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THE LEONARD BERNSTEIN ARTFUL LEARNING MODEL: A CASE STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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THE LEONARD BERNSTEIN ARTFUL LEARNING MODEL: A CASE STUDY
OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

David S. Brothman

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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of the requirements of
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in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

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ABSTRACT

Case study methodology was used to explore and better understand how the Leonard Bernstein Artful Learning comprehensive school reform model impacted a high performing suburban elementary school outside Chicago, Illinois. The school adopted the model not because it was doing poorly academically, but rather as a vehicle to institute a comprehensive arts-based curriculum school wide. Focusing primarily on teachers' perceptions of how the model affected teaching and learning in their classroom, the study also uncovered how the school, families, the community, and district leadership responded to and supported Artful Learning over a five year period since its inception. The study found Artful Learning (Experience, Inquire, Create, Reflect) to be a powerful means to deepen student learning, build community within and outside of school, stimulate reflective practice among teachers, and empower teachers to lead school-based professional development. Contributing to the research knowledge on the role of art in educational renewal and teacher leadership efforts, the author concluded that Artful Learning can be an effective school reform model that allows educators to deeply engage with, explore, and deliver curriculum that revitalizes teaching, learning, and leadership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my wife, Andrea, for putting up with all the lost nights and weekends while I was in class or writing this dissertation. I could not have completed this case study without your support.

Also, thank you to Dr. Richard Benjamin for introducing me to Artful Learning. You taught me how to make teaching and learning not only rigorous and deep, but fun for students.

To the administrators and teachers of Northtown Elementary School, thank you so much for allowing me to learn about Artful Learning with you and for inviting me into your school. I truly appreciate all you have done. It is my hope that the work you have done at Northtown becomes the model for using arts-based strategies in schools across the country.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this case study is to investigate an elementary school that uses the Leonard Bernstein Center's Artful Learning Model as its instructional model. Artful Learning is a comprehensive school reform model that uses the fine arts as the basis for instruction. While many of the schools that are using Artful Learning are low income and using the program as a reform model, this school is in a wealthy school district and does not need any kind of instructional reform. However, I wanted to investigate why Artful Learning is so successful at this school and what factors contributed to that success.

My background is in the social sciences. I taught high school social studies and was a K-12 social studies coordinator. Currently, I am a public school administrator and my focus is on curriculum and instruction. It is confusing to many why I would write a dissertation on a school that uses arts-based unit design and instruction strategies. I have been asked the question many times; why the arts? Unbelievably there is a social studies connection. Here, I tell the story of my awakening to the arts as a tool for not only curriculum design, but instruction as well. I never thought the arts would be the answer to so many of the questions I had when teaching low-income students. After all, I am not an artist. I played the drums; I like going to theatre; and I enjoy good music. I can not dance, sing, or draw. However, I was a high school social studies teacher who taught using drama and debate. I had students create time-period newspapers and respond to questions through discourse in the classroom. One lesson I enjoyed teaching was having students create conversations using slang from the 1920s and then comparing that slang to how people spoke in the late 20th century. This was not the arts; it was how I taught. I

enjoyed it and my students enjoyed it. My colleagues thought my classes were loud. I thought they were controlled chaos. Artistic was not something I even connected to my teaching style. If I am not artistic, why am I so into this method of teaching? And, why do I connect with Artful Learning in such a way that it is the basis of my educational philosophy?

The Bernstein Artful Learning Model

It happened quite unexpectedly in fall 2004. I received a phone call from a colleague who was doing her principals' internship with a nearby school district. This district was working on a Character Through Service Learning Grant (CTSL) and wanted to partner with my school district. I attended a meeting with my colleague and some other staff members in my district who were also involved in the program. It was there that I met Dr. Richard Benjamin. Dr. Benjamin had been a superintendent in Michigan, Nashville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia prior to becoming executive in residence at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia. He was also senior consultant to the Leonard Bernstein Center for Learning. Dr. Benjamin was responsible for awakening me from my arts slumber. Using the CTSL grant, he showed me the connection between the arts and social studies. Thus began a nearly five year continuous relationship with Dr. Benjamin, the Leonard Bernstein Center, and the Artful Learning Model.

Throughout those five years, I came to understand the importance of the arts in public education not only as "specialty" classes, but as tools of teaching and learning. I watched and listened to teachers who were using the *Bernstein Model*. Because the district I worked in was a low-income, underperforming school district, we were ripe for a new way of delivering instruction. I wanted to find a way for our social studies

teachers to connect history to our student's lives. The Bernstein model was perfect. I began to immerse myself in this method of learning. I taught myself the process so that I might share the importance of Bernstein's Artful Learning Model with other educators in my district.

Shortly after I taught myself the process, I began training a small group of middle school social studies teachers so that they too could use the model in their classrooms. The group would meet once a month and when Dr. Benjamin was in town, we would do more in-depth training with him. In the meantime, I became a National Trainer for the Leonard Bernstein Center. I was slowly becoming one of the few local experts in Artful Learning in Illinois. While I was teaching Artful Learning to teachers in my district, several schools and school districts asked me to present at conferences and in-services. In 2006 and 2007, I presented at the Imagination Conference at National Louis University and the Northwestern Collaboratory Symposium as well as at a number of school districts in my area. I also incorporated a mini-Bernstein Unit in the graduate social studies methods classes that I taught at a local university. This method changed the way I taught. It was a major paradigm shift since I entered the teaching profession in 1993. I began to realize that the arts can greatly affect in a positive way how students learn. Now, I want to discover how the arts impact learning when they are the total focus of instructional design for a whole school.

As a result of these experiences, I also began to read about the connection between the arts and improving critical thinking skills. Booth (2001) and Jenson (2001) believe that art helps improve cognitive ability in the brain. If, as Booth (2001) stated, good high school arts programs reduce dropout rates and absenteeism, then why have we

not taken a more serious look at programs such as Artful Learning? In today's educational climate, I believe we need to step out of the traditional mode of teaching and look at other ways to reach students. If students of the 21st century need more active learning in the classroom, then it is up to us as educators to find better, more inclusive teaching strategies. If including the arts is a viable option, then schools need to re-think the importance of programs like Artful Learning as instructional models. It is my belief that this case study will give educators the impetus to look at Artful Learning and other such arts-based programs as being a central piece to how students learn.

What is Artful Learning?

The mission of the Leonard Bernstein Center for Learning is “to strengthen education on a national level by preparing teachers, schools, and communities to use the Arts and the artistic process in the teaching of all academic subjects” (Leonard Bernstein, 2008, *Lean More*, p. 2). In essence, Artful Learning is a school reform program. It is based on 19 years of collaboration between educators, researchers, and those who teach using the model in classrooms. Well-known conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein's belief that music and the fine and performing arts in combination with a concept-based, interdisciplinary construct, could be used to improve academic achievement and instill a love of learning inspired the program. The approach embeds the arts in the learning and serves as the method to convey understanding to students across the curriculum.

Grounded in the artistic process, the Artful Learning Model is a framework for educators to explore and deliver curriculum that revitalizes teaching, learning, and leadership. Research-based professional development empowers educators to utilize this

methodology over a three-year implementation process, with the goal of building a sustainable and effective learning community. The Artful Learning Program is an art-based comprehensive school reform model that promotes higher order thinking and rigorous instructional unit design. (Leonard Bernstein, 2008).

While much of this study has to do with student achievement, there is more to why the Artful Learning Program works than just numbers. Yes, test scores can tell us whether the program is beneficial or not; however, they do not tell us what changed. Test scores do not improve overnight. There has to be some paradigm shift that occurs which allows the community of learners to change. Artful Learning is a comprehensive school reform model. That in itself says, you have no choice; you must change. You just reform yourself or something worse might happen. In regard to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), this means the county or the state takes you over. Comprehensive school reform (CSR) models were created to help schools change for the better. The North Central Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL) (2002) noted that the U.S. Department of Education described CSR as models that employ proven strategies and methods that are based upon scientifically based research and effective practices to improve student achievement (p. 3). The U.S. Department of Education states that the focus of the CSR Program is to raise student achievement by employing proven methods and strategies to produce comprehensive school reform. CSR builds upon and leverages ongoing state and local efforts to connect higher standards and school improvement. This program helps to expand the quality and quantity of school-wide reform efforts that enable all children, particularly low-achieving children, to meet challenging academic standards (U.S.

Department of Education, 2004). The outcome is a whole new instructional model that should, in a short period of time, improve the school both culturally and academically.

Eisner (1999) maintained that if the arts do contribute to academic achievement, it matters only if they do so based on academic accomplishments that have educational worth. Achieving higher scores on trivial outcomes is no victory (p. 152). The trivial outcomes Eisner refers to are assessments that do not affect academic achievement in the long run. Eisner seems to be looking for a connection between achievement and arts-based instruction. Can arts-based instruction help improve teaching and learning within the school? The goal of this study is to answer this question.

For arts education models, according to Eisner (1999), what is needed is an appraisal of their effectiveness grounded in evidence that the differences are educationally consequential. The Artful Learning model, with its focus on enduring understanding, is much like what Wiggins and McTighe (1998) described as a big idea that students learn and will understand for 30 years beyond the classroom. Eisner and others, such as Catterall (1998) and Elfand (2004), believe that models like Artful Learning influence student's academic performance. In this study, my aim is to discover how one school, Northtown Arts School, has bridged this gap. I believe the best way to accomplish this goal is through conducting a case study. It is important to note that the Northtown Arts School is not in a position where it must choose a comprehensive school reform model. This school has chosen Artful Learning as an instructional model in an effort to continue and further enhance a pattern of success within the district in terms of standardized test scores.

The Artful Learning Process

The Artful Learning Model provides a sequence that includes active learning, meaning hands-on student activities where both the student and teacher each take on the role of artist, teacher, and scholar. Students go through the sequence in order to determine an answer to a *Broad Significant Question* that is connected to a concept being taught in a specific unit. Each part of the sequence is designed to give students a different level of understanding as they progress through each activity. The sequence challenges students to Experience, Inquire, Create, and Reflect.

Experience

The process begins with what are called *Inquiry Centers*. Within each center, students follow the Artful Learning sequence beginning with *Experience*. Students take part in active learning activities where they experience the *Masterwork* in several ways. A Masterwork is a human achievement that crosses disciplines and cultures. It is something that exerts influence over time and is the best example of its genre. In the classroom, this could look like listening to a song, viewing a movie clip, moving around to music or the sound of instruments, discussing the meaning of a painting, writing about how a piece of art makes you feel, or imitating a scene in a play. An example of this sequence in a classroom setting would be students taking a field trip to the Museum of Modern Art and viewing a painting, a Masterwork, by a specific artist while answering deepening questions which have been created to enhance each student's understanding of the hows and whys of the artist's creation of the painting. These questions are based on the next sequence called Inquiry.

Inquiry

The next step is for students to *Inquire*. Here, students use *deepening questions* to inquire about the Masterwork which also helps to begin answering the Broad Significant Question. An example of a Masterwork would be the Declaration of Independence or a painting by Picasso. A Broad Significant Question would be: What causes war? In this part of the sequence, students will begin to identify a concept through the investigation of deepening questions. These questions guide the inquiry and promote various research techniques. This process might also lead to more questions for the students to ask and answer. In this part of the sequence, students might be found reading a play, interviewing someone, experimenting with a formula, comparing songs and poems, categorizing important facts, questioning why something happened, or exploring a neighborhood to find answers. With each activity, the students make new connections that help them piece together an answer to the Broad Significant Question that began the process.

If we continue with the example of a Masterwork which was previously discussed in the experience section, students would take these deepening questions and come up with some answer that is detailed and allows students to better understand the connection between the artist, the painting, and Broad Significant Question that is posed to them. The Broad Significant Question is connected to a concept and the Masterwork. To show understanding, students might answer questions based on an interview the artist gave on why he or she created that painting. To find answers to a deepening question, students might also create a chart that shows connections, or explore the time period in which the painting was created. Once this inquiry process is complete, students move to the next sequence, which should begin to develop a broader understanding of the concept.

Create

After students have completed the experience and inquiry sequences, they begin to create something that shows what they have learned and understood within the Inquiry Center. They work on an *original creation* that represents the new knowledge they have gained in the inquiry process. This could look like students brainstorming ideas for a community service project, rehearsing a skit or song they have created, shaping a clay recreation of their version of Mount Rushmore, presenting to a group of younger students about bullying, performing a skit, informing the community about a problem in their school, or sharing information with other classes about what they have learned.

Continuing with this example, students might re-create the painting based on modern day issues or their own perspective. They might take what they have learned about the painting and create a group skit that goes into more detail about what the painting represents. In some cases, teachers might choose to have students in multiple groups create skits based on different pieces or ideas of the painting. Students would create and perform their group skits and discuss what each skit represents. After this, they would engage in the process of determining which skits made the best connections and then begin to put them all together to create one play. This is the beginning of the sequence called Reflect.

Reflect

The final stage of the sequence is *Reflection*. In this stage, students reflect on what they have learned and understood so far about the concept and Broad Significant Question. Reflection can look like students journaling what they have learned, using mapping, responding to questions posed by a teacher or someone they are speaking with

or listening to, reviewing facts, analyzing or critiquing a problem, applying new knowledge in a different way, or envisioning a new way of doing something.

Once all of the Inquiry Centers are complete, students create a class project that shows understanding of the concept they have learned. This is a student-centered, teacher-facilitated approach that can reduce the number of unit teaching days. This study revealed that because of the rigor involved, students understand what they are learning much faster, and because they are actively engaged in the learning process, they retain more. Authors such as Booth (2001) and Jenson (2001) believe that using the arts improves the cognitive ability in students. The inquiry centers used in the Bernstein Model employ the art-based strategies that both of these authors suggest should be included in every instructional model.

To conclude the example of a class project, we have left students in groups creating different skits. Once these skits of the class project have been performed individually, the teacher then might ask students to reflect on each skit and within their groups, come up with a sequence that will best tell the story of the painting and/or the artist. Each group would have a note taker that reports back to the class on how and why they feel each group's skit fits into the sequence to tell the best story about the painting. Once this activity is complete, the groups would become one class again and the class would vote on which group's sequence of skits told the best story. The best sequence of skits is chosen and then performed as a play. The class then performs for other classes at their grade level as well as for the whole school, while at the same time explaining what the play means and connecting it to the concept and painting. This activity shows

reflection at a deep level and also gives the teacher an idea about individual student and class understanding about the concept being taught.

How Artful Learning Changed the Way I Teach

As mentioned previously, I have always taught using some form of active learning. I was the kind of student who needed to be actively engaged in the learning process in order to understand what was being taught. Artful Learning was the transformation that I needed to fully understand, an enduring understanding if you will, how a teacher can teach to reach all students. What I learned while becoming a Bernstein Trainer helped me to focus on how I taught teachers in my district as well as the graduate students who were studying to be teachers at the university where I was an adjunct. For me, this was a true example of being a lifelong learner. I was learning something new while at the same time, I was passing on that knowledge to others in a way they could utilize it in their classrooms.

When I became a social studies coordinator, one of my roles was to provide professional development for K–5 teachers as well as middle and high school social studies teachers. Because I was so involved in the Bernstein Model at the Northtown Arts School, I wanted to bring the program or the concepts it taught into my own district, and I did. This program brought together teachers who were struggling with low-income students and were grasping for ways to reach them. I began to teach these teachers how the fine arts, and specifically the Bernstein Model, could enhance what was being taught and could be connected to the curriculum. I made connections for the teachers. For example, I showed them how they could take a concept such as leadership and a Masterwork such as Mount Rushmore and connect them to teach from multiple

perspectives. Another example was taking the Bill of Rights and creating a rap song to demonstrate understanding while linking with today's issues. Teachers were both challenged and invigorated. They began to understand what I was saying. Their Students were beginning to take an interest in social studies. Teachers were now going for depth of instruction instead of breadth. For that brief time, when I was able to show how the arts can lead to teachable moments, I believe I made a difference in how these teachers looked at instructional design. Those teachers who are still in the district today use many of the strategies I taught them in an educational environment that deems social studies unimportant. On the one hand, these teachers who are employing Artful Learning strategies can teach as in depth as they want to because there is no state test to worry about. On the other hand, they also need to prepare students to become critical thinkers so that they can be successful on their language arts state test. One of the many things I learned while becoming a fan of Artful Learning was that in order to reach students in this 21st century world, teachers need to engage them in thought, connect what they are teaching to their lives, and actively engage them in the learning process.

This same belief was transferred to my graduate Social Studies Methods class. I wanted to strip away the belief that "sit and get" was an acceptable form of instruction for K-8th grade teachers, and instill the belief that while group or cooperative learning work was good, there could be more to it. Artful Learning became the focus for this methods class. Through questioning and discussion, I realized that many of these teachers never thought about actively engaging students in the lesson through critical thinking. They never realized that social studies could and should be the catalyst for teaching critical thinking, or be the bridge to all other subjects through the use of arts-based strategies. I

used arts-based strategies to show connections to historical events as well as how to pull prior knowledge from students, which teachers could use to enhance the classroom learning experience. These experiences had a profound impact on me as an educator and sparked in me my commitment to undertake this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand how one school used the Bernstein Artful Learning Model to promote academic success. Information was gathered through a narrative case study at a school that has been using the Leonard Bernstein Center's Artful Learning Model for roughly ten years. The Artful Learning model is currently the only No Child Left Behind approved arts-based comprehensive school reform model, and it is being used in schools across the country. Data compiled by the Bernstein Center as well as my own data are used as a response to current research on the topic of the importance of the arts in schools.

Rationale

Studies have not been conclusive in terms of academic achievement and the arts. I believe we need to study programs such as Artful Learning and examine how these programs change the culture of learning in schools. Eisner (1999) believes that we need to have more studies that compare the academic performance of students who have had arts courses with those who have not. Eisner asserted that the more arts courses taken, the greater the effect on academic achievement. However, according to Eisner, such a study would need to rely on the quality of teaching provided. Should one group of students have a higher quality of teachers in their academic studies than another group, this would affect academic achievement. Eisner maintained that the arts do not

necessarily promote the development of skills but rather the attitude one needs to become motivated to take risks; if this takes place, then a student would be more likely to attend school more often and enjoy it.

The purpose of this study is to explore if higher learning is taking place and how Artful Learning strategies play a role. Jenson (2001), a leading researcher on the arts and student achievement, explained that there are correlations with visual arts and higher college entrance scores. Jenson noted the College Board reported that for the 1999 school year, there was a difference between scores of students with visual arts coursework versus those with no arts coursework. Students with studio, art appreciation, and art design score an average of 47 points higher on math and 31 points higher on the verbal portions of the college entrance test, and the scores for photography and film work are nearly the same (p. 60). This gives rise to the question, how did this school get to this point when it has students with limited exposure to the arts both in school and in their home life as well as students who have some experience in the home and more and more exposure to the arts in school? What happens when students leave this school and attend a middle and high school that does not place as much emphasis on the arts? Does this district have something in place to make sure students do not lose the connection? Once students have been exposed to the arts and connections are made between the arts and their core classes, how do we ensure students continue to use the arts as a way to enhance learning? So as to obtain answers, the following research questions guided this study.

Research Questions

The primary question of this study is: How can arts-based strategies be used to strengthen the curriculum? I would like to know what parts of the Artful Learning

program have been instrumental in improving students' ability to understand instruction that were not available prior to the incorporation of Artful Learning. If I can show that arts-based instruction helps students achieve at a higher level, then this would be one more beam of support for arts education in public schools.

Related questions that flow from the primary question include:

- How does the district or building leadership play a part in the success of the program?
- How might various components of Artful Learning improve the school and the curriculum?
- How might the Artful Learning model be modified to be more effective given the changing landscape of education?
- What have been the barriers to implementing a program that is as detailed as Artful Learning?
- How might art be a core part of the curriculum, of school improvement, and a central piece to how students learn?

Definition of Terms

To help understand some of the terms I will be using when referring to the Artful Learning model, I am including this section as an explanation of the sequence of learning that takes place during classroom instruction:

Arts-based curriculum. Researchers such as Rooney (2004) and Eisner (1999) state that curriculum is arts-based when there is a collaborative effort between the arts-based teacher and the core area teacher to incorporate those arts into teaching and learning in every subject every day.

Artful learning. Created by the Leonard Bernstein Center for Learning in 1992, this is a comprehensive school reform model that was founded on the belief that the arts provide a fundamental model for learning. It is a concept-based, multi-disciplinary unit-based program that is supported by teacher research (Kenny-Gardhouse, A. & West, C., 2001).

Artful learning sequence. The sequence is a rigorous version of a learning center. Students learn about Enduring Understandings and connections to concepts through the sequence. Teachers provide students with a Broad Significant Question that is connected to a universal concept and Masterwork.

Broad significant question. This is the one overarching question that drives inquiry.

Comprehensive school reform (CSR). This is a school level reform that centers around one unifying theme. It should include all four of the core subject areas. Pieces of this program will also include instruction, curriculum, parent and community involvement, and school organization (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Schools that are not meeting the standards and are failing are asked to become involved in a CSR program. However, leaders of schools such as the one being researched might choose a CSR program because they think it is best practice.

Community of learners. Each school has a community of learners. Building this type of school community takes time and practice. Villarreal and Scott (2008) believe that it is critical that the community of learners include stakeholders who represent various perspectives of the educational change process. At a minimum, this should

include parents and teachers of traditionally underserved students, educators with expertise in effective instruction of these students, district and campus administrators, community leaders representing the private sector, activists, district and campus support personnel, and students who represent these underserved student groups (p. 8).

Culture. Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning influences upon further action (Li & Karakowsky, 2001).

Enduring understanding. Enduring understanding is a big concept that goes beyond the subject being taught (Wiggins & McTigh, 1998). It is something that is understood or transferable beyond one's education and is used in many situations.

Essential question. According to Wiggins and McTighe (1998), this is an essential question that cannot be answered in a brief one or two sentence answer. This type of question brings about inquiry and leads to more questions that promote understanding.

Masterwork. This is a manmade object that is timeless and universal. It is also the best example of its genre. It can be a piece of art or sculpture, a poem or book, a speech, a song or piece of music. It can also be an example of architecture or a machine. Students learn about the connection through understanding that is learned throughout the sequence. Each piece of the sequence builds upon the other. Students gain

understanding of the concept each time they complete a piece of the sequence which has been described in a previous section of this chapter (experience, inquire, create, reflect).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The following literature review is based on the research question: Can arts-based strategies be used to strengthen the curriculum? The topics explored include:

1. The Arts in Comprehensive School Reform
2. The Role of the Arts in Creating a Culture of Learning
3. Student Engagement and the Arts
4. The Arts and Critical Thinking
5. The Arts and Student Achievement
6. Research on the Bernstein Model

The Arts in Comprehensive School Reform

As explained in chapter one, the Leonard Bernstein Center's Artful Learning Program is a comprehensive school reform model that has had some success in low-income schools in Atlanta, California, Louisiana, and Florida (Leonard Bernstein, 2008). My goal with this research is to engage schools and school boards in making a paradigm shift in terms of what is needed to truly educate students for understanding. The culture of learning in today's educational climate has changed, and I would like all stakeholders to rethink how we foster learning in students. Too much of today's teaching and learning is grounded in the theory that student achievement is primarily tied to teacher quality and effectiveness, which is a product of passing the No Child Left Behind legislation. All too often teachers are forced to teach for memorization in order to prepare students for state tests and not for student understanding. If we know that incorporating the arts into the

curriculum helps students learn, we should do all we can to make sure the arts are in *every* school district.

There have been numerous studies conducted on arts education and the connection to student achievement. Booth (2001), Eisner (1999, 2002), and Jenson (2001) have explored this topic at length, but in my opinion, the research needs to go deeper and beyond just achievement. Achievement is only one piece of the educational puzzle. The culture of learning in schools needs to be looked at as well, that is, how students learn best. This means focusing on student engagement, critical thinking, and teacher reflective practice if we are to truly understand how students can improve achievement through the arts.

For example the A-Plus Program is a comprehensive school reform model that began in North Carolina in 1991 as a pilot program in 25 schools. It uses a curriculum, instruction, and organizational model based in the arts. Nelson (2001) asked, “What role can the arts play in comprehensive school reform that improves learning for all students?” Nelson’s findings suggested that comprehensive school reform that is driven by arts integration affects schools, communities, teachers, and students in ways far beyond those that show up in standardized tests focused on basic skills (p. 1).

The Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership (PAEP) was founded in 1996 to promote learning through the arts for K–12 students in southeastern Pennsylvania. The program is non-profit and has a range of affiliations and programs:

Through a range of programs and services, PAEP achieves its primary goals of: promoting best practices in the design and implementation of arts education programming; providing access to resources and networks in support of arts education programming; and, encouraging and supporting an appreciation of learning in and through the arts. (PAEP, 2014, Who We Are, para. 1)

The PAEP promotes arts in schools by providing a variety of services to schools throughout the Philadelphia area. According to the PAEP (2014), schools have access to a variety of programs and activities for students and teachers. PAEP has partnered with the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts to provide schools with artists in residency opportunities. In this program, artists teach in classrooms while integrating art into the curriculum. As of the 2011–2012 school year, there were 60 session residency and long term residencies and a teacher/artist summer training program.

PAEP (2014) has also partnered with the U.S Department of Education on two arts-based programs. Arts Link, 2010–2014, is an experimental research program that builds math and science competencies through arts integration. Artists are placed in year-long residencies in four Philadelphia elementary schools to work with teachers in grades 2–5 to improve math and science skills using visual arts. Arts Bridges, 2006-2010, was an experimental research project that built literacy through an integrated arts collaborative model. In this program, selected artists who represented two different art forms worked in four Philadelphia schools in grades 4–6 to support literacy acquisition and fluency. A young artist program is a main component of the PAEP program. In a program titled “Let Freedom Ring,” students in grades 5–8 learned civics through an integrated arts/civics curriculum in collaboration with the National Liberty Museum.

The Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) is both an education and an arts organization. According to CAPE (year), its greatest strength is “its unique ability to successfully bridge the frequent divide between arts and education” (p. ? or para. ?). Founded in 1992, CAPE’s work with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) made them a leader in school improvement. In 2005, CAPE began integrating an after school program in

CPS with the learning that takes place during the school day. This was done with the belief that a curriculum integrated with art is more persuasive because it gives students the ability to inquire and exchange creative ideas that are both artistic and academic. While discussing how and when arts become the central focus in the learning environment, Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga (1999) stated that according to the Teachers College research team and those examining the CAPE schools, the very school culture is changed, and the conditions for learning are improved (p.11).

Because CAPE considers itself a learning organization, students learn while at the same time educators and researchers collaborate to improve learning. According to CAPE (year?), there are three primary research questions that drive its mission. Two of these questions deal with arts integration and student achievement. The first is: What are the effects of arts integration on teachers and students? This question drives both the research and the curriculum. The second question is: What strategies of integration lead to positive results in students? One of the strategies used in CAPE classrooms is including Inquiry questions that spark investigation in learning. This is an important aspect of rigorous instruction. Teachers and artists use inquiry along with documentation from different mediums such as video, photography, and interviewing to enrich the learning experience.

Another current educational reform discussion centered on the arts was led by President Barak Obama and Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley. As part of the Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance (AEMS), both leaders took part in the Imagination Conversations in Maryland: Nurturing the Imagination/Creativity/Innovation Continuum conference. A report of this conference stated that this was an important

discussion that was driven by Maryland's Third Wave of Reform as part of the Race to the Top. "If imagination, creativity and innovation are deemed to be of value, then education policies should clearly and concretely reflect that fact (Mears, 2011, p. 5)."

One interesting aspect of this discussion was that because STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) has become a priority in education, many Maryland educators stated that STEM programs that include the Arts have been more successful creating (STEAM) programs. Because the addition of the arts provides an avenue for discovery, critical thinking, and exploration, STEM programs become more rigorous.

In concluding the report, Mears (2011) stated:

While there is concern that some aspects of ICI (Imagination, Creativity, Innovation) are difficult to measure, educators in the conversations from arts education and arts integration schools countered that in the context of arts education and arts integration, there is constant measuring and assessment, which teachers, schools, and school systems use to assess student achievement in the arts and to measure the quality of programs. (p. 9)

In this new age of Race to the Top and school reform, the arts need to have a place in the instructional design at the K–12 level. This report is a great example of how it can work to everyone's advantage.

The Role of the Arts in Creating a Culture of Learning

Culture of learning is the culture of the school. How students learn, or don't, and teachers teach, or can't, is a part of the culture. An arts-based curriculum focuses learning on imagination and exploration rather than on memorization. Eisner (2002), Jenson (2001), and Booth (2001) all believe that more emphasis should be placed on exploration of ideas rather than rote acquisition of facts. The arts lead students towards this way of thinking. In this era of high-stakes testing, the culture of learning is shaped by memorization and testing. If we find that the current culture is not working, in terms

of not being successful in meeting Adequate Yearly Progress, then it is possible that teachers and students need a new way to teach and learn. Because social media has become such a large part of students' culture, we as educators need to find different ways to use social media as a form of instruction. Using the fine arts as a tool to reach students through social media is a definite change in the culture of learning in today's educational environment. Artful Learning as an instructional model has been the catalyst for change in several schools throughout the country, some of which are Fairview Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana; Salvador Elementary School, Napa, California; Wright Elementary School, Des Moines, Iowa. When we discover something, whether through the arts or some other medium, learning is much more fulfilling. The culture of learning at the Northtown Arts School has been shaped through the Artful Learning process. One of the areas where a difference can be seen, when compared to a traditional instructional model, is through student interaction.

Student Engagement and the Arts

The culture of learning in a school is closely connected to student engagement. As explained in chapter one, Bernstein's Artful learning promotes active student engagement. One way students can be more engaged in the learning process is by wrestling with essential questions. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) and Hayes-Jacobs (1997) asserted that exploring essential questions promotes enduring understandings. Enduring understandings are what students should retain and hold for 30 years and beyond. In Artful Learning, students gain understanding through activities that include experience, inquiry, creation, and reflection. These learning modalities put together, or used separately, engage students in activities that foster enduring understanding rather

than rote memorization. Simply telling or encouraging students to engage in their class work is seldom enough. Jones (2008) pointed out:

Likewise, in Artful Learning students connect the concept, Masterwork, and Broad Significant Question to their lives and information that they already know. Relevance can help create conditions and motivation necessary for students to make the personal investment required for rigorous work or optimal learning. Students invest more of themselves, work harder, and learn better when the topic is interesting and connected to something that they already know. (www.leadered.com).

The Arts and Critical Thinking

Providing students with the opportunity to use critical thinking skills is also an important piece of the culture of learning. Essential questions and enduring understandings are a part of critical thinking. Elder (2007) defined critical thinking as “self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way” (p. 1). If we are to teach students to think critically, we need to give them the opportunity to engage in dialog that forces them to reason. This means that the delivery of curriculum needs to be open and not as structured. Textbooks need to be put aside for time to explore and inquire about the concepts that are being learned. The Bernstein Artful Learning Method is a conduit for improving critical thinking skills in students. Using the arts as a medium for teaching critical thinking is central to the Artful Learning Model. Mackey and Schwartz (2006) use music to promote critical thinking. They found that activities which involve hearing, thinking, questioning, or visualization when listening to music improve critical thinking.

Reasoning is emphasized when students are asked to describe a piece of music. Each of these is integral to the critical thinking process. This approach is also a part of Artful Learning. Students are asked to describe a piece of music through various mediums such as art, drama, or narrative. This kind of learning pushes students to think critically about the theme of the song and the concept they are learning. When critical thinking is used, students begin to make connections to higher order thinking.

The Arts and Student Achievement

Brookfield (1995), when defining reflective practice, focused on critical thinking from a teacher's perspective. Critical reflection helps teachers to understand why they teach in a certain way and to assess the impact and perceptions of these practices. A teacher must always be aware of different ways to reach students. In this day of NCLB and standardized testing, being reflective about what our students need to truly understand what they are learning rather than learning by rote is very important. Educators must ask themselves what it is they want students to leave their classrooms knowing. If the answer is to understand the conceptual framework of the curriculum and current teaching practices do not lead to that end, it might be time to change how we teach. The method through which teachers present their material may also impact student achievement as well as how they learn. Reflective practice must be on-going if we are to keep up not only with educational trends but with how each student learns.

A main component of Artful Learning is reflective practice. The final piece of the Artful Learning sequence, reflection, helps both student and teacher. Once students become familiar with the pattern of the Artful Learning sequence, reflection will become an integral piece of a teacher's instructional practice and student learning. Teachers will

be able to use reflection as an assessment tool and students will use reflection both as self-assessment and a way to move towards enduring understanding of the concept they are being taught.

Research on the Bernstein Model

The UCLA Study

Artful Learning is the signature school improvement program of the Leonard Bernstein Center, based on 19 years of intensive collaboration and refinement, field research and implementation with leading educators, researchers and ultimately practitioners of the model. The program was inspired by Leonard Bernstein's vision that music and the other fine and performing arts, in combination with a concept-based and interdisciplinary construct, could be used to improve academic achievement and instill a love of learning. This reformation of thought embeds the arts in the learning process and serves as the method of response for students to convey understanding across the curriculum (Leonard Bernstein, 2008).

The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA undertook a three year evaluation of the Artful Learning program from 2001–2004 that was conducted by Griffin and Miyoshi (2009). This was the most extensive research done on the implementation and impact of the program on schools that are participating. The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Areas that the researchers examined included teacher satisfaction with the program as well as their understanding of it and professional development components and whether or not the program was a useful tool for teachers of various experience levels. They also studied how the Artful Learning model impacted student achievement

and teachers' instruction and how it impacted the school as a whole. While research was done on the program from 2001–2002, CRESST researchers began interviewing teachers from the winter of 2003 through the spring of 2004. Teachers and administrators were interviewed by telephone and were from schools in the Los Angeles Public School District.

One of the areas that I studied in Northtown School in Illinois focuses on implementation of the program. The CRESST evaluation determined that 91% of all students interviewed stated that they developed an Artful Learning unit in 2003. Researchers also asked how often teachers incorporated the arts into daily instruction. Only 2% reported never using any work of art as a tool to teach their students (Griffin & Miyoshi, 2009, p. 9). These are important statistics to use to compare the single school in Illinois. Where Los Angeles has multiple schools using Artful Learning in many classrooms, the school in Illinois was created as a Bernstein School. In Los Angeles, 90% of all teachers interviewed believed that there was a need for Artful Learning at their school. This case study was undertaken at a school that is not low income or underperforming because I thought it would be interesting to see if teachers at this school see Artful Learning as a benefit to students who are already meeting the standards.

CRESST researchers also studied which content areas were most likely to incorporate Artful Learning into instruction. Not surprisingly, they found that social studies (63%) followed by language arts were the area's most likely to use the program regularly in their classrooms. I believed I would see similar responses at the school in Illinois. However, because this school is a Bernstein School, it was likely that all content areas integrate Artful Learning into their curriculum in some way.

Teachers at the Illinois school also had a positive impression of professional development. This is an area that I compared with Los Angeles. How Artful Learning was presented as a professional development tool at the school in Illinois is important. Teachers in Los Angeles felt that professional development better prepared them for classroom instruction, but the data differed for Level 1 (79%) versus Level 2 (38%). Researchers determined that several factors were involved in the difference of comfort levels, such as the fact that many lessons were geared towards upper elementary examples and focused on language arts with very few math and science examples. They also felt that training was focused on what future lessons might look like rather than how it could look now (Griffin & Miyoshi, 2009, pp. 23–25). A positive outcome of professional development for Los Angeles teachers was that they found their teaching practice being influenced by Artful Learning techniques. Good professional development crosses all curricular areas and I wanted to see if this is the case in Illinois. Because the Bernstein Model was chosen as the main curriculum and instructional model, this is something that needs to be looked at.

CRESST researchers also studied shared leadership. At schools in Los Angeles, the researchers found no relationship between the implementation of Artful Learning and shared leadership. This presents another difference in how Artful Learning was implemented in both Los Angeles and Illinois. The school in Illinois was created with Bernstein in mind. Schools in Los Angeles implemented Bernstein as a school reform model and, therefore, had outside issues factor into the implementation process.

In looking at student achievement, the CRESST researchers found that both teachers and administrators liked how Artful Learning improved student engagement. In

a survey conducted by the researchers, they found that using Artful Learning strategies in the classroom gave students the ability to access and retain information using higher level thinking skills (Griffin & Miyoshi, 2009, p. 31). Teachers in Los Angeles also reported that there was an increase in the quality of student work. Some teachers also reported that there was a small increase in student scores. A small percentage of teachers, 30%, stated that they did not know whether or not Artful Learning had any effect on the standardized tests (p. 32). This is an area where there has been much debate. In chapter two of this research, I discuss the debate between student achievement and the arts. It is this major debate which prompted me to conduct this case study. The only data that the CRESST researchers had available to them were standardized assessment data. My case study includes both standardized and teacher created assessments which give us a better overall picture as to how Artful Learning improves achievement. Researchers in Los Angeles did find examples of growth in Artful Learning schools around the district. On average, Artful Learning schools advanced 22% in writing than other schools in the district. This is attributed to the fact that Artful Learning has a writing component in the *Reflect* sequence (Griffin & Miyoshi, 2009, p. 36). Because the Illinois school in my study is not using Artful Learning as a reform model and is the only school in the district fully implementing the program, this area is hard to compare. I studied this area in general and compared achievement from year to year both prior to implementation of Artful Learning and its current use.

CRESST researchers studied nine schools from across the United States that have fully implemented Artful Learning. The data show higher academic achievement in reading and math compared to schools in the same districts that are not using the Artful

Learning model. Their data show growth in reading, language arts, and math. Table 1 displays the average growth in percentage of students meeting and exceeding state standards for Artful Learning schools, their districts, and matched comparison schools for 2000–2003.

Table 1

Comparative Average Student Growth of Artful Learning and Non-Artful Learning Schools and Districts: 2002–2003

	Reading	ELA	Math
Artful Learning Schools	11.5	5.4	9.7
District	5.5	5.2	5.9
Comparison Schools	4.9	3	5.6

Note. Data sources: State Department of Education websites for CA, FL, GA, PA, and OR.

Fairview Elementary School in Bloomington, Indiana is one school that went through the process of partnering with the Bernstein Center to use Artful Learning as its restructuring model. The school adopted this program during the 2010–2011 school year. The Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) (2014) website states that students learn best when concepts are introduced and practiced through multiple modalities. Artful Learning enhances learning by presenting curriculum in highly engaging ways. Teaching with arts-based strategies leads to increased student engagement, motivation, and collaboration within a more stimulating and joyful learning

environment. My case study looks at this same concept. Are students more engaged in the learning process because of Artful Learning? Are students more engaged? One must remember that this current case study does not involve a school that is in restructuring or reforming in any way. Artful Learning is this school's chosen instructional model.

Campbell-Jones et al (2004) discussed how parents at one elementary school in California became more involved with the school. Artful Learning provided opportunities for parents to receive their own professional development, and the Artful Learning program became a magnet for getting parents to attend school activities. Students began to become active while doing homework. The authors stated that parents reported their children moving from the kitchen table to the middle of the floor doing dance moves along with their work.

Jackson Middle School in Portland Oregon is another example of academic achievement that is highlighted in the CRESST report. When comparing Jackson Middle School, an Artful Learning school, with the rest of the school district from 2006 through 2009, benchmark status data from <http://www.ode.state.or.us>, shows an increase in students meeting or exceeding state standards over other middle schools in the district. In mathematics, students meeting or exceeding state standards on state assessments from 2003 through 2009 at Jackson middle school consistently outperformed other middle school students in the same school district. In 2003–2004, Jackson middle school students scored 79%, while district students scored 62%. In 2004–2005, Jackson middle school students scored an 83% and other district students scored 67%. From 2005–2006 through the 2009 school year, Jackson Middle School scored no lower than 86% in the

meet/exceed category while the rest of the district had meet/exceed scores of 70%, 82%, 88%, and 81% respectively.

cores were equally as impressive in Reading. Beginning in 2003–2004, Jackson Middle Schools meet/exceed score was 82% compared to 63% for the other middle schools in the district. Through 2009, the scores were consistently higher as well. The distribution was as follows: 83%–66%, 90%–70%, 89%–73%, 89%–71%, and 80%–70%. If you look at the cohort grade 6 beginning in 2006–2007, students scored higher than other cohorts at district middle schools through eighth grade, but scores did not trend upwards for the three years. Reading scores for the 2006 cohort compared to the other middle schools were as follows: 87%–84%, 91%–84%, and 83%–80%.

Benchmark status for the Statewide Writing Assessments at Jackson Middle School was also consistently higher than the rest of the district. Writing shows the largest gain. In 2000, Jackson Middle School scored a 55% meet/exceed score while the other district middle schools scored a combined 83% meet/exceed. The following year, 2001, as an Artful Learning school, Jackson Middle scored a 78% meet/exceed score or a 23% increase from 2000. The rest of the district improved 83%–90%, a 7% increase, over the previous year. Writing shows the widest gap over a three year period from 2004–2005 through 2007–2008 between Jackson Middle and the rest of the district. The meet/exceed scores are as follows: 75%–50%, 58%–47%, 80%–61%, and 68%–52%. These scores show the importance of Artful Learning and the arts to writing improvement. This study shows similar scores at the Northtown Arts School compared to the rest of the district. However, it must be remembered that the Northtown Arts School is not a school that is in need of comprehensive school reform and neither is the district it is located in.

The A+ Schools Program

In an overview of key findings of the A+ Program, Nelson (2001) reported that after four years, the program had positive effects on schools, communities, teachers, and students. Through the A+ Program, the Arts were legitimized, and organizational capacity and channels of communication were increased. Schools that followed A+ also had a more focused identity. Through the Arts, schools formed new community partnerships that enhanced learning, and parents became more involved in their child's education both in the classroom and at home, with a greater understanding of the curriculum. Teachers found that the change in instructional design enhanced learning and that they could collaborate with each other and take on leadership roles, which led to a richer curriculum and more fundamental assessment. Students benefited from this program because of the enriched curriculum. The new instructional design put students on an equal footing in terms of access to the curriculum, which improved attendance and behavior. Student assessment scores also increased over the four years.

Nelson (2001) also examined evidence that the effects of the A+ program have been institutionalized after funding for the program concluded. At the local level, Nelson found that more arts teachers and courses were retained and that the arts were integrated into the core curriculum. Teachers also continued to collaborate on thematic units. At the state level, Nelson found that program funding was added to the state budget and that the North Carolina Legislature approved A+ as an approved comprehensive school reform model. Because of this, more schools joined the program.

The conclusion of Nelson's (2001) overview describes the lessons that the A+ experience holds for effective school reform. Nelson confirmed that:

- Reform does not end when the pilot does;
- Investments in human capital result in a resilient reform;
- Changes in culture and practice must be supported by structural changes, particularly in the use of time;
- Accept ambiguity and the need to balance seemingly opposing approaches;
- Sustainable educational reform requires a political strategy; and
- School reform can be comprehensive without being overwhelming.

These are lessons to look for in any major educational change and it is important to assess whether the Northtown Arts School followed any of the above lessons.

Salvador Elementary School, Napa California

Salvador Elementary is a small elementary school in Napa Valley, California that uses Artful Learning as their instructional model. Data for this school was collected from the school website as well as school-ratings.com. The demographics of the school provide helpful background information. In 2012, enrollment in the school was 147 students. Its student population was 41% ELL (English Language Learner) students, and 71% of their students were socioeconomically disadvantaged. The school also had a Gifted and Talented Education program that serves 4% of the students. Rossi (2011) explains that California uses an *Academic Performance Index* (API) as a measurement of student success. The state has set a goal of 800 for each school and district. Each school is ranked from one to 10, with 10 being the top level. Based on the scores from the spring of 2010, Salvador Elementary had an API of 758. The school was ranked as a 3 in the state, as are schools with a similar demographic. For the years 2010–2012, the school was designated an Arts Magnet School.

According to the school's website, its current mission statement states that "Salvador Elementary commits to the artistic process, creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking as the model for learning across disciplines while inspiring our diverse community with a passion for curiosity" (Salvador Elementary School, n.d., para. 1). Incorporating the arts was not a new concept for students and teachers at Salvador. Williams (2006) described students who are engaged by storytelling and using music, dance, and the various forms of the arts to teach the curriculum. A Bay Area nonprofit organization called On the Move worked with Napa Valley Schools in 2006 to create a curriculum model that connects the arts with standards-based education in the core content areas. Program Director Rachel Epley was quoted as saying, "Every child is engaged . . . Not a single child sits out, even the kids whom teachers have identified as 'difficult.' They are all there" (Williams, 2006, p. 85). This background makes Salvador a perfect fit for Artful Learning. The school community already understands that incorporating the arts into the curriculum is extremely beneficial to learning.

Wright Elementary School, Des Moines, Iowa

Wright Elementary School is located in Des Moines, Iowa and is currently in the 4th year as an Artful Learning School. Artful Learning is being used as a school improvement model here. The Public School Review (2010) website detailed the demographics at Wright. Wright Elementary School Students were 83% White, 4% Hispanic, 2% American Indian, 8% African American, and 3% Asian/Pacific Islander. Wright Students who were eligible for a free/reduced lunch was at 55% (pp. 1-3). Table 2 provides additional data regarding grades 3, 4, and 5.

Table 2

Wright Elementary School Report Card: 2009–2010

Grade	2009	State	2010	State
3				
Math	45	77	48.57	77.2
Reading	62.5	76.8	40	76.4
4				
Math	65.52	81.2	53.85	80.1
Reading	55.17	81.2	61.54	78.5
5				
Math	54.55	79.9	64.29	80.6
Reading	51.11	80.3	57.14	78.5

Note. Data source: Home facts (www.homefacts.com/schools/Iowa/Polk-County/Des-Moines).

The curriculum at Wright is set up to follow the Bernstein model. The school year is divided into trimesters, with each trimester using a different Masterwork, Significant Question, Concept and Focus Statement. For example, the 2011–2012 school year for kindergarteners was as follows: Masterworks are Paul Klee’s Castle and Sun, Norman Rockwell’s Roadblock, and a Kaleidoscope. Significant Questions were: What is change? What is risk and, what is transformation? Concepts connected to the questions were: Change, Risk and Transformation. Focus statements for each trimester were: Change is everywhere; people take risks every day; and transformation is a change

that occurs over time. Each of these units was connected to the curriculum being taught each trimester.

Midway Elementary School of the Arts, Sanford, Florida

Midway Elementary School of the Arts located in Sanford, Florida has received a 3 year Magnet School Assistance Grant. This grant is being used to fund an integrated fine arts program that uses Artful Learning as the instructional model. The Seminole County Public School District described the school as one that combines academic and fine arts instruction by giving students the opportunity to develop their individual talents at each grade level. In January 2010, a new state of the art facility was opened up to accommodate students from across the school district.

Table 3 contains the demographic data of Midway Elementary School from 2008–2010. The data show a very diverse student population that has embraced an arts-based curriculum. It also must be noted that this is a school of choice and not every student who applies will be accepted. Students had the opportunity to be mentored by local artists and in the summer of 2012, students had the opportunity to apply for “summer at the museum”.

Table 3

Midway Elementary School Report Card Data: 2008–2010

Racial/Ethnic Group	Number of Students Enrolled in October		School %		District %		State %	
	Female	Male	2009-10	2008-09	2009-10	2008-09	2009-10	2008-09
WHITE	65	46	24.3	20.4	57.1	58.2	44.4	45.3
BLACK	119	84	44.4	47.4	13.6	13.3	23.0	23.0
HISPANIC	56	34	19.7	21.4	18.5	18.2	26.2	25.0
ASIAN	4	3	1.5	0.7	4.0	3.8	2.6	2.5
AM.INDIAN	4		0.9	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
MULTIRACIAL	27	15	9.2	9.2	6.5	6.2	3.4	3.9
DISABLED	23	38	13.3	15.8	13.4	13.4	14.1	14.3
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	217	147	79.6	82.5	39.2	34.4	53.5	49.6
ELL	15	13	6.1	7.3	5.3	5.3	11.6	11.8
MIGRANT							0.5	0.5
FEMALE	275		60.2	55.2	48.7	48.7	48.7	48.7
MALE		182	39.8	44.8	51.3	51.3	51.3	51.3
TOTAL	457		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note. Data source: Florida Department of Education (<http://doeweb-prd.doe.state.fl.us>)

The Arts and Common Core

With the new Common Core Standards being used in most of the United States in 2013-14, many people were unsure where the arts will fit. Robelen (2012) answered some of these questions. Focusing on using close readings is one answer. The idea

behind close readings is to read a text and then describe the main idea using supporting evidence. This is very similar to what students do when studying the visual arts. Susan M. Riley, a curriculum specialist, remarked that there "are a lot of natural connections . . . I see the common core as a great platform for the arts to really rise and share their importance in the educational fabric of a school" (para. 5). Robelen gives several examples of how the arts can benefit any Common Core lesson. For example, the New York City Public Schools are using the arts as the basis for an Underground Railroad unit using dance and a high school unit for theatre that asks students to write an original monologue (para. 7). Robelen also described a partnership between ArtsConnection, a nonprofit organization that is working with the district to create interdisciplinary units that connect theatre and dance with the new Common Core English/Language Arts standards (para. 9). These are all positive steps towards incorporating the arts into the new educational framework that teachers will need to follow.

Another example from New York regarding the arts benefitting the Common core comes from the Genesee Community Charter School in Rochester. This is a school that has been using arts integration in their curriculum prior to Common Core. Robelen (2012) quoted Principal Lisa Wing: "Using art as text, we're teaching children to look at art or movement or listen to music and derive meaning from it," whether a "famous painting or through watching 'Swan Lake' or singing Erie Canal [folk] songs." The school also looks at "using the arts as a vehicle of expression, the communication side of the common core, and knowing how to create artwork that creates a message and that conveys details" (para. 33).. These are skills students will be required to master if they are going to be

successful learning Common Core Standards and meeting the standards with the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) examination.

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) (2014) website has several great resources to assist teachers and administrators in connecting the arts to Common Core Standards. "AEP is providing this (ever-growing) selection of resources to help AEP Partner Organizations, arts educators, school leaders, and policymakers develop a better understanding of the Common Core and what the movement means for the arts" (Arts Education Partnership, 2014, Common Core and the Arts, para. 1). One of the sections that the AEP website provides is a link to a curriculum map created by the Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project. Here we have a direct link to the Common Core and the Arts. In the introduction to the curriculum map, Common Core (2014) stated,

Because Common Core promotes the importance of all students studying the arts, we have highlighted places where ELA instruction could be enhanced by connecting a genre or particular text, or a theme of a unit, to works of art, music, or film. (p. 1)

What follows is a K–12 suggested unit of study that incorporates the arts with the English Language Arts (ELA) standards.

This document is the perfect vehicle for embedding not only arts-based strategies but core content into the ELA curriculum. Several suggestions are made in the document. ELA teachers who are comfortable with embedding the arts into their curriculum should do so, and team teaching with an art or music teacher should be pursued. If ELA teachers are not comfortable teaching arts-based strategies, include art and music teachers in the planning process so they can parallel teach the same content with the arts focus.

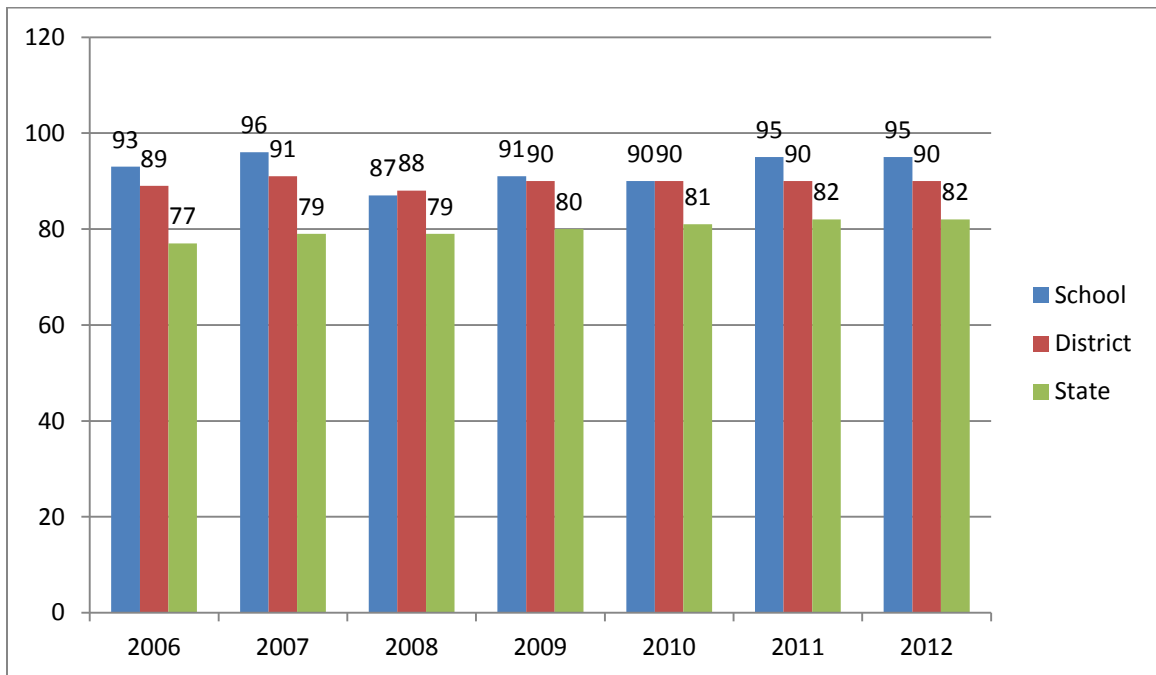
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to investigate the implementation of the Bernstein Artful Learning School Reform Model in one suburban elementary school. I studied Northtown, an elementary school that uses the Bernstein Model as the basis for learning at the K–5 level. The demographic breakdown of this school in 2013 was 53% White, 19% Black, 21% Hispanic, and 6.5% other. Table 4 shows the percentage of students meeting state standards from 2006–2013 for this school:

Table 4

Northtown Elementary School State Test Scores: 2006–2013



Note. Data source: Illinois Interactive Report Card (<http://iirc.niu.edu/>)

This school was selected for this study for several reasons. First, it is in a district that has been using Artful Learning since the 1995–1996 school year. Second, this elementary school was originally created as a Bernstein School. Teachers were trained in Artful Learning and were chosen based on their knowledge and commitment to using the Bernstein Method.

In this chapter, I will explain what my methodology is and how I collected and analyzed data. I'll also discuss limitations and ethical issues related to this research.

Research Questions

The research attempted to answer the primary question: How can arts-based strategies be used to strengthen the curriculum? Included in the research are the following related questions that flow from the primary question that guided this study:

- How does the district or building leadership play a part in the success of the program?
- How might various components of Artful Learning improve the school and the curriculum?
- How might the Artful Learning model be modified to be more effective given the changing landscape of education
- What have been the challenges to implementing a program that is as detailed as Artful Learning?
- How might art be a core part of the curriculum, of school improvement, and a central piece to how students learn?

Case Study Approach

Yin (2004) described a case study as a study that includes a research question which addresses *how* or *why*. The observer has no control over the events being observed and the study is done in *real-life* context. Yin also maintained that the phenomenon and the situation under study should not be evident. This is the case with the particular school being studied. While this Bernstein School has been in existence for a few years, there is no explanation as to why this curriculum design process is working for them.

Flick (2009) contended that the subjectivity of the researcher and of those being studied becomes part of the research process. "Researchers' reflections on their actions and observations in the field, their impressions, irritations, feelings, and, so on, become data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation" (p. 16). The researcher for this study has a history with the Artful Learning program. Creswell (1998) and Stake (1995) pointed out that the type of case study being done for this research is called an intrinsic case study because the researcher will be evaluating the Artful Learning program and studying administrative and teacher responses to the program.

The Site

The site of the study is the Northtown Arts K–5 Elementary School in northern, Illinois that was created as a Bernstein School. According to the Illinois Interactive Report Card (iirc.niu.edu), the demographics at the Northtown Arts School as of 2012, are as follows: 63.3% White, 1.2% Black, 7.8% Hispanic, 23.3% Asian, and 4.4% Multiracial. In 2012, the educational environments at the Northtown Arts School showed 7.8% of its students were considered Limited English Proficient (LEP), 14.3% had Individual Education Plans (IEP), and 9.6% of their students were low income. This

school also had 96%, almost 100%, parent involvement and a 96% attendance rate. In 2012, there were a total of 441 students enrolled and the average class size was 22.

The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of the school since 2006, shows the Northtown Arts School met or exceeded the standards on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) each year in both reading and math. The Northtown Arts School students surpassed the NCLB threshold each year from 2006–2011 by a significant margin.

This is a trend that is on track to continue at the Northtown Arts School even as No Child Left Behind reaches the 100% threshold by 2014. However, should the current requirements for meet/exceed still be in effect by 2014, it is highly unlikely that any school will reach the 100% threshold. At the time of this research, an update of the NCLB law was being discussed by President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

Data Collection

Data was collected in three ways: individual interviews, group interviews, surveys, and document analysis.

Document Analysis

Historical and academic data on the history of Artful Learning were collected from the Illinois Interactive Report Card website. This data were compared with research from the Leonard Bernstein Center for Learning. This documentary evidence was supplemented and compared with other documents from the school which included data such as test scores, curriculum guides, school mission statement, and policies. Additional

data were collected from the state department of education as well as from the school itself.

Survey

For this study, I used a survey (see Appendix B) to determine the opinions of teachers regarding the Artful Learning Model. The survey was also used as a vehicle to determine who would be interested in a more in-depth group interview.

These survey questions were designed to get the teachers' perspectives on whether and to what degree using Artful Learning as an instructional model influenced their teaching and shaped their curriculum. Also, my aim was to determine which strategies were being used in class to improve learning for students of varying ability levels

Interviews

Rubin's (1995) conception of interviewing posited the view that interviewing is about learning how different cultures think about their viewpoints, problems and solutions, and how their actions are similar or different from our own. Rubin believed the way we interview depends on what we want to know. Interviewing is a process we use to find out how others view situations. For the purpose of this research project, interviewing was a crucial piece of the puzzle.

Individual Interviews

The superintendent, who was the lead Bernstein trainer, and the principal were interviewed together for one hour. Because both of these people were involved in the process of selecting the Bernstein Model and its implementation from the beginning, they

had a unique perspective. Questions were directed toward the principal's view of how the Bernstein Model has affected the school in multiple ways.

Teachers were interviewed based on their responses to a teacher survey (see Appendix C) that related to this study. Many of the teachers in this building had been a part of the Bernstein Model for several years, and new teachers are required to attend training in the summer before they start their new jobs. Their experiences were an integral part of this study. Prior to a group interview, I interviewed each teacher separately and asked specific questions that were intended to draw out themes I could explore deeper in the focus group session. Questions focused on the teaching and learning process, both in the classroom with students and as part of professional development.

Group Interviews

In the process, I also conducted a group interview with administrators and a group interview with teachers, which were 1 hour in length per team (see Appendix A). The teacher group interviews included teachers who gave their consent based on a question from the survey they had been asked to complete. The group interview moved deeper into themes that were uncovered in the teacher survey and the individual interviews. This method allowed participants to reflect aloud while the researcher facilitated the discussion. By allowing participants to seek deep meaning together, the researcher was able to ask deepening questions to elicit more in-depth responses that get at the participants' interpretations of the questions being asked. This is not unlike the Bernstein Method. My intent was to learn and understand how Artful Learning affected each teacher's instructional methods and teaching philosophy.

This triangulated approach gave me better overall answers to the research questions. Another reason for this approach was that “corrections by the group concerning views that are not correct, not socially shared, or extreme are available as means for validating statements and views. The group becomes a tool for reconstructing individual opinions more appropriately” (Flick, 2009, p. 197). Stake (1995) believed that a researcher needs to have an open and organized mind and that interview questions should be prepared ahead of time. This will prevent the researcher from going off task. In discussing the interview process, Gillham (2000) explained that the questions asked should be essential to the research. They should also be open ended so that the answer the researcher receives is open. Gillham believed that this process will lead the researcher towards discovery. The interviews were transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the interviews, surveys, and documentation were coded to aid in searching for essential themes. According to Boyatzis (1998):

The steps in developing a code inductively using thematic analysis require, in most cases, criterion referenced, or anchored, material. The material to be coded must represent a subsample of two or more specific samples used in the research (p.41).

The data collected for this research was analyzed by comparing survey responses with small group discussion and themes that emerged from both. The researcher has a background in Artful Learning training, so responses to those questions were compared with that knowledge. All data was also compared to similar sites.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This study was conducted to answer the primary research question “How can arts-based strategies be used to strengthen the curriculum?” This was done by surveying and interviewing teachers and administrators at a public school designated as a Leonard Bernstein Artful Learning School.

Data were collected in three ways. First, teachers were asked to answer a ten-question survey. Nineteen out of 25 teachers responded to the survey. Second, the final question of the survey asked the teachers if they would like to take part in individual interviews, and a follow-up group interview. Five teachers agreed to be interviewed individually and as a group. Data gathered during the individual interviews and small group session were recorded and transcribed. Each of the individual interviews and the group interview were transcribed and coded for patterns and themes. Responses to both the individual interviews and the group interview will be discussed in this chapter.

The first section of this chapter is an analysis of the survey data. The responses acted as a guide to create questions for the individual teacher interviews. Emerging themes from the individual interviews led to further probing questions that led to questions for the group interview. Following the findings from the survey, four themes that emerged from the qualitative interview data will be presented.

Teacher Survey

A survey was designed to determine how teachers felt about Artful Learning and if they used any of the components in their classrooms (see Appendix B). As can be seen in Table 5, of the 19 teachers who responded to the survey, 52.6% of the respondents

have been teaching Artful learning for five years or more, and 47.3% have been teaching Artful Learning for five years or less.

Table 5

Years Teaching Artful Learning

Question 1: How many years have you been teaching Artful Learning?

Teaching Years	Percentage
10 or more	26.3%
5-10 years	26.3 %
5 years or less	31.6%
This is my first year	15.8%

The number of teachers who have been teaching five years or less is slightly higher at 31.6 % than any other category. Those teachers who have been teaching between five and 10 years make up the core group of veteran Bernstein teachers. These are the teachers who make up the Bernstein Leadership Team, almost half the Northtown staff.

The second question deals with whether or not teachers feel that using art in the classroom is a central piece of the learning process. Being an arts-based school, I was curious to know how important the teachers felt art was to the learning process. As can be seen in Table 6, every teacher who responded to the survey believes art has a place in the learning process.

Table 6

Centrality of Art to the Learning Process

Question 2: To what degree do you feel art is central to the learning process?

Statement	Percentage
Very important	47.4%
Important	15.4%
Somewhat important	36.8%
Not important	0%

Over half of the teachers, 47.4% *very important* and 15.4 % *important*, believe that using art in the classroom is central to the learning process. However, a significant percentage of teachers, 36.8%, only believe that art is *somewhat important* to the learning process. This percentage could be representative of teachers who do not teach one of the core subject areas. Data from individual interviews and group discussion show that teachers who teach outside of the core areas, as well as those who teach 5th grade, do not always use Artful Learning strategies in their teaching. What these numbers tell me is that even though Artful Learning may not be a central focus for all teachers, there are many who still use arts-based strategies as part of their instructional design. Moreover, 0% of the teachers believe that art is *not important* to the learning process. This finding leaves the door open for continued inclusion of arts-based strategies in the curriculum and instruction.

The third question (see Table 7) of the survey explores teaching style. I wanted to determine how much learning about and using the Bernstein Model influenced the way the Northtown teachers taught.

Table 7

Influence of Bernstein Model on Teaching

Question 3: How has the Bernstein Model influenced your teaching style?

Statement	Percentage
Significantly	26.3%
Somewhat	42.1%
Only a little	26.3%
Not at all	5.3%

The responses to this question are interesting in that 42.1% of the teachers believe that the Bernstein model only *somewhat* influenced their teaching style. This finding mirrors the question 2 finding that 36.8% of teachers believe that art is *somewhat important* to the learning process. I believe there are two reasons for this. First, while many of these teachers came to Northtown Arts School with a willingness and passion to use arts-based strategies, as the years have gone by, fewer and fewer of these teachers and new hires are using Bernstein *all day every day*. Second, because of new state and federal mandates in standardized testing and new teaching standards, teachers are having trouble finding ways and time to use arts-based strategies. This tension is something that the Central Office administrators and the building principal will have to address in the

near future if they want to continue to have the arts be central to teaching and learning at Northtown.

On the other hand, some of the teachers who thought that the Bernstein model only *somewhat* influenced their teaching style may be underestimating the pervasive influence of the model on the entire teaching culture of the school. One teacher remarked in the survey response box, “I was already doing a lot without realizing it, otherwise I would say significantly.” This was a common observation with many teachers during the individual and group interviews. Throughout the interview process, teachers stated that art strategies have always been a part of their teaching. Being a teacher at Northtown has always meant using arts-based strategies in the classroom. Even those who taught “specials,” like physical education and library skills or other non-core classes, used the Bernstein Model when a whole school Bernstein Unit was taking place.

The 31.6% of teachers who said that Bernstein influenced their teaching style *only a little or not at all*, confirmed my suspicion that not all teachers were using Artful Learning all the time. Teachers who responded to this question may be those who teach “specials” and do not often use Artful Learning, or who came to Northtown with their own arts-based teaching style.

Because I knew there was a possibility that not every teacher was using Artful Learning all the time, I wanted to find out how often they use the Artful Learning components (Experience, Inquire, Create and Reflect) in their classroom. The responses shown in Table 8 have the potential to turn this study in a completely different direction.

Table 8

Frequency of Utilizing Artful Learning Strategies

Question 4: How often do you use Artful Learning strategies in your classroom?

Statement	Percentage
Every day	26.3%
Only for certain units	26.3%
Occasionally	42.1%
Not at all	5.3%

These responses are not surprising. While 42.1% of the teachers said they *occasionally* use Artful Learning strategies in the classroom, many said they use them only when the whole school is doing a Bernstein Unit. Only 26.3% said they use all the components of the model (Experience, Inquire, Reflect and Create) in their everyday instruction and to plan Artful Learning based units. Another group, 26.3%, said they used Artful Learning strategies for language arts and social studies, but not math and science. It appears that only a quarter of the Northtown teachers are comfortable using Artful Learning strategies with every subject, whereas another quarter are only comfortable using it as a reading and language strategy used primarily to develop critical thinking skills.

One teacher added in the response box, “I use many Bernstein strategies throughout the week,” and another added, “I use Bernstein strategies on a weekly basis but only my science and social studies units are ‘Bernsteined.’” When a teacher uses the term *Bernsteined* to describe their lessons, it means they are using one or more of the

Artful Learning sequences (Experience, Inquire, Create, Reflect) as part of their instruction. For example, within the Unit, students might *experience* a Masterwork relating to the concept being explored. Then the teacher would use deepening questions (inquiry) to help students better understand the concept. The creation component of the Unit can be arts-based through drama, painting, collage, music or poetry. Journal reflection doubles as an assessment tool.

If only 26.3% of teachers always use the full Bernstein model for their teaching, how did the other teachers use it? To answer this question, I asked the teachers to rank the Artful Learning component they use the most in their classroom.

Table 9

Most Used Artful Learning Sequence

Question 5: Rank the Artful Learning sequence that you use most.

Sequence	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4
Experience	42.1%	15.8%	36.8%	5.3%
Inquire	10.5%	31.6%	31.6%	26.3%
Create	31.6%	31.6%	15.8%	21.4%
Reflect	15.8%	21.1%	15.8%	47.4%

The responses in Table 9 tell a story about where teachers are in the process of using Artful Learning. I believe that *Experience* receives the highest ranking, 42.1%, as the most used because it is the focus of every Unit. The explanation of the complete Artful Learning process is provided in chapter one. Typically, at the start of a Bernstein Unit, students are introduced to a Masterwork, and then they are allowed to experience it

in several different ways. When teachers Bernstein a unit, this means they use a specific sequence for students to follow. A possible reason why 36.8% of the teachers indicated a Rank 3 for *Experience* could be that they only use it when there is a school or grade level Artful Learning Unit going on. In any case, the Experience component of the model is clearly the most used by teachers at every grade level.

The rankings for *Inquiry* are interesting in that only 10.5% of respondents feel it is important enough to give it a Rank 1. This response took me by surprise. Northtown Arts Elementary School promotes itself as using the Artful Learning Model to introduce inquiry and using the arts as a means of expression for learning and instruction at every level. Artful Learning helps students to learn using inquiry-based strategies. Even though a combined 63% of the respondents indicated a Rank 2 and Rank 3 for *Inquiry*, based on the schools assertion of what it claims to do, this falls short of its original hopes and focus of the curriculum, as exemplified by the 10.5% of teachers who indicated a Rank 1 for inquiry.

Related to the low rating given to inquiry is that 47.4% of respondents ranked *Reflection* as the least used part of the Bernstein sequence. Teachers seem not to be making the connection between Inquiry and Reflect. They might be placing more importance on introducing the unit rather than following the sequence to its completion using the processes of inquiry and reflection. This might explain why teachers are using pieces of the model rather than all of it.

The next question asked teachers if using the Bernstein Model made them a more effective teacher.

Table 10

Bernstein Model and Teacher Effectiveness

Question 6: Do you agree with the statement: Using the Bernstein Model has made me a more effective teacher?

Completely agree	42.1%
Somewhat agree	47.4%
Somewhat disagree	5.3%
Disagree	5.3%
Completely disagree	0.0%

The data in Table 10 are positive indications for the continued use of arts-based strategies at Northtown. Seventeen out of 19 teachers *completely* or *somewhat* agree that using the Bernstein model has made them a more effective teacher. These teachers have been at Northtown Arts Elementary for at least five years and have been trained in Artful Learning to varying degrees. Some are Bernstein teachers and as such, are part of the Bernstein Leadership team. The response to this question bodes well for arts-based instruction at Northtown. However, a challenge will be to provide professional development in Bernstein strategies, especially for newly hired teachers who will replace the core of Bernstein teachers as they retire.

The next two questions focus on student learning. I first asked the teachers if using Artful Learning has improved student engagement in their classroom.

Table 11

Artful Learning and Improved Student Engagement

Question 7: Using Artful Learning has improved student engagement in my classroom.

Significantly	36.8%
Somewhat	42.1%
Only a little	15.8%
Not at all	5.3%

Table 11 shows a combined 78.9% of the respondents felt that using Artful Learning improved student engagement in their classroom *significantly* or *somewhat*. This shows that the majority of teachers at Northtown Arts believe arts-based strategies improve student engagement. In follow-up discussions with teachers in both individual and group interviews, this perception was reaffirmed, especially for certain subject areas. Teachers who were strong in social studies and language arts used Artful Learning to engage students more often than those teaching other academic areas. This supports what Jenson (2001), Booth (2001), and Eisner (1999) say about the role of the arts in student engagement. Most Northtown teachers believe that using the arts at any level improves students' ability to think and be engaged in the learning process. These data provide another positive indicator for keeping arts-based strategies at the center of the Northtown curriculum.

The second question that relates to student learning focuses on, asking teachers to rank four statements regarding teaching and learning in order of importance.

Table 12

Ranking of Statements Regarding Teaching and Learning

Question 8: Rank the statements in order of importance.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Artful Learning Motivates students to learn	57.9%	21.1%	15.8%	5.3%
Artful Learning allows for differentiated instruction	10.5%	10.5%	36.8%	42.1%
Artful Learning facilitates critical thinking	15.8%	36.8%	26.3%	21.1%
Artful Learning makes learning more fun for teacher and student	15.8%	31.6%	21.6%	31.6%

Table 12 shows that more than half the respondents (57.9%) believe that Artful Learning motivates students to learn, while 42.1% feel that it is not a good tool for differentiating. According to the Leonard Bernstein (2008) website, “the arts-based skills and strategies magnify student engagement and demonstrably improve cognition, as we as provide differentiation to meet the needs of all learners” (Artful Learning Model, para.2). This connection between motivation and differentiation seems not to hold for teachers at Northtown. Almost 37% responded that Artful Learning facilitates critical thinking skills. However, this is in direct contrast to question 5 where 10.5% of the teachers placed Inquiry on the low end of the ranking system. Teachers may be separating the two based on inquiry being a sequence of the Artful Learning process, but not relating it to *critical thinking*. Bridging the disconnect here could help those teachers

who are not using all or most of the Artful Learning strategies to see that inquiry and critical thinking are the same thing.

Artful Learning is a way to keep arts-based strategies in the forefront of curriculum and instructional design. More work might still need to be done to help new teachers see that arts-based instruction can be something more than a motivating enticement to learn, but rather an essential for deep learning to take root. For this to happen, Artful Learning needs to be at the core of Northtown's professional development plan.

Summary of Survey Findings

Below is a summary of survey findings from both the individual interviews and small group discussion.

- The majority of teachers at Northtown Arts believe that arts are central to the learning process.
- Using the Bernstein Model has influenced teachers teaching style and that it has made them more effective as teachers.
- Artful Learning has improved student engagement and motivates them to learn.
- While Artful Learning as a whole is not used all the time by every teacher, arts-based strategies are commonly used at various times during the day.

The next section of this chapter will be a discussion of four themes that emerged from the individual interviews and small group discussion.

Qualitative Themes

The four themes that emerged from the interview data are:

- Artful Learning promotes critical thinking within an enriched curriculum.
- Artful Learning promotes high-level teaching and learning through professional development.
- Artful Learning enhances both teacher and student reflection.
- Artful Learning is preparing teachers and students for the Common Core.

Theme 1: Artful Learning Promotes Critical Thinking Within a Rich Curriculum

This theme was a common thread throughout the interview process. I heard this during individual interviews with the very first question. The following teacher is a 1st grade teacher who has been teaching Artful Learning since the program was first piloted at Northtown Arts Elementary. She remarked on how her 1st graders use critical thinking skills at such a young age. “Having a 6- or 7-year-old do that kind of thinking (critical) is extraordinary. Thinking and learning become second nature. Also, vocabulary is extraordinarily rich because of the things we are teaching.”

Later on in the group interview, I asked this same teacher to expand on her comment. The following discussion revealed that most participants believed that Artful Learning was instrumental in providing teachers with the tools to create a more enriched curriculum.

Researcher: A lot of you mentioned rich curriculum. You said that it made the curriculum rich. It made it deeper. Talk a little bit about why the curriculum is made more rich because of Bernstein.

Teacher 1: Artful Learning actually has you go deeper because you're doing inquiries and the inquiries is a work in and of itself and deepens the understanding of your topic. If you're just talking about the history of Illinois, you go deeper with that by giving the kids inquiry centers on certain parts and certain topics so they can learn more and I think that makes it richer.

Teacher 2: I agree with her, but also the essential question helps the students really do higher-level thinking which makes them go deeper into the curriculum. I

think that those questions that we pose and that they have to reflect them throughout the unit really makes them do more higher thinking. It's not just quick knowledge based comprehension questions. They have to really think and makes them dig deeper into the unit and the curriculum that we're presenting them.

Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2001) stated that “learning is never finished.

Students revisit ideas again and again in different media and from different perspectives.

They spiral back to ideas that compel them each time in a new way with new

information” (p. 91). The previous exchange among the teachers at Northtown shows

how invested they are in ensuring that students receive a well-rounded rigorous

curriculum. It also shows how using arts-based strategies such as an Inquiry Center can

deepen students understanding and improve critical thinking. During the individual

interviews, one teacher stated that “art heightens engagement and improves student

learning.” The same teacher also explained that students learn more because art is a

value to them. She was talking about how art becomes something students can use as

part of the learning process. Using art becomes a learning pattern for them. Students

value art because of this helps make them a well-rounded student. Another teacher

commented, “Because art is tied to the multiple intelligences, it connects students to their

interests.” When learning is connected to students’ interests, rich curriculum is the result.

Teachers also discussed the link between a rich curriculum and making connections and

integrating subject areas. One teacher noted, “I think making any type of connection is

part of learning and if they don't make the connections, if nothing goes together then

they're really learning because they're not taking all the different aspects and bringing

them together.” The teachers continued talking about student engagement in terms of

making connections to learning and the importance of integrating the curriculum using

Artful Learning.

- Researcher: Next, everyone talked about making connections. How Bernstein, the sequence itself allows you to make connections. Talk a little bit about how that connects with Art for Learning and helps in your daily teaching.
- Teacher 1: I think making any type of connection is part of learning and if they don't make the connections, if nothing goes together, then they really aren't ... they aren't learning because they're not taking all the different aspects and bringing them together. Again, that to me is just like a natural thing which is part of Artful Learning to also actually be part of your everyday teaching.
- Teacher 2: I would add that that really goes with integrating curriculum. That although you can make connections within that one topic, but it just lends itself to what you're working on.
- Teacher 3: I would piggyback that and say when you're integrating the curriculum then the kids their knowledge is just more clear of what you're teaching because everything is a "ah-ha" moment, oh we learned that in reading or we learned that in social studies. Their whole day just flows a lot smoother. The connections in Bernstein allows the integration of the curriculum which allows the students to learn.
- Researcher: Am I hearing that there's a connection between making connections and integrating the curriculum then?
- Teacher 3: Definitely.

The five teachers who took part in the individual interviews and group discussion also believed that using Artful Learning has made them "pioneers." They felt that because the curriculum they teach is so rich, their school is way ahead of others who may need to rewrite curriculum to meet Common Core standards. Each teacher was extremely comfortable with how deep the Artful Learning curriculum can get. The teachers talked about how learning, using an integrated curriculum, improved the higher level learning of their students.

Teachers who I spoke with fully embrace this. They see connections in everything they do. Even when they are not teaching a full Bernstein Unit, they are using the strategies in every class throughout the year whenever possible. Just over half of the

teachers, 52%, who responded to the survey believed that Artful Learning facilitates critical thinking. All teachers who took part in the group discussion ranked this statement as important. The discussion regarding critical thinking was directly linked to making connections and integrated curriculum.

Teacher 1: I would add that that really goes with integrating curriculum. That although you can make connections within that one topic, but it just lends itself to making connections all throughout the day in each of your subject areas that you're working on.

Teacher 2: I would piggyback that and say when you're integrating the curriculum then the kids their just knowledge is more clear of what you're teaching because everything is a "ah-ha" moment, oh we learned that in reading or we learned them in social studies. Their whole day just flows a lot smoother. The connections in Bernstein allows the integration of the curriculum which allows the students to learn.

Researcher: Am I hearing that there's a connection between making connections and integrating the curriculum then?

Teacher 3: Definitely.

Researcher: Everybody concurs. It's all rolled up into one big integrated curriculum, can I say that is also a theme? That's what Bernstein helps you do in the classroom?

Teacher 1: I was going to use the word foundational. Giving it a basis and a foundation within a foundation to keep everything in place instead of in all that isolation and not having anywhere to ground yourself. The students can really have a solid foundation in order [to] have a understanding of what they're learning and why they're learning these things along the way.

Burnafor et al (2001) believed that the arts create a synergy between content areas because they promote inquiry. Artful Learning is built around this belief. "Integration is about engaging a rich array of skills and learning strategies so that the understandings of each content area is enriched and illuminated by the presence of other content areas" (p.10).

The 1st grade teachers continued to talk about the Picasso Masterwork and the experience they all had to describe how critical thinking takes place using the Bernstein Sequences (Experience, Inquire, Create, and Reflect).

When they (1st graders) experienced it, it was much different than us showing them the picture of it. Things they came back with pictures, they came back and said how if they stood on one side it looked like this, if I stood on another side, if I stood underneath it, all the different ways of looking at it. To me that was showing growth in their critical thinking.

These teachers were very vocal about what their 1st graders can do. They constantly mentioned how critical thinking had become second nature to them. They have become more inquisitive and ask many questions. During the individual interviews, responses to questions relating to this theme were: "Bernstein deepens and strengthens understanding"; "Bernstein improves the curriculum because it made kids want to learn more about the artist, look at art a different way and appreciate it in a different way." This not only improves critical thinking skills but also improves student's ability to reflect on things they had no prior knowledge of before the experience.

As an example, during the 2010–2011 school year, Northtown School chose “Perspective” as their Concept and the Unnamed Picasso sculpture in front of Daley Plaza in Chicago as their Masterwork. The Significant Question students had to answer was “Do people ever change who they are and what they believe?” The teachers could not stop talking about this experience. Because the sculpture was close to home, the school “invited” families to go downtown at their leisure and make a stop at the sculpture. Parents and students took pictures at different angles; they climbed on it and talked about what they experienced. Once back in school, the students compared what they saw in person versus the picture they viewed in school. They used the experience of

seeing the sculpture in person as a way to enrich what was already being taught, and they added another level of understanding to the concept. This in turn helped each student answer the significant question based on prior knowledge they had before the Unit was taught and the new material they learned both in class and from the family field trip.

Many Researchers and education professionals such as Burnaford et al. (2001), Jenson (2001), and Olson and Smith (2000) have asserted that using arts-based strategies can improve students' critical thinking skills. Through the survey and interview process, I heard from teachers on several occasions how using the Artful Learning process improves students' critical thinking skills. According to Olson and Smith (2000), "Critical thinking denotes disciplined processes of analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating information resulting from observation, reasoning, or reflection based upon intellectual values that apply to all areas of human experience" (p.61).

When I interviewed the former principal, she referred several times to how Artful Learning had a big influence on student's critical thinking. She explained:

It's also not only about Artful Learning but about the philosophy that the Superintendent brought in. . . that you're not bound to a textbook. I always remember looking at other school districts Visions and philosophies "to create critical thinking children that will work in an ever changing world." And, I'm like, that's what Artful Learning does for kids. It makes you question, it makes you inquire about things, because when we do some of the work with kids, on asking why. When you are just experiencing a Masterwork, it was really interesting this year. I have documents that go. . . the questions that kids asked about the Masterwork and it's very interesting to see the progression and the depth of what kinds of questions they're asking later on.

Here, the principal mentions how one piece of the Artful Learning sequence (Inquiry) has been instrumental in pushing students to ask more questions about a Masterwork or any other instructional tool. The work students have been doing with Inquiry has had a direct effect on how students answer questions for every subject area.

In summary, teachers felt that Bernstein has been instrumental in helping them create a rich curriculum that in turn pushed students to dig deeper in all subject areas. Using the arts based strategies enabled teachers and students to shift perspectives with the example of the unnamed Picasso Sculpture Experience Center. Because students were asking more questions about the concept and the sculpture, and teachers were able to explore more with their students, and students began to ask deeper questions through the use of arts-based strategies. This was instrumental in improving students' critical thinking skills. However, at least two of the teachers believed that without Bernstein as the lens, art would not translate into the core subject areas. As of now, we will not know the answer to this because Bernstein will be the lens for the foreseeable future.

Theme 2: Artful Learning Promotes High-level Teaching and Learning Through Professional Development

In a group interview with the superintendent, principal and lead Bernstein trainer, I asked the question “How has this supported teachers’ lifelong learning? The principal responded in the following way:

I always remember looking at other school district’s Visions and philosophies “to create critical thinking children that will work in an ever-changing world.” And I’m like, that’s what Artful Learning does for kids. It makes you question; it makes you inquire about things, because when we do some of the work with kids, on asking why. When you are just experiencing a Masterwork, it was really interesting this year. I have documents that go. . . the questions that kids asked about the Masterwork and it’s very interesting to see the progression and the depth of what kinds of questions they’re asking later on..

As you can see from the response above, the principal focuses on Artful Learning and how it relates to critical thinking in students. Teachers got so into learning the process that when it came time to teach it, the enthusiasm for teaching the units began to diminish. Even so, teachers continued to want to learn how to make Artful Learning

more effective for student learning. They just needed to find a way to do this. The superintendent then remarked upon the resourcefulness of teachers:

I think they are resourceful. We do not give them a blank check or a bottomless pit of money, but if they are motivated to look for ways to improve or enhance their units, I mean they are constantly looking at not only workshops and things like that, but other resources and materials that would supplement and support a unit. It's kind of this continuous improvement. How can we make this better?

The whole Reflection piece and the aspects of learning get applied to teachers through that kind of job-embedded teacher's development. When they reflect on it and ask, how can I make this better? What can we do differently once we get feedback or reaction? From the students or maybe you didn't get the results you wanted. They are looking for ways to make it better.

While the teachers began to teach with more depth, the principal observed that the constant planning and deep instruction began to burn out teachers.

I think that's what you see with teachers; it's hard because one of the reasons we stopped doing Inquiry Days this year is really we kind of burned out our Bernstein team and we needed to take a break. We wanted to do dance. We haven't brought anybody in for a long time to do that. Teachers, when you sit down and talk, you can talk for three hours. I mean even just sitting here talking about it now has energized me. It's like; I need to find another way I can do this.

Thus embracing Artful Learning had both positive and negative effects. The instruction became more in depth and students began to understand the concepts being taught.

Teachers stayed after school to plan lessons and were energized to teach in this manner, which in turn energized students and their parents to take part in any Artful Learning activity. However, over time, this intensity burned teachers out, and for some it turned them off. While the teachers understood the value of teaching using Artful Learning, they were having trouble doing so with all of the other duties they had been asked to perform.

It was clear that professional development in Artful Learning had been supported by both district and building administrators. Artful Learning training and best practice teaching were very apparent. The next theme deals with reflective practice.

Theme 3: Artful Learning Enhances Both Teacher and Student Reflection

One of the reasons Artful Learning has been successful with the teachers who have been teaching it for a while is the constant professional development and cooperation amongst teachers to teach each other. Schön (1983) defined reflective practice as "the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning " (p. 102). Teachers at this school are always learning. They discuss lessons and strategies with each other and share successes and failures. Let us look at the exchange from the small group discussion in regard to reflective practice.

Teacher 1: I think anytime you reflect on whatever you do is a positive thing. That's again, we talked about talked about a skill, a lifelong skill, well that skill of reflecting is something that you're going to need and it's nice that we foster it starting in the early grades in order to know how to express yourself in writing.

Researcher: Has Bernstein helped you with reflective practice? Just the process of going through writing inquiry centers and writing the units.

Teacher 1: Yeah.

Teacher 2: Writing the units, yeah I think that has helped a lot.

Researcher: In what ways?

Teacher 3: As you're writing the units you're trying to see that and what's your goal by the end of the unit and then you have to reflect upon how you're going to get to that unit or get to that goal and what kind of inquiry centers are you going to use. I think just writing units in general and with Bernstein we've been forced to write our units. When you're writing units in general you're doing a lot more reflecting of your own teaching and how you can tweak it for the following year. What's working, what's not. Just making your units better.

Teacher 4: What kind of questioning can you use to do that? Look at those essential questions, those significant questions, are you really asking the right things?

Teacher 5: In order for the children to be able to reflect.

As can be seen from this exchange, these teachers love to reflect on the units they are creating. Each team of teachers feeds off each other and it appears that there is quite a bit of constructive criticism going on. To me, this is the meat of reflective practice. Let us continue looking at the rest of the discussion where the teachers talk about how creating high-level essential questions forces teachers to bounce ideas off of each other.

Teacher 1: Those (questions) take a long time, I think, for a teacher to come up with those questions. You do a lot of, spend a lot of time coming up with your essential question or your reflection piece because you're questioning yourself, and is that really the best one?

Researcher: Do you find that you have more, or deeper, conversations among faculty members or at least within grade level or across grade level because of Bernstein?

Teacher 1: I guess it kind of forces you to do more conversing with other teachers when you're creating a unit because you're all sitting there brainstorming, coming up with questions, pondering which is the best one. I think that is a little bit, takes a more deeper level of questioning I guess.

Teacher 2: I think to see them questioning your teaching. How did I do? Could I have gone further? Should I have done this? I have seen us do that a lot.

Teacher 3: All the time you look at what you taught. What's wrong? How come we didn't get the outcome we were looking for? Did we not ask the right questions? Was there too much yes and no and not enough open-ended things for them to do the thinking?

Teacher 4: Which is all work in progress for all of us I think. To make sure the questioning is deep and critical. I think that's hard to do.

As this exchange shows, the Bernstein teachers constantly reflect on their practice. When writing units they are looking at what the end product is. Here they are using the Wiggins and McTighe (1998) strategy of “beginning with the end in mind.”

When writing Artful Learning Units, teachers first consider what they want the outcome to be. They then look at what assessments should be built. They then fill in the content so that students can gain an enduring understanding from the concept, Masterwork, and broad significant question. For this process to work seamlessly, teachers have to determine which questions will elicit the deepest responses from students and which questions lead to more inquiry. As can be seen from the exchange above, sometimes they work and sometimes they do not. However, it is all part of the Artful Learning process for students and teachers alike.

Having teachers elicit the deepest responses from students also pushes teachers to become more engaged in reflective practice. This was the major factor in Artful Learning that promoted reflective practice. At the same time, while students' critical thinking skills were improving, so were their questioning skills. Now students not only question each other but they question their teacher. This means that teachers need to be aware of all the different angles the inquiry questions may take. This leads to teachers brainstorming with each other, seeking ever more ways to take their teaching to a higher level. The familiar process of reflecting on their Artful Learning Units transferred over to their regular teaching. As a result of using the Artful Learning process, the teachers began to think deeper about what instruction should look like in all their lessons. Thus grade level teams would routinely collaborate to come up with lessons that were rigorous and connected to a grade level or school-wide concept.

The teachers spoke often about student's having to reflect. Reflection is an integral piece of higher level learning. When students are asked to reflect upon what they have been taught, it deepens the learning process. For example, the following is a section

of a group interview with teachers that focuses on the importance of reflection in the teaching and learning process.

Researcher: The next thing I would like to talk about is the students' ability to reflect. I believe each of you said that one of the benefits of Artful Learning was students you saw in, I don't know if I can use the word uncanny ability for say, 2nd graders to all of a sudden they use reflective statements about something that they've learned that you weren't expecting to happen. If you can talk a little bit about students' ability to reflect and how they use it.

Teacher 1: I'm in 1st grade and we are teaching the reflection process in 1st grade and it is uncanny how it taught those skills of being able to think about your learning and how they can verbalize it and then at some point they can get it said; they can put it on paper; they can put into words as the year progresses. I think that being able to do that's how we learn. That's a lifelong skill for these kids and they get better at it as they up the grade levels, but it is a lifelong skill. You should be reflecting and learning throughout your whole life, whether you are in a school setting or whatever setting.

Researcher: Did you think that Bernstein or the Artful Learning program itself has enhanced a student's ability to reflect just by the very nature of the program?

Teacher 2: Well I think the reflection piece of Artful Learning actually got me started on doing reflections in my classroom more so than I had done before. Even to the point where we were putting it in math class. This is something we started with Bernstein, with Artful Learning, and just took it and embedded it in our curriculum. The kids, it amazes me, even today, we had inquiry day today, it amazed me what these kids could write on relationships today and how they saw it and how they saw respect in relationships. These are six year old.

Researcher: This is 2nd grade? 1st grade?

Teacher 1: 1st grade. Even kindergarten did it today.

Teacher 2: Kindergarten did it.

Researcher: Do you see students' ability to reflect growing from beginning of school year to end?

Teacher 2: Definitely, definitely because in the beginning when we ask them to read blocks, they just sit there and we have to feed it to them. Now that we do it so much, we told them to think about your thinking.

- Teacher 3: It's the way you teach them to do that.
- Teacher 4: Model, model, model.
- Teacher 2: I think out loud and I give my kids those examples. If I was asked by my teacher to reflect on how I did with this particular paper, this is what would go through my head. I would talk about like I would like them to think it through and talk. You know what I'm saying?
- Teacher 3: The other piece about that is that it's not just ever over. There's not one answer and then it's over, yes that was right and that's it. You have ideas at the end of the day, at the end of the next week. You come back to it at the end of next month. Many of the significant questions don't have an answer that's ever going to be a right answer and that's important for the kids to know that there's no be all, end all to each understanding.

This exchange is also an example of how reflecting on learning is an important part of critical thinking. Reflection and critical thinking both link to enduring understanding. However, teaching in this reflective manner is not necessarily easy; it requires regular professional development opportunities to perfect.

Throughout the year, Northtown teachers have many opportunities to attend district workshops and national conferences. Each summer, teachers are offered an Artful Learning workshop. All new teachers are required to go through an introductory training program to become familiar with the Artful Learning process. While interviewing the superintendent, principal and lead Bernstein trainer, we discussed what is required of teachers once they are hired and beyond. In this next discussion, note how the principal explains the process of introducing Artful Learning to teachers, both new and old, to ensure that everyone does Bernstein Units with fidelity.

- Researcher: Let's talk about the teachers. When you have a new teacher that comes in, how much time do you spend with them? Do you model the process with them? Does their team help them grasp the design?
- Principal: Within the past few years, anyone who comes into this building knows this up front that we are an Artful Learning School and for the first year

that they are here, basically they are on a team that is already doing the Artful Learning Units. Their requirement is that next summer they have to go and get the training for Artful Learning 1 then 2. Betsy and I then train at level three and we have worked the last two years at trying to do some after school things and it really has become more within our building we have a Bernstein team. Some Dual Language teachers, some Northtown Arts School teachers come together and we meet twice a month and we talk. . . . About three years ago we started doing Inquiry days. That is a piece of data that would be interesting.

Principal: The Bernstein Team would sit. . . . It takes a long time to develop good Inquiry Centers. We would do our Inquiry Centers; we would package them and put them out to teachers and we would educate all our teachers and that was our forum really of teachers' development too. They learned what the process was through doing that kind of Inquiry. This year we've pulled back on that and we are doing it a little differently. We have a scholar in residence and we are doing dance. And actually, this week and next, she is working with our kids down in the gym and we've pulled back on Inquiry days to do more experiential and work differently. But when we did those Inquiry days and we're talking two days in a row, no behavior concerns at all. None. And right there, you ask anyone in the school there was. . . . Everyone was just exhausted. Kids were engaged in learning and they would just go. . .

Researcher: How long was the Unit?

Principal: This was our school wide one and then we would do two days of Inquiry Centers and then we would do two days where [we] would work on Inquiry Centers that would develop our creation. So from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., they would go like an hour and all the rooms would be set up with Inquiry Centers and teachers would go in and were also in teams. You would have maybe an art teacher, a 2nd grade teacher, 3rd grade teacher, a P.E teacher and they would all work together and stay with that group of kids throughout the whole day.

Lead Trainer: When you talk about teachers' development. They would experience what a solid Inquiry Center would look like because it had all the steps rolled in. If we had any nay sayers who said "this would never engage my 5th graders or this will never work in my classroom," they were seeing it work with their kids.

Superintendent: That job imbedded teachers' development approach and having them experience it just as if they were a student going through a lesson.

This exchange gives an idea of just how in depth teachers and administrators go to make sure that each teacher is well versed in the Artful Learning process and also gives a sense of how rigorous the professional development is as well as the preparation for a school wide unit. Regardless of the difficulty level, these teachers push each other to create units that are teachable and provide enduring understanding to their students.

I also asked the leadership team if teachers try to outdo themselves each year. I asked this because even though the whole school has been doing Artful Learning units, the 5th grade has kind of slacked off promoting Artful Learning as a whole. However, it appears that they continue to use the strategies and concepts in their instruction and when evaluating their practice.

Researcher: Do teachers try to outdo themselves each year?

Superintendent: I think so! I think I've seen that with the school wide units and I think the same thing you know, which is surprising that 5th grade wouldn't get on board here because you get enough. . .

Principal: With our 5th grade because we've moved into a system where some of them are doing science and social studies differently. That's the difference. It's more of like . . . so and so does science and that kind of thing; it's also it is the time to sit down and work with them to do that to get that going cause our 4th grade has several units. But there is a little drop off.

Superintendent: And even interdisciplinary. Make it interdisciplinary.

Principal: Yeah. And that's why the power is in using the concepts in the units. Do they use strategies, Artful Learning strategies? Absolutely. Even our 5th grade teachers use a lot of the Artful Learning strategies and a lot of the questions.

Under the previous two superintendents and previous principal, Artful Learning was the anchor on which all professional development at Northtown was determined. As can be seen from this exchange, new teachers began by being immersed in the process while veterans continued learning and improving their practice each year. Teachers were taught to become experts in the Artful Learning process and to experience units the way students would experience them. They would reflect upon ways to improve and to make lessons more connected to their students. This is the perfect example of synergistic reflective practice.

Unfortunately, this kind of reflective synergy is not as prevalent as it had been in the past. Building and district administrators have had to promote new initiatives related to the pressures of new high-stakes testing requirements. New teachers coming into Northtown still attend the Artful Learning workshop; they also must attend test-related professional development. With all the new mandated initiatives, the teachers at Northtown are finding it difficult to continue Artful Learning training. However, each of the teachers involved in interviews for this study are part of the Artful Learning Leadership Team, and so they are always engaged in Artful Learning teaching. Because of the training they and their colleagues have received in Artful Learning, these teachers believe that some aspects Artful Learning will always contain some aspect of what they learned, and the process will always be a part of the culture of learning at Northtown.

As a group, because they are always reflecting and improving their practice, the teachers at Northtown feel that they are more prepared than many other schools to meet the demands of the many new educational initiatives from the federal and state government—Common Core, PARCC, and teacher evaluation.

Because they had Bernsteined units for so long and students were using multiple media to learn content and express ideas, the teachers and administrators felt that both students and teachers were being well prepared for the Common Core and the upcoming PARCC Assessments in 2015.

Theme 4: Artful Learning Has Prepared Teachers and Students for Common Core

Education in the 21st century is linked to higher-order thinking and learning. The Northtown teachers believe they have been well prepared by Artful learning for this level of teaching and learning. The new PARCC assessment will require teachers to teach more depth rather than breadth. I and the Northtown teachers believe that arts-based strategies will be central to the 21st century learning process. Eisner (2002) believed that cognitive development can be enhanced when students are asked to compare and contrast creative works of art (p. 37). If students are to be successful in the Common Core assessment model, they must be able to think critically and creatively. The teachers in this study believe their students are doing just that.

I first broached this topic during the individual interviews with teachers. Four of the five teachers believed that Artful Learning is a perfect fit for the new Common Core Standards. One teacher put it this way:

The four components can be tied to any learning. Why not use this mode of learning with the Common Core Standards? It's not an extra piece, part of my teaching, but not all teachers are on same wavelength though. It's second nature to (Bernstein) trainers but not others. I believe that Bernstein is not separate; it's part of strategies we teach every day.

Another teacher thought that Artful Learning was a good fit, but had some reservations with all the new changes:

The Artful Learning Model is built for anything but it's difficult. Teachers are asked to do too much. For me it's not a natural enough connection yet, not

accessible enough. It fits perfectly but is rigorous and takes time. Can't do all the time but is a vehicle. RTI hasn't helped either. It takes a lot of time up. The Common Core is built for it. Almost parallel, except for the arts piece. Teachers are more inclined to make a checklist than a unit.

While most supported Artful Learning, there were still some concerns about the process. These statements were positive but cautious. These two teachers are at different stages using the model. One is a Bernstein trainer and the other is relatively new to Artful Learning. I do believe that any program that is as in depth as Artful Learning will take time to mesh with Common Core. The program seems to be a perfect vehicle for teaching the way the Common Core wants teachers to teach, which is more in depth. However, for this to happen, there still needs to be extensive professional development. I asked the teachers about how their Artful Learning professional development prepared them for Common Core.

The teachers believe that the training they received about Common Core combined with the training in Artful Learning has prepared both teacher and student for the new standards. While a few teachers believe they will not have time to do the units effectively under the Common Core requirements, most are in agreement that arts-based strategies will prepare students for the Common Core. In the next discussion, teachers compare the Artful Learning curriculum with the Common Core Standards and requirements.

Researcher: Most of you agreed that Artful Learning fits with the new Common Core and will prepare students for the new PARCC Assessment; however, a couple of you felt that it's too rigorous combined with all the new requirements. Meaning, there's so much to do how do we fit it all in. Do you think teachers will be able to use Art for Learning effectively in whole or in part with everything else that they're being asked to do? How can this be accomplished?

Teacher 1: Well, I don't see it as a separate entity; I never have. To me, it's part of a whole and it's just something that we use to increase student learning,

student thinking, student reflecting. I don't see the disconnect at all. I don't see it as something extra on my plate because it's just embedded in my day.

Teacher 2: I agree.

Teacher 3: I agree too. I think you're used to creating these lessons. You're used to creating these units and you just incorporate the standards where they need to go. As we're starting common core standards this year, we just create our checklist of are we getting these standards? Are we doing them through the unit that we're teaching or we'll add onto those units.

Teacher 4: I think it's second nature. We've both been doing this a long time. When we are writing new units or creating new lessons, that doesn't go away just because maybe it is not a full blown Bernstein unit. That thinking is always in your head. That's why I think when you eat and sleep and drink it, it just flows from you. It's automatic, like breathing air. It's automatic. Like you say, there's no disconnect.

Teacher 5: I don't see any . . . yeah.

Teacher 1: That's just what we do. We've been at this a long time.

Teacher 2: I don't feel that teachers will be able to use Artful Learning effectively in whole with all that is being asked of us to do with the common core standards. Changes to our curriculum, state and district changes, and the upcoming teacher evaluation/assessment piece. I see it as something that can enhance and deepen areas where possible and desired, but not as a whole program that a school is committed to. There is too much work and expectation to contend with.

Teacher 3: She has a little bit different opinion.

Researcher: What do you think about her response? Is she in the minority within the building or is it split?

Teacher 2: I think it's split because there's teachers who are newer that haven't been used to Bernstein as long as . . . I mean the three of us have done Bernstein for a long time. I think if you don't know Bernstein as well as other teachers it doesn't come as second nature. It's more challenging. They're still getting their hand on what Bernstein is and now the common core so that creates more frustration and more of a challenge. I think it depends on the teacher and their experience with Bernstein.

The teachers, for the most part, believe that Artful Learning has prepared them for the Common Core. The one dissenting teacher hasn't been doing it as long. She may

also represent the view of new teachers coming in who not only have to learn about Artful Learning but also become familiar and proficient with Common Core Standards and all the other mandated changes teachers have to deal with. Continuing on with the discussion, the teachers seek to find some explanations as to why it may be hard for some teachers to teach Artful Learning alongside Common Core. In the following exchange, the teachers discuss why it might be easier or difficult for some grade levels to work with both Artful Learning and Common Core.

Teacher 5: Now, of course, teacher 1 is a 4th grade teacher. She has other things to deal with that we don't. She has ISATs etc. that she has to think about, which we do not. Again, we happen to work on teams that know this stuff and who knows what that background of this particular teachers team is like. Are there more new people that haven't gone through all the training? You're never going to find anyone that's just. . .

Researcher: Do you find that teachers kindergarten say through 2nd or kindergarten through 3rd are going to have an easier time with the changeover than the upper elementary because there's so much more expected with common core and the PARCC Assessment, or do you think that those who have been say ingrain with Bernstein that it will be their second nature and it's not going to phase them? Like you were saying or do you think it is. . . you're lower elementary so you don't have that assessment piece to worry about.

Teacher 1: Actually I think for us it's more difficult because we're actually laying the groundwork for the critical thinking and the deeper thinking. I would say that the children throughout the grades as they move just gets stronger in their skills and I would think that for the children it would be something that's embedded in them, in their type of thinking.

Teacher 2: I guess I just again, if you see [it] as a separate entity I could see where you would count it as work.

Teacher 3: As more work on your plate.

Teacher 4: I could actually see that as another something on your plate, but if it's embedded in your day, then it's just part of your teaching; I don't find it any more rigorous or challenging.

This exchange shows the differing opinions of long-time veterans who have been teaching Artful Learning since the beginning and a teacher who has only been doing it for a few years. While they disagree on whether or not Artful Learning will be able to be used with fidelity, they agree that students' academics improve because of it.

That being said, while the teachers are comfortable with all the teaching strategies that come with Artful Learning, they are aware that they might have to use the units less or in a completely different way. Their belief that students are more prepared for 21st century learning because of Artful Learning will not change. Both Artful Learning and Common Core link critical thinking and essential questions with higher standards. Artful Learning seeks to teach more in depth rather than breadth; so does Common Core.

Because Artful Learning's very purpose is to use creative rigorous lessons to increase critical thinking, it is the perfect complement to the Common Core curriculum. Both prepare students for life beyond the classroom. While reading over several sections of the Common Core standards, I came across its mission statement which reads in part:

The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010)

When reading this statement, similarities with Artful Learning can be seen. Artful Learning is robust and relevant to the real world. If the components of Artful Learning are used while teaching, teachers will definitely be preparing students for success in college and their careers. It is the perfect match.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the implications and recommendations that have arisen from the case study. The primary question of this study was: How can arts-based strategies be used to strengthen the curriculum? To better answer the primary question, I will begin with the related questions and the implications within them. I will conclude the chapter with recommendations and a personal reflection. The related questions of this study were:

- How does the district or building leadership play a part in the success of the program?
- How might various components of Artful Learning improve the school and the curriculum?
- How might the Artful Learning model be modified to be more effective given the changing landscape of education?
- What have been the challenges to implementing a program that is as detailed as Artful Learning?
- How might art be a core part of the curriculum, of school improvement, and a central piece to how students learn?

Question 1: How does the district or building leadership play a part in the success of the program?

There are major implications here. A school district only goes as far as district or building leadership is willing to take it. When I first became involved with this district

ten plus years ago, the superintendent and his cabinet, as well as the school board, was fully on board with Artful Learning. Almost all teachers and administrators that were interviewed held the premise that arts-based strategies are an integral part of teaching and learning. Several building principals were eager to learn and provide staff with training on the Artful Learning process. As a result, the Northtown Arts School was created as a Bernstein Artful Learning School. Parents who wanted their children immersed in arts-based strategies requested to send them to Northtown Elementary. As time went on, the superintendent retired and the assistant superintendent took over as superintendent and continued the program. Fast forward to 2012, the district has a new superintendent and Northtown has a new principal. The school board has other pressing mandates and initiatives to focus on. The question then became: Can the Artful Learning program be sustained as district and building level administrators continue to change, as it inevitably will?

When I spoke with the previous superintendent and principal just a few short months before they retired, I asked them how changes in the top leadership would affect Artful Learning. The superintendent was positive but cautiously optimistic:

It's going to be critical. It makes me a little nervous to think a new superintendent, who is new to the state much less with the stuff that's happening at the State level, new teacher evaluation tools, and people can get crazy and maybe they will be frightened into shifting the focus into the wrong thing. I mean you don't focus on Core Standards just for the sake of Core Standards. I mean the Core Standards, just like ISAT, just like before the standards are going to take care of themselves. Don't focus on that trailing indicator but stay focused with the things that are going to get us to that end result and I think this model (Artful Learning) focusing on that end in mind is the way to go. But I can see that, if you are worried about, are you going to make AYP and what the achievement results are going to be tied into principal evaluation, that's why I am trying to put that all in place before I leave so that principals can feel comfortable.

In the end, the outgoing superintendent held true to her commitment to ensure that Artful Learning continues to be front and center at Northtown Arts Elementary. Before leaving, she hired a principal with a background in the arts who wanted to be at Northtown because of Artful Learning. Her director of curriculum stayed on in the same role for the new superintendent. The director of curriculum had been involved with Artful Learning from the very beginning. In fact, she was a classroom teacher in the first years of the program. The challenge now for the superintendent, principal, and director of curriculum will be to show that Artful Learning can be an effective curriculum approach for meeting Common Core standards on a regular basis. So far, Artful Learning is still very much in use at Northtown.

If one walks into Northtown Elementary School today, the arts are evident in the hallways. Student work and evidence of past and current units are displayed around the school. The core group of Bernstein teachers who still use Artful Learning daily to drive most instruction are very concerned about keeping the program alive. The whole school is, at least for the immediate future, still doing school wide Bernstein Units around a singular concept and Masterwork. The new principal of Northtown has a background in the arts and is doing all she can to hold Artful Learning together. The new superintendent has many issues to focus on and while not dismissing Artful Learning, he has not taken a lead role in keeping it front and center, at least visibly. As I was beginning this research, I reached out to him to discuss Artful Learning and he graciously offered the assistance of his leadership team, in particular, the director of curriculum.

At present, the director of curriculum has taken the lead in keeping the program viable. During the one-on-one interview I had with her, she stated, “art won't translate

into the core curriculum without Bernstein (Artful Learning) as the lens.” She also believes Artful Learning and Common Core are synergistic, stating, “teachers are asked to do too much . . . it (Artful Learning) fits beautifully as a vehicle for higher level standards. Common Core is built for this.” Even so, this will not happen automatically. She also states that teachers and administrators need to become more engaged in learning how both connect. With all the new state requirements, I believe the district leadership team is doing an admirable job at keeping Artful Learning a viable curriculum model. The question is, how long can they keep it going in the current educational environment? Because Artful Learning is no longer the focus, the program itself is not as evident as it was in the past. However, what is evident is that both central office and building leadership believe that the teaching strategies used in Artful Learning are still an important piece of the learning process. To this end, they encourage teachers to use arts-based strategies where they feel they can best enhance knowledge and understanding. However, for Artful Learning to survive and thrive, the Northtown teachers must also take the lead.

Among the findings of a research study done on the Artful Learning program at UCLA from 2001–2004 by the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) was the importance of shared leadership. While the current administrators are on board with Artful Learning, I believe that there was more shared leadership in the beginning. Hughes and Pickeral (2013) asserted that school leaders can increase student engagement and thus student achievement if they engage all stakeholders in working together toward a shared purpose. This inclusive strategy was followed at the birth of the Artful Learning program. District, school, and community leaders embraced

Artful Learning as a way to engage students in a rigorous academic environment. While there is a good amount of shared leadership at Northtown Elementary School, it is not as widespread as it was even three years ago. The new principal is a proponent of Artful Learning, and the Bernstein Leadership team still exists, but their “reach” does not extend as far as it once did. For now, the superintendent and his leadership team will continue to support Artful Learning, but only as far as it takes them in meeting Common Core and Adequate Yearly Progress goals set by the state.

Question 2: How Might Various Components of Artful Learning Improve the School and the Curriculum?

Over the years, teachers and administrators at Northtown Arts Elementary have created a culture of learning within the school that is centered on the arts. From its inception, the Artful Learning model shaped the philosophy of the school. So, how have the Artful Learning components improved the school and the curriculum? In the beginning, all teachers had been heavily in-serviced into the Bernstein method. They trained, modeled, and taught Artful Learning because that was the philosophy of the school and it was expected of them. Parents chose to send their children to Northtown because the school offered the opportunity for a rich curriculum experience using arts-based teaching and learning strategies. It seemed to work for all involved, parents, teachers, and students.

Using each of the Artful Learning components—Experience, Inquire, Create, and Reflect—students learn differently. Infusing the arts into the curriculum and daily instruction can lead to a more positive school culture. Catterall et al. (1999), noting the positive effects of the arts on the Chicago Public School System’s Chicago Arts

Partnerships in Education (CAPE) program, found that when arts become the focus of learning, school culture improves and learning conditions improve as well. Until now, this has been the experience of teachers at the Northtown Arts School.

Observing the school over the past ten years, I have seen firsthand how teachers and building administrators have used Artful Learning to create a positive learning environment for the whole school. Parents, community members, and teachers all were involved in Artful Learning Unit projects during and after school hours. An example of this which was related previously is the Picasso Experience. For this *Experience*, parents and students came together and the outcome was two-fold. First, parents were able to experience first-hand how Artful Learning worked, and how it continued to work outside of school. Second, it brought the school together as a learning community, parents, teachers, children, and families.

Learning is enhanced when students are allowed to make deeper connections and teachers use what they learned for future lessons. One school-wide Artful Learning Unit is done each year and everyone takes part, including physical education, art, music and library. Students at every grade level at Northtown should be familiar with each component, and the curriculum they experience should be richer for it. Overall, I do believe that students at Northtown have received a richer curriculum because of Artful Learning. I have witnessed students at Northtown Arts Elementary experiencing a Masterwork and have listened to first grade students explain what they saw. Teachers infused *Inquiry* into their lessons on the Masterwork and connected it to the central concept of the Unit. Each year without fail, they have created and completed an Artful

Learning unit school wide that is connected to a school wide concept. The school wide-units have included:

2007–2008:

Masterwork: A photograph by Robert Doisneau entitled “The Musician”

Concept: Values.

Significant Question: Do a person's actions always show what they value?

2008–2009:

Masterwork: The Mandala Project, Namgyal Monastery Institute of Buddhist
Studies

Concept: Legacy

Significant Question: How do today’s actions affect tomorrow? How do my
actions shape the footprints I leave behind?

2009–2010:

Masterwork: Unnamed Sculpture, Picasso

Concept: Perspective

Significant Question: Is there ever more than one right answer?

2010–2011:

Masterwork: Unnamed Sculpture, Picasso

Concept: Perspective

Significant Question: Do people ever change who they are and what they
believe?

2011–2012:

Masterwork: Oye Como Va, Tito Puente

Concept: Power

Significant Question: Do we have the power to change our world?

2012–2013:

Masterwork: Sunday on La Grand Jatte by Seurat

Concept: Relationships

Significant Question: How do your words and actions show respect in relationships?

Artful Learning activities unite the school. Each grade level follows a common conceptual theme and uses the same Masterwork. The difference on each grade level is in the depth of prior knowledge students have at the start of the project. When an entire school works towards a common learning outcome, it can only make the school community stronger. This is a school community on the cusp of change. It is yet to be seen whether the sense of community and the success it has achieved through Artful Learning continue with Common Core at its center.

The small group discussion with the Northtown teachers brought this issue to the forefront. Teachers are so overwhelmed with new requirements that they are not certain they can keep up while continuing to become more adept in the Artful Learning components as well. However, if they neglect what they have learned through Artful Learning, their perception of being more prepared than other schools for the Common Core Standards may be diminished.

As more and more mandated initiatives are put in place, and the school begins to experience a downturn in Adequate Yearly Progress scores for successive years, Artful Learning might slowly disappear. Without continuous professional development in

Artful Learning, as well as Common Core, Northtown teachers could lose all they have gained in terms of critical thinking and teaching for understanding. The Artful Learning components seem tailor-made for the kind of instruction that is now required with the Common Core. If they hold the course, Northtown has a unique opportunity to shine above all others if they stay the course and continue using the Artful Learning components

Question 3: How Might the Artful Learning Model Be Modified to Be More Effective Given the Changing Landscape of Education?

Throughout this study, interviews have revealed how teachers have adapted the Artful Learning model to fit their grade level and subject matter. Common Core asks teachers to focus on depth rather than breadth. This is the perfect opportunity to bring arts-based strategies into the conversation. Researchers Mackey and Schwartz (2006) have found that hearing, visualization, questioning, and critical thinking are improved when students are exposed and listening through music. Music is not the only arts-based strategy that contributes to these skills. Most of the teachers at Northtown incorporate drama, art, and visual media in their teaching. The challenge will be to continue to use arts-based strategies along with Common Core.

Those teachers at Northtown who have been using Artful Learning for many years understand this and are comfortable with the coming changes. New teachers, however, are hesitant. Each teacher I spoke with and those in the building who took the survey are familiar with each of the Artful Learning components. They also understand how they benefit students. If Northtown is to be successful in smoothly transitioning to Common Core, ideally the whole staff needs to be on board. If not, it is possible that there will be

confusion and dissension amongst the teachers. There already are those who will not use Artful Learning in any format unless there is a school-wide Unit.

There are implications here. First, if teachers cannot conceive of a way to incorporate Artful Learning into Common Core, there could be no more Artful Learning. Should this happen, many members of the community who have sent their children to Northtown because Artful Learning is the primary instructional model will likely be upset. Teachers who have spent years learning the model will also be unhappy. These teachers champion the model and incorporate Artful Learning components into their daily lessons.

The second implication involves instruction. Teachers who are currently using Artful Learning components, I believe, will always use them no matter what changes come their way. The essential components, Experience, Inquire, Create, and Reflect have been so firmly imprinted into their teaching that they naturally use them in most every lesson. However, those teachers who are not as experienced using the components, especially to teach the Common Core standards, could inadvertently set back gains in student achievement that were made through a focus on Artful Learning.

One area the teachers who were interviewed were adamant about was that Artful Learning has prepared them for Common Core. For veteran teachers, this may hold true. However, those teachers who are not as experienced might have trouble bringing both Artful Learning and Common Core into their teaching. If this group of teachers is not on board with Artful Learning, there could develop a disconnect in the school-wide curriculum that could adversely affect student achievement for the school as a whole as measured by AYP. Finally, if arts based strategies are left behind, so will many students.

Many students have experienced Artful Learning instruction since kindergarten. What happens when they reach 2nd or 3rd grade and a new instructional design model is used?

Question 4: What Have Been the Challenges to Implementing a Program That Is as Detailed as Artful Learning?

Over the years, leadership from the Central Office starting with the superintendent down and the school board has been extremely supportive of Artful Learning. However, tensions began to arise around the 2011–2012 school year when the superintendent and the Northtown building principal announced their intentions to retire. This coincided with the state entering into a multistate agreement to use Common Core to drive instruction and assessment. This was at the same time that a new teacher and principal evaluation system was being readied for rollout. Add to this the likelihood of the district's status in AYP due to raising the cut scores on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT), and the pressure continued to mount on the Artful Learning program.

I sensed that pressures were increasing at the beginning of fall 2011 when I began to hear that not every teacher was using Artful Learning at every grade level or for every subject area. Whether or not this was due to an overwhelmed principal, which I do not believe was the case, or the need to respond to newly mandated educational reforms and requirements, or a combination of the two, depends on whom you ask.

Veteran teachers were being asked to change instructional gears as the direction and demographics of the school gradually began to shift. Artful Learning no longer was the sole instructional model. Several teachers mentioned in the interviews that students were no longer enrolling because of choice, but for other reasons. The result was that the students who were coming into Northtown at varying grade levels were unfamiliar with

the Artful Learning model. This also affected one of the reasons Northtown started Artful Learning in the first place, which was to build a unique arts-based community. Nelson (2010) conducted a study of A+ Schools and concluded that school reform driven by arts integration affects not only schools but teachers, students, and communities as well. If this current trend continues, Northtown risks losing its identity as an arts-based school along with the bond with the community it has worked so hard to form around the arts.

Another challenge is the implementation of the Common Core Standards and its effect on teacher evaluation. This may be the biggest challenge of all. With Common Core, teachers are being asked to change how and what they teach. Likewise, administrators are being asked to evaluate teachers using a rubric that may or may not benefit certain teaching styles, such as arts-based teaching. In any case, this is what the future holds, so everyone needs to adapt.

Northtown Arts Elementary seems, for the most part, prepared for this change. Even though there is some division amongst the staff about the ability to continue using Artful Learning while adapting to Common Core, there remains a core of support for Artful Learning. However, if this divide amongst teachers continues, Artful Learning may slowly disappear as a teaching strategy. The Bernstein Leadership team and the principal will need to be vigilant in keeping the components going in every classroom at every grade level. Brookfield (1995) stated, "critically reflective practitioners realize that their work is rife with contradictions and consequences of which they are, at best, dimly aware" (p. 33). Northtown teachers and administrators are truly reflective practitioners. I

believe that the principal and the Bernstein Leadership team will refocus their practice over the next few years to incorporate Artful Learning into Common Core.

Question 5: How Might Art Be a Core Part of the Curriculum, of School Improvement, and a Central Piece to How Students Learn?

Artful Learning was originally implemented at Northtown primarily as an instructional philosophy rather than a school improvement model. While the model has been used throughout the country as part of comprehensive school reform, Northtown Arts Elementary sees Artful Learning as the main vehicle to deliver instruction. To this end, Artful Learning strategies and whole units have been designed and implemented each year since the program was adopted in 2007–2008. I have witnessed the early years and the continuation of Artful Learning at Northtown. Students at Northtown are very comfortable with arts as a major focus in their learning. It could be said that Artful Learning has defined the culture of learning at Northtown, and it is not alone. Schools across the country, such as Fairview Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana; Salvador Elementary School, Napa, California, and Wright Elementary School, Des Moines, Iowa, have been successful in using Artful Learning as the instructional model.

Artful Learning and other arts-based curriculum models allow students to become fully engaged in their class work. Jones (2008) believed that students invest more of themselves, work harder, and learn better when the topic is interesting and connected to something that they already. The Northtown Arts Elementary School has perfected using art as a central piece to how students learn. I have witnessed students at Northtown using the arts to enhance their learning.

Starting with the depth of each year's significant question, students have been tasked with making some very deep connections using art and arts-based activities. Looking at each year's Masterwork, Concept, and Significant Question, one might surmise that the whole school is involved in arts-based learning at all times. However, based upon the teacher interviews, it was 2011–2012, or possibly earlier, that many teachers stopped using some of the Artful Learning components. As a result, some Northtown students may not have been exposed to and benefited from a deep arts-based instruction at all grade levels.

Northtown Arts Elementary teaching staff is well ahead of their peers in terms of using arts as a core part of the curriculum and a central piece of how students learn. They have led the way in this endeavor for half a decade. However, what will happen when the changes discussed previously have taken hold and add to the workload of the teaching staff? Teachers at Northtown will need to be vigilant in making sure that the gains they have made using arts-based teaching strategies do not fade away. If Artful Learning is allowed to wither, what message does that send to parents who have chosen to send their children to the school for the sole purpose of learning through the arts? Moreover, what of the students who have been given the opportunity to enrich their lives and increase their learning through arts-based strategies?

Recommendations

Commit to Artful Learning

Teachers using even some arts-based strategies make learning richer and more enjoyable than when not using them. This means that it is important that district and building leadership find ways to link Artful Learning to the Common Core. Once

teachers see that incorporating arts-based strategies into their daily lessons also aligns with teaching Common Core Standards, those teachers who have begun to drift away from Artful Learning will slowly be drawn back into the fold.

During the course of this study, I sensed that many teachers were worried that Artful Learning was no longer the focus for the school. To alleviate this concern, if possible, Northtown could be re-designated as a Bernstein School. Going through the process, while symbolic in nature, might redirect everyone back to the original purpose of the school. While state requirements to meet AYP and other district issues have forced some changes on the original focus of the school, I believe teachers would be more amenable to what looks like extra work as long as the Central Office administrators renewed their focus on the original concept conceived in the creation of this school.

Use Professional Development to Link Artful Learning With Common Core

District and building leadership, including Bernstein Teacher Leaders, need to set up professional development workshops on how to incorporate Artful Learning components into the Common Core standards. Because Common Core requires more in-depth teaching and learning this should be an easy task. Modeling a Common Core-based lesson using Artful Learning components would be helpful. Northtown has a plethora of talented teachers who can lead many of these workshops. Peer instruction is extremely beneficial; when you add peer observation, it becomes even more powerful. Add to these reflective practice, and you have a professional learning community focused on the same goals. What is more, you have created an educational environment that uses arts-based instruction in support of Common Core. Combining the two approaches results in a richer curriculum, more in-depth teaching, and enhanced student critical

thinking. Brookfield (1995) maintained that critical reflection helps teachers assess the impact their practice has on how they reach students. If Artful Learning and Common Core are going to exist side by side for the near future, reflective practice must continue to be part of the culture of learning at Northtown Arts Elementary.

Make Arts-Based Strategies a Part of Teachers' Lessons Everyday

For the majority of the staff, incorporating arts-based strategies into their daily lessons should not be difficult. The challenge here again will be for the principal and teacher leaders to engage in conversations with teachers regarding the importance of keeping arts-based strategies in the forefront of their teaching while learning how to address the Common Core standards. The majority of the teachers have some level of experience using the Artful Learning components. Some of the new teachers who have been hired and then placed on teams that do not use the components will need continued professional development from the building principal as well as the Bernstein Leadership Team. Both new and veteran teachers need to be so comfortable with using the Artful Learning components with Common Core that it becomes second nature. This will come with practice, more specifically, reflective practice.

The teachers and administrators at Northtown have been leaders in arts-based instruction for many years through Artful Learning. The core components, Experience, Inquire, Reflect, and Create, involve the same in-depth critical thinking required for Common Core instruction. The challenge will be for teachers to rewrite their lessons to match Artful Learning arts-based strategies with Common Core teaching standards. While this will take time, I do not think it will be too difficult. This staff has a good core of Artful Learning teacher leaders who can guide others in the process. Once that is

complete, teachers will need to determine which pieces of the curriculum can be infused with the Artful Learning strategies and which assessments will be arts based. Again, Northtown has this in place at some grade levels, but not all.

Going through this process should also assist the teaching staff in vertically articulating the K–5 grade levels as well as the content areas. Once this process is complete, art will again be the central focus of instruction and be the main component for school improvement. Because Northtown is already doing many of these things, incorporating arts-based strategies into the school improvement process will be a simple task. The key here will be to ensure that teachers are well trained in using arts-based strategies in the classroom as well as trained in how to write Common Core lessons.

Use Artful Learning to Prepare Students for the PARCC Assessments

One area that has not been discussed is preparing students for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Assessments beginning in 2014–2015. While teachers will need to prepare students for the technology side of this assessment, they will also need to prepare them for the critical thinking and writing piece. Using Artful Learning strategies for this is the perfect vehicle for student success. When you incorporate the use of technology with the arts, students become more fully engaged in the learning process. Eisner (2002), Jenson (2001), and Booth (2001) have all shown that when more emphasis is placed on exploration of ideas rather than rote acquisition of facts, students retain more of what is being taught. I believe that the administrators and staff at Northtown are up to the task. They have the opportunity to become leaders in using arts-based strategies with the Common Core.

Artful Learning Model Contributing to Theoretical Understandings

My final thoughts regarding this case study are mixed. I see great possibilities for Northtown Elementary School to continue its success using Artful Learning as its main instructional design model. That is, if it can navigate the challenging waters of the Common Core and other educational initiatives that are at its door step. The school has a strong district and building leadership team that understands how arts-based strategies foster student success. The District Office leadership is supportive and I believe they will continue to be as long as Northtown can show that arts-based instruction fosters student growth and achievement. However, this study shows that not every Northtown teacher is comfortable, or willing to use arts-based strategies within each teaching unit. To rebuild staff cohesion, grade level teams should continue to regularly meet to determine the scope and sequence of where the arts should be incorporated into the learning. Because there is strong building leadership, I do not see this as a problem going forward should administrators choose to consider the recommendations.

I have spent a decade working with this school and this topic in one way or another. I have seen its successes ebb and flow through changes in state and federal education reform and changes at the superintendent and principal positions. Through it all, I have seen dedication on the part of everyone involved to ensure that arts-based strategies remain a focus at Northtown Arts Elementary. During the time I have spent with this group of very dedicated educators, I have learned to appreciate the positive effect that the arts have on students, parents, and teachers. The administrators have shown what it takes to lead a staff of dedicated individuals and use their strengths to make learning rich and inviting through arts-based instruction. With continued guidance

and support of building and district level leadership, I am confident that Northtown Arts Elementary and Artful Learning can and will weather the storm and become a model for Common Core arts-based education, not only in Illinois but nationally as well.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Interview Questions: District Administrators

1. Can you tell me a little of the history behind Hawthorn choosing Artful Learning as a curriculum model and Arts School becoming a Bernstein School?
2. Why did you choose artful learning as a curriculum model? Did you use any specific data?
3. How did you choose which teachers worked at The Arts School? Were they trained by the Leonard Bernstein Center before they were hired?
4. Has the Artful Learning model affected the culture at The Arts School and if so how?
5. In your opinion, do you think the Bernstein Model has had an impact on academic achievement at Arts?

APPENDIX B

Survey Questions

1. How many years have you been teaching Artful Learning?

10 or More 5-10 years 5 years or less This is my first year

Comment Box:

2. To what degree do you believe art is central to the learning process?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

Comment Box:

3. How has using the Bernstein Model influenced your teaching style?

significantly somewhat Only a little Not at all

Comment Box:

4. How often do you use components of the Bernstein Model in your classroom?

Every day Only for certain Units Occasionally Not at all

Comment Box:

5. Rank the Artful Learning Sequence components below that you use the most.

Experience

Inquire

Reflect

Create

Comment Box:

6. Do you agree with the statement: Using the Bernstein Model has made me a more effective teacher.

completely agree

Somewhat agree

Somewhat disagree

Disagree

Completely disagree

Comment Box:

7. Using Artful Learning has improved student engagement in my classroom?

significantly somewhat Only a little Not at all

Comment box:

8. Rank the statements below in order of importance:

Artful Learning motivates student to learn

Artful Learning allows for differentiated instruction

Artful Learning facilitates critical thinking .

Artful Learning makes learning more fun for both teacher and student

Comment box:

9. How would you describe your training in using the Bernstein Model?

More than adequate Somewhat adequate Very little No

training

Comment Box:

10. Would you be interested in participating in a small group interview on the impact of the Bernstein model?

Yes No

APPENDIX C

Individual Interview Questions

1. How might art be a core part of the curriculum? Of school improvement? Or, a central piece to how students learn?
2. How might teaching using Bernstein model help teachers reflect on their practice and make teaching exciting?
3. Can you share a story from your own experience about how the Bernstein model impacts students learning? How does it work?
4. How do the components of the Bernstein model improve school and the curriculum?
5. How does the Bernstein model help students to be more engaged learners? How does it improve critical thinking?
6. How might the model be modified to be more effective given the changing landscape of education? For example, the mandate for Common Core?