

2010

## A CASE STUDY OF A REGIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

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# A CASE STUDY OF A REGIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

(Spine title: A Case Study of a Regional Youth Festival of the Arts)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

By

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Faculty of Education

2  
Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
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## Abstract

The release of *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1–8, The Arts* by the Ministry of Education in 2009 raises questions about how schools and principals can endeavour to deliver that curriculum to students in this era of significant funding cuts. In this context, the thesis explores a case study of a Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA), with a focus on two research questions: 1) In what ways are the arts education experiences of the RYFA similar to, and different from, school-based arts education? and 2) In what ways might the RYFA experience serve as a model for school-based arts education? The findings of the case study reveal a number of themes that participants report make the RYFA a meaningful arts experience. Participants reported the RYFA as special for the arts are not often celebrated. Participants were also aware of a sense of community, arts showcasing, and inclusivity during the RYFA.

Keywords: arts education, community, case study

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband, Terry, our children, Sean, Ryan, and Stephanie, and daughter-in-love, Meghan. Our journey together in life and community is an ongoing reflection of your support and understanding.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction—Context and Background

*It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process.*

Henry James

This research is based in part on questions raised at a community forum in my family of schools about the beleaguered state of the school-based arts, some 15 years ago. Why were band instruments left unused and collecting dust at a local elementary school? Why had elementary school music specialists all been reassigned to regular classrooms? Why had the countywide yearly music festival not been held in 10 years? Why were school choirs and bands no longer a part of the school day but asked to practice during lunch time or after school? Didn't the arts form an integral part of the education process for both elementary and high school students? In 1994, my local school board decided not to act on a public petition to maintain a Grade-12 music program at the local high school. Arts educators in our county at that time were becoming profoundly discouraged.

All around, there seemed to be more questions than answers. In response, in November of 1996, several teachers and volunteers organized a community forum attended by school trustees, local town council, teachers, parents, and students and the discussion resulted in several teachers and volunteers commissioned to organize a regional youth festival of the arts in 1997 to encourage the school-based arts in our schools. Because of their collaboration, an arts festival was founded and is now going into its 13th year. The festival is a community-driven, countywide student arts celebration called the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA), which does the following:

- presents approximately 2400 students each year with an opportunity to celebrate the school-based performing and visual arts;
- invites each attending school to prepare and perform a 17-minute sampling of curricular activity in drama, dance, music and visual arts that is creating excitement in the arts at those schools;
- shares arts ideas amongst school teachers in schools without elementary arts specialists;
- aims to provide DVD footage of the performances to all schools at no charge;
- profiles secondary school bands, choral and dance performances, improvisation, and visual arts to elementary students: as a result, elementary students are more fully informed of their options when they choose their high school elective courses;
- networks local arts councils and theatres, school councils, corporate sponsors, and a local church congregation to provide this experience without cost to participating schools;
- gathers feedback and reflections from students, teachers, school board administrators, parents, and sponsors;
- showcases secondary school drama, dance, visual arts and music;
- involves participation from every public, separate, and private school at both the elementary and high school level; and
- provides a website for students and teachers to share their stories about the arts.

Secondary school arts were offered through dance class performances, drama presentations with improv, visual arts displays, and music. High school music involved junior and senior bands, school musicals, jazz ensembles, and choirs.

### **Questions and the Method**

This thesis examines the local program that will be referred to in this study, as the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA), which I believe has potential to promote meaningful conversation about the delivery of arts education in learning communities today. The thesis investigates whether regional, school-based arts festivals, collaboratively organized by schools and their communities, may inform one type of model useful in delivering school-based arts education in these days due to significant changes in the last decade within public education. Based on data collected during a six-month period beginning in 2007, my thesis seeks to answer two questions:

1. In what ways are the arts education experiences of the RYFA similar to, and different from, school-based arts education? and
2. In what ways might the RYFA experience serve as a model for school-based arts education?

A case study format was used to shed some light upon these questions and the RYFA experience was examined via the multiple lenses of drawings, interviews, and focus groups of and with various participants (i.e., teachers, students, festival volunteers, as well as my own personal experiences as narrative).

## **Organization Overall**

This opening chapter addresses the relatively recent history of Canadian school-based arts programs, as well as the effect that participation in arts programs has on children and their learning experiences. The literature review chapter highlights the special place of the arts in engaging emotion, imagination, and reflection for students of all learning styles and the impact upon students of rich and empathetic learning experiences. The third chapter outlines the methods used to conduct the case study in its aim to better understand the nature of the RYFA and how it relates to and compares with school-based arts education. Chapter 4 presents the four evident threads revealed within the findings. Specifically, participants reported the RYFA as a special experience as the arts were not often celebrated. Participants were aware of a sense of community, arts showcasing and inclusivity for learners and educators. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in light of the literature and considers ideas around the delivery of arts education pursuant to the release of the Ontario Ministry of Education's 2009 arts curriculum. The final chapter summarizes the research results and makes suggestions for future research in this field. The appendix includes specific documentation of various key portions of the investigation, including a brief recap of my life-long involvement with the arts and the part I played in the development of the RYFA.

## **Context**

### **Limits in delivering school-based arts education**

Schools are increasingly restricted in providing the arts to their students due to funding cuts to education and cultural programs. One Ontario high school principal said, "The arts are really being hit. That is a whole story unto itself. It is actually quite tragic."

His comments were included in the Ontario Ministry of Education's 2003/2004 Double Cohort Study Phase 3 Report.

The negative impact of the changes is described in a landmark Canadian study by Rena Upitis & Katharine Smithrim (2003a, 2003b) that examined arts integration programs in schools across Canada. The resulting report, *Learning Through the Arts*, was based on research involving more than 6,000 teachers, students, and principals. It states that limited arts instruction takes place in many Canadian elementary schools. While some provinces, Saskatchewan, for example, have robust arts programs that include specialized arts teachers even at the elementary school level, most provinces have less resources for arts education.

Interestingly, the Ontario Ministry of Education espoused universal access to the arts when it created the 1994 Royal Commission on Learning, stating that:

The arts are an integral part of any complete education; and they can and should be a very rewarding part . . . the arts are part of the core curriculum and not inherently less valuable as part of a well-rounded education than any other subject; they are not frills and should not be treated as such. . . . Not only does every student have the right to be introduced to the arts as an area of cultural knowledge, learners also need ways of making abstract ideas concrete . . . like science, art is a hands-on way to apply mathematical and logical reasoning skills, explore ideas, and have the satisfaction of making something with what one has learned. (Ontario Ministry of Education, *For the love of learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning*, 1994)

The report admonished that saving money by targeting arts programs does a disservice to everyone involved. Four years later, *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: The Arts, 1998* outlined precise guidelines about the arts-based knowledge and skills required at each elementary school grade level, as its premise was that the arts are essential to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth. Appropriate instructional strategies were to be developed to address the diverse needs of the students, and young

children were to be given verbal and non-verbal opportunities to be creative in all of the art forms so that they would gain the skills and confidence needed to engage in artistic exploration. Implicit was an understanding that the arts are central to the development of creative and critical thinking. Although the Ministry of Education has outlined clear and well-defined expectations for the arts in Ontario's schools, mandated curriculum does not necessarily determine what happens in a given classroom; the actual delivery of the curriculum determines students' experiences.

This role of curriculum delivery was stated clearly in 2004 by People for Education in their report, *The Arts in Ontario's Public Schools*. People for Education, is an independent, parent-led organization promoting education in Ontario's English, Catholic, and French schools. Though the report applauded the thorough 1998 arts curriculum with respect to its informed understanding of how the arts could be taught at each grade level, it also expressed concern about the actual delivery of the arts.

People for Education's 2008 release *Schools at the Centre* states that schools in England and the United States have set targets for literacy and numeracy test scores that resulted in a two-tier curriculum—with the arts, social sciences and physical education relegated to the bottom tier. Evidently, school-based arts in Ontario have been similarly impacted. This People for Education update emphasizes that although the Ontario arts curriculum is impressive, the actual delivery of the arts at the school level is the fundamental challenge that must be addressed for after a decade of funding cuts to both education and culture. The report identifies several province-wide trends, including the following:

1. Students' access to the arts can depend on the ability of parents to pay for private lessons or fund-raise for the arts in their schools.
2. The number of music teachers in elementary school has declined by more than 10% since the funding formula makes no provision for arts programs or specialist teachers in the arts.
3. Access to specialist arts teachers varies widely across the province and school boards, with the result that the funding formula currently in place is having an adverse impact on the arts, putting smaller student populations at a distinct disadvantage.
4. Recent reforms to secondary schools have had a negative impact on arts programs: fewer arts courses are offered and fewer students are able to take these courses.

The 2004 People for Education report also mentions that the level of personal musicianship required of a teacher to implement the curriculum is daunting. The study may inform a model for dealing with some of these challenges.

### **Renewed call for school-based arts**

In 2009, the Ontario Ministry of Education issued an arts curriculum that thoroughly endorses arts education. Lack of funding will make it difficult to meet the expectation in this curriculum; however, a change in who has roles and responsibilities in arts education may open up new possibilities for delivering school-based arts experiences. The Ontario Ministry of Education's 2009 arts curriculum introduced such a change; it states that two new partners, besides, parents, teachers and students, have roles and responsibilities in arts education. While both the 1998 and 2009 curricula



acknowledge students, parents, and teachers as playing a central role in the success of arts programs, the 2009 version additionally recognizes principals and community partners as having important roles and responsibilities in arts education. The 2009 version entrusts the ultimate delivery of the curriculum to the leadership of principals. They are to ensure that the curriculum is properly implemented and that appropriate resources are made available. Community partners are identified as an important resource for a school's arts program. Their inclusion is unprecedented, and may open up possibilities in the educational experience of students and the life of communities that were previously unimaginable.

Given the unsupported state of the arts in many schools, (Upitis and Smithrim, 2003a), it is interesting that the Ontario Ministry of Education's 2009 arts curriculum uses language significantly stronger regarding the role of arts education, than the 1998 arts curriculum it replaces. It reads as an exemplar of the argument that an arts education is integral to education. Throughout the preface, there is repeated emphasis on how experiences in the arts contribute positively toward enabling students to achieve their potential as learners and to participate fully in their community and society. The curriculum recognizes the arts for their role in encouraging the use of imaginative approaches through tools, techniques, and skills to gain insights about the world around them. It makes direct mention of how interacting with artworks emphasizes the validation of commonalities and the celebration of differences. The arts encourage learners to change their ideas of the world.

Furthermore, the 2009 arts curriculum emphasizes that education in the arts is essential to a student's intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth and well-

being. It is based on four central ideas: 1) developing creativity, 2) communicating, 3) understanding culture, and 4) making connections. Major aspects of these ideas are outlined in a chart on page six of the arts curriculum:

- *Developing creativity* involves aesthetic awareness, creative process, problem solving skills, and innovative approaches to a challenge.
- *Communicating* comprises manipulating elements and forms to convey or express thoughts, feelings, messages, or ideas through the arts, using the critical analysis process, constructing and analyzing artworks with a focus on analyzing and communicating the meaning of the work, and using new media and technology to produce artworks and to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas about art.
- *Understanding culture* explores understanding cultural traditions and innovations, constructing personal and cultural identity through a sense of self and “other” locally, nationally, and globally, and making a commitment to social justice and dealing with environmental issues.
- *Making connections* recommends learning experiences that link cognitive and affective domains such as collaborating to create works of art with others, performing in ensembles, and recognizing how the arts relate to other subject areas.

The 2009 arts curriculum states that principals ensure the curriculum is implemented in classrooms “through the use of a variety of instructional approaches, and that appropriate time, facilities, and resources are made available for teachers to allow all students to participate in all four strands of the arts program” (p. 8). At the elementary

level, participation in inclusive exhibitions, concerts, and performances is encouraged. Teachers may have their “students participate in festivals that focus on the curriculum, support the units or sequence of instruction, have clear criteria, are designed for educational purposes, and provide descriptive feedback” (p. 9). Principals are also to promote learning teams and work with teachers to facilitate teacher participation in professional development activities in all curriculum areas, including the arts.

It is timely that community partners are described as an important resource in arts education and that collaboration between schools and community partners are presented as enriching schools and their communities. Schools and school boards are encouraged to develop existing links with local communities and to create new partnerships that follow ministry and school board policies.

A significant conundrum exists, though, in this curricular document. Though arts expectations have been raised for teachers and have been raised for principals in encouraging their staff to accomplish it, the ministry has offered no funding is to facilitate these implementations. If the arts are valued as highly by the Ministry as this document suggests, how has the Ministry enabled principals to actually fulfill this responsibility? Does this impact how a principal would view a model for encouraging some aspects of the arts curriculum provided by the school community if this were possible without charge? If a community provides a venue to strengthen school-based arts at no cost to participants, is this an instance of meaningful community participation in the education of students? The 2009 arts curriculum suggests that schools and school boards are to develop existing links with local communities and to create new partnerships that

follow ministry and school-based policies, given the economic realities that all communities presently face.

A premise of arts education is expressed in the opening quote of Ontario's 2009 arts curriculum, taken from *The Arts Go to School*:

Since arts experiences offer other modes and ways of experiencing and learning, children *will* have opportunities to think and feel as they explore, problem solve, express, interpret, and evaluate the process and the results. To watch a child completely engaged in an arts experience is to recognize that the brain is on, driven by the aesthetic and emotional imperative to make meaning, to say something, represent what matters. (2009 p. 15) [Emphasis added]

Shannon (1992) suggests there is value in recognizing the context of community in the profound interdependence of learning and life, education and society. There are timely and compelling arguments for education communities to investigate new ways to support the delivery of the arts curriculum. This case study explores the RYFA and in light of the demonstrated need to develop for cost-effective ways to facilitate students' positive exposure to the arts, the findings and discussion may encourage further conversations within the education community about strengthening the value and delivery of the school-based arts in these days. If so, the case study has served its purpose.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

*Art gives us a means to create community, to connect with each other. It allows us freedom to imagine things as they could be otherwise ... the journey is more significant than the end result ... teaching empathy through art is significant because we are helping children become thoughtful individuals within a community (p. 47).*

Phillips

This chapter outlines the history and development of ideas surrounding children's educational experiences and the role the arts play in enhancing that process. The literature reviewed highlights the special place of the arts in engaging emotion, imagination, and reflection for students of all learning styles and the impact upon students of rich and empathetic learning experiences in the arts. These issues were interwoven within the findings of this case study, which I believe provides useful talking points for schooling communities as they explore ways in which to implement the arts curriculum in these days. A community-based arts celebration may inform one type of model to consider in the delivery of arts education in Ontario's schools.

A new scholarship has emerged in the last decade that has focused on John Dewey's educational legacy and his idea on how education affects society and the central place of active interaction in encouraging students to make connections between the classroom, their actual communities, and world view concerns (Hyttén, 2000). John Dewey (1934) believed that rich learning experiences are enabled through moments of intensified engagement, stating unequivocally that the arts break through the barriers that divide human beings and "renders men aware of their union with one another in origin

and destiny” (p. 271). During aesthetic moments when our senses are fully alive and engaged (Flannery, 1977), we are moved emotionally through our sense of smell, taste, touch, sight, and hearing, and our learning can deepen in its knowledge and complexity (Heid, 2005). Hank Weddington (2004) views genuine education as ongoing, aesthetic experiences of transforming human interaction and believes that these moments involve care, responsibility, vulnerability, and emotional investment. I believe that the arts have a special place in enabling some of the most important things educators can do for learning communities: to think deeply and develop reflective habits of the heart and mind.

### **The Role of the Senses and Emotions in Learning Experiences**

Enabling learning is central to education. Our senses are the first avenues to consciousness and these learning experiences are the very stuff of life, according to Elliot Eisner in *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002). Far from imagining that senses and emotions confuse “meaning making” in the learning process, Eisner contends that when educators pose questions and reflect about what students see, hear, feel, and experience, students will learn to explore issues with greater insight, sensitivity, and intelligence. In some circles, the arts are viewed as an emotional and subjective way of knowing rather than an intellectual one (Eisner, 1972), thus rendering them less useful. However, I believe that the arts develop our capacity to understand by giving opportunities to learn and to think in special ways by deepening and broadening the complexities of our lived experiences. Although many learning theorists have been historically concerned with the issues surrounding sensory engagement and attention, investigation is limited if we do not also recognize phenomena, such as the arts which are remarkably effective in sustaining attention (Sullivan, 2000). In my own experience as a teacher, I have noticed

how engaged students can become in arts performances, both as performers and as members of an audience. Literature recognizes the significant ways in which the arts engage the senses and emotions that involve learners in their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of their educative environments.

The role emotions play in facilitating learning cannot be underestimated, and the connection between emotional awareness and cognition is significant (Heid, 2005). Emotions, cognition, and sensory impressions are inexorably linked because our mind and feelings process powerfully together. Recent cognitive neurological research reveals that one without the other is damaging to cognition. Antonio Damasio (1994, 2003) reported instances in which patients with injuries to areas of the brain where feelings and emotions are processed suffer basic cognitive function deficiencies and have difficulty making decisions. There is growing evidence that cognition and emotions should be studied together, and the role of emotions is emerging as a significant theme in learning theory (Bresler, 2006). Cognition is integral to learning, and since emotions are meaningfully engaged through the arts, sensory perception, and feelings can translate into ways we find and make sense of our experiences.

### **The Role of Imagination in Learning Experiences**

The arts are central in imaginative learning experiences. Maxine Greene (1995b) extends conversations about the essential place of the emotions in learning environments by further arguing that the arts kindle imagination and this in her view is truly one of most valuable kinds of learning education can offer. Heid agrees (2005, p. 3), noting that:

[W]hat is especially important in understanding aesthetics is that, at its core, we are engaging with the world and the wonder of life ... by learning to attend to the smallest nuances of art and of life, we may find a deeper presence within ourselves and within our world. That deeper presence may

let loose imagination, passions, curiosity, and sometimes extraordinary circumstances.

Arthur Efland states that imagination is encountered and explored in full consciousness within the arts:

Making a place for the arts means giving oneself over to either the ornamental fringes of knowledge or to the abandonment of the hard facts of reality . . . the arts are places where the constructions of the imagination can and should become the principle object of study, where it is necessary to understand that the visual image or verbal expression are not literal facts but embodiments of meanings to be taken in some other light. (2004, p. 769)

This view of cognition recognizes that learning within the arts is a process beyond literal understanding, a process that involves metaphorical and imaginative attributes that have a unique role in releasing this conscious, imaginative capacity (Greene, 1995a). It is important for educators to distinguish between aesthetic learning and mere exposure to art. Entering into learning imaginatively, perceptually, affectively, and cognitively is different from knowing about a concept in an academic sense that is devoid of affect and imagination (Greene, 1995a).

A noted educational theorist intrigued by the role of emotions and imagination in learning is Kieran Egan. In his recently released book, *The Future of Education: Reimagining Our Schools from the Ground Up* (2008), he continues to develop his ideas about the features of our minds, suggesting that these features are integral to the way we make sense of the world. Since education can be viewed as the process of maximizing these cognitive toolkits, accessing them is vital to learning experiences. Egan (1997) identifies these kinds of understandings as somatic, mythic, romantic, philosophic, and ironic. Among the educational implications of these tools is the role of the emotions and humour. Dialogue with RYFA participants often included the place of feelings and



humour as their most memorable festival moments. Egan feels that educators have undervalued their importance, since he views them as fundamental to flexible, imaginative, and creative thought.

### **Arts and the Role in “Meaning Making”**

Making sense of our experiences is central to a meaningful educational experience. Not only do the arts engage our senses and emotions in unique ways that may deepen our learning, but aesthetic experiences also tend to prompt us to reflect and think (Catterall, 2005; Eisner, 2002; Goodman, 1984; Parsons and Blocker, 1993). These reflective experiences often open opportunities to find meaning in our lived experience. Since our educational institutions are designed to prepare students to meet societal challenges, the arts have a special place in the education experience because they can enable a student to problem solve, think critically, attend to detail, collaborate, contemplate, and creatively express his or her own perspective (Yorke-Viney, 2007).

Learning environments are enhanced in many ways when the arts are central to the curricula. These experiences with the arts encourage authentic conversations out of which questioning, critical thinking, and in time, significant inquiry arises. We can gain understanding through these experiences (Goodman, 1984). Angela Elster & Kate Eccles (2005) suggest that the arts put us in touch with subtlety, nuance, and multiple possibilities because when they are infused into the whole life of the child, functional learning with multi-layered dimensions of context, applicability, and meaning-making, become possible. Jesse Goodman and Julie Teel reflect on how the “humanities and arts have the power to awaken imagination, the critical consciousness and multiple perspectives that raise our consciousness and thus make it possible to create meaningful

social worlds” (1998, p. 69). Greene applauds these efforts, because “encounters with the arts nurture and sometimes promote the growth of individuals who reach out to one another as they seek clearings in their experience and try to live more ardently in the world” (1995a, p. 381). Greene (2000a) also suggests that students attending exhibitions and live performances add to the modalities in which students make sense of their worlds. Indeed, experiences in “living more ardently in the world” are significant, and in “Texts and Margins” (1991), Greene encourages teachers to search for ways to bring this to their students in a genuine, educative sense, for gaining competency and sensitivity in the aesthetic domain allows individuals to live more vivid, intense, and satisfying lives.

### **The Role of the Arts in Learning Experiences for All Students**

The ways in which the arts can draw all students into richer educational experiences is an emerging area of interest for many arts educators today. The landmark report, “Champions of Change: Learning In and Through the Arts” (Fiske, 1999), presents findings from several major research projects on school-based arts involving thousands of students in many schools in the United States, and one of the overall conclusions is that the arts can enhance all domains of learning and expressions of understanding. The arts also can provide motivation generally for students in their schooling situations and thus offer one of the most effective ways to engage, motivate, and excite students is to integrate the arts into content areas (Deasy, 2002). Students find these sorts of learning experiences process-oriented, authentic, and meaningful (Catterall, 1999). Thus, it is no surprise, that the arts engage students more deeply in their learning experiences (Aprill, 2004). Of particular interest to me was research that suggests that at times, the arts can attract students who have been excluded -from educational endeavours

(Deasy, 2002). Fowler (1996) contends that the arts can be inclusive of all learners, and I see value in creating opportunities for students to experience learning situations that are inclusive of all learners, of all learning styles, like those reported at the RYFA.

Few things impact students more than presence or absence of empathy in learning situations and the arts have a special role to play for all students in this regard. In *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (1994), Eisner asks:

What of a student's experience at school? How does he feel about what he is doing? Is what she is learning becoming a part of her worldview? Are the major lessons he is learning those that are being taught? Let's look at how students interact with one another .... we must seek an empathetic understanding of the kind of lives children lead in school. But this means that we must make judgments, that we must attend to what is not easily standardized, and that we must get to know students as people. (p. 362)

Max van Manen (1990) emphasizes the value of the relationships an educator strives to develop by understanding a learner's difficulties, knowing how to listen, seeing each child as a unique being, understanding their fears and vulnerabilities, encouraging the learner's success, remaining patient and supportive, and being reliable, trusted by, and available to children. At times, testing is the defining feature in the educational landscape of children and teachers, and thus, intentional efforts to search for ways to connect with the children who may remain invisible and disconnected from much of what is taught in schools are valuable, according to Susan Goetz Zwim and Mark Graham (2005). These students in particular can be at risk of becoming bored, and Greene insists that there is no better argument for the relevance of the arts in schools than the fact that boredom and a sense of futility are among the most powerful obstacles to learning. In *A Light in Dark Times—Maxine Greene and the Unfinished Conversation*, she is quoted as saying:

The arts are the greatest key in developing motivation and fighting boredom for all. The sense of boredom, the sense of emptiness, the sense of disenfranchisement, the sense of hopelessness, is easily combated by the activities associated with the arts (Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 70).

In this regard, the arts can encourage students' motivation to learn. Increased exposure to the arts reportedly encourages more consistent school attendance, greater creativity, and better social skills (Fiske, 1999). The arts can attract students who have been pushed away from other opportunities at school (Catterall & Waldorf, 1999).

### **The Arts and Empathy—Deeper Learning**

The arts provide students with experiences that allow for deeper learning. Bennet Reimer, in *A Philosophy of Music Education* (1989), suggests that as we come to understand more about how the human mind works and how it produces knowledge, we are better able to understand the special cognitive status of the arts and the authentic, essential ways in which they involve people in intelligent, reasoned, mindful experience. For instance, he explains that a child may be taught all sorts of things about a fruit called an apple, and the student may grasp the concept thoroughly. Yet once a student tastes and eats an apple, he or she has a deeper understanding of what an apple is and experiences it in a different way. This understanding through the senses is of a different order and Reimer contends that when we discuss the value of the arts in education, we cannot rest, philosophically or professionally, until we have discussed the unique way in which the arts draw students into learning in a different, deeper way.

Egan (1997) speaks of how the basics of our educational development are within the arts as techniques within language enable us to make sense of our world. He views early learners as poets and proposes that the first kind of understanding we experience is somatic. Opportunities for children to engage emotionally and imaginatively in their

learning situations, matter. Weddington contends that genuine education is grounded in the “the embodiment of human perceptual interaction for transformation carried out with care, responsibility, vulnerability and emotional investment” (2004, p. 124). The arts cultivate empathy, or as Stout contends, “a disposition for sympathetic awareness” (1999, p. 33). Weddington contends that Dewey viewed interactive engagement as a mode for all human existence and that all aesthetic experiences are educative for “they prepare the individual for future interactions of a deeper quality and create a desire for an ever-unfolding transformative growth” (Weddington, 2004, p. 124). In this regard, Greene (1991) defines transformative self-learning as a process of “wide-awakeness,” when we become more cognitively, emotionally, physically, aesthetically, and spiritually attuned to others and ourselves. In growth-oriented public spaces, Greene (2000b) suggests that we can learn to activate our imaginations, appreciate new insights, and welcome the interplay of different perspectives.

The arts have a place in encouraging this interplay of different perspectives and Patricia Ramsay (2006) specifically states that we need to encourage children to empathize with individuals and groups that they are not familiar with, as this reduces the tendency to make negative causal attributions about strangers. This interplay also reduces the tendency to stereotype groups not like one’s own, and Ramsay advises creating opportunities for children to recognize how underneath the diversity of cultures and group norms, everyone has similar feelings and reactions to life events.

There is a clarion call out to educators to look for opportunities where this may be done:

The world of the 21st century [calls] for a profoundly different, deeply democratic system of public schooling based on constant attention to the

lives of individual children and to the familial and community worlds from which those children come. It is a system of schooling whose most important aim is the creation of decent, compassionate, human individuals who are, in Anita Teeter's words, "Caring adults, builders of communities, sharers of learning, lovers of the printed word, citizens of the world, nurturers of nature." (Clincy, 1997, pp. 8-9)

Ramsay (2006) refers to this as making room in students' minds for others' ideas, wishes, and perspectives and I believe there may be a place for school arts-based youth festivals to accomplish this by embracing and involving schools from public, private, and parochial schooling sectors. This sort of learning opportunity for students reminds me of what Patricia Ramsay envisions as useful learning spaces where children are caring and critically aware of diversity. The intent is to have learners constructively and deeply engaged with each other through sharing the arts with one another, with the premise that diversity involves focusing on the awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of human difference (Hawthorne and Henderson, 2000). Michael Parsons suggests that our society and the kinds of problems we face are changing rapidly:

Our problems are becoming more complex . . . a socially relevant education would prepare students by focusing the curriculum on such problems. In addition, students need a more integrated personality, greater awareness of self, and more understanding and tolerance of others..." (Parsons, cited in Eisner & Day, 2004, p. 775)

He argues that a stronger curricular emphasis on personal wholeness, awareness of self, and more understanding of others would better prepare students for the future, and these issues have long been linked with art education. Finally, Parsons mentions how Judith Burton, in her 2000 article, "The Configuration of Meaning," values students working through their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes in such a way that their learning constructs a consistent picture of their world and their place in it. Through this process, the student

gradually makes sense of his or her own experiences. Art experiences, naturally lend themselves to this sort of experience of the senses and of meaning-making.

### **Ontario Arts Curriculum —Rhetoric and Reality Concerning Access**

In 1994, the Ontario government's Royal Commission on Learning reported that "art is the major route to learning for many students, their most developed 'intelligence,' and their best way of solidifying foundational skills ... saving money by targeting arts programs probably does a disservice to all students, and can impose a particular hardship on many of them." Eisner (2001b), in "What does it mean to say a school is doing well?," views the current lack of emphasis on the arts as detrimental to a complete education. First, standards-based reforms led to increased expectations for students who were evaluated by standardized tests. Over time, the emphasis in instruction was put on the subject areas examined in these quantitative, standardized tests. This focus on tests as indices of student success deemphasized teaching for knowledge and the ability to think critically. Consequently, aligning curriculum and instruction to suit multiple-choice assessment became the normative practice. Thus, Eisner believes that in part, the arts are rare because the response to educational reform in the last decade was to have school districts narrow the delivery of curriculum into what was to be "tested" rather than what was to be taught. In the forward to *Transformative Curriculum Leadership* by Hawthorne and Henderson, Eisner states his belief that the current reform agenda is not motivated by "humanistic visions of the possibilities of human consciousness" (2000, p. iii), but that it reflects, instead, fears about national economic issues. He warns that what test scores best predict is other test scores: the purpose of schooling is not to enable students to do better

in school; the purpose of schooling is to enable students to do better in life (2001b), yet the arts continue to be deemphasized.

This problem is not specific to the United States. The narrowing of curriculum to what can be tested is now evident in Canadian schools, and Upitis and Smithrim (2003a) report a lack of arts instruction in many elementary schools. Although arts educators have advocated for decades that the visual and performing arts should have a central place in the intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social development of students, education delivery often relegates the arts to a low status. Often they are relegated to being a course elective, useful as extracurricular “rainy day” programs (Cohen & Gainer 1995). David Darts (2006) contends that there is a common belief, both within and outside of education circles, that arts education is a frill that can be eliminated in times of financial constraint.

The 2008 annual report on Ontario’s public schools, published by People for Education and titled *Schools At The Centre*, states that the majority of elementary schools do not have music specialists. Funding for specialists is generated by the numbers of teachers at a given school so it is not surprising that only the largest schools have them. No provincial funding is specifically dedicated to the arts by the Ministry of Education. Much of schools’ art programming or arts enrichment is paid for by parents. Many schools are not in a position to fundraise for the arts:

There are many communities without the capacity to raise money for things like musical instruments, arts supplies, and other forms of arts enrichment. And there are many families who cannot afford the fees in secondary schools. Often, the communities with the least capacity to fundraise are also home to the students who have little or no access to formal arts programs outside of school. (p. 15)



Setting up elite schools helps some students but does not allow for equitable delivery of arts programs. As Walter Pitman (1998) points out, although some public schools specialize as arts schools, setting up elite arts schools for those who envision future employment in the field does not address the principle that every child should be brought to a level of arts literacy that will help facilitate a joyful and productive life.

### **The Ontario Arts Curriculum 2009—Two New Partners**

The Ontario Ministry of Education's 2009 arts curriculum emphasizes that arts are a subject area well suited to encouraging creative insights about the world around us, including diverse cultures and perspectives. Students are to be given opportunities to interact with artworks that highlight and validate commonalities shared in communities and to reflect on how differences can be celebrated. The arts are recognized as uniquely suited to draw learners into questioning their ideas of the world.

The curriculum also introduced two new partners, principals and the community, who are to have roles and responsibilities in arts education, alongside parents, teachers, and students. Specifically, the 2009 arts curriculum entrusts principals to build relationships with their communities and to ensure that the arts curriculum is properly implemented by making certain appropriate resources available. Furthermore, community partners are mentioned as having a role and responsibility as important resource for a school's arts program as well.

The inclusion of community partners reflects a holistic understanding of students and their cultural backgrounds as expressed by Nel Noddings in "A Morally Defensible Mission for Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (1995), who insists that education, above all, focuses on skills central to human life. Integral to this process is the sense in which

caring is a strong, resilient response toward human life that involves embracing a sense of wonder and appreciation for life and its technical, natural, cultural, and spiritual worlds. Impressions of community values and beliefs make an impact on our expectations and guide our decisions and behaviours. As Ramsay noted in 2006, “All of us—children *and* adults—are influenced by our social, political, and economic context. As we grow up, we absorb our communities’ values and beliefs, which, in turn, form our expectations and guide our decisions and behaviours” (p. 16). Ramsay further points out that an enriched knowledge of self involves realizing that we each have a unique history of experiences and that, throughout our lives, we construct individual lenses through which we view the world. I believe that the inclusion of community partners reflects this sort of understanding in the 2009 arts curriculum for Ontario’s schools.

With respect to the impact of the arts upon our lives, the arts and our need as humans to make some things special is just as vital to our life experiences as food and shelter, according to Ellen Dissanayake in “The Pleasure and Meaning of Making” (1995). She notes that the arts originated and thrived for most of human history as a communal activity, and their existence mattered to us almost as much as survival. These gatherings mobilized, coordinated, and unified the members of the social group, ensuring they worked together in a common cause in the conviction that their values and worldview mattered. Since the earliest days of humankind, greater prosperity accrued to groups who worked together in common purpose, confidence, and harmony, based at least partially upon their ceremonial activities. Thus, the arts were an instrumental feature unifying any given culture. Dissanayake (2009) also highlights that the arts are special in the way they distinguish our lives from the mundane, for within “artifying,” one shapes

or elaborates their everyday, mundane reality, thereby transforming it into something special.

Bollnow (1989) similarly views ceremonies and celebrations as indispensable aspects of human community and school life, for daily routines are disrupted and time is given over to celebratory gatherings, gatherings which he views as being integral to life, and thus, to a complete education. Their purpose is to lift us out of the narrow boundaries of our everyday existence and allow us to experience a deeper communion, a new sense of belonging within our community. Fostering moments when individuals sense their shared humanity is to be highly valued according to Upitis (2003), who reported on the impact of integrated arts programs on thousands of students in Ontario. It reported that scholars and philosophers world-wide argue that the arts are part of what makes us human and thus are an important feature in the education of young people and their early perceptions about the world around them.

### **The Arts and Larger Concerns of Pedagogy and Society**

Exploring ideas in the education community that enable the arts affects larger concerns of pedagogy and society. Eisner, in the foreword to Hawthorne and Henderson's *Transformative Curriculum Leadership* (2000), argues that:

After all, democracy itself recognizes that human development is a social affair; we feed off the contributions of others; indeed, we learn from those who are least like ourselves. In this sense, schools are communities within which the diverse talents of students, teachers, school administrators, and the public at large can contribute their perspectives, their arguments, and their aspirations to create not only a vision of educational virtue, but an organization that is effective is realizing such a vision. . . . It is through the interactions of the social and the individual that growth occurs. (p. iv )

Dewey notes that art is a “part of the significant life of an organized community” (1934, p. 7). The impact of the arts is important to the way we live and relate to one another in our communities:

Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life. But they are also marvellous aids in the creation of such a life. The remaking of the material of experience in the act of expression is not an isolated event confined to the artists and to a person here and there who happens to enjoy the work. In the degree in which art exercises its office, it is also a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity. (Dewey, 1934, p. 81)

Ramsay (2006) explains that collaborative communities are not simply about members contributing to the success of the whole group. Collaboration in this sense involves taking responsibility for supporting each other, respecting and learning from the various strengths of community members, and having the intrinsic satisfaction of learning and growing together along the way. Aprill (2005) concludes that there has been a fair amount of excited discussion and writing in recent years about the need to reclaim the arts as a basic part of a complete education, framing it as being central to young people’s development and to new networks of educators, artists, parents, and young people who have developed coherent programs expanding the role and deepening the value of the arts in schools and communities. Aprill senses that a fundamental shift has occurred in relationships between education communities and arts communities within networks of shared interest. Shannon (1992) commends education done in the context of community, as it illustrates the profound interdependence of learning and life, of education and society.

According to Hawthorne and Henderson (2000), one of the most effective ways to ignite and sustain change in schooling issues is to 1) invite the community to attend think

tanks on aspects of the curriculum that need to be addressed; and 2) to develop school/community networks around an issue, as networks like these can develop trust, open communication, and build mutual respect among parents, community members, and faculty members. They believe that the best transformative work involves people who have the greatest stake in success. It enmeshes the beliefs of real people with the culture of the school, given that transformative curriculum leadership recognizes how progressive people can collaborate toward fundamental change and shifts in power structures that embrace students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders. It values having no single interest group dominate deliberations. These collaborations with community are reciprocal learning experiences for all involved and demonstrate that a significant way to create sustainable changes in school/community power relationships is to create a functioning example of a new arrangement. For example, a group of parents, community members, and faculty members can become advocates for transformative curriculum practice. Patricia Ramsay, in *Teaching and Learning in a Diverse World: Multicultural Education for Young Children* (2006), views these efforts to create communities where roles are flexible and where information is exchanged freely throughout the system as being very powerful. Hawthorne and Henderson (2000) see all educative forms of learning as artistic and aesthetic, believing that the process involved is optimized when the meanings made by individuals are congruent with their own experiences, talents, and aspirations.

According to Greene (1991), political literacy can occur as people experience each other's inter-subjectivity and create projects together for mutual transformation. This idea embraces "community that would have to include in its dialogue women and

men of all classes, backgrounds, colours, and religious faiths, each one free to speak from a distinctive perspective, each reaching from that distinctive perspective toward the making of some common world. And it would have to be a community sharing unabashed love of the arts” (Greene, 1991, p.27).

In conclusion, this chapter on literature highlighted the special place of the arts in engaging emotion, imagination, and reflection for students of all learning styles and the impact upon students of rich and empathetic learning experiences in the arts. I believe these ideas may offer talking points and strategies to encourage school-based arts within schooling communities in Ontario, based on the hopeful new mandate of 2009 arts curriculum.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This thesis investigates an event called the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA), which is a regional student arts festival that has been held annually over several days each May in my county since 1998. This case study provides a first-hand understanding of the event, and considers it for its possible context and for specific themes through sketches that participants made of their most memorable moments at the festival, and through dialogue about questions that considered how the festival was like and dissimilar to arts experiences they had in their schools. When educational researchers want to know more of what children think and feel about their school experiences, a meaningful place to begin is with their drawings, according to Haney, Russell, and Bebell (2004). The case study was designed to explore the RYFA through sketches and dialogue about questions in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the RYFA. The data was collected over a six-month period, beginning in 2007. The purpose of the study is to promote discussion around strategies or models to strengthen and deliver the arts curriculum in Ontario's schools in these days.

In this chapter, I first show why I choose qualitative research within case study design to explore the nature of the RYFA, a student festival that celebrates school-based arts. Next, I explain how this investigation was conducted and finish the chapter by reviewing the limitations of my study.

## Qualitative Inquiry

I chose qualitative inquiry because it is well suited to investigate an event involving students, teachers, and volunteers, because it empowers individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research collects data in natural settings with sensitivity toward the context and individuals involved and allows an enhanced understanding of the context or setting of an issue. It considers the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Findings are inductively analyzed to establish patterns or themes. The final report offers the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex, detailed description, as well as an interpretation of the problem. The study adds to the literature and may provide a call to action.

[A] qualitative approach is appropriate to use to study a research problem when the problem needs to be explored; when a complex, detailed understanding is needed; when the researcher wants to write in a literary, flexible style; and when the researcher seeks to understand the context or setting of participants. (Creswell, 2007, p.51)

Berg (2007) says that human interactions form the central data of qualitative inquiry and suggests that the theory of “symbolic interactionism,” a term coined by Blumer (1969), describes participants’ perspectives and their ability to take the roles of others. As individuals experience an event, they can attend and imagine the feelings of others. Key is an understanding that human behaviour and opinions can involve empathy.

In choosing qualitative research, assumptions, worldviews, and certain philosophical assumptions are made, and these have implications for the research results:

- Ontological: What is the nature of reality?;



- Epistemological: What is the relationship between the researcher and those being researched?;
- Axiological: What is the role of values?;
- Rhetorical: What is the language of research?; and
- Methodological: What is the process of research? (Creswell, 2003)

This case study reflected these issues in its design:

- Reality is subjective and multiple, therefore the researcher uses quotations and describes themes in the words of participants and provides evidence of different perspectives;
- The researcher does not attempt to distance himself or herself from participants in the study. Rather, the researcher spends time in the field with participants and becomes an “insider”;
- The researcher acknowledges that research is value laden and that biases are present, and so is open to discuss values that shape the narrative, including personal interpretation along with the interpretations of participants;
- The research is written in an informal style using the personal voice and uses qualitative terms in the case study reports, such as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, *confirmability*, or *validation*; and
- The researcher, using inductive logic, may modify the data collection process to include new questions as the study develops.

### **Case Study**

I chose to do a case study because within qualitative inquiry, case study design is useful when a “bounded” system, such as an arts festival, is being investigated (Merriam,

1998). This case study describes a single event being studied over a set period of six months, within a given population, by gathering data about impressions elicited by dialogue around two questions that the study participants knew in advance. It functions under “natural conditions” (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998), that is, a school setting in the school district. Data was collected during a six-month period from October 2007 to March 2008. This case study of the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA) seeks to provide a first-hand understanding of a bounded, contemporary, real life event, and explores it for its possible context and specific themes.

Case study is well suited within qualitative inquiry when a deep understanding of a phenomenon is explored. Berg (2007) discusses how case study informs theory. He indicates that case studies provide a sort of deep understanding similar to Geertz’s (1973) notion of “thick description” and so they enable “sense making” processes created and used by individuals involved in the event being examined (Weick, 1995). “Sense making is the manner in which people, groups and organizations make sense of stimuli with which they are confronted, how they frame what they see and hear, how they perceive and interpret this information, and how they interpret their own actions and go about solving problems and interacting with others” (Berg, 2007, p. 285).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) view human behaviour as an ongoing and negotiated interpretation of objects, events, and situations. Similarly, Berg (2007) indicates that researchers can understand the meanings that emerge from these interactions by either entering into the defining process or developing a sufficient appreciation for the process so that understandings become clear. Case study guides the researcher to concentrate on a

single phenomenon in order to identify the interactions of significant factors (Berg, 2007).

Three main types of case studies can be done: 1) intrinsic, 2) instrumental, and 3) collective (Stake (1995, 2000). I chose to do an instrumental study because I was interested in how a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon, the RYFA experience might inform school-based arts education. During a conversation, The Ontario Arts Council indicated that the RYFA is unique as a school-based arts celebration organized by the community in which schools (whether public, separate, or private) are embraced. Thus, this study involves exploring a novel event in the arts education program of several schools in my region of Ontario.

Case study design, with its emphasis on thoroughly exploring one phenomenon, is ideal for studying the RYFA as it might inform a model for delivering school-based arts education. It recognizes each person's situatedness in constructing experience and understanding in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible (Creswell, 2007). Case studies are particularly suited to open-ended questions asked within a real life context. Unlike positivistic perspective studies, case studies strive for a holistic interpretation of the event or situation under study (Creswell, 2007). Researchers are bound not by cause and effect relationships, but rather by identifying the complex interactions of factors in a given situation, as expressed by the participants themselves. Furthermore, Creswell states that one of the strongest and most scholarly rationales for a case study is to fill a void in existing literature, to establish a new line of thinking or to assess an issue with an understudied group or population. It is hoped that this study of a unique school-based arts festival may usefully contribute to the body of

existing literature. Haney, Russell, and Bebell (2004) state that when educational researchers want to know more about what children think and feel in their school experiences, a useful medium of research is their drawings.

This study will 1) extend the use of drawings by children, adolescents, and adults in researching about the educational ecology of schools by including data from individuals in the school community; and 2) explores arts education in a community setting, which is a novel research focus. The questions of the study are:

1. In what ways are the arts education experiences of the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA) similar to, and different from, school-based arts education?; and
2. In what ways might the RYFA experience serve as a model for school-based arts education?

## **Data**

Berg (2007) reviews current educational research and indicates that there is growing concern that if only one source case study data were considered, the validity of the case study findings may be suspect. Triangulation strengthens the validity of the findings when it reflects multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Merriam, 1998) This process, in part, involves collating evidence from different sources to reveal possible themes. This study gathered data from various sources including students, teachers, volunteers and their drawings and dialogue. Denzin (1978) indicates that one aspect of triangulation, data variety, has three subtypes: 1) time, 2) space, and 3) person. This research design varied all three.

The statements were collected for this study using interviewing procedures of varying lengths and styles:

- Time and style: 15-minute interviews for 27 students, 60-minute focus sessions for 9 teachers, and 60-minute single person interviews with 3 festival volunteers. I gathered the data over various intervals during a half-year period.
- Space: I used various locations for the sessions: several school settings, empty classrooms, libraries, and offices.
- Person: I gathered data from students, teachers, volunteers and my own experience.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection in case study is typically extensive and draws on multiple sources of information and several procedures (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Data was drawn from three sources: 1) drawings; 2) transcribed recordings of the various interview situations; and 3) narrative.

### **Drawings**

I used drawings because research has shown that children's drawings can reflect what they think and feel about their school experiences. Haney, Russell, and Bebell (2004) support their use on a macro level because drawings have been shown to inform education practice and learning.

Drawings have been used for decades as markers and mirrors of personal identity. They offer a different glimpse into human sense making than written or spoken texts do because they can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, and the subconscious (Haney et al, 2004). Adults

are usually considered to have an advantage over children in areas of oral and written expression (Wilson & Wilson, 1979). In our print-oriented cultures, drawing puts children on a more equal footing with adults in terms of expression. Drawings by children, adolescents, and adults have unusual power to document educational ecology and encourage reflection (Haney et al., 2004; Weber and Mitchell, 1995). Yet drawings have only recently been used in this way. Both research groups stress the high value of inquiring into students' own conceptions of their educational experiences and learning through drawings. I began the interview sessions by asking participants to look back on their festival experience and sketch something memorable. I had prepared the participants for drawing by telling them about this feature, ahead of time, in their information forms. The design of this study had a novel research focus, as it included drawings not only by children, but by adults as well.

### **Interviews**

A second source of data used in this study was the statements of individuals interviewed. Denzin (1989) defines the method as a conversation with the purpose of gathering information. After the participants had sketched a memorable scene or event, I asked them about it, using questions such as, "Can you tell me about your drawing?" "Why do you remember the arts experience in this way?" "How is it similar to, and different from, other arts-based activities at school?" I audiotape all of the interviews.

I used two different approaches, semi-standardized interviews and the extended focus group procedure, to try to gain an understanding, the deep structure of knowledge that comes from personally interviewing participants, and to probe to obtain detailed meanings (Berg, 2007). Creswell (2007) considers "validation" in qualitative research to

be an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings as best described by the researcher and the participants. Any report of research is acknowledged as a representation of the author through the detailed thick description, and the value of this is enhanced by how close the researcher is to the participants in the study. My personal involvement in the festival as a coordinator, is recognized and discussed as part of the informed understandings I brought to this as a researcher.

I used the semi-standardized interview with the students and the festival volunteers so I could adjust the language I used for the various age levels of the participants. A formal structured interview procedure would have limited me to using the questions exactly as worded. This allowed for age appropriate conversation and clarification as necessary, since children in primary, intermediate and senior grades were participating, as well as teachers and volunteers. The two predetermined questions were asked in a systematic order; however, I took the liberty to digress and probe beyond the answers in dialogue, if appropriate: a semi-standardized interview approach gave this flexibility. Qualitative research design includes open-ended research questions that can be used to explore the topic further according to their answers, which is particularly suited to the hour-long interviews with the festival volunteers.

I used focus groups with the teachers because they allow participants to hear ideas and use those concepts in formulating their opinions and, in this way, can capture the complexity of the human experience and provide valuable information (Creswell, 2007). I used a tactic known as the extended focus group procedure. In this design, participants came somewhat prepared for focus group dialogue, because they knew ahead of time

from the permission and information letters, about the material to be discussed and the sketching to be done.

### **My Own Story**

I also used my own story as a data source. Creswell (2007) views the slow process of collecting data and analyzing the data, as a narrative.

We present the study following the traditional approach to scientific research, i.e., problem, questions, method, and findings. We talk about our experiences in conducting the study, and how they shape our interpretations of the results. We let the voices of our participants speak and carry the story through dialogue, perhaps as dialogue. (Creswell, 2007, p.43)

Furthermore, at some point we ask, “Did we get the story right?” (Stake, 1995). Creswell (2007) cites Wolcott (1994) in emphasizing that there are no right stories, only multiple stories and that perhaps qualitative studies do not have endings, only questions.

My story deepens the understanding of the context of this case study. I begin the discussion section of this study with the story of what in my background and journey brought me to the idea of the festival, the experiences that caught my imagination along the way, and why it may be time to tell the story. I included my drawing and story to provide additional context for interpretation of the findings. Human science is interested in the world as we find it (van Manen 1990). “Unlike research approaches in other social sciences which may make use of experimental or artificially created test situations, human science wishes to meet human beings—men, women children—there were they are naturally engaged in their worlds” (van Manen, 199 p.18). In *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness* (1991) van Manen discusses how educators continue to strive to foster rich human educative environments for children. As



I reflected on my most memorable experiences in the arts, I realized how I had come to tell a story about my own journey in this respect which unfolds over time.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the narrative is suited to capture and investigate experiences as human beings live them in time, in space, in person and in relationship. They view humans as storytelling beings who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives and thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways we experience the world. Narrative can capture in a unique ways, the complexity of human interaction, the impact of the arts, and speaks to the importance of emotional, imaginative, and sensory response. Furthermore, they suggest that, research is a collaborative document, a constructed story from both the lives of both researcher and participant that provides context and understanding in part to the “experiential whole.” My story, attached as Appendix A, adds context to the case study and reflects a growing awareness of what the arts have meant to me and continue to mean to me. It is useful in offering, in part, my experiences as a student, novice performer, teacher, parent, volunteer, and community member.

### **Data Analysis**

To identify the evident threads in the data, I used a spiral data analysis approach, which John Creswell (2007) recommends in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Five Approaches*.

I conducted a content analysis (Berg, 2007) on the data to holistically identify themes and to provide a detailed description rich in the understanding of its context (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Using categorical aggregation, one of the four forms of data analysis, which Stake (1995) recommends, I searched for themes in the data looking for

issues and relevant meanings. I began by reading the transcriptions a number of times to get a sense of the database. This allowed me to identify phrases, ideas, and key concepts. Then I analyzed the data from each participant's drawings and remarks and identified themes, through memoing. I then compared, contrasted, sorted, and synthesized those themes and from them emerged 11 themes that transcended individual data.

I conducted a second content analysis through the lens of these 11 themes to validate the new themes and to identify representative samples that exemplified each of the evident threads. Finally, I organized the 11 threads into broader categories, not to generalize beyond the case data, but to facilitate understanding the complexity of the case data. The four categories or overall threads that emerged were community, arts showcasing, inclusivity, and special nature of the RYFA itself in celebrating the arts. I used these themes to organize the findings and the discussion. (The titles of themes are taken from the words from those interviewed.)

## **Ethics**

Practical issues involved in conducting this research were carefully detailed in the application to conduct research with the local school board. Permission from the regional school board was granted to conduct research with their students. The protocol is outlined in online documents available at the school board, and includes criteria that satisfy the use and non-disclosure of personal and confidential information pursuant to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O., 1990, c. M.56. Specifically, these documents include the procedure manual, which directs research projects in schools, as well as the accompanying research application forms and letters. Practically speaking, the protocol involved requesting permission by October 15, 2007

from the Superintendent and Research Liaison Committee. This was done in accordance with the board policy to conduct research designed to produce a minimum of inconvenience for staff and students, and was in full compliance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The interviewer had to have a police record check and the scheduling and supervision were negotiated with the principals in whose schools the research was done. The superintendent addressed questions and problems related to the execution of the research.

With the permission of the regional school board, principals were invited to participate in the research and to offer the opportunity to participate to students and teachers who had attended the RYFA. The regional school board Research Letter to Parents was sent home to those parents whose children were involved in the RYFA. Similar letters were given to RYFA organizers, volunteers, and parents to describe the research project and to invite their voluntary participation. A copy is in Appendix B. The documentation used to inform and obtain consent from the potential participants about the research consisted of the Letter of Information and the Consent Form. Wording regarding the participant's consent complied with the University of Western Ontario policies and procedures, and participants were given a copy of the Letter of Information to keep for reference. With respect to risks or possible discomfort to research participants, the research presented no particular risks or discomfort with respect to physical emotional, social, economic risks and stressors. In this study, gathering data through interviews and focus groups did not bring up uncomfortable or controversial issues. The benefit to participants of the population being studied was to have an opportunity to reflect on their RYFA experience. This case study was designed to explore

questions about the arts in terms of dialogue and sketches with participants. It was not the intention of this study to comment upon the efforts of a school board, the administrators or educators to deliver the arts in these days of unprecedented challenge and change within school communities in Ontario. Case study establishes findings within data of research participants but does attempt to apply them as generalizations experienced necessarily by others. Case studies, though, may prompt useful questions and discussion about issues that appear to be significant in their importance. As an investigator, I have nothing but respect for individuals who persevere as educators. Central to the usefulness of these findings is whether the findings resonate with the experiences of others sufficiently to inspire think tanks to strengthen and deliver school-based arts in days to come.

Once the interviews were arranged at each school, the sessions with students were held in windowed rooms or hall areas close to the students' classrooms. Focus groups with teachers were held in school libraries during or after school hours. Interviews and focus groups with festival organizers and volunteers were held in windowed office meeting rooms.

I took steps to ensure the anonymity of participants and to preserve the confidentiality of data both during the research and in the release of the findings. No names or identifying information were included that could personally identify the participants. Recordings of the audiotaped interviews were stored in a locked cupboard for two years and will be destroyed once the research is completed.

As a graduate student investigator, I applied and received the approval of the Ethics Committee of the University of Western Ontario. The process proved that the

study met the standards of the Ethical Guidelines for the Institutional Review Committees for Research with Human Subjects. The scholarly and scientific validity of the study and the appropriateness of using human subjects were stated in the objective and hypothesis of the research project proposal.

### **Limitations**

Since I have both a personal history with and an appreciation for the RYFA, biases and threats to the validity of this data and analysis were real possibilities. To protect the inquiry from accusations of producing fictitious accounts, the findings were submitted to representative participants; a student, teacher and volunteer were asked to give feedback on how accurately the case study was portrayed and the feedback informed the project. In this way, an opportunity was open for them to present alternative interpretations. Creswell (2003) recommends taking data analysis interpretations and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy of the account. This procedure, along with the inclusion of my own experiences as a narrative, deepens the understanding of the context of this case study

### **Conclusion**

In summary, qualitative inquiry was used in this study to gather data from participants in a school-based festival. As individuals shared their memorable RYFA moments through dialogue and sketches, conscious attempts were made to minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and study participants. Sensitivity was shown towards the participants by collecting the data in natural settings. This study gathered data from several sources to identify themes amongst those interviewed: 1) twenty-seven 15-minute student interviews, 2) three one-hour focus

groups involving three teachers each, and 3) three one-on-one interviews with festival organizers and volunteers. Additionally, my own story explored the issue of the festival impact. The questions I asked, 1) what ways the arts education experiences of the RYFA were similar to, and different from, school-based arts education; and 2) in what ways might the RYFA experience serve as a model for school-based arts education, had not been covered in existing research. The findings explored the meaning the individual participants ascribed to the event. The findings were inductively analyzed to establish patterns or themes, and the findings offer the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and detailed description of the celebration itself. The findings about the unique nature of the celebration may add to the existing literature and be useful in opening up new conversations about strategies to deliver an arts education to students in Ontario.

## Chapter 4

### Research Findings—Evident Threads

The aims of this case study are to better understand the nature of the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA) experience and how it relates and compares to school-based arts education, to see how it might inform a model for the delivery of school-based arts education.

The participants reflected on the festival experience and sketched a memorable scene or event. Then they answered questions, such as “Can you tell me about your drawing?” “Why do you remember the arts experience in this way?” “How is it similar to and different from other arts-based activities at school?”

In total, 27 students, 9 teachers, and 3 festival volunteers participated in the study. An analysis of the transcribed recordings of their interviews and their sketches revealed four evident threads in the data: community, arts showcasing, inclusivity, and rare occurrence. Although the threads can be pulled individually from the rich tapestry of an arts experience, at times, their ideas and colours also blend into one another.

Overall, the most evident threads in the data were how the participants experienced elements of community, either as a performer or an audience member through 1) unity of purpose, 2) audience, 3) affirmation, 4) diversity, and 5) a non-judgmental context.

A second evident thread was that the festival showcased school-based arts. This was reported as 1) inspiring; and 2) a learning experience.

The third thread referred to the festival being inclusive. Participants 1) all students, regardless of academic status; and 2) all teachers, regardless of background or arts experience.

The fourth thread in the data was that the RYFA was a special experience because the arts were not often celebrated.

## **Community**

The first evident thread in the data was the communal nature of the event. The festival enables more than 2,500 students from public, private, and separate school sectors to gather and perform in front of approximately 500 other students and audience members on a given morning. The data described participants experiencing community as a performer and as an audience member. It made an impact on the individuals by leaving them with a sense that they had experienced something larger than they were. The content analysis of the data revealed five elements of community:

1. unity of purpose;
2. audience;
3. affirmation;
4. diversity; and
5. a non-judgmental context.

Each element is discussed in turn below.

### **Unity of purpose**

The data revealed that teachers and students experienced a sense of unifying purpose. Performers and audience members alike described being gathered together to



celebrate the arts. A Grade-3 student mentioned this as she sketched herself alongside another student in her bell choir (Figure 1):

I was nervous at the beginning, but once everyone got into it, I just flooded my mind and nothing else mattered.... “We love the arts.” That’s what I felt. You could tell the audience got into it. We loved it.



**Figure 1: Handbell Players: “We love the arts.”**

A senior student recalled being aware that “everyone [was] so into the arts”:

I just loved how when everyone was up on stage, everyone was so into the arts, and they were so inquisitive, and they were doing something they loved to do. They loved everything about the art. They loved seeing the joy on people’s faces.

One teacher drew an illustration of her students dancing in cat costumes (Figure 2), and she reflected upon how it felt to be gathered with one arts goal in mind:

I really think that one reason that the audience is so positive is that at the beginning of each morning, introductory speakers [students, teachers, and volunteers] talk from their own hearts and experiences

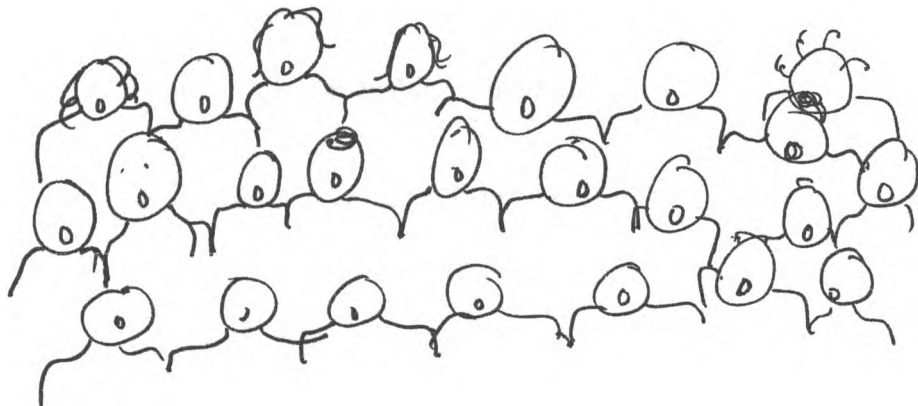
... everyone in the room [is] so proud that we are all gathered in a common goal.



**Figure 2: Proud cats.**

In a focus group session, a teacher talked about students from various ages and schools experiencing the arts as they sang altogether (Figure 3):

I drew my picture of all the children with their mouths open and singing the same note, but the important thing is that they are standing shoulder to shoulder.



**Figure 3: Shoulder-to-Shoulder.**

A sense of unity was reported by a teacher in her first year of teaching:

It is [also] amazing to see the productions from other schools and students, and at all age levels ... neat to experience it with all the schools in the community, showing we are all together, in unison, one big family. As teachers, we sense that and the students do, too.

The value of gathering as a community once a year to celebrate school-based arts as performers and audience was mentioned by another teacher:

After a whole year of teaching, you have taught them certain things in music and it's an opportunity to perform it in that larger venue, which is a great opportunity. That is how it ties into the curriculum; It really enhances it because of the performance opportunity. It all fits together. It is the goal, I think the children like that.

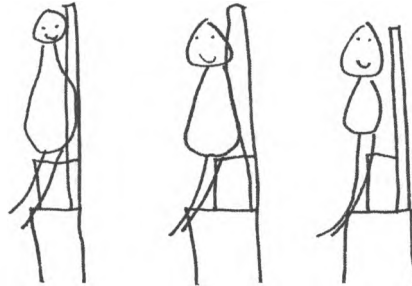
### **Audience**

In addition to talking about a sense of common purpose in celebrating school-based arts together, participants reported that the special nature of the arts audience itself was significant. Specifically mentioned were the applause, large numbers, age ranges, congeniality, and empathetic response. A senior elementary student said the nature of the applause was more supportive than at his school assemblies:

- Student: They were watching you intently, even if you messed up. Everyone would always clap and support you.
- Interviewer: Do you hear applause like that often?
- Student: No, not really. Usually there are not a lot of people coming to a [school] event that are happy to be there and "for" the arts.
- Interviewer: So the festival enables something larger?
- Student: Absolutely.

A primary student whose class had never performed in front of another group of students sketched the audience as his memorable impression (Figure 4). It was a larger arts community than he had known before, and he drew those audience members smiling at him as he performed:

It made me feel really good... I had never gone to a huge place and performed for all these people. It was like five schools.



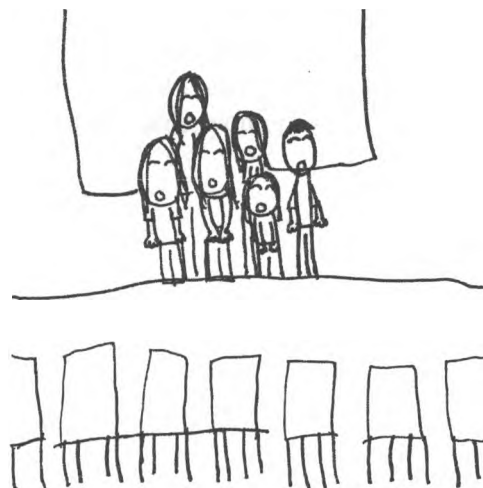
**Figure 4: The audience smiles.**

During one of the focus sessions, a teacher mentioned the contribution made by the larger size of the audience:

They have a larger audience to perform for here [at the festival]. We can't provide that here; we can't provide that in a school setting. It gives us that chance.

While describing her sketch of her school choir in front of the audience (Figure 5), an intermediate student mentioned that it had been the first time they had performed in front of an audience, let alone one of that size. She reported sensing that her own school community connected in a way they had not experienced before:

It was really fun; we don't often get to do it.... It makes all the kids feel like we are all friends.



**Figure 5: First time in front of an audience.**

A sense of the event being a “special” celebration was experienced.

- Interviewer: Is the festival audience different than what you are used to?  
 Student: There are different faces, different smiles. If we were just performing in the gym, it would be the same smiles as any other time. The festival time is different because you are happier, there are different smiles on everyone's heads . . . it's a different building, different people, all those things.

A senior elementary student spoke about the nature of the audience and the empathy he experienced:

Most of the people in the crowd know that they are going to have to get up and perform too, so ... like ... they want to say, "It's okay if you mess up, they are really good." That is what they would want the crowd to say about them if they were up on the stage . . . It's like, "So what? They did well. It doesn't matter." You identify with the people on the stage.

### **Affirmation**

Participants reported feeling affirmed, which is related to how community was experienced. As she sketched her drumming circle (Figure 6), an intermediate student spoke of the "rush of the crowd" and enjoying feeling "proud" of herself.

I'm going to draw the drum circle I was in. It was so fun on the stage and getting into the beat. Well, you are up on stage and there is this big screen with your school name on it [Jumbotron] so I put that in my drawing. I was right there at the front, having the crowd there and all the applause. It was a lot of fun. Our drumming experience was a great experience, the rush of the crowd ... I love that feeling that you are proud of yourself that you just did that. And afterwards, you are so proud of yourself.

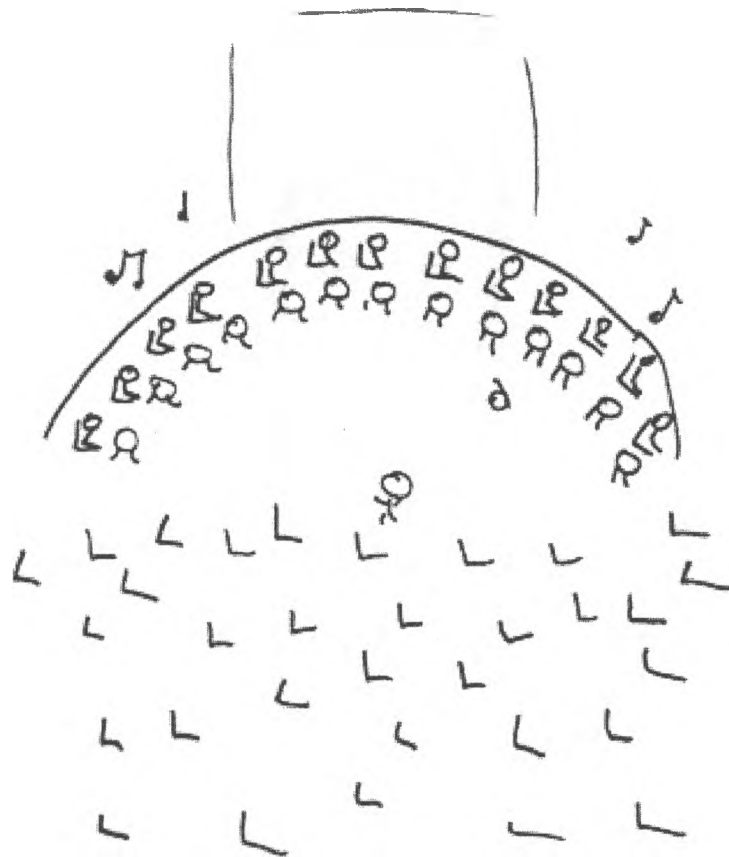


Figure 6: Drumming Circle: "You are so proud of yourself."

One of the festival volunteers spoke of the applause, from her perspective as a part-time teacher and a mother, and about how often a student sensed affirmation from it:

- Volunteer: Everyone needs some applause [laughing].  
 Interviewer: Talk to me about that  
 Volunteer: I know from my own kids, if you give them a chance to perform and get positive experiences, it's something that matters to his little heart.

A career teacher voiced this awareness of audience and affirmation and was it apparent in her sketch of herself smiling (Figure 7). She had chosen to draw how the festival made her feel as an educator. As she drew, she stated that students sense they are respected:

I just thought of one little thing. I like the level of respect shown to the children. They are not talked down to; they are respected for their efforts. I

think that sometimes children don't get that enough; it is a whole new vibe for kids to feel that their efforts are appreciated.



**Figure 7: Teacher smiling.**

The fact that parents could be a part of the audience was also mentioned. One Grade-2 student mentioned that parents were there not only to see their own children perform, but also to watch other classes and schools perform. He spoke of how it felt to have his parents attend.

Student: I saw my family. I didn't think they could come because they had to work. They took the day off. We had so much fun because we had to dress up and stuff. ...

Interviewer: So you remember the festival as special in this because...

Student: My dad showed up. It wasn't really like anything [you do at school] because we went on a bus and it was really weird because we had to go onto the highway. My stepmom really never comes to see me at school. There aren't those times. It was different because we didn't have to work, just dance.

A Grade-4 student depicts the audience as a line of stick figures and she explained that it represented the "one million" people in the audience and how she experienced affirmation and empathy in ways she had not known before in community:

Interviewer: Other than the teacher who taught you the song, had you performed it in front of any other people?

Student: Nope . . . the first thing that struck me, I kind of felt like I was dreaming. The first thing that made me feel it was real was hearing my voice come out of me. We got a lot of clapping, a bunch of people were saying it was a really

- good song. As I was walking back to my seat, a couple of kids went like this. [High five]
- Interviewer: Has that ever happened before?
- Student: No, not really .... used to be in baseball and people [but] they never really meant it, they were just told to do it. But at the festival, it was really different.
- Interviewer: Why do you think they were cheering you on like that?
- Student: Because kids from other schools know how it feels to go up on stage, how it feels to have to sing.
- Interviewer: Had you ever seen those kids from the other schools before?
- Student: Nope. They were basically .... strangers. I didn't know how they felt about me.
- Interviewer: But then you found out.
- Student: Yup.



Figure 8: Students from other schools say “she is good!”

## Diversity

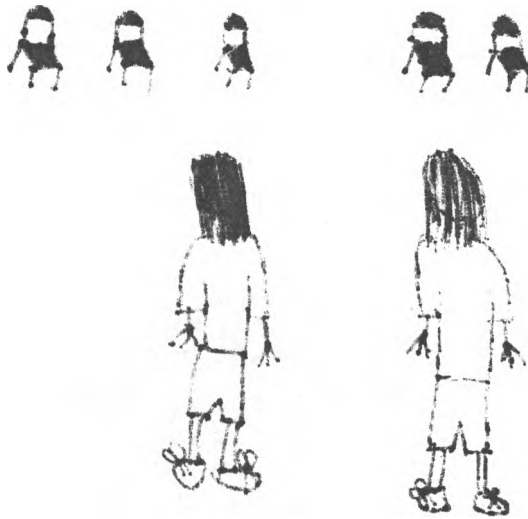
Experiencing diversity was another aspect of community evident in the data. Students and teachers spoke of sensing diversity as they performed and attended performances in front of people they did not know. Specifically, they were aware of interacting with people outside their own school sectors: one student described the audience as having people he didn't “know.”

When I think about the festival, I think about diversity. It's not really like school. Because you are performing before more people than you do at school, and they are people you don't know.



Another senior student mentioned watching students from public, private, and Catholic schools perform. He drew people, seated on many chairs, all facing the centre stage, and he pointed out where the Catholic students were sitting (Figure 9):

You connect more with other kids because you get to really see what they can really do and they get to see what you can really do. The festival is a cool place to do that.



**Figure 9: Diverse audience.**

An intermediate student reflected that her most memorable experience occurred when a group of Grade-1 students performed in a bell choir. She explained that even as the bells each had a different sound and yet there was harmony in song, she sensed joy in celebrating the arts with different students from different school situations:

It is definitely not like school.... I saw that the different people represent all the different schools, types of people, coming together and singing in harmony.

In one focus group, a teacher explained why she sketched students standing shoulder to shoulder, she remarked about the place of the festival in enabling this opportunity and why this mattered to her:

Arts allow for diversity. As our society's fabric, we understand that we are all alike.

An intermediate student spoke of experiencing diversity as “different faces with different smiles” in a way her school could not offer.

Student: There are different faces, different smiles. ... The festival is different because you are happier; there are different smiles on everyone's heads.

Interviewer: Did you think it added something that different schools were there, not just yours?

Student: Yes. There is like—happiness.



**Figure 10: Smiles from different school students.**

One career educator stated that the arts provide opportunities for students to express themselves and then reflect on their understanding. She views this as foundational to education.

The festival is such a huge impetus for arts in general.... I just think about their [arts] expression in learning the language (of the arts). If you don't express yourself, then you rebound and do not challenge yourself to change what you think, and that's the whole point of education.

She depicted herself as the curly headed figure in the back row of the choir and explained that she and her students were all at various ages and stages of life—different in many ways, yet involved in the arts moment, and standing shoulder-to-shoulder. She referred to her favourite moment as having occurred at the end of the celebration when a mass choral piece was sung by all in attendance, bringing the audience of public, private, and separate school students and teachers together.

### **A non-judgmental context**

Participants reported experiencing an accepting milieu. The opportunity to experience the arts in a non-judgmental setting and apart from competition was mentioned by a senior elementary student as he sketched a school band (Figure 11):

The festival was a great way to keep music a part of your life and realize that there are still places that allow you to have non-competitive places so you can have more chances with music without pressure.



**Figure 11: Places for non-competitive school band experiences.**

A intermediate student stated that, in contrast to art competitions, the festival was about an arts opportunity:

I would say that I think it was one of the most favourite moments of my life because you're on stage and singing. After it all, you are just so happy

that you can celebrate the arts. It's not who is better than who. It's about celebrating the arts.

A teacher also reported experiencing community in a non-judgmental context. She spoke of the festival as a larger arts opportunity than her own, single school community could provide:

I think the biggest thing for the children I bring is that it is non-competitive. I know that after performing, they are very proud of their school and they all—from grade 1 to 12—are all performers that succeed, and they all have huge smiles.

A teacher in one of the focus groups referred to her sketch of a conductor with a 10 out of 10 rating on the sketch itself (Figure 12). Eight grinning band members half circle the centre stage and the audience are represented by many dots. A large hand is clapping and a volume meter reflects the enthusiastic reaction of the audience. After she had reflected on her initial reticence about attending the festival, she emphasized the impact of a non-judgmental milieu in these days on both the students and teachers:

They [former students] still keep talking about the festival. I think that if it was a competitive venue, it wouldn't accomplish that. It is just wonderful that the arts get to shine, and through the arts, the children get to shine. That is what we have always treasured about it. ... At first, you are worried that it is not going to come together, but it does not matter what happens. Being able to have a non-judged type of audience, it opens the bars to make the kids feel like they can do it, and I remember that applause is always in my heart and my head when we are performing.

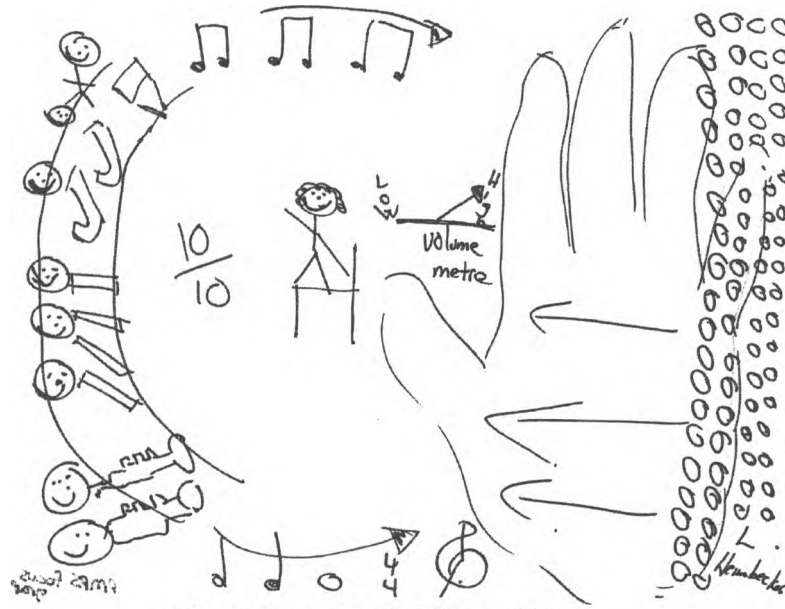


Figure 12: Arts and children shine.

A student described how her choir had been laughed at during a school assembly. She explained how the festival had a different, non-judgmental milieu and recalled listening respectfully to younger students' performances and having older students listen respectfully to her choir's efforts. This was unlike her schooling experience:

[At the festival] Yeah, people weren't [mocking] laughing. People partly knew that we were a Grade-2 class and they were in K class and we didn't laugh at them and they wouldn't laugh at us. . . . [high school students] didn't laugh at us. There were a few, maybe, but none of us heard that. So when the high school students performed, we didn't laugh at them. . . . Yes. It was very weird, very different.

A senior student was clear that the lack of competition was his most memorable festival impression:

I will never forget how I went in there, it was non-competitive. It was one of my first band experiences and the pressure was so off your shoulders. It didn't matter if it was the first time you played your instrument. It didn't matter, and it isn't going to affect your school's reputation. It was about music.

Another student remarked that the non-competitive nature mattered, for people were not focussed on mistakes:

“It (the RYFA) was definitely not like school. At school, you are just like ‘everyone will remember it, if you make a mistake’.”

### **Showcasing School-Based Arts**

Another thread evident in the data was the ways in which the festival showcased school-based arts. The content analysis of the data revealed that this showcasing was

1. inspiring;
2. a learning experience; and
3. an opportunity for personal expression.

One teacher in particular referred to the RYFA as a showcase:

I just see it [the RYFA] as a showcase, a sharing of concepts. I think that now with the students knowing that the [regional] festival goes on, I think that one of the things that they are thinking about when they are doing their art projects . . . is that there is something that they can look forward to, something that they can focus on. It’s considered an award, kinda.”

### **Inspiring**

The data showed that participants thought opportunities to experience the arts in schools were rare and they viewed showcasing the arts as inspirational. Their reaction ranged from 1) being intrigued by what they experienced; 2) to being motivated to learn more about the arts; 3) to being challenged to develop their artistic abilities and passions.

A senior elementary student looked back at this festival experience and recalled how it intrigued him to view the arts as a life-long fascination:

It was such a really cool experience and I would love to go back, even just to watch, because it inspires you so much to get into so many different things and opens you up to so many other ideas. The musical world is all unique and it’s pretty cool. A lot of those things you can do, you can continue for your whole life. There doesn’t need to be a certain age that you have to start at. You can be really little and be really good at it.

An intermediate elementary student was also motivated to learn more:

Everyone was doing all different types of incredible music from bands to recorders to singing... I thought that [the festival] was really unique, and I thought that one day, I would like to do each and every one of those things. One day, I would like to try and do them myself. There were different types of instruments I had never seen and never heard about before. It was neat to get to figure out what they were like and what they could do.

One student spoke of remembering how students danced. They “did this really cool dance . . . flips and stuff. I remember wanting to do the same thing.” Another student talked about both dance and improv:

You learn something new from the things you see there. . . There were a lot of students there from other schools doing different things. One school did a dance thing with signs and had a peace sign. . . There is not really ever an opportunity to see the things you get to at the festival. . . It’s not like going to see a play or anything because you get to see what other schools can do. You learn new things like what improv means and what other kids might do or what they have talents at.

Another intermediate elementary student sketched herself trying out percussion instruments played at the festival (Figure 13):

[The festival] is invaluable because it introduces us to another world of colour and music and a mixture. It is so nice to know how music is played so you might be able to play it when you are older.

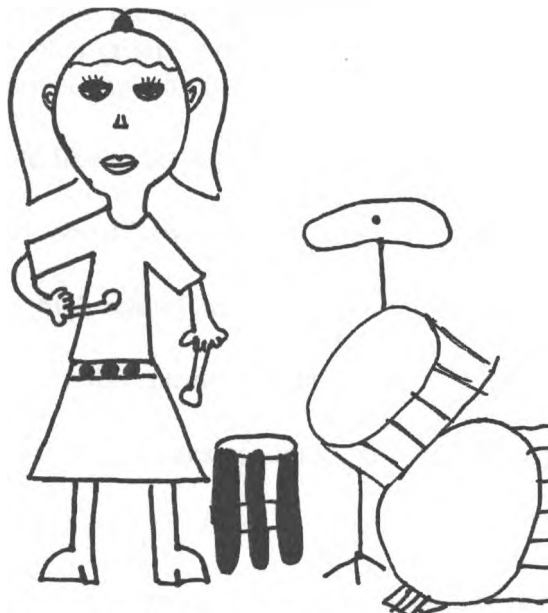


Figure 13: Playing the drums one day.

Another student illustrated audience members listening to Grade-9 band students. She reiterated the idea that the festival was inspiring, but added that that feature motivated her to develop her artistic abilities further.

- Student: They looked like they knew what they were doing, and I wanted to do it like them one day.
- Interviewer: Does anything else come to mind that really stands out about the festival?
- Student: Getting to play and do the arts just for the fun of it, not doing it for grades ... We went around and looked at the art pieces. I really liked drawing, and I thought I would really like to get as good as the other people there, and it really made me want to strive to make what you have a little better.

A younger student also was challenged by the festival experience. This primary student remembered feeling anxious and clutching her handbell, as she travelled to the RYFA on a bus for the first time. "I was little. I was like, what should I do?" Afterwards, she felt proud and decided to train further:

- Student: I felt really happy that I did my best and I knew it was over and I could watch the other people. ... You kinda want to join up with the other groups.
- Interviewer: What other groups would you like to join?
- Student: (School Name) choir
- Interviewer: Why?
- Student: I would like to be one of the lead singers.

Another student spoke about how stirring it was to hear a high school band. In her sketch, she depicts where the high school band sits on the stage while she stands as a Grade-7 student out in front with the clarinet she has decided to learn to play when she goes to high school (Figure 14). She speaks of looking forward to inspiring others in the arts, as the festival has inspired her:

- Student: It [high school band] sounded so much like professionals. It was so good. It overwhelmed me and my friends. We



realized that we wanted to do it, and be that good. We wanted to be in high school, be that good and amaze younger students and get them to love music just as much as us.

Interviewer: It's so interesting to me to find out what you as a student find meaningful. What are you looking forward to doing this year?

Student: This year is going to be cool because we are going to sound really good and it might be something that people from another school will remember and tell you about the performance later if you do one of these interviews after the next festival. That's why the festival keeps everyone artsy, because we all push each other to improve.



Figure 14: Pushing each other to improve in the arts.

An intermediate student spoke of how arts experiences inspire her to explore new ideas about passion and narrative:

Student: Music brings out different emotions in everyone, sometimes the sound relates to me. The song tells a story in a new way.

Interviewer: In what ways was the festival special?

Student: It was just a great experience. It was something you never, ever get. You know how you live in search of things of joy in your life that gives you that overwhelming feeling? If you don't have that, then you are not living life to the

fullest. You have to enjoy something and live it with a passion.

During one of the focus group sessions, a teacher reflected on how the festival inspires students to share through personal expression and thus, contributes towards their complete education:

It's the art; it's their hearts and something most precious to them. Hopefully, they will be interested in sharing in different venues in their lives down the road. Sharing. That is why arts are so important, because they trigger other levels of expression. Without the fear of perfection, that is the only way it can grow. That is what we as educators have to do. It's not about perfection. If you think about things, after a while, you realize as an educator it's not all about reading and writing.

One of the volunteers remarked that she continues to passionately commit her time and energy to the festival because it is deeply moving to experience students of all ages being tolerant and appreciative of one another:

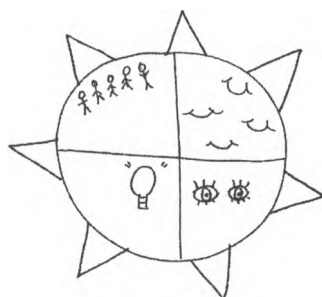
Sometimes you see things at the festival that move you almost to tears, and you know, you get that feeling of "this is a wonderful moment" kind of thing. . . . The fact that you have kids [performing] from kindergarten up to Grade 12—I don't think there are too many events that the [school] Board ever creates that involve all those range of kids. And tolerance for what each group has to offer.

### **A learning experience**

Teachers, students, and volunteers reported that the festival provided several significant learning experiences. Impressions included the festival 1) providing professional development ideas for teachers in a county with no arts consultant; 2) enabling senior elementary students to make more informed choices about their high school elective arts courses; and 3) helping them rethink how the arts inform a complete education. One of the teachers in a focus group stated that she found the festival a learning opportunity and a central focus for her yearly curriculum planning. As she

described her sketch of a light bulb within a smiling sun shape (Figure 15), she commented that the festival “kept everyone artsy,” both as an annual arts celebration and an encouraging opportunity for educators to “see” [eyes] and exchange dynamic arts ideas:

This picture represents the concept that you get so much professional development from seeing other schools perform that the light bulb goes on and you think, “that’s an idea that would work with my classes.” I think it was Mary [her colleague] who did kazoos, or maybe it was ukuleles, and I thought that was such a novel idea, and it was [her colleague] who sparked that in my mind. This is the teamwork that was involved, you were working as a group for a common goal, and that was to perform at the festival for others and to enjoy the performances of others.



**Figure 15: The festival keeps everyone artsy.**

One of this teacher’s colleagues spoke about all of the arts and how they are celebrated differently at the RYFA:

We try on education nights and in performances, but the arts here [at the RYFA] is like the Oscars. We have these other little opportunities to share, (at our school) but then we have the Oscars and they can finally go there and show other schools what they have done . . . there used to be lots of professional development in the arts and now with the new curriculum, it [the arts] has taken the backseat in the professional development area, unless you have actually sought it out yourself.

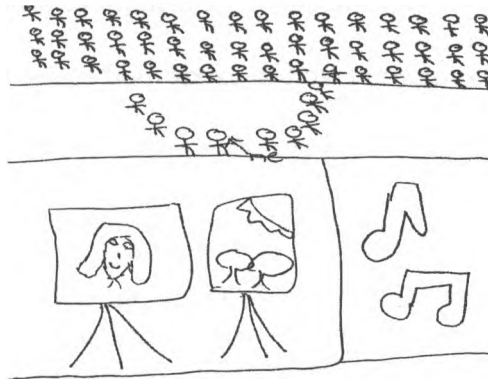
Another teacher illustrated how initiatives like drumming circles and school bands have spread from one school to another because teachers have brought art ideas that were

working well in their schools to the larger education community at the festival. She explains where she is standing centrally [“me”] in front of her band ensemble, in the forefront of her school orchestra (Figure 16). She adds two symbols, arts canvases and a musical clef symbol, to represent the two RYFA emphases —visual and performing arts.

One other thing about the festival is seeing ideas, those that help inspire fellow educators in the arts. I know teachers who have gone to the festival and have seen things like the drum circle and have been inspired to do the same at their school. The festival gives an opportunity for educators to see something new, get some advice....(a local school) got their band, their drumming circle, from us, from seeing us at the festival. We had some parents and teachers approach us after the festival and ask how they could implement the same program at their school. It worked; It’s in their second year. We took both of our bands on a bus over to (a local school) and it was great. We performed, they asked questions.

During another focus session with teachers, a colleague reflected on the place of professional development in the RYFA. Her sketch reflects the visual and performing arts:

Teacher: I was thinking back on the performances and the various styles of art from various age groups and it was amazing to see it span over a number of age groups. It was very neat to see, although I am a very new teacher still. It was amazing to go there and see what other schools and teacher were doing. It was a source of PD [professional development] for me whom I like because oftentimes there are very little arts in PD days and it’s a really neat thing to see and get ideas.



**Figure 16: Teacher: Opportunities to share arts ideas that inspire other colleagues.**

A Grade-6 student spoke of being able to make more informed arts course choices at the secondary school level after having attended the festival:

Interviewer: So one of the things you like about the festival is getting to see the arts at the high school level?

Student: Yes, that way you know what you can look forward to.

A Grade-8 student drew a detailed sketch of the band instrument he played and speaks of the various arts strands he can chose from: (Figure 17).

Student: Well, this year I have to pick courses for high school and last year I went to the festival and saw the improv team from (a local high school) and it was so amazing, but I didn't know if I wanted to take it or not. But the cool thing about the festival is that you can go and see them play their instruments or perform their skits, dance, drama, visual arts, and it kind of helps you to pick what you'll take in high school.

Interviewer: As an elementary school student, would you have had any other opportunity to find out what a high school improv team was?

Student: No. I didn't know until last year's festival.

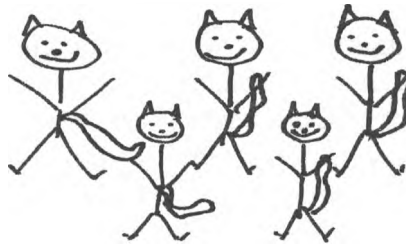


**Figure 17: Senior student sketches band instrument he will choose in high school.**

Students from all grade levels mentioned the place of humour and interviewees often reminisced about the hilarious immediacy of the unexpected moments in performances. A student and teacher both spoke of how humorous the moment was when a student's costume fell apart. In this instance, the cat tail dropped to the floor and the students all around just burst out laughing.

Teacher: I drew [referring to her sketch] when we were doing the cats and the tails were cute, delightful. So were the children's reactions to the crowd's response [when the tail fell off]. There we just were aware of the crowd's response

and they understood the laughter and knew they were laughing with them and not at them.



**Figure 18: Proud cats.**

This moment was underscored by another comedic, apparently incongruous, moment when a student appeared to fall off the festival stage. This bonded the audience in laughter and left a Grade-7 student with an impression he clearly remembers. It was the first time he, and several other students interviewed, had ever seen an improv group perform, and he remarked that his experience at the festival was unlike school in that “there is not really ever an opportunity to see the things you get to [see] at the festival,” and so he chose to sketch a pratfall in a high school improvisational skit as his most memorable festival moment (Figure 19).

Student: I remember when the improv team was doing this skit about a skateboard or roller skates and this guy was a champion or something and he fell and broke his leg. This one [his sketch] is about slipping on a skateboard as he fell off the stage.... You learn something new from the things you see there. . . . You learn new things, like what improv means, and what other kids might do or what they have talents at.



**Figure 19: High school improv prat fall.**

While sketching, this student reflected about another hilarious moment at the RYFA and what he learned about secondary school drama courses:

I remember that it was really, really funny and the (high school) drama kids and they were doing a sketch where the kids were acting up and the math teacher was getting really, really angry and then this kid comes in and they make him feel bad (empathy emphasis) . . . you were laughing so much at their facial expressions and them jumping everywhere. And then out of nowhere one of the kids (improv) gives a huge burp. And how when we heard that the (high school) was going to be there, we thought, “Okay great. It is going to be a history play or something.” But it ended up being drama student skits and it was really funny. When they were done we were like, “Let’s watch them again.”

Another senior student discussed the improv performance and considered it the memorable as well.

Student: There is not really any opportunity to see things you get to at the festival. . . I think it’s unique. I’ve never got to see that stuff before. It’s not like going to a see a play or anything because you get to see what other schools ca do. You learn new thing like what improv means and what other kids might do or what they have talents at . . . you learn something new from the things you see there.

One career educator reflected that the learning experienced in the arts matters for all students. She connected the demise of the arts with a preoccupation on standardized testing:

I can’t remember one year I missed in 12. The festival is such a huge impetus for arts in general. In school, we have a huge tradition of sports which is competitive, and this is really important to many students, but I think there are just as many, if not more, kids that respond to some art form . . . the arts, the cultural joy it brings them, the festival is an impetus for teachers to do that [the arts], as well. I like it when I see teachers given time off to do the arts as well as teachers given time off to do sports. Because of the festival, that’s the only thing that provides the arts. When funding started to go from the arts, and now it’s all about the EQAO? (Education Quality and Accountability Office—Ontario government agency that oversees standardized testing across the province)

An intermediate student spoke of the impact of seeing her school’s arts display at the RYFA:

- Student: It feels overwhelming. Just like everything else. I like it. It is an overwhelming feeling that makes you feel good inside. It [visual arts] is a different way of expressing yourself . . . it was big art [RYFA visual art display], the collection. I have always enjoyed finding the story that the person is trying to put into the picture.
- Interviewer: So displaying art happens at your school but is it different when you display at the festival?
- Student: It is different because everyone can see the talent at our school and we can't always see the talent from other schools. Some of the pieces there were awesome. I loved looking at them. I just try to read the story and spend 10-15 minutes looking at them.

Another student spoke of what it was like to experience the visual arts displays:

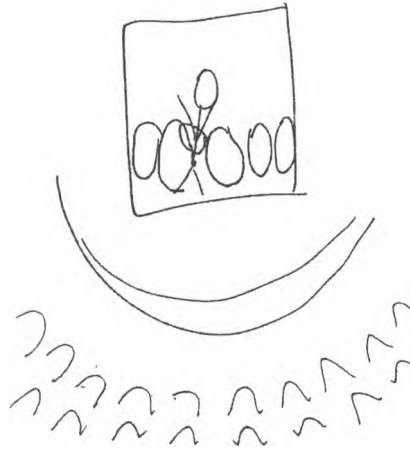
- Student: In my arts class we made masks and mine was at the festival. It's a great time being at the festival. I'm in Grade 8. Knowing my mask was up in that room and everyone getting to see it was amazing. I love that feeling that you are proud of yourself that you just did that. And afterwards you are just so proud of yourself.
- Interviewer: When you go to the festival, is there a different feeling than doing arts at school?
- Student: At [his school] you see everyone everyday and you know them. But at the festival its new people, new judgment and it definitely feels different. Having artwork up it feels so good to do it and you feel proud of it . . . some of it was so good. The high school kids always do these portraits and it's amazing.

### **Opportunity for personal expression**

For one senior student, the opportunity to experience a new literacy in the arts was beyond words. He sketched his group with himself seated as the drummer and recalled feeling totally caught in the moment (Figure 20):

All these people are there for a passion, you know, they wouldn't be there if they didn't want to be. It was very overwhelming but in a good way.... Just the overwhelming feeling. . . . I was nervous walking up to the stage, but once I looked out at all the people and they were so intent on what I was saying and playing on the drums, it was awesome. I can't really put it into words; it is such a rush of emotions.





**Figure 20: Student drummer: “I can’t really put it into words.”**

In summarizing her feelings about the impact that the festival made on the learning community in the county, a teacher remarked about the central place of the festival and the arts in genuine learning:

I can’t remember one year I missed. The festival is such a huge impetus for arts in general. In schools, we have a huge tradition of sports, which is competitive, and this is really important to many students, but I think there are just as many, if not more kids, that respond to some art form. I just think that their expression in learning the language [of the arts] and if you don’t express yourself then you rebounded and [are not challenged to] change what you think, and then that’s the whole point of education. Now it’s all about the EQAO.

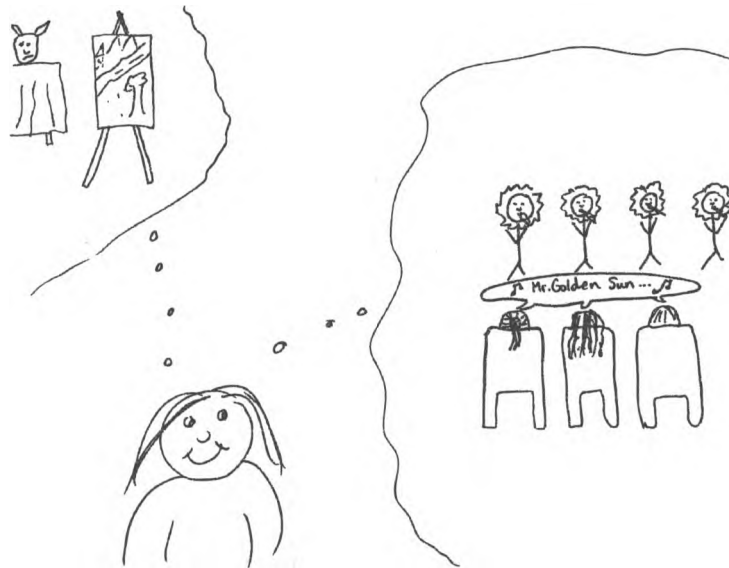
### **Inclusivity**

The third thread, inclusivity, is evident and visible in the rich tapestry of the arts experience, although it undoubtedly blends in its complexity within the themes of community and arts showcasing.

The term “inclusivity” refers to a phrase that a teacher voiced in her focus session: “The arts are for everyone.” Her sketch clearly depicts the two components of visual and performing arts celebrated at the RYFA. Three different children sit engaged by primary

children performing their kazoo song “Mr. Golden Sun” (Figure 21). She reflected on the openness of the arts to embrace all students with all learning styles:

Drama is what brings students out ... especially with troubled students, those who have few positive experiences in their lives. You really see them come out. It’s just amazing to see what comes of their ideas. In a school like this one, it’s a very important chance for them to shine. That’s what you have to do for kids; giving them an opportunity to shine and build their self-confidence. The arts are for everyone. I really like that phrase.



**Figure 21: Teacher: “The arts are for everyone.”**

This teacher continued to speak of the visual arts and the impact of the displays:

Everyone was so into the art . . . all the beautiful art. I have always been into art, and I love how much gorgeous art there was and how it displayed how talented people are. I loved it.

This inclusivity thread reveals how the festival embraced 1) all students, regardless of academic ability and 2) all teachers, regardless of their arts experience and background.

### **All students included**

The festival was inclusive of all students, regardless of academic status.

The participants noted the capacity of the arts to involve all students, regardless of learning style or ability. A teacher in a focus session sketched three students connected by playing percussion, while she thinks about how all students have a place in the arts (Figure 22). Her illustration deliberately includes individuals with varying identities:

It [the sketch] was of my little ones who have a type of drumming circle, often the ones who don't succeed academically for many different reasons. It is wonderful to see them succeed in the arts and see them enjoy it, express their emotions and let themselves shine. We are not all as gifted in the academic, and it gives children not gifted in arts an opportunity.



**Figure 22: Teacher: Children not gifted in academics can shine in the arts.**

One of her learning challenged students reflected on what he learned about drama at the festival:

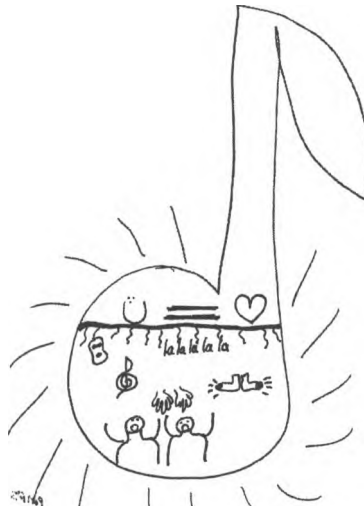
- Student: Well there is one thing that I am really good at, it's miming.
- Interviewer: Miming. There were mimes as part of the high school improv group. Did you see them?
- Student: Yes.
- Interviewer: So you saw those high school students miming and that's what you enjoy doing and what you know you can do well?
- Student: Yes.
- Interviewer: How did that impress you?
- Student: I want to be just like them.

The teacher who sketched children (Figure 22) who were not gifted in academics shining in the arts spoke further about the reflections about students who do not succeed in academic pursuit:

I think the biggest thing for the children I bring to the ([RYFA] is that they all get very shy and it is non-competitive. I know that after performing they are very proud of their school and they all—from grade 1 to 12—are all performers that succeed and they all have huge smiles. This happens through the dance, all the arts, and symbolizes what we bring students together. They are often students who don't succeed in other areas and the festival gives them an opportunity to really shine and be proud of what they have done and it affects them for years.

Another teacher discussed the place of the arts in motivating some students to attend school:

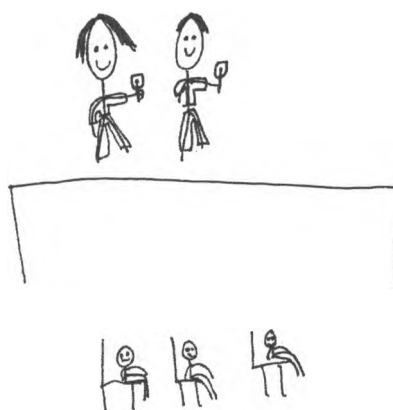
The other things about the arts are attendance. If you have kids who maybe don't like school, but they like something they are doing that is art related, that is something that is a great motivator for them coming to school because they know they can be successful in those areas. Especially with the new curriculum which focuses so much on literacy skills in almost every subject, including math, those students who are not strong in literacy or other similar skills can focus on art and use that as an example of success, and it represents a reason to come every day . . . especially for troubled students, those who have few positive experiences in their lives. You really see them come out. It's just amazing to see what comes of their ideas.



**Figure 23: Teacher: The arts motivate non academic students to attend school.**

A student spoke about how the festival included all students and sketched himself alongside another student standing front and centre on stage (Figure 23):

I felt it [the festival] was special because it showed all the abilities of students and things that they wouldn't be able to show other kids. It was a special way to say, "Hey, I am here, look what I can do."



**Figure 24: Student: "Hey, I am here. Look what I can do."**

One of the teachers recalled the first time she brought students to the RYFA and that many of them lacked self-confidence for various reasons, including academic learning style. The students also had no performance experience:

I can't remember what year it was, my first year band that was very small and there were students that needed a lot of confidence and it wasn't coming together very well, but we still decided to take them to the festival. I remember climbing up onto the platform and I was shaking because they had to see me and they played a piece and as soon as they finished, it felt like there was thousands of people clapping for us and there was so much applause and smiles. It took so long for us to get on to the second piece because the kids were so proud of themselves and it is the memory that I have.

One of her colleagues added that dance and drama can have a special place in building confidence:

The other thing I find is that some of the children who are very quiet in the class room come to life where you engage in the arts and it's just a different way of expressing yourself. Whether it is drama or dance, when you have an opportunity to perform they open up.

A career educator, who has attended the festival since its first year, remarked that she values the all-encompassing nature of the arts. She appreciated how the festival involved all students from all academic levels:

It's about belonging. I want to come back to my picture. I depicted the kids as shoulder to shoulder, the reason that this is an emotionally positive experience is that it is a lot of kids realizing the beauty of doing the same thing together.

#### **All teachers included**

The festival is open to all teachers, regardless of background or arts experience. In one of the focus groups, a teacher remarked that since any teacher with any background was welcome to attend the festival, she decided to attend:

If I knew that I would be judged in any way, I would probably say I don't feel skilled enough to lead a group to this event because I don't have a background in music. I would be thinking of highly trained people; there is no way I could compete with them. For the children, too. They are going for the pleasure of it, not because they are going to win anything. I think they get enough recognition and satisfaction from going.

Another teacher stated that educators feel comfortable attending regardless of how proficient their students are in the arts. The emphasis is on sharing good art ideas, not on comparing one performance with another:

It is an amazing opportunity for a teacher. It is such a highlight for me in our growth. It is always at first like, "Oh, what are we going to do?" But when it is over, it is a great sense of satisfaction, and all my colleagues agree with that who attend ... you end up with varying levels of "polishedness," but that's okay, and we are all there to share together in a supportive environment.

As she sketched the various audience seating sections, student emcees with standing microphones, stage instruments, leader's podium, and choir members, a teacher explained that teachers, regardless of arts training, feel at ease in the festival celebration:

It isn't about competition, it's about sharing and community and that's why I jumped on the bandwagon. I feel "I can do that," nobody is judging you. You can bring recorders, sing, bring kazoos, it doesn't matter . . . I remember that, at the end of the year, my kids would often remark that the highlight of their year was the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts. It stood out in their minds as something that occupied a special place in their minds.

### School-Based Arts Celebration

The fourth finding evident in the data was that the RYFA experience was special for the arts were not often celebrated in some schools. An intermediate student described a memorable moment at the festival. Her sketch depicted a girl who was the lead drummer in the elementary school band that hosted the RYFA the morning she attended (Figure 25). This was a special memory, for she had just begun to take drum lessons herself and had never before seen another girl from any school play the drums in an ensemble.



Figure 25: Playing the drums one day.

She added that the festival was not like her previous experiences with school-based arts.

- Student: There were different students, teachers that I have never seen before. It was about everyone . . . that was cool. I would want to do it again.
- Interviewer: Is the festival not like what you do in school?
- Student: There are not a lot of arts in school—school is about other subjects. We get art every six weeks.

A intermediate student who had not previously performed in front of an audience remembered how “good” it felt to perform for the first time (Figure 26).

- Student: I was nervous, and it wasn't like a normal time. But then I saw the smaller kids, and I thought that if they can do it, why can't we.
- Interviewer: Had you sung in front of an audience like that before?
- Student: No.
- Interviewer: Had you sung before in front of parents or the school?
- Student: No.
- Interviewer: So that was your first time doing that type of thing?
- Student: Yes.
- Interviewer: How did it make you feel?
- Students: Really good. It made us feel like we had done really well.
- Interviewer: And how did you feel about that as a student?
- Student: I thought that it (the festival) was unique, and I thought that one day, I would like to do each and every one of those things. One day, I would like to try and do them myself. There were different types of instruments I had never seen and never heard about before. It was neat to get to figure out what they were like and what they could do.

Students who spoke of singing as a choir at the festival remarked that performing a song was special.

- Interviewer: Before you went to sing, how were you feeling about doing that?
- Student: Kinda worried I might mess up.
- Interviewer: How did you feel when you were up there?
- Student: With all the people up beside me, I felt okay with it.
- Interviewer: Have you ever done anything like this before?
- Student: Once I sang at a birthday party.



Interviewer: At school, is there much singing?

Student: "O Canada," and at ceremonies.

Another student spoke drew a sketch of herself singing up on the stage and mentioned how good she felt afterwards

Interviewer: So when you went to the festival, how was it not like what you do at school?

Student: You get to sing on the stage, there were other grades there, and I sang with other people who I've never sang with before in my school.

Interviewer: So you've never sang with the other grades before?

Student: We all practice separately and then do it together at the festival.

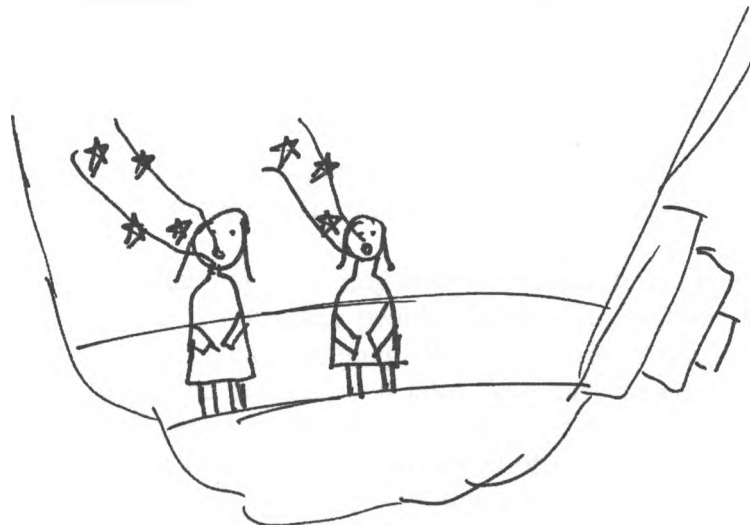


Figure 26: Stars.

At that same school, a senior student also mentioned that he found he was looking forward to the RYFA. His remarks reflect how special it was to see the school-based arts performed, and how much he valued the experience. His sketch depicts himself and a friend looking out at the audience (Figure 9).

Student: There were a lot of students there from other schools doing different things. One school did a dance thing with signs, and had a peace sign.

Interviewer: Are there other times that you get to see other schools doing that type of thing?

Student: There is not really ever an opportunity to see the things you get to at the festival.

Interviewer: As a student, how does that make you feel about the festival?

Student: I think it's unique; I've never got to see that stuff before. It's not like going to see a play or anything, because you get to see what other schools can do, learn new things like what improv means and what other kids might do or what they have talents at.... This year is going to be cool because we are going to sound really good, and it might be something that people from another school will remember and tell you about the performance later if you do one of these interviews after the next festival. That's why the festival keeps everyone artsy, because we all push each other to improve . . . I just loved the improv team and the band.

Another student sketched her choir performing and why she was looking forward to attending.

Interviewer: So you are singing at the festival (referring to her sketch). Do you perform in front of other classes at school?

Student: No.

Interviewer: In what way is singing at the festival different than school?

Student: There is not many people listening [to a choir] at school, you are just practicing. When you are at the festival and everyone is there, you know you have to get it right, and you actually sing with a smile ... it is valuable because it introduces us to another world of colour and music and a mixture. It is so nice to know how music is played so you might be able to play it when you are older.

One Grade-2 student explained why she depicted herself smiling as she stood on the festival stage (Figure 29) and was asked why she remembered that moment.

Student: It was the only time I ever went on stage, and it felt really nice.

Interviewer: So when this sort of thing happens, do you sing much in your class?

Student: We sing "O Canada" and "Somewhere in My Memory."

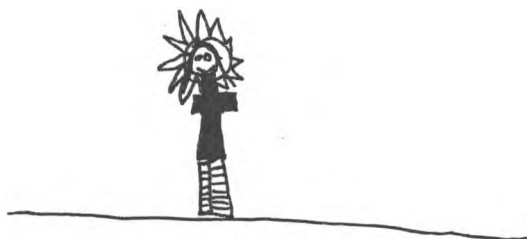
In reviewer: Does anything else come to mind?

Student: I remember when two kids and older kids from my school sang "Free to be" on stage.

Interviewer: Why do you remember it?

Students: Because one of my best friends was up there.

- Interviewer: How did it make you feel?  
 Student: It made me feel proud of her.  
 Interviewer: Did you have the same feeling after you performed?  
 Student: Ya, I felt proud of myself for the first time in my life, because I went up on stage for the first time.



**Figure 27: Proud of myself for the first time.**

An intermediate student was asked if she had done singing like that before. She replied that she once sang at a birthday party.

- Interviewer: At school, is there much singing?  
 Student: "O Canada" and at ceremonies.  
 Interviewer: Anything else that comes to mind that was special?  
 Student: I got to see how my friends were singing. I never knew they could sing that well.  
 Interviewer: Kids at your school?  
 Student: Ya.



**Figure 28: Smiles from different school students.**

A Grade-2 student was asked in what ways going to the festival was kind of like things the student did at school:

It reminds me of practicing, getting ready for the festival.



**Figure 27: Getting ready for the festival.**

A festival volunteer drew a primary student with a sun-face costume playing a kazoo (Figure 32). As a mother and part-time teacher, she felt students had few opportunities in her school community to perform:

Do you know what that is? Well, this is from the class from [a local elementary school]. They came with paper plates they made into sunshine faces. They had kazoos and I loved it because it is really reflective of what a staff person or teacher can do . . . they would hum and perform . . . they loved it.



**Figure 28: Kazoos cost little money.**

Two teachers reflected on why most teachers at their school are hesitant about teaching the arts and the place of the festival in this situation.

There used to be lots of PD (professional development) in the arts, and now with the new curriculum it has taken the backseat in the PD area, unless you actually seek it out yourself. . . I'd like it when I see teachers given time off to do the musical stuff, as well as the teachers given the time off to do the sports.

## **Conclusion**

In summarizing these findings from data collected in 2007, the aims of this study were to better understand the nature of the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts experience and how it relates and compares to school-based arts education. Overall, four evident threads were found. The first thread revealed how elements of community were experienced, either as a performer or an audience member, through 1) unity of purpose; 2) audience; 3) affirmation; 4) diversity; and 5) a non-judgmental context. A second evident thread was how the festival showcased school-based arts. This was reported to be 1) inspiring; and 2) a learning experience. The third thread evident in the data referred to the festival being inclusive of: 1) all students, regardless of academic status; and 2) all teachers, regardless of background or arts experience. The fourth thread in the data is that the RYFA experience was special, for the arts are not often celebrated.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion of Research Findings**

The findings from the study of the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts suggest that community-based arts festivals may inform ideas about delivering school-based arts education. This chapter will show how this case study informs the literature by exploring a new and possibly valuable idea in arts education in Ontario's schools. It may inspire collaborative learning communities as they attempt to deliver the arts in these days. The special place of the arts to allow individuals to enrich their understandings of people around them, and to foster moments when individuals sense their shared humanity in joyful and affirming ways, facilitates meaningful educative experiences. The chapter also shows that the findings are significant in light of the release of the 2009 arts curriculum, which in an unprecedented decision, entrusts principals and community members with roles and responsibilities in arts education. This may signal a significant window of opportunity for collaboration between community members and principals, along with teachers, students and parents to strategize ways to strengthen the school-based arts. The festival provides ideas about arts education that may be timely.

Each of the evident threads within the data will be discussed in light of related literature and the voices of participants themselves. Overall, students reported the festival experience as special because the arts are not often celebrated, They also remembered being aware of a sense of community, the arts being showcased, and of students of all learning styles being involved in the RYFA. The first section of this chapter will explore the implications of participants experiencing community in significant ways through unity of purpose, appreciative audience, evident diversity, and a non-judgmental attitude.

Next, the chapter will consider ways in which participants were impressed by the school-based arts showcase; they found it inspiring, a learning experience, and place that provided opportunities for personal expression. Then the chapter will explore the third theme, which reveals that the festival was inclusive of all students of all learning abilities and styles, and embraced teachers with or without formal arts expertise. Finally, the chapter discusses the fourth evident thread, which expressed the RYFA was special because the arts are not often celebrated. Each thread will be considered separately although they exist intertwined in the dialogue and sketches that explain memorable moments in the celebration.

### **Community**

Our impressions of community values and beliefs make an impact on our expectations and guide our decisions and behaviours, according to Ramsay (2006). We are, each one of us, affected by the social, political, and economic milieu in which we live. An enriched grasp of self-knowledge involves realizing that “we each have our unique history of experiences and throughout our lives we construct lenses through which we view the world” (Ramsay, 2006, p. 19). The threads evident in the data reveal that participants in the RYFA, an event which embraces public, separate, and private school sectors, experienced “community” in significant ways. The findings show that they sensed unity of purpose, appreciative audience, affirmation personally, diversity in the audience, and a non-judgmental context. This section will show that moments when students sense our shared humanity, engage deeply in community and connect as individuals in joyful and affirming ways, are valuable for individuals are being active

participants in their learning. These moments are increasingly vital as educators work to prepare students for their futures (People for Education, 2009).

The section initially explores ideas regarding the importance of individuals experiencing unity in community and then discusses reported experiences of empathy and diversity. This section will also show how these findings inform existing literature by affirming the central place of the arts in creating learning opportunities for students to deeply engage students with one another and with the larger world.

A community-organized youth arts festival opens opportunities for students from all school sectors to share performances and visual arts and many of the individuals who attended the RYFA remarked on a deepened sense of community after having performed in front of students from other schools at the RYFA. In the foreword of *Context, Content, and Community in Art Education: Beyond Postmodernism* (Neperud, 1995), Jerome J. Hausman observes that increasingly,

We are coming to recognize the interconnectedness of elements that contribute to the fabric of our existence. Our expanded visions of arts education are bringing us back to an enriched grasp of self-knowledge and creative process. Ideas of a “global village” are bringing us to a deepened sense of community (p. ix).

### **Unity of purpose and audience in celebrating the performing and visual arts**

Overall, participants reported a sense of unity, and one teacher summarized the findings as she explained why she drew children and a teacher joyfully singing side-by-side:

It’s about belonging ... I depicted the kids as shoulder to shoulder. The reason that this is an emotionally positive experience is that it is a lot of kids realizing the beauty of doing the same thing together. Everyone can come together and be one of the gang.



This sense of unity of purpose was often mentioned in dialogue and suggests that those interviewed were aware that they sensed the express intent to celebrate the performing and visual school-based arts and to have everyone united in this common purpose. RYFA participants experienced a responsive audience that was larger and more diverse than those in their school circles. One teacher said, "They have a larger audience to perform for here (at the festival). We can't provide that here; we can't provide that in a school setting. It gives us that chance." Having these opportunities to celebrate the arts has always been important, according to Dissanayake (2009). These gatherings allowed individuals to enrich their understandings of people around them. In fact, Dissanayake (1992) suggests that participating in the arts provided a sense of solidarity and the ability to cope needed in challenging times.

Bollnow (1989) similarly views art as integral to human society and reviews the powerful place that ceremonies and celebrations have had in the history of pedagogy and school life. He views ceremonies and celebrations as indispensable aspects of human community and school life, for daily routines are momentarily abandoned and time is given to celebratory gatherings. These moments are integral to life, and thus, to a complete education. Their purpose is to lift the person out of the narrow boundaries of his or her everyday existence and to allow that person to experience a deeper communion, a new sense of belonging in community.

One teacher's impressions of the festival illustrate the beliefs espoused by Bollnow and Dissanayake:

It is a part of a child's education. I am (also) aware in preparing the children for this event that they like to rise to the occasion. They like the fact that there are expectations on their behaviour as an audience. And stage presence. I've used the term "performance stance" and this is

something new for students. They realize that there is formality and they like it ... The fact that there is a special emcee, special volunteers, all speaks of being special, and they are included. That all is a part of the specialness and joy they find in it. Celebration is a natural outcome of that... It means we are setting this time apart. It is special. It isn't the same old every day.

The case study findings highlight the happy nature of the celebration, and fundamental to this was the way in which the arts connected learners and community with their shared humanity, regardless of school sector distinctions. Enabling places and spaces where students can truly experience community is possible within student youth festival and thus, provides a rich learning experience for students, rarely experienced by students in these days. A county-wide school board music festival has not been held in my county for more 30 years. There is reason to believe that reimagining how they can be organized has value as important as ever. Dissanayake (1995) speaks directly to the power of celebrating arts in schools in her discussion of a visit to the Shetland Islands, where the arts were central to their way of life. Community-sponsored Shetland art classes contributed a sense of well-being by passing on their *joie de vivre*, by example and instruction, especially in the schools. Being affirmed by such a large and congenial audience evidently impacted students as they sketched and discussed it in the interviews as part of their most memorable moments.

### **Empathy and caring through affirmation and diversity**

As students engaged in community in a deepened way as the arts were shared in performance, there were opportunities for children to identify with one another over school sector circles that encouraged affirming, reflective and empathetic understandings. One RYFA volunteer, who is also a teacher, mentioned that she is committed to

supporting the festival because it enables students to engage in community in an enriched way:

Community and children together, masses of them who have been invited to a venue, has nothing to do with competition or money. Virtually any kid can sing in the choir or hit a bell, no matter what your economic situation is. I've seen kids who showed up with homemade instruments, drums out of tin cans and ice cream containers. They are a part of something bigger than themselves, they go home feeling proud and excited.

According to those interviewed, the festival set the stage for empathy and caring.

A student remarked that "It was really fun; we don't often get to do it... It makes all the kids feels like we are all friends." Another student mused about the congeniality and the role of identification in empathy.

Most of the people in the crowd know that they are going to have to get up and perform too, so like, they want to say, "It's okay if you mess up, they are really good." That is what they would want the crowd to say about them if they were up on the stage . . . It's like, "So what? They did well. It doesn't matter." You identify with the people on the stage.

The impact of a situation in which individuals identify with one another in a new way is significant as educators endeavour to prepare critically aware students to approach the days ahead. Phillips (2003) believes that in the arts there are a range of opportunities to nurture empathy that involve identification and imagination, for art gives us a means to create community, to connect with each other. It allows us freedom to imagine things as they could be. The journey is considered more significant than the end result, and teaching empathy through art offers children opportunities to become thoughtful individuals within a community.

Annie Kidder, Director of People for Education (2009), reported that the arts encourage individuals to foster empathy and she views this as increasingly vital as educators work to prepare students for their futures. Zwim & Graham (2005) also

underscores the value of educators developing empathy within their classrooms and argue that the arts have a unique place in humanizing school experience.

### **Diversity and caring within community**

A community-based festival model may offer a way to help prepare students for their future in our society by having students identify with one another in an arts experience. The place of the arts to open moments of shared emotion amongst learners from various school circles and cultures is useful for often a sense of caring and appreciative response occurs. The students who participated in the festival reported feeling a sense of empathy as they prepared to perform and attended to other performances. They identified with the students in other schools over the challenges of having to perform publicly and opportunities for students to engage deeply in their own learning are highly valuable in my opinion.

In “Nurturing Empathy,” Phillips asks educators to consider how they convey to their students that they are valuable people with something unique to offer. “We create this power by teaching our students how to care about others... Once students become active participants in their learning, they can make more connections between themselves and the larger world around them. As one learns caring within the community, one gains the capability to expand that caring to others elsewhere. The more children connect with the people and places surrounding them, the greater the opportunity for learning empathy” (2003, p. 2). The phrase “as one learns caring within the community” conveys a sense in which caring cannot be absorbed as a construct unless it is experienced.

Classroom discussion about people who are different from one’s own culture is one thing. Classroom discussion following experiences of interacting and sharing with people from

different belief systems through school-based arts festivals over several school sectors is another sort of conversation and experience.

Integral to experiences of diversity that educators can encourage, are possible moments for a sense of caring to be emotionally sensed. One of the most powerful ideas Nel Noddings has championed is that school curriculum should be entirely reorganized around the central theme of care.

Caring is not just a warm fuzzy feeling that makes people kind and likeable . . . Rather, it demonstrates respect for the full range of human talents. Not all human beings are good at or interested in mathematics, science, or British literature. But all humans can be helped to lead lives of deep concern for others, for the natural world and its creatures, and for the preservation of the human made world. (Ornstein, 2003, p. 60)

To care for someone in this way is to imagine how it might be to see life as they do. Michael Parsons "Art and integrated curriculum" (2004) advises that there is a clarion call to educators to look for opportunities in which this may be done. He advises that public schooling in the 21st century should be based on constant attention to the lives of individual children, their families and community in order to genuinely understand the student's frame of reference. This may create situations in which students are prepared to understand other community worlds as well. Noddings (as cited in Ayers and Miller, 1998) contends that caring leads to a greater understanding of ourselves and others. Encouraging opportunities for schools to connect across racial and cultural boundaries is a valuable idea. The arts may have a special place in this process, and some of the students' remarks summarized how a critical awareness of oneself and others is at times through the arts.

The community-based festival model provides an experience of diversity, which educators can use to encourage children to reconsider their assumptions and the 2009

Ontario arts curriculum mandates schools with this responsibility. Ramsay (2006) speaks directly to this challenge and provides guidelines for challenging children's assumptions and expanding their perspectives. All children come to the learning situations with unique experiences and perspectives and to work effectively with them, we need to learn what specific children do and do not know, what puzzles them, and how they react to different people and situations. The family and community context from which a child comes profoundly affects their perceptions of the world around them. Ramsay recommends that educators think about whether or not the children at their school represent the diversity of the community. What groups are represented in the learning environment? Which are not? A regional, community-based festival can have a place through the arts to bring various groups together as a career teacher indicated when she spoke about why she has attended the festival since its inception and why she felt it was a significant experience in diversity for her students:

It's neat to experience it with all the schools in the community (separate, public, and private) showing that we are all together, in unison, one big family. As teachers, we sense that, and the students do, too. It is a great diversity experience.

A student reported that he found this unlike school in some ways. "When I think about the festival, I think about diversity. It's not really like school. Because you are performing before more people than you do at school. And they are people you don't know." Another student sketched a scene in which where public and separate school students sat in the festival audience. "You connect more with other kids because you get to really see what they can really do, and they get to see what you can really do. The festival is a cool place to do that."

An intermediate student pointed out that this mix was “definitely not like school ... I saw that the different people represent all the different schools, types of people, coming together and singing in harmony.” These remarks are repeated in the discussions, and they emphasize how students reported experiencing diversity through the arts as “different faces with different smiles” in a way any individual school could not offer.

Does it matter if students have opportunities to experience the diversity of their community during their early years as students? Does it matter that students can share their school-based arts with other faith schooling sectors in a congenial and affirming context? Maxine Greene applauds educators’ efforts as they search for ways to enable caring and community:

This is what we shall look for as we move: freedom developed by human beings who have acted to make a space for themselves in the presence of others, human beings become “challengers” ready for alternatives, alternatives that include caring and community. And we shall seek, as we go, implications for emancipatory education conducted by and for those willing to take responsibility for themselves and for each other. We want to discover how to open space for persons in the plurality, spaces where they can become different, where they can grow. (1988, p. 56)

In this, Greene sees an emphasis not on children becoming compliant or conforming, but in educators creating learning places where caring and critically aware children are constructively and deeply engaged with one another and with the larger world.

Educating for diversity should focus on the awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of human difference along with sensitivity to democratic traditions and ideals (Hawthorne and Henderson, 2000). Michael Parsons (2004) suggests that our society and the kinds of problems we face are changing rapidly as our problems become more complex. A socially relevant education would prepare students by focusing the

curriculum on a more integrated personality, greater awareness of self, and more understanding and tolerance of others, goals with which Parsons believes our present system does poorly. He states that, as students work through their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes in a way that their learning constructs a consistent picture of their world and their place in it, a student gradually makes sense of his or her own experiences. Art experiences are naturally conducive to these sorts of experiences of the senses and meaning-making.

This case study data reveals that students themselves noticed how diverse the audience was and experienced community in a new way, since they were actively contributing to it. It shows that there a place for educators to construct learning possibilities for students around themes of diversity and understanding differences and commonalities over students in several faith and school sectors through celebrations of the school-based arts.

A question can be asked at this point: Is there a place for community in the education of our children? If not, can that place be envisioned? If so, what does that place involve? Do our answers to these questions factor into what we believe education actually aims to do? Do the arts have a role in this? Weddington (2004, p. 120) bases his ideas on John Dewey's aesthetic theory: "Dewey (1916) argues that 'since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself' (p. 53). I would extend this by adding that since education is all one with growing, reciprocal human interaction (i.e., aesthetic experience) is all one with education."

Weddington also contends that education comprises ongoing aesthetic experiences that embody transformative, perceptual human interaction. This



transformation is carried out with care, responsibility, vulnerability, and emotional investment and I believe community organized school-based art festival for students may have a role to play in this. Transformational interactions can transcend classrooms and are comprised of ongoing reciprocal interactions viewed as education itself. If schooling is limited through an over-emphasis on “surveillance, sorting, training, and extraction (i.e., testing) ... education limits education” (p. 133). Authentic, reciprocal human interaction in part educates individuals in ways Weddington proposes are closer to Dewey’s (1934) vision of what education and community is about: “that no whole is significant to us except as it is constituted by parts that are themselves significant apart from the whole to which they belong – that, in short, no significant community can exist save as it is composed of individuals who are significant” (Dewey, 1934, p. 204).

If community is experienced in ways that 1) bind one another in common purpose; 2) comprise a large audience of students 5 to 18 years of age in an enthusiastic, empathetic environment; 3) provide a highly affirming and non-judgmental audience; and 4) offers diversity in the separate school sectors present—if all of this is experienced, then what is being learned about one’s community? My sense is that education communities can provide rich learning opportunities for learners to expand their notions of community through celebrations of the school-based arts. I believe this notion fulfills in part the mandate of the 2009 arts curriculum and would be useful in educating students for their future in Ontario communities.

### **Showcasing School-Based Arts**

Showcasing the arts, the second evident thread, centred around how the festival was inspiring, provided a pleasant learning experience for teachers and students, and

provided an opportunity for personal expression. Several of the ideas expressed in the findings about how the festival showcased school-based arts raise questions about the nature of the arts, their unique role in engaging our senses and emotions and impact this can have upon learning. In this section of the discussion, ideas from the data and the literature that illustrate and extend conversations about the central place of experiencing the arts through the senses and emotions will be considered before the way the arts contribute toward a complete education is examined.

### **Arts experiences and their value**

In one of the focus group sessions, dialogue amongst several teachers centred on why attending the festival was worthwhile and how the arts are valuable. One teacher spoke of the importance of emotions in student's learning: "It [the arts] gives them emotional growth, gives them a chance to really put their thoughts into music, dance, and poetry. They need that venue to let their feelings out." Far from imagining that senses and emotions confuse the learning process, thus rendering the arts less useful than other pedagogical subject areas, Eisner (2002) states that the arts develop a learners' capacity to understand by providing opportunities to learn and to think in special ways that deepen and broaden the complexities of lived experiences. This demonstrates the pivotal role that the senses and emotions play, a role that cannot be underestimated in its ability to engage individuals in the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of their learning environments.

Students, teachers, and volunteers involved in this case study directly spoke about the place of the arts to engage learners in learning through their dialogue and sketches of memorable moments during the RYFA. A teacher interviewed during this investigation

described her sketch of a memorable festival moment, noting that her students' smiles and big eyes represented their complete engagement with the performances. Maxine Greene (1992) refers to these moments and the role the arts can play in this "participant kind of engagement" and argues that the arts naturally offer this to learning environments. Another festival participant, a volunteer, reiterated how she remembered that festival students were not only interested in their own performance material, they were also fully attentive to other performances. The volunteer compared this to her own general impressions about schooling:

There is [also] something to be learned from the audience portion of your being there, of tolerance, and listening and giving your attention. And I don't think that is something that happens a lot in education . . . that's the sharing part, right? It's that you're waiting for your time and that's going to be a very exciting time, but in the meantime, you are there to pay attention to what the other guys are doing.

Yet investigation into the nature of attention is limited unless it recognizes phenomena such as the arts, which, remarkably, encourage *sustained* attention according to Sullivan (2000). A sense of being fully present and attentive in the moment is central to learning, and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) points out that the arts are well suited to encourage these sustained moments in educative experience. Participants in this case study spoke of experiencing this, of being inspired by learning experiences both as performers and as audience members. As discussed earlier, this may be linked to the role of empathy in performance and how our emotions can play a pivotal role by drawing individuals into deepened learning experiences.

Research indicates that the ability of the arts to engage students emotionally and imaginatively is one reason they are essential in the delivery of meaningful education, and Greene (1995a) is convinced that in exciting a learners' imagination an educator has

enabled one of best kinds of learning education can offer, a position with which Heid wholeheartedly agrees:

Moreover, the arts play an important role in bringing about the transformative moments of ordinary life that disclose the extraordinary. What is especially important in understanding aesthetics is that, at its core, we are engaging with the world and the wonder of life ... by learning to attend to the smallest nuances of art and of life, we may find a deeper presence within ourselves and within our world. (Heid, 2005, p.50)

Efland, in “Art Education as Imaginative Cognition,” states that within the arts, imagination is encountered and explored in full consciousness:

Making a place for the arts means giving oneself over to neither the ornamental fringes of knowledge nor to the abandonment of the hard facts of reality . . . the arts are places where the constructions of the imagination can and should become the principle object of study, where it is necessary to understand that the visual image or verbal expression are not literal facts but embodiments of meanings to be taken in some other light. (2004, p. 769)

Thus, Efland views cognition as a process beyond literal understanding. He also believes that cognition can be actively cultivated to encourage imagination. Greene (1995a) highlights the unique role of the arts in releasing this conscious, imaginative capacity. She also carefully distinguishes between aesthetic learning and mere exposure to art, since entering into learning imaginatively, perceptually, affectively, and cognitively is completely different from knowing about a concept in an academic sense that is devoid of affect and imagination.

The majority of the individuals in this case study mentioned hilarious moments at the festival that they still look back on and remember vividly. The place of humour to engage learners is new in many discussion circles, and since it was mentioned often in the findings of this case study, it warrants further consideration here. In particular,

interviewees often reminisced about the hilarious immediacy of the unexpected moments in performances. A student and teacher both spoke of how humorous the moment was when a student's costume fell apart. In this instance, a cat tail dropped to the floor and the students all around just burst out laughing:

Teacher: I drew [referring to her sketch] when we were doing the cats and the tails were cute, delightful. So were the children's reactions to the crowd's response [when the tail fell off]. There we just were aware of the crowd's response and they understood the laughter and knew they were laughing with them and not at them.

This moment underscored how engaged everyone was by the humour. A second example illustrates how a comedic, apparently incongruous, moment when a student appeared to fall off the festival stage bonded the audience in laughter and left a Grade-7 student with a strong impression. It was the first time he had ever seen an improv group perform, and he remarked that his experience at the festival was unlike school in that "there is not really ever an opportunity to see the things you get to [see] at the festival," and so he chose to sketch a pratfall in a high school improvisational skit as his most memorable festival moment. A second senior student also chose that moment as his most memorable.

While the research indicates the value of using the arts to facilitate learning moments, teachers are sometimes conflicted about whether they have time to incorporate the arts into learning, given the extensive pressure they face in covering other, "more important" curricular expectations. This reflects the enormous stress teachers face each day as divide the school time among the various subject areas to be covered. According to Slattery and Dees (1995), teachers should feel free to counterbalance bureaucratic demands with an emphasis on the human person, the human spirit, and why the arts

matter. Few things strike me as more important in education than how the humanities and the arts have the power to awaken imagination, the critical consciousness and multiple perspectives that raise our consciousness and enable us to create meaningful social worlds (Goodman and Teel, 1998). Educators' efforts in this regard, can nurture the growth of individuals to reach out to one another as they seek clearings in their experience and try to live more ardently in the world (Greene, 1995a), and are indeed, in my opinion, fundamentally important as students are launched through education to prepare for their futures.

Indeed, experiences in "living more ardently in the world" are no small part of one's existence, and Greene (2000a) encourages teachers to search for ways to bring this to her students for gaining competency and sensitivity in the aesthetic domain allows persons to live more vivid, intense, and satisfying lives. One student's remarks clearly spoke to this understanding:

It [the festival] was just a great experience. It was something you never, ever get. You know how you live in search of things of joy in your life that gives you that overwhelming feeling? If you don't have that, then you are not living life to the fullest. You have to enjoy something and live it with a passion.

Another senior student viewed the learning opportunity at the festival as a way to experience the arts in a new fashion, even sensing that mere words were not up to the task of describing the moment.

These moments are indeed valuable and central in genuine education for they introduce learners to the notion that, at times, our impressions stand outside of verbal articulation and expression. At times, we absorb understandings that resonate in our spirits that are full of wonder, and beyond words. In "Texts and Margins" (1991), Greene expresses her conviction that within the arts, people are often left with a sense of awe that

inclines them to imagine spaces where they can create visions of other ways of being and approaching life's moments. Gary Charles, a career educator, speaks of his enthusiasm about the arts in much the same way as the students quoted above. He felt that music is by its nature the most other-worldly of all the arts:

No one has ever seen or touched a beautiful melody, and yet melodies can get inside of you and you can't root it out. It becomes a part of you and if you have never had that experience, I feel sorry for you. You are missing what can be not only one of the great joys of living, but a great help to you when other things seem inadequate. (Whalen, 2008 p. 34)

Bennet Reimer (1989) believes that when art is experienced aesthetically it gives (to the extent that it is good art) as powerful, as effective, as tangible a sense of the human condition as is available to human beings.

### **Contributions of the arts to learning**

An understanding of the central place of the arts to engage learning through the senses and emotions provides the context to next consider the ways in which the festival model is provides a learning experience for both teachers and students. The findings show that the festival 1) provided professional development ideas for teachers; 2) enabled elementary students to learn more about the various arts and allowed senior elementary students to make more informed choices about upcoming, high school elective arts courses; and 3) permitted participants to reflect on how the arts inform a complete education.

#### ***Professional development.***

The majority of teachers who bring their classes to the festival have no formal arts background or experience. According to the findings, the festival provides a context in

which colleagues share arts ideas in a non-threatening milieu. A second-year teacher in one of the focus groups mentioned that she felt:

[I am] a very new teacher still. It was amazing to go there [RYFA] and see what other schools and teachers were doing. It was a source of professional development which I like, because oftentimes there are very little arts in Professional Development days and it's [the festival] a real thing to see and get ideas from.

*Student learning.*

As the findings show, the festival provided learning experiences for students as well as the teachers. It also served to deliver aspects of the 2009 arts curriculum, providing another reason why the festival informs a model to deliver school-based arts education. As a community-based event, it allowed schools in part to meet the expectation that students be involved in their communities. It also addressed the central issue of creativity. Creativity is outlined in Richmond's (1993) six criteria of Imaginative Art Teaching (IAT). In some ways it can be argued that the festival, due to the remarkable collaboration of administrators, principals, teachers, students, festival volunteers, and community, may exemplify IAT and thus address the central creative values of the 2009 arts curriculum.

1. According to Richmond, the first criterion of IAT is that Imaginative Arts Teaching (IAT) generates unusual ideas and activities. The collaboration of administrators, principals, teachers, students, volunteers, and community in the festival is unusual, and no other Canadian, school-based arts festival embraces all three school sectors—public, private, and separate—and requires no fees to attend; It thus qualifies as an “unusual” aspect of the educational experience with no known precedent.



2. IAT constructs learning opportunities that lead to worthwhile artistic understanding. According to teachers who attended the RYFA, the collaboration within the educational community through the RYFA helps develop a worthwhile artistic understanding. Teachers choose to attend voluntarily from all public, private, and separate school sectors in the county, and the opinions of teachers and students themselves reflect how it contributes to artistic understanding by providing a culminating activity for the arts curriculum. One teacher stated that:

After a whole year of teaching, you have taught them certain things in music and it's an opportunity to perform the piece at that larger venue. It is a great opportunity. That is how it ties into the curriculum. It really enhances it because of the performance opportunity. I remember that, at the end of the year, my kids would often remark that the highlight of their year was the RYFA. It sort of stands out in their minds as something that occupied a special place in their hearts.

Another teacher illustrated how she developed her students' artistic understandings using videotapes of the students' performances to constructively prepare for the larger festival performance.

Well, what we have been doing is videotaping their performances and they can watch it. They love that, and they are very interested. . . . and then we asked afterwards where we could improve before we went onto stage next. But the whole purpose [of the] thing, why we are doing this, is the festival in May. It is the culminating thing that you go to.

3. IAT utilizes the teacher's knowledge and judgment. The plans concerning an upcoming festival are discussed each year by the teachers themselves who attend an annual meeting. They establish guidelines, and their opinions and feedback following each annual celebration are fundamental to the direction

of the RYFA. Teachers presently serve as advisors to all levels of festival leadership.

4. IAT is flexible and adaptive to the unique demands of practice. The opinions of teachers and students themselves inform these criteria of imaginative teaching within the festival. A teacher remarked:

One other thing about the festival is seeing ideas; those that help inspire fellow educators in the arts. I know teachers who have gone to the festival and have seen things like the drum circle and have been inspired to do the same at their school. The festival gives an opportunity for educators to see something new, get some advice.

Other teachers offer opinions about how useful the festival is in meeting the demands of practice in these days, in these schools. One said, "I can't remember one year I missed. The festival is such a huge impetus for arts in general." Another stated that

It is an amazing opportunity for a teacher. It is such a highlight for us in our growth. It is always at first like, "Oh, what are we going to do?" But when it is over, it is a great sense of satisfaction. All my colleagues agree.

A third teacher remarked on the central focus the festival has in arts curriculum for her students.

Because the goal of attending the festival is something to aim for, it gives a purpose to what we do [in the arts curriculum]. It's a larger goal that we can provide. I know from years of teaching, the students just know and they ask about the festival, "Do you know when it is, what are we doing" and it's nice to have a goal that is real and larger than what we can provide here and something that has a history and that the students look forward to.

A student spoke of how the festival served as a year-long focus for arts education. "At schools we're leading up the festival. The festival is the peak and we get psyched about it."

5. IAT respects the exploratory, open-ended, and insightful nature of the arts.

The level of cooperation amongst the teachers who attend is noteworthy and reflects the insightful impact the collaborative initiative has had. Several years ago, a teacher was inspired to contact a teacher at another school to ask for advice on how to fund and organize an elementary school band. A teacher relayed that:

[her local school] got their band, their drumming circle from us, from seeing us at the festival. We had some parents and teachers approach us after the festival and ask how they could implement the same program at their school. It worked. It's in their second year. We took both of our bands on a bus over to [that school] and it was great, we performed, they asked questions.

A volunteer remarked that "at the festival, there is such a great incorporation of the experiences into the actual learning at the school and the teaching . . . it's furthering their education." Another volunteer organizer explained her sketch of a kazoo:

They see many schools there and what they are doing, and first of all, they feel like they are not alone. Secondly, they get inspired to try new stuff. If more kids don't come with kazoos, I will hand them out at the door; It's so easy. It gives them ideas and inspiration to go back and do it themselves. If that is all it does, then it serves its purpose.

This suggests the insightful nature of the celebration in its open-ended, casual tone and commends the individuals who have committed to enable an arts festival that usefully supports and encourages creative arts teaching in given schooling districts.

6. IA Teaching is vital and motivating and is a model for the pupils' own imaginative efforts in art. The festival was reportedly inspirational on several levels, and one student voiced how it motivated him in the following way:

It was such a really cool experience and I would love to go back, even just to watch, because it inspires you so much to get into so many different things and opens you up to so many other ideas.

A teacher mentioned her memorable festival impressions:

That's why kids love the arts, because kids can express themselves. If we let them express themselves, they can learn so much more instead of feeling that they have to learn someone else's [ideas] math or timetables.... This is your signature, you own it. It's your experience in the arts.

In these ways the festival experience has been useful in encouraging imaginative arts teaching at the elementary school level and, thus, supporting the delivery of the arts in this county. Furthermore, according to the data, the festival introduced senior elementary students to arts course ideas they might not have otherwise know about. This enables them to make informed choices about arts electives upon entering secondary school.

- Student: This year I have to pick courses for high school, and last year I went to the festival and saw the improv team from Local High School and it was so amazing. I don't know if I want to take it or not, but the cool thing about the festival is that you can go and see them play their instruments or perform their skits, dance, and it kind of helps you to pick what you'll take in high school.
- Interviewer: So one of the things you like about the festival is getting to see the arts at the high school level?
- Student: Yes. That way you know what you can look forward to.

This suggests that the festival contributes to a student's preparedness to make course selections. One principal remarked that she would advise that principals arrange festival attendance for their students so that every student at a given school has an opportunity to attend once over their elementary school years for this very reason. It can thus be argued having students and teachers share arts-based performances over various grades and school sectors, qualifies as an engaging and exciting experience for students with respect to their learning about the arts. These experiences opened up connections

and possibilities for growth that developed new arts teaching ideas in a collaborative educative context. If so, it may serve to inform other education communities about arts education.

Thus far, in exploring the second thread evident in the data, showcasing the school-based arts, discussion of the literature and data has illustrated the central place of the arts in engaging learning through the senses and emotions. This perspective provided the context to consider the ways in which the festival itself was a learning experience for teachers in schools where there is no arts specialist. The finding that elementary students found the festival helpful in making informed decisions about further arts electives demonstrates how the festival can contribute towards effective, school-based arts education. A significant finding was that teachers and students sensed that the festival and the arts contributed toward a complete education. This is a valuable idea for learning communities to discuss in light of the new mandate of the 2009 arts curriculum.

### *Complete education.*

Genuine education involves exploring one's beliefs and understandings with insight, sensitivity and courage. Indeed, Eisner (1994) views authentic education as an ongoing process in which an individual learns to reflect on what they see, hear, feel, and experience, and gradually, one's reflections pose questions that are in time expressed with deeper insight, sensitivity, and intelligence. A career educator summarized her impressions of the festival's principal role of highlighting the arts, saying she believes that the aim of education is to challenge learners to examine their understandings as they prepare for their future in society: "The festival is such a huge impetus for arts in general.... I just think about their [arts] expression in learning the language (of the arts).

If you don't express yourself, then you rebound and do not challenge yourself to change what you think, and that's the whole point of education."

This role of the arts in encouraging new ideas and rethinking understandings was mentioned by a student who said that "It [the arts and the festival] inspires you so much to get into so many different things and opens you up to so many other ideas." A teacher stated that the arts are integral to a complete education: "It [the arts] is so critical to tie in art and math and language. It is such a big component of our day. If we really, truly want to educate kids totally, it [the arts] has to be a part." Another student described the value of the arts in his school experiences by saying that "you can learn so much more from the arts and stuff. With arts, you can relate and it can help us through stuff." Greene (1988) notes that few aspects of education are more important than growth-oriented public spaces where we learn to activate our imaginations, welcome new insights, and change our minds, where we become willing to refine our beliefs through conversations with others.

Since the arts are unique in the way that they encourage creative, perceptual, and reflective capacities (Smith, 2004), contemporary writing about aesthetic education argues that arts education should do what it alone can do best. Yet, the reality is that the arts have become marginalized in schools because they are seen as an extra. There still exists a common belief, even held by educators and policy-makers, that arts education is expendable and a frill that can be eliminated in times of financial deficit (Darts, 2006). The challenge is to find meaningful ways to connect arts curriculum to the larger concerns of pedagogy and society. If indeed our public educational institutions are designed to prepare students to successfully meet societal demands and challenges), then

the arts are an integral component of the educational experience as they develop a students' ability to problem solve, think critically, attend to detail, collaborate, contemplate, and create something original that will be representative of the individual's world view at that point and place in their lives (Anderson, Carter, and Lowe, 1999). Some educators and policy-makers assume that the arts do not take any particular level of brainwork, but can be used to pass time pleasantly. Rademaker (2003) believes that this stems from a prevailing attitude that the arts can be taught "if we have time," or "if you are good, you can have some fun in music classes." She states that Dewey (1989/1939) saw this problem more 60 years ago, commenting that it was not customary to include the fine arts as an important aspect of the social conditions that bear upon democratic institutions and personal freedom. Even "good" democrats were content to look at art as an adornment of culture rather than as an enjoyable activity we should all partake in. Rademaker points out that too often, just as Dewey warned, art is often thought of as being not much more than entertainment.

Eisner (2001b) grounds discussions about what a complete education is when he argues that an educator's efforts are best spent not on enabling students to produce high test scores, but on enabling students to live a better life. Nel Noddings (1995) in "A Morally Defensible Mission For Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," further qualifies this argument and insists that education above all focuses on skills central to human life, such as encouraging students to become competent, caring, loving human beings. She views an overemphasis on training individuals to enter the workforce or go on to further academic studies, all at the expense of exploring how caring is a strong resilient response

towards human life that involves cultivating a sense of wonder and appreciation for life and its technical, natural, cultural, and spiritual worlds.

Truly, a teacher's caring heart can impact students above all. "When relationships are right and the comments made suit the moment, when a child is touched and an adolescent supported, the student may come away from the art room with a memory that he or she will cherish throughout his or her life. It is in this sense that a teacher affects eternity" (Eisner, 2001a, p. 10).

### **Inclusivity**

The term inclusivity comes from a pivotal phrase a teacher used in one of the focus sessions: "The arts are for everyone." Her festival sketch depicted the two components of visual and performing arts celebrated at the RYFA (see Figure 16 in chapter 3). One of her colleagues in the session said that she had similar reflections about how the festival embraced all students:

It's about belonging. I want to come back to my picture. I depicted the kids as shoulder to shoulder. The reason that this is an emotionally positive experience is that it is a lot of kids realizing the beauty of doing the same thing together. Everyone can come together and be one of the gang.

Participants reported that they experienced inclusivity because, as the festival data reveals, the celebration embraced 1) all students, regardless of academic ability; and 2) all teachers, regardless of arts experience and background.

### **All students.**

This experience of connecting individual learners in an emotionally positive experience, irrespective of learning style, was among the strongest threads derived from



the data. It complements the first evident thread, “community,” and the ways in which festival participants sensed unity of purpose, affirmation, and a non-judgmental context.

The findings indicate that the festival provides a place in schooling where students connect as equals over grade levels and learning styles. It provides a place to connect the children whose learning abilities or styles keep them invisible and disconnected from much of what is taught in schools, especially when testing is a priority. Developmentally challenged students from one of the local elementary schools attended last year and helped with videotaping the event. The finding that students were aware that all learners from every type of educational designation—gifted, main stream, and special needs—were involved in the RYFA—is significant. This suggests that celebrations of the school-based arts can be designed intentionally so there is an opportunity to achieve inclusivity for all students in a school through the arts. Furthermore, it suggests that a school-based arts celebration can be organized so that it embraces students and their teachers from several different school systems. Within the RYFA, any school in the county is welcome to attend. Any teacher in any class is welcome to attend. No one pays a fee to attend.

As noted earlier, in its 2009 annual education report on Ontario’s public schools, People for Education, applauded the detailed 2009 arts curriculum. It also pointed out that there is no funding specifically designated to implement it. This report, *Ontario’s Public Schools in 2009—Wanted: A Renewed Vision for Public Education*, noted that all students in Ontario do not have equal access to the arts. The RYFA, however, informs a model of a learning situation in which all students experience school-based arts in a way

that transcends differences over school sectors and invites each performer and audience member to share school-based arts.

### **All teachers**

The case study data identified a second instance of inclusivity in that teachers of all arts backgrounds and experiences were also embraced. The following segment considers this finding in light of the related literature and the issues it raises.

Though the festival literature and promotional materials clearly state that all teachers and classes are welcome, some educators reported feeling reticent and initially intimidated because they had no formal arts background or training. This lack of formal training or background in the arts is a typical situation among teachers (Zwim and Graham, 2005). The non-competitive tone of the celebration was demonstrated to be a key factor encouraging such teachers to attend for the first time. A teacher in one of the focus groups referred to her sketch of a conductor with a 10 out of 10 rating on the sketch (see Figure 12 in chapter 3) and openly discussed her initial apprehension about attending the festival because she has no formal arts training. Her remarks emphasize the impact of a non-judgmental milieu on both the students and teachers:

They [former students] still keep talking about the festival. I think that if it was a competitive venue, it wouldn't accomplish that. It is just wonderful that the arts get to shine, and through the arts, the children get to shine. That is what we have always treasured about it..... At first, you are worried that it is not going to come together, but it does not matter what happens. Being able to have a non-judged type of audience, it opens the bars to make the kids feel like they can do it, and I remember that applause is always in my heart and my head when we are performing.

A volunteer spoke to this value as well:

Everything in school is competitive. They [people involved] live their academic lives primarily in that mindset. What other times are there just to focus on making a connection with other people in the group, experiencing

performances together like that? What other times do you do it in school? I think that this is the beauty [of the festival], and that is why I think that this idea should be communicated to other communities.

In *Contemporary Issues in Curriculum* (2003), Parker Palmer speaks of teachers meeting as fellow travelers, offering encouragement to each other in the demanding but deeply rewarding journey across the inner landscape of education. As a teacher, it has been important for me to have places to exchange stories with colleagues about my teaching. I have taught in situations where I had virtually every sort of resource help and where I had virtually none. I see significant value in teachers sensing they are supported in useful ways as they attempt to deliver the arts in these days. One of the features of the RYFA organization is that several master elementary teachers serve as resource arts mentors for teachers who attend the RYFA. These mentors walk teachers through any questions they have in order to support their involvement in the RYFA.

Furthermore, given the complexity of the educational landscape of teachers, this mentoring has been useful in presenting a supportive milieu. Teachers are initially intimidated about attending the celebration and have reservations about their ability to bring students fully prepared. However, as one teacher said, the actual RYFA experience is not about rating teachers or students. It's about a positive learning experience: "That is what scares people [teachers]. They think everyone there is trained by specialists, but when you get there [to the festival]; you realize that if you flop, it is still going to be a positive experience. That we'll find success in it."

For some teachers, the festival has filled a gap caused by the demands of practice, such as cutbacks in several areas in delivering the arts curriculum to their students and in having little access to professional development in this aspect of the curriculum. One teacher remarked that "There used to be lots of professional development (PD) in the arts,

and now with the new curriculum, it has taken a backseat in the PD area unless you have actually sought it out yourself.” This remark suggests that the RYFA offers ideas on arts education are delivered in these days in Ontario.

### **School-Based Arts Celebrations**

The fourth evident thread revealed that participants found the RYFA special since the arts are not often celebrated. This finding speaks to the complexity of conversation in the education community about school-based arts. It underlines the importance of finding ways to deliver the arts-based education set out in the Ontario’s Ministry of Education 2009 arts curriculum. This case study presents ideas that inform a model that may help schools deliver the arts curriculum and there are three expectations that the festival directly fulfills: community involvement, creative strategies, and recognition of commonality and difference.

First, in the 2009 arts curriculum, with respect to community involvement, there is repeated emphasis on how experiences in the arts can play a valuable role in helping students achieve their potential as learners and to participate “fully in their community and society.” (p.3) The RYFA addresses this expectation in several interesting ways. Students have opportunities to interact from other students in various school sectors in the region. The community tracks the celebration through local television, radio, newspaper and magazine media that cover the celebration and interview students, teachers, and volunteers in press releases. Local town council members, provincial and federal members of parliament, school board trustees and chairpersons from the public, and parochial and private school attend. The local theatre is also a sponsor and they volunteer to professionally emcee the festival. An arts council provides funds towards

expressed needs schools may require such as school logo T-shirts for elementary school bands. A local church congregation, which has an auditorium that seats up to 700, donates their facility at no charge and is actively involved in the providing volunteers that host the event. An association of retired principals and teachers attends and serves as school hosts as well. A local corporate sponsor provides the operating costs of the event. This indicates that a cross section of the community in which the RYFA serves, is represented and actively involved in the celebration.

Secondly, with respect to creative strategies as another expectation within the 2009 arts curricular document, the festival demonstrates imaginative tools, techniques, and skills in several ways. The festival involves all school sectors represented within this community. Students themselves are actively involved as advisors in the direction of the RYFA. Many students write stories about their festival impressions and include drawings of their favourite moments, which are posted on the festival's web site. Special education and mainstream classes have been involved in videotaping the event. Students have also recorded their renditions of the mass choral piece as teaching exemplars for those who may attend and be new to the how the closing moments of the festival include a mass choral piece. Students also nominate their teachers for an award of excellence offered each year to an educator of exemplary service to the arts in schools. These contributions reflect imaginative approaches in which students are exploring their community at large and how they can contribute in it.

Thirdly, direct mention is made in the 2009 arts curriculum that students interact with arts works to emphasize commonalities and celebrate differences, which is the foundational principal underlying the celebration itself. The fours strands of dance,

drama, music and the visual arts shared at the festival are all instances of learning experiences that may deepen the and enrich the overall ideas of the arts curriculum which are to develop understandings about creativity, communication, cultures and connections. Specifically, teachers are encouraged to involve their students in “inclusive” exhibitions, concerts and performances: “Teachers may have their students participate in festivals that focus on the curriculum, support the units or sequence of instruction, have clear criteria, are designed for educational purposes and provide descriptive feedback” (p. 9). The festival meets these requirements.

This case study does not attempt to speak about arts in schools generally or how rarely each of the four strands of the arts curriculum are experienced in schools. Yet talking points exist about the importance of having all four strands enabled in schools and celebrated at the RYFA. I am not aware if statistics are available that provide information about the presence or absence of each arts strand within an individual school, within school boards, or across the province though drama, dance, music and visual arts. All are certainly equally important in the current arts curriculum.

At the RYFA, the visual arts displays include work from three public secondary schools and the majority of elementary schools. Exhibition space one-third the size of the auditorium seating 600, presents freestanding art displays and the ingenuity in presentation is remarkable. Teachers are encouraged to arrange their bussing plans around students having time to browse the visual arts displays. Some teachers and RYFA organizers have expressed interest in having more time available for students to browse the displays. In response, last May displays were opened to the public at an evening RYFA Visual Arts Open House, so that the community at large could be involved. Since

2006, volunteers have taken pictures of the artwork and these images have been posted on the festival web site. In 2010, an instructional DVD walk through visual arts tour, produced by teachers and adjudicators, will be arranged.

The other three curricular strands of dance, drama and music are represented at the RYFA in several ways. Secondary schools send dance teams to the festival and the amount of elementary dance performances offered each year has increased steadily over the last thirteen years of the RYFA. The RYFA registrar aims to have at least one dance and drama performance per morning. For the past four years, the drama class at the closest high school has offered to attend several times during the week so more elementary students would have a chance to experience this secondary school arts program. The RYFA offers each attending school 17 minutes of performance time so that up to six elementary schools can participate each morning; the teachers themselves decide what performance and visual art material is presented. Schools attend voluntarily. Elementary school music performed spans drumming circles, choirs, musicals, recorder pieces, handbell choirs, junior and senior bands. Each festival morning is hosted by a school and music students at local high schools perform in junior and senior bands, choirs, and ensembles.

The concern that the RYFA may not be offering each strand of the arts equally is a complex issue. The RYFA showcases what teachers choose to have their students perform. It endeavours to represent all arts strands each morning. Some teachers have been asked to bring their dance or drama troupes more than once over the week to provide a complete showcase. The challenges may in part reflect whether the four strands are present within schools themselves. Several possible reasons and their implications

involve: 1) the amount of professional development opportunities for teachers to strengthen their understanding of the individual strands; 2) the absence of specific funding from the Ministry of Education to enable arts education; 3) the emphasis teacher training institutions place upon the arts in preparing its pre service teachers; 4) whether or not a principal can move ahead to enable staff in delivering all four strands of the arts; and 5) the ability or willingness of a given school community to support the delivery of the arts, if at all.

Another factor may lie within the actual personal experience of educators and community members themselves and thus their understanding of the various strands of the arts. Some people have not had life journeys that involved or affirmed the value of the arts. One distinctive of the RYFA community is that, in contrast, so many who link arms to enable the school-based arts have experienced the beauty of the arts as sojourners. In interpreting whether or not the findings speak to how any one of the arts are more represented in the RYFA than another, an intriguing aspect of the language arises. The first interview question uses the phrase “memorable moment.” Could that phrase have implied to some of those interviewed, that the more communal moments of performance were being profiled over the impact upon learners of art pieces? Viewing artwork tends to be an individual experience, while song and dance is a communal experience and the latter may have been viewed as “memorable” particularly when shared in an interview context. Regardless, several teachers in the focus sessions included the visual arts in their sketches. Another depicted dance as her memorable moment, and three others intentionally sketched all of the arts without singling any one in particular. Knowing this may be useful in interpreting the findings.



**Conclusion: Window of Opportunity 2009**

The 2009 arts curriculum states that two new enablers of school art education, principals and community partners, are to work alongside teachers, students, and parents. Perhaps progressive people will be encouraged to collaborate with students, teachers, parents, principals, and community partners in ways to recognize aspects of each interest group.

In *Transformative Curriculum Leadership*, Hawthorne and Henderson (2000) state that when such groups become forums for generating, discussing, and critiquing new ideas, these gatherings can be genuine attempts to engage all persons in the work of the school, to share in the responsibility for teaching through the development of personal and professional bonds. Ramsay (2006) expands upon this concept, noting that collaborative communities are not simply about members contributing to the success of the whole group. Collaborative communities value the relationships necessary to support each other and to respect and learn from the various strengths of all involved. Aprill (2004) suggests that this involves a fundamental shift in relationships between the education communities and the arts communities as they work together over areas of shared interest and concern. It is interesting that the RYFA represents this sort of collaboration in that teachers and volunteers all share leadership at the executive, advisory and committee level.

This concept of shared work being done owing to a shift in relationships in education communities amongst the role-bearing partners in arts education was, arguably, also illustrated by the 1996 community forum held in my county. The forum gathered opinions about the state of the school-based arts from the regional politicians, trustee members, school council members, principals, teachers, parents, and students. The

“common sense revolution” had created a maelstrom of anxiety amongst many individuals about the local school board being amalgamated, what programs might be eliminated during amalgamation, and how the arts were unsupported in many county schools. Two years earlier, the board had dismissed a petition to protect music in one of the local high schools. Following the 1996 community forum, a task force was formed of several teachers, students, and volunteers to pursue arts-strengthening ideas. Out of this collaboration, the first RYFA was held in May 1998.

The development of the celebration may parallel suggestions that Hawthorne and Henderson (2000) highlight as the best way to initiate and sustain change in schooling issues: 1) invite the community to attend think tanks on aspects of the curriculum that need to be addressed; 2) develop school community networks around an issue, since networks like these can develop trust and open communication; and 3) build mutual respect among parents, community members, and faculty members.

As discussed, the lack of funding to implement the current curriculum may hamper schools in reaching the goals espoused in the 2009 curriculum, but the festival represents a strategy beyond funding requests. This may encourage communities in situations like mine, to enable a model to strengthen aspects of the arts and possibly provide them at no cost to schools. Because of the economic realities all communities face, this is a compelling argument to further investigate the impact and nature of the RYFA.

No small aspect of envisioning this sort of model, according to Greene’s “The Ambiguities of Freedom” (2000b), is the political literacy that results from people’s “intersubjectivity, their coming together” to imagine what might be, what ought to be, so

that attention can be focused on the inequitable situation and provoke persons to take action together in order to transcend and transform the challenge at hand. Without commenting on whether or not the teachers from 28 schools who gather with volunteers to organize the festival ascribe to emancipatory pedagogy, it is interesting that in *Texts and Margins* (1991), Greene defines this circle as a “community that would have to include in its dialogue women and men of all classes, backgrounds, colours, and religious faiths, each one free to speak from a distinctive perspective, each reaching from that distinctive perspective towards the making of some common world. And it would have to be a community *sharing* unabashed love of the arts” (p. 27).

In one of the focus sessions, the teachers discussed how the festival had a place in encouraging educators in these days of budget cuts and other cutbacks. The dialogue expressed concerns about the uphill nature of enabling the arts in these days and how individual schools may vary widely in this respect. Another teacher spoke from her heart in the closing moments of her focus group session: “I think that getting to celebrate the arts is, well, I cannot think of another venue that is like the festival ... being able to pursue the dream and make that dream a blessing on other people is truly wonderful ... we don’t want it ever to end.”

A volunteer viewed the collaboration as a dream that she is proud of:

The festival reminds me of Martin Luther King and his ‘I have a dream’ [speech], and in my mind, there was a dream. A dream to awaken our hearts ... when my daughter started at her school [20 years ago], the arts teacher had a choir. My daughter was very interested. The teacher gave up eventually and was defeated. It had to do with the school system, the kids and the parents weren’t behind it. Nobody wanted to do it. Over the years since the festival began, that teacher came back. What that gave to my kids is tremendous. What that meant for my daughter who had a defeated music teacher, to see her come back meant so much. Now my daughter is

able to see her baby brother [in that school], and it meant so much for the children's self-esteem—for the teachers and the volunteers, too.

It is not the purpose of case studies to offer generalizations. However, the findings discussed herein do suggest that the community-based festival offers ideas about delivering rich school-based arts education. One volunteer reflected that:

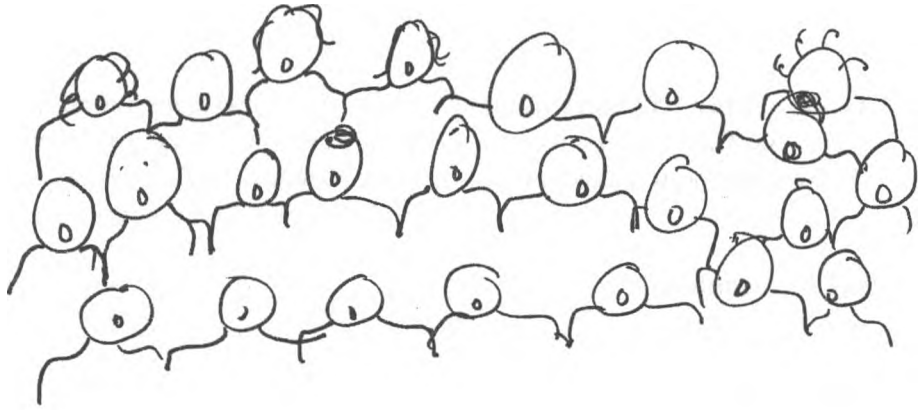
It is such an enjoyable part of our lives; I think that it is really, really important. I think that if we can excite other people in other places in Canada and the world, wherever ... I think it is so important. It gives us faith to take on other things as parents, as volunteers, and young people. Don't you love a dream?

Another volunteer felt the festival was an exemplar of school-based arts that should be shared with other communities:

Somehow a package needs to be put together to outline how these festivals are run and put together. It all boils down to that it is such an important learning process, but also enjoyment. We need to have the arts in our lives, and the arts are getting squished out in so many different ways. Whether I am helping a music teacher in a small way or a fabulous festival where everyone shines. It is a tremendous effort. A lot of people and places might find it too intimidating to take on such a project. But if they had a "how to" guide, then we are improving society.

Another volunteer was clear that this dream is worth pursuing for other education communities:

The festival is such an opportunity to bring the arts into their lives and gives passion back to the teacher and all the entertainers.... I hope that what you are writing about is, is a sort of a plan for other areas to use, so that they won't miss a wonderful aspect of what we can have in our lives.



**Figure 29: Choir members “shoulder to shoulder.”**

## Chapter 6 Summary

*Education imbued with the study of the humanities and arts has the power to awaken the imagination, the critical consciousness, and multiple perspectives that raise our consciousness and thus make it possible to create meaningful social worlds. (p.68)*

Goodman and Teel

A Regional Youth Festival of the Arts was established in 1997 as a community-based effort to strengthen and deliver school-based arts after a decade of funding cuts had left school arts programs devastated. Because of the beleaguered state of the school-based arts at that time, a community forum had been held in 1996 involving the regional school board, trustees, principals, teachers, students, politicians, parents, and students. Out of it a committee was stuck to organize a celebratory school-based arts festival, the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA), to be held in May of 1997. It was hoped that the RYFA would provide a positive arts learning experience. Now in its 13th year, the RYFA informs a model for delivering aspects of the school-based arts that other schools and communities could use or adapt. Through qualitative inquiry, a case study was designed to explore the nature of the RYFA with two questions:

1. In what ways are the arts education experiences of the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA) similar to, and different from, school-based arts education?; and
2. In what ways might the RYFA experience serve as a model for school-based arts education?

This chapter first summarizes the context for the research, and then states the thesis research questions. Next a brief description is given of the research method and findings. Then it provides summary answers are stated for each of the two questions. Then, the implications of the findings for the future of the arts education are reviewed, followed by a review of the areas the findings suggest for further research.

### **Method and Findings**

The two research questions were investigated within a case study of the RYFA experience, from data collected over a six-month period beginning in 2007 through the lenses of drawings, interviews, and focus groups of participants (teachers, students, and festival volunteers). My own experiences were offered as narrative. The transcribed recordings of participants' interviews and their accompanying sketches revealed four evident threads concerning the impact of the festival. The findings, which were discussed in chapters 4 and 5, indicated the following:

1. Participants experienced community in several ways, both as a performer or an audience member, through
  - a. unity of purpose;
  - b. audience;
  - c. affirmation;
  - d. diversity; and
  - e. a non-judgmental context;
2. The festival was a school-based arts showcase unlike anything their schools typically offered. Participants noted that the celebration and showcase of the school-based arts was

- a. inspiring; and
  - b. a learning experience;
3. Participants reported the festival being inclusive of
- a. all students, regardless of academic status; and
  - b. all teachers, regardless of background or arts experience; and
4. Data revealed that participants reported the RYFA experience as special because in some schools arts are not often celebrated often.

The first research question was used to have participants to discuss how the RYFA experience was both like and different from their school-based arts. The answer revealed that the RYFA experience is like the school experience because it is a venue in which to share curricular school-based arts ideas. Yet, it is different in that having the opportunity to celebrate the arts in a focused way was special because the arts were not often celebrated in some schools. It was memorable for its sense of community, inspiration, and inclusiveness. The participants said that RYFA enabled them to sense community through unity of purpose; to experience being a performer in front of a large audience; and to have opportunities to receive affirmation, to experience diversity, and to perform in a non-judgmental context. The students and teachers stated that sharing the visual and performing arts in a showcase venue was an inspiring learning experience. The participants said that the celebration was unusual in its inclusive nature as it involved all students regardless of academic status and all teachers regardless of arts experience or training

The second question explored in the thesis investigated the ways in which the RYFA experience might serve as a model for school-based arts education. The RYFA



offers pedagogical ideas that may inform a model for school-based arts education through 1) community, 2) showcasing school-based arts, and 3) inclusivity, which could be useful to schools in creating more effective arts programs.

The first way in which the RYFA may be useful is in its emphasis on how students experience their communities. With the greater awareness of self gained through artistic expression, students can work through their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes in a way that allows them to construct an idea of their world, their shared humanity, and their place in the world. This study has explored the implications of opening up learning spaces where students experience community through 1) a sense of unifying purpose that 2) comprises a different audience and age range of students 3) in an affirming, enthusiastic, constructive context 4) of learners from diverse backgrounds, who sense empathy toward one another during arts performances in 5) a non-judgmental celebration of the school-based arts.

Students can also experience a sense of their identity as Canadians at an event like the festival. For years, RYFA participants have participated in a Canada-wide choral event during the closing ceremony, when they sing a mass choral piece that was composed by Canadians to be sung by students across Canada on the first Monday of May.

Another aspect of community that the RYFA suggests is the opportunity for principals to find innovative ways to work with community partners to enable school-based arts resources. This may include projects to provide guest artist performances, arts council resources, and fund raising for class visits to museums, staff workshops, and forums. The RYFA began in a family of schools 13 years ago when a public forum was

held to discuss the beleaguered state of the school-based arts at that time. A group of teachers, students, parents, principals and community members agreed to become a task force to set up a school based arts celebration. This parallels the transformational leadership communities Hawthorne and Henderson (2000) recommend and continues to have a role serving schools by strengthening their school based arts.

The second pedagogical idea within RYFA experience that may be useful to consider is the role the festival plays in showcasing school-based arts, in particular. The RYFA experience offers some ideas, knowledge, and methods that educators might find useful in covering the four strands of drama, music, dance, and visual arts. Specifically, educators may consider the value of promoting the following: 1) show and tell, 2) arts assemblies, and 3) themed arts exhibitions.

1. **Show and Tell:** Allotting time for students to share their art performances and visual arts with other classes creates a focal point for efforts and enthuses the arts learning environment. Students can be active in organizing, emceeding, videotaping, and editing event footage of these arts events.
2. **Arts Assemblies:** Having high school arts students visit elementary school assemblies to perform can motivate senior students to consider arts electives at the secondary school level.
3. **Themed Art Emphasis:** In a meaningful way, students can explore social issues such as safe schools, tolerance, empathy, and display the learning through their arts: skits, composed songs and chants, poems, creative dance, themed posters, movies, and power points.

The third aspect of the RYFA that may inform a model of arts instruction is its emphasis on inclusivity and the way in which the arts are singular in their ability to promote self-expression and embrace learners of all backgrounds and learning styles. The arts can engage students of all learning styles in deeply educative experiences, and this matters because, often, other subject areas naturally segregate learners according to learning style.

As educators look to strengthen their arts programs, students and teachers from all learning strategies, experiences, and backgrounds can consider ideas within a school-based arts festival that may include all students and teachers, in the interconnectedness we can choose to embrace through the arts.

### **Research Opportunities**

The implications for further research are intriguing as outlined below:

- **Teaching institutions and universities:** Timely discussion could explore how the findings of this study suggest talking points for teacher training programs and students interested in research about models in arts education.
- **Educators:** Research is needed to establish the status of the arts in schools so that informed action and strategies can be best applied where they are most needed in provincial districts.
- **Teachers:** Future research might develop practical ways and means whereby teachers who attended the RYFA can share their stories about how the festival helped them deliver arts curriculum where they practice.
- **Data from sketches:** Another promising area for further research is considering the value in some situations of having study participants initially sketch their

impressions. The participants found the sketching activity interesting and at times carefully elaborated about what their drawing was meant to depict.

- **Regionality:** Future studies might determine which aspects of the RYFA experience are specific to this region. This would further inform arts education and may suggest generalizable circumstances and resources that may be useful for other educators and their communities to consider.
- **The four strands of arts instruction:** This study raises concerns about how the arts are not equally presented in schools and within the RYFA. The discussion considered several possible factors that might pose further questions for study.
- **Smaller version:** In addition, future research might examine the current program to identify how the themes reflected in the chapter discussing the findings (i.e., community, arts showcasing, inclusivity, and rarity) might be replicated on a smaller scale for use in individual schools.
- **Outcomes from the arts:** The complex learning and expressive processes of the arts and their implications upon the intellectual, personal, and social development of learners is profound. The potential to make an impact on students intellectually, personally, and with respect to their social development, is exciting and hopeful. Further research could more fully and intensively explore how the specific outcomes of learning are experienced and expressed in art forms.
- **Complete education:** Further research could be done on how the arts contribute positively toward enabling students to achieve their potential as learners and to participate fully in the communities and society.

Looking back on this case study, the images of a celebration of the arts evident in the drawings of the participants live in my thoughts and motivate me to continue my work in the arts.

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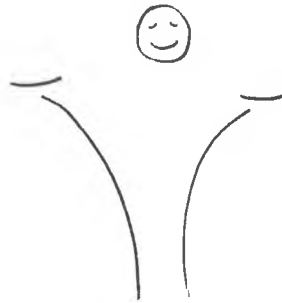
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## Appendix A A New Awareness of the Arts

The elementary school choir, 120 voices strong, began to sing Music Monday's anthem. This mass choral piece, commissioned by the Canadian Music Educators' Coalition (CMES), is a song offered each year to all school communities across Canada, a song to be sung the first Monday of May. Time froze for me. The children's voices gently breathed beauty into the final moments of the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts. Beyond words, I sensed awe.



**Figure 30: A moment of awe.**

In that memorable festival moment depicted by my sketch, I leaned against the back wall of the filled auditorium. Why did I feel like a supplicant with eyes closed and hands raised? Why were children in the audience wide-eyed and on the edge of their seats? Why had a hush settled over the audience? Was this a time unlike others in their schooling experience? Were we on sacred ground? Had I known arts moments like this before?

Was the moment simply about a song, or was it about music? Songs are something most of us are familiar with. As a child, I heard the national anthem begin

each and every school day in our working-class neighbourhood of Ville St Laurent in Montreal. We had music as a subject once a week and learned folk songs. Sir Winston Churchill High School offered one visual arts elective entitled Introduction to Art, but it had no music program or choir. Parents like mine in the sixties made sure their children took music lessons and passed the Grade-8 conservatory piano exam. One of the best things about my piano studies as a child with the Royal Conservatory piano curriculum was the graded rendition of *God Save the Queen* on the back page. To avoid the tedium of practicing scales and finger exercises, I'd spend half my daily practice time mastering stirring renditions of what was our national anthem. By the time I was 15, several neighbours knew to read the paper after supper, as my Dad did, whilst listening to the kid next door rehearse the song as if the Queen herself was arriving on the *Queen Mary* the next day. It was little wonder neighbours began asking me when I was a young teenager to give their children piano lessons.

At 16, I attempted my first-ever piano recital performance or exam—the Grade-8 conservatory benchmark. No small motivation was knowing it could count as a high school leaving credit. The examiner introduced himself and said that the stunning, gilded mirrors on every wall surface of Victoria Hall in that Town of Mount Royal municipal building allowed him to sit at his desk and judge the position of my every finger as I played. I was terrified and fought hard to control my trembling hands and knees that day, and ever since. Thrilled to have survived the ordeal, overcoming my terror made an impact my own practice as a piano teacher.

Preparing children to play confidently and well at conservatory piano exams by means of bimonthly student recitals became close to my heart. To this day, my students

remember how each had a turn hosting the event and ladling fruit juice into glass drinking cups from a punch bowl afterwards. Elementary school principals knew that when they hired me, they had a music teacher, choir leader, and piano accompanist. Ensuring that students were well prepared to perform mattered to me, and making music happen for students and schools was something I brought to every school I taught at.

My story so far speaks about impressions around school arts performances, but more needs to be said about the impact of some early experiences I had within language and religious schooling communities. I attended an English-speaking elementary school within the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal in predominantly French-speaking Ville St. Laurent. Charts outlining how to conjugate the three major French language verb families—*avoir*, *être*, and *s'être*—hung on our classroom walls all year, but I don't remember knowing or speaking to anyone personally who was French.

However, by the time my sister, who was six years younger than me, was in Grade 6, her elementary school had become a pilot project for French immersion. My sister and her best friend also attended the inaugural year for French secondary school immersion programs in Montreal. My earlier years in high school were different. Being Protestant made me different from 90 percent of students at the school in my designated district, and social separation—a silent, utterly alienating one based on religious affiliation—existed in my secondary school experience.

When my children began public school education in this county, I wondered as a parent how I might volunteer or help and music gave me an opening. It was the early, hopeful years of school council in Ontario, and a few principals in my district were enthusiastic about what parents might do as volunteers and community members. My two



youngest children's elementary school principal recommended that I attend school council and volunteer to accompany the school choir after school. As I considered this proposal, I also puzzled over something I had heard, that band instruments were collecting dust under the school stage and mulled over why this may have happened. Within a few months, I learned some of the reasons. Arts consultants had been removed at the school and family of school levels. The school reform rhetoric of the Conservative government had torn school communities apart politically and emotionally. The aftermath was profoundly discouraging for individuals who believed that the arts had mattered in the education of their children and students. Yet, I sensed that beyond the teacher, parents, administrator, school board, trustee, and superintendent education sectors, there were individuals as concerned as I was about the compromised delivery of the arts, regardless of politics.

My concern eventually led me to do a case study on the festival to identify whether it might serve as a model for other schools systems. In the same way I had asked participants in the study to reflect on their festival experience and how it was similar to what they have experienced in schools, I asked myself how the festival reminds me of school-based arts ideas I have taught and enjoyed. Although I have made and orchestrated many arts moments for students, my memorable moment is one in which I experienced art in a new way. Somehow, I was the novice. In that moment, aware of the diversity in the audience and how the children were singing from their hearts, I was in awe.

Yet, in a way, it was *déjà vu*. The first time a high school music teacher brought a high school choir to the festival, it was a busy time of life for me with little opportunity to

listen to new choir scores. What happened as the formal choir of high school students trained their attention on their conductor is festival lore. The final words of the song hung in the air. It was a song about the power of music to strengthen us when we are weak. A silence overcame the group of five hundred adults and students of all ages. The beauty of their voices and of their message left us somewhat dazed. Then, from all over, one by one, people began to applaud. Performer and audience alike were together caught up in something awe-inspiring.

I return now to that memorable festival moment in 2008 when I experienced the mass choral piece from the Music Monday initiative, and knew it was linked to listening to that high school choir and yet outside of things I can articulate. Perhaps this was an aesthetic moment of sorts—something that changes you forever. It is true that a book could be written to describe the who, why, where, what, and when of the moment. Words can name the teacher who determined to lead the choir, explain why 120 students from one school had a chance to learn the score and sing it with another school that day, describe where the event was held, tell why a church would host a community event of this impact, name the piece that the CMES had offered to schools across Canada on their website, and explore ideas of what the singing of this song means about an emerging nation-wide consciousness that music does connect us in ways nothing else can. But this moment was more than words, reasons, and explanation. Time stood still. There was an awareness of the arts: its beauty, its place, and its contribution surprised me: a new sense of its power in a way I had not known before; an unexpected sense of beauty; an awe of beauty and the privilege of experience.

A few tears fell. For the first time in public life, I was not anxious to wipe them away. Others around me, teachers and parents alike, also seemed spellbound and moved. To facilitate an arts event is one thing; to be transfixed by the arts personally is another matter entirely. The moment was about awe, about being alive in a new way—transformed, perhaps. I looked around and knew that within minutes, people would be streaming through the doors out to school buses, full of questions about the event and about next year. The questions will always be there, as will the struggle, yet there was a quiet presence, a knowing. Knowing that the struggle to facilitate moments like this for students and for my community was somehow meaningful. Somehow sacred. A knowing that captures my imagination with the hope others might experience its beauty. An experience I cannot forget.

**Appendix B**  
**A Case Study of an Arts Education Experience:**  
**“Regional Youth Festival of the Arts” (RYFA)**

**LETTER OF INFORMATION**

My name is Wendy Carter and I am a Masters’ student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario under the supervision of Dr. George Gadanidis. I am currently conducting research into the *Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA)* experience and would like to invite your child to participate in this study.

The aims of this study are to better understand the nature of the RYFA experience and how it relates and compares to school-based arts education.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to reflect back on the festival experience and sketch something memorable. The interview will be held in a windowed schoolroom and last for approximately 15 minutes. Dialogue will follow questions such as Can you tell me a bit about your drawing? Why do you remember the RYFA arts experience as special in this way? How is it similar to arts based activities at school? Is it different in any ways from school-based arts experiences?

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results in any presentation or publication of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential for this research and will be collected through drawings and audio taping of interviews. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your child’s name nor information which could identify him/her will be used. I intend to retain the research data for a period of 2 years.

The information will be collected under the authority of Board Policy # 204 and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The contact person for inquiries concerning this information is the Principal of Program in (this regional district school board).

The Research Liaison Committee of (this school board) has given permission for this study to be carried out at your child’s school. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and the students will not be identified individually. Your child’s participation is completely voluntary.

Should you consent to allow your child to participate in this research, please be aware that you and your child have the right to withdraw him/her at any time without penalty, should you wish to do so, or to decline to answer any specific questions you would prefer not to answer.

If you have any questions about this research, or any comments to make now or at a later date, please contact either me at [wcarter2@uwo.ca](mailto:wcarter2@uwo.ca) or Dr. George Gadanidis at (519) 661-2111, extension 88682 or [ggadanid@uwo.ca](mailto:ggadanid@uwo.ca).

Thank you. Wendy Carter

**Letter of Consent – Parents/Students*****A Case Study of an Arts Education Experience***  
**“Regional Youth Festival of the Arts”**

I have read the Letter of Information relating to the above-titled project, I understand the proposed research and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have discussed this research with my child.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my child from the study at any time without incurring a penalty of any kind, that I my child may decline to answer any specific questions should he/she choose to do so, and that the information collected is for research purposes only.

I hereby give permission for my son/daughter to participate in the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts research project being conducted (in this school board).

Child's name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Letter of Information – Teachers/Ryfa organizers

### *A Case Study of an Arts Education Experience “Regional Youth Festival of the Arts” (RYFA)*

My name is Wendy Carter and I am a Masters’ student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario under the supervision of Dr. George Gadanidis. I am currently conducting research into the *Regional Youth Festival of the Arts (RYFA)* experience and would like to invite you to participate in this research.

The aims of this research are to better understand the nature of the RYFA experience:

- In what ways is the arts education experience of the RYFA similar to, and different from, school-based arts education?; and
- In what ways might the RYFA experience serve as a model for school-based arts education?

Information for this research will be collected by means of drawings and audio taping of interviews. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used. I intend to retain the research data for a period of 2 years.

The information will be collected under the authority of Board Policy # 204 and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The contact person for inquiries concerning this information is the Principal of Program (in this school board).

The Research Liaison Committee of (this school board) has given permission for this study to be carried out. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Should you consent to participate in this research, please be aware that you have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty, should you wish to do so, or to decline to answer any specific questions you would prefer not to answer.

If you have any questions about this research, or any comments to make now or at a later date, please contact either me at [wcarter2@uwo.ca](mailto:wcarter2@uwo.ca) or Dr. George Gadanidis at (519) 661-2111, extension 88682 or [gadanid@uwo.ca](mailto:gadanid@uwo.ca).

Thank you.

Wendy Carter

**Letter of Consent – Teachers/RYFA organizers**

*A Case Study of an Arts Education Experience*  
**“Regional Youth Festival of the Arts”**

I have read the Letter of Information relating to the above-titled project, I understand the proposed research and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring a penalty of any kind, that I may decline to answer any specific questions should I choose to do so, and that the information collected is for research purposes only.

I hereby give permission to participate in the Regional Youth Festival of the Arts research project being conducted (in this school board).

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix C**  
**Ethics Approval**

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Western USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number: 0709-1

Applicant: Wendy Carter

Supervisor: George Gadanidis

Title: *A case study of an arts experience "Dufferin Youth Festival of the Arts"*

Expiry Date: May 31, 2008

Type: MEd Thesis

Ethics Approval Date: September 19, 2007

Revision #:

Documents Reviewed &

Approved: UWO Protocol, Letters of Information & Consent

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

No deviations from, or changes to, the research project as described in this protocol may be initiated without prior written approval, except for minor administrative aspects. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information and consent documentation, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

Dr. Alan Edmunds (Chair)

**2007-2008 Faculty of Education Research Ethics Sub-Committee**

<b>Dr. Alan Edmunds</b>	<b>Faculty (Chair 2007)</b>
<b>Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
<b>Dr. Jacqueline Specht</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
<b>Dr. Wayne Martino</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
<b>Dr. J. Marshall Mangan</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
<b>Dr. Jason Brown</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
<b>Dr. Robert Macmillan</b>	<b>Assoc Dean, Graduate Programs &amp; Research (<i>ex officio</i>)</b>
<b>Dr. Jerry Paquette</b>	<b>UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (<i>ex officio</i>)</b>

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