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"Child," "Fine Art," and "Art for Children": The Shaping of School Practice and Implications for Change

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School art is typically distinguished by the subject matter it denotes: visual art, music, dance, or drama. In this article, I suggest a new distinction among the arts genres used in the school, namely, "child art," "fine art," and "art for children." Rather than being categorized by subject matter, these three genres operate across the various media. Each genre is associated with different contents, pedagogies, and evaluation practices. Each is based on a separate set of ideologies and goals, related to different underlying assumptions about the nature of arts and arts learning. Those assumptions are incompatible with each other on both the ontological level (what constitutes art) and the pedagogical level (how to teach it).

In the first part of the article I examine the day-to-day "operational curricula" of the three art worlds in the subjects of dance and drama (which, when taught by specialists in the schools in which my colleagues and I observed, were taught as one subject), music, and visual arts. There are fundamental differences among these genres--in their out-of-school manifestations as well as in their ideal curricula--but, I argue, the genres are being diluted and their distinctions blurred, and they are sacrificing their potential contributions to one another. In the second part of the article, I focus on the contexts in which the genres operate. Specifically, I examine the contexts of time and space for arts instruction, as well as the communities of practice in which school art functions. I show that each of the components plays a different, though interrelated, role in the dilution of the three genres of school art. In the third part I suggest that the three genres may be strengthened by policies addressing the aforementioned contexts. I argue that similar genres and analogous dilution exist in other school subjects, from language arts to math and science, and that dilution is shaped by the same contexts that shape school arts. That commonality in structures, problem, and cause calls for coordinated action. Accordingly, the development of policies should involve policymakers, teachers, and specialists in each of the genres (e.g., in the subjects of art, science, and math) so that efforts and deliberations may be aligned, informing and supporting each other.

School Arts

This article is based on two research studies, which examined arts education in elementary schools using qualitative methods. The first, a three-year project, was conducted under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Arts. The second, a four-year project, was sponsored by the Bureau of Educational Research and the research board at the University of Illinois.

Observations revealed three genres of arts used in the schools: (1) "child art," meaning original compositions created by children in dance, drama, visual art, and music; (2) "fine art," meaning
classical works in the different arts media created by established artists; and (3) "art for children," meaning art created by adults specifically for children, often for didactic purposes. Child art became a legitimate subject of scholarly discussion during the child study movement of more than a century ago. Its philosophical foundations can be traced to a Rousseauian notion. Fine art, grounded in humanistic goals, highlights a pursuit of excellence; the acquisition of cultural knowledge; and cognitive, factual, and critical approaches. In the schools, it draws on the disciplines of arts history, arts criticism, and less frequently, on the discipline of aesthetics. Art for children claims no scholarly framework. It does not, like child art, espouse self-expression, nor does it claim, like fine art, to be "the best of the culture." Rather, it serves practical needs in providing materials that are meant to be developmentally appropriate, accessible, and relevant to children's lives. In the following sections, I describe each of these genres as it is manifested in the operational curricula of elementary schools.

Child Art

In my studies of U.S. schools, child art was prevalent in the subjects of visual arts, and when it was taught, in dance/drama, but it was nonexistent in music instruction.(n6)

Arts instruction came in two forms: one taught by arts specialists, the other by general classroom teachers. When taught by arts specialists, content often focused on elements of art (color, shapes, lines, level, plot). When taught by classroom teachers, content revolved around themes of holidays, seasons, and special events (Easter bunnies, winter penguins, Valentine cards).

In general, child art consisted of quick products, completed within one thirty-minute lesson. Classroom teachers used a "one-shot" lesson, whereas art specialists thought sequentially, built from one lesson to another, and aimed at developing concepts and skills. Arts specialists focused on arts vocabulary and techniques, establishing frameworks for arts activities. They provided guidance and modeling yet allowed students' choices. They created frameworks by asking probing questions and making suggestions grounded in artistic rationales. Classroom teachers tended to be more prescriptive in all arts subjects, but in some cases (typically in ESL and early-childhood classes) they adopted a noninterventionist approach, providing little or no guidance. Accordingly, their activities ranged from the tightly structured production of holiday items and basic dance movements, to free creation, for which teachers provided visual materials or music as background to dance(n7) and offered no direction. Both classroom teachers and specialists used ample encouragement, the former in a generic way ("I like it"), the latter specifically ("I like the way you use color to make your pattern stand out").

Observations revealed subtle but important differences among the observed visual arts and dance/drama activities. Visual arts activities allowed choices but did not require interpretation by the students. In contrast, most observed dance/drama activities involved children in active problem solving, probing for interpretations within given boundaries. Those two pedagogical approaches affected the level of interpretation and depth in children's work. Activities in dance/drama in classrooms and in the "informances" for parents and community presented in local shopping malls, exemplified processes of personal interpretation, creation, and problem solving.
In contrast, children's visual artworks in both arts specialists' and classroom teachers' classes, were often nondistinct, not conveying individual expression. Part of the lukewarm tone in the exhibits can be attributed to the inexpensive materials that did not lend themselves to artistically rewarding experimentation. Another related factor was the limited techniques that students possessed. Another related factor was the limited techniques that students possessed. The lack of framing of artwork and the crowdedness of the presentation were still other factors. I believe, however, that as important as materials, techniques, and exhibition style are, it was the lack of guidance to explore, to invest themselves in creating something meaningful, that shaped children's art. Indeed, child art reflected few themes of personal relevance, few indications of exploration of ideas, moods, or feelings. Thus, child art, with its lack of personal expression, resembled children's activities in other subjects—such as science, math, and social studies.

It is intriguing that that relative uniformity of style could be discerned even in the classes of those classroom teachers who adopted an open-ended pedagogical style. There, some students did create artwork that was original and different, but most students produced artwork similar to that made in the highly prescriptive classes. I noticed exceptions when the topic demanded personal interpretation (in contrast to merely assigning an open-ended activity), and when children could interpret the topic easily—for example, in the kindergartener's assignment to draw a picture of themselves doing their favorite thing. Students' work, then, reflected a variety of ideas, experiences, and levels of sophistication, manifesting ownership and investment. In general, with the exception of dance/drama activities, the processes, products, and presence of child arts in the school did not claim regular attention, but were blended into the busy school environment. They reflected, rather than shaped, school culture.

Expression and interpretation, as Langer pointed out four decades ago, are complex processes, involving more than the permission for spontaneous creativity. Expression requires knowledge about feeling as well as sophisticated knowledge of intellectual, technical, and formal skills. Without knowledge and personal investment, self-expression can become trivial, in Langer's words, symptomatic rather than artistic. Therein lies part of the discrepancy among the ideals of child art as means for self-expression and the lack of expression found in the operational curriculum. Even though self-expression is celebrated as an important part of the self-fulfilling life and is a central goal of the ideal curriculum in early childhood, observations of the operational arts curriculum indicated few invitations to communicate one's feelings through artistic means. Indeed, interviews with specialists revealed strong feelings of ambivalence toward the goals of expression. Arts teachers voiced concerns that students' expressions of feelings render students vulnerable, potentially causing out-of-control situations, even leading to violence. These concerns echoed those of the school culture, which is apprehensive of expression, regarding discipline and management as necessary for emotional and physical safety.

Creativity was acknowledged in interviews with teachers as the raison d'être of child art. Creativity, however, comes out of explicit probing into meaningful issues, and meaningful issues can be emotional, sometimes painful. Creativity often involves problem setting as well as problem solving; it requires personal investment and ownership. At the same time, it is nurtured by active support and recognition of a community of practice. Children, like adults, are quick to discern the explicit and implicit rules of the activity--what will elicit attention and acknowledgment. In an environment in which superficiality is accepted and "cute" products...
prevail, however, the need to create interpretations, to invest and to push oneself, may not be established. That is, I believe, why perhaps there is no direct relationship between more choices in the curriculum and more originality and expressivity in students' artwork. Rather than choices, it is the framing of the artistic experience, as well as the type of attention and the recognition of the artwork provided by teachers and other students, that promotes invested, expressive art making.

Fine Art

Less systematically present than child art, fine art existed in schools in teachers' presentation of the works of the great masters, through, for example, listening to classical music of well-known composers, or looking at reproductions, posters, and postcards of works by famous artists. Typically, fine arts activities were the territory of arts specialists. Several classroom teachers used classical music as background for routine work, relaxation, and resting and used visual work as class decorations. On one occasion, I observed a classroom teacher who shared her favorite artistic styles, bringing to class calendar pictures of impressionist artists and conversing with children about their feelings and personal reminiscences elicited by the art work. But it was specialists who used artworks as an integral, though sometimes small, part of their curricula.

In visual arts, presentations of fine art were confined to two to three minutes of exposure; children's attention was drawn to a concept learned in that lesson. Biographical information about the artist consisted of the artist's name, birth date, and country of origin. Remaining on a surface, perceptual level, the interactions with fine art rarely involved explorations of the artwork or the construction of personal meanings; discussions and observations about style; reflections on what made the artwork interesting or innovative; or comparison of different artists in terms of formal, technical, or expressive qualities. The brevity of the encounter did not highlight the distinctions between the various works, styles, and expressions.

In music, specialists dedicated part and whole sessions to listening and discussing a composition. Composers ranged from Bach to Haydn, to Gershwin and Copland, from baroque to classical, romantic, and the more folk-based music of the twentieth century. Music teachers provided students with relevant concepts, discussed the evocation of an ambiance, and sometimes modeled conducting movements. Competitions initiated by music specialists invited students to collect biographical information on these composers, promoting and rewarding fact gathering. Students were expected to gain familiarity with names of composers, some knowledge of historical content, and exposure to musical styles. Classroom discussions did not develop awareness of the different styles and their diversity of expression.

Arts specialists lamented that children are not good listeners, that they easily get bored with facts, that they are used to doing things actively. Students' low interest in historical perspective may have been related to the fact that school-based fine arts focused on facts and information, with little emphasis on eliciting students' interpretations and engaging them in meaning making. The lack of interpretation and construction of meaning in fine art paralleled the lack of interpretations in the child-art activities. Thus, fine arts were used for exposure, sometimes for the creation of ambiance, not unlike the role of music in grocery stores and elevators, or visual art in hotels. The lack of focus on aesthetics as a framework for discussion about the meaning of
art can be explained by the fact that aesthetics is dependent on critical reflection, which was not part of school discourse, whereas arts history can be introduced in a technical manner, using facts, thus making it compatible with other school style discourse.

Art for Children

The genre of art for children was featured mostly in music instruction, occasionally in school productions by children for community and parents, and in school and out-of-school performances for children. The prevalence of "music for children" in music classes was correlated with the availability of music textbooks that feature songs composed for didactic purposes, as well as edited folksongs and simplified excerpts of classical music for school use. Materials for students' productions were often taken from magazines for classroom teachers. In both textbooks and magazines, the materials were market driven, didactic goals dominated, and artistic quality was often less of a consideration.

Art for children was used in two distinct ways: the first, in classrooms or schools, with children as performers, and the second, outside of class or school, with children as audience. In the former, activities focused on basic skills--singing on pitch, clapping to rhythms, learning notation, sometimes playing recorders; in the productions, speaking with clear diction, moving, and singing as a group were emphasized. Even though music textbooks sometimes included higher-level cognitive skills and creative activities, teachers typically did not adopt them in the classroom. In those sessions, as well as in preparation for performances, pedagogies tended to be prescriptive and highly structured. The learning environment typically consisted of whole-group instruction with occasional space for "soloists." The emphasis on basic skills and large-group instruction correlated with the low priority given to individual interpretation and the scarce attention paid to aesthetic qualities and expression. Performance materials were suited to students' abilities; selected contents were those perceived as developmentally appropriate or well suited for encouraging student participation.

The second category involved children as audience to performances. In-school performances were presented by local artists--puppeteers, musicians, and actors. They were often structured as several small events (e.g., recitation of a written text or direct instruction of a skill and its practice) tied together by moral commentaries. The resulting form, created by shifting modes, is different from the development of a long, sustained form. The typical format of delivering students from the school principal to the performer and back, and the commentary on behavior at the moments of delivery and return were reminiscent of classroom teachers "delivering" their classes to the arts specialists on a daily basis.

These performances could be described as entertaining, presenting well-known themes and formats, often introducing children to American folk songs, games, and stories. The moral/patriotic content and force of the program were compelling, often dwarfing the artistry of it. Moreover, the moral issues presented were associated with school, not with art, in that the emphasis was on instruction rather than emotional experiences of moral dilemmas through aesthetic media.
Occasionally, art for children included out-of-school performances; students were taken to nearby cultural centers to attend operas and dance and theatre performances produced for children. Those performances, often presented by first-class groups (for example, a shorter version of Humperdinck's Hansel and Gratel performed by the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and The Fables, by a leading national dance company), were typically of high quality in contents and skill. The artistic framing of the experience and the length and intensity of the event had the integrity of "authentic" art. In my observations, children seemed engaged, enjoying the graceful and humorous dances, the captivating melodies, and the occasional interviews with actors and dancers who, between movements, shared their experiences and personal commitments.

Through their actions, school practitioners, classroom teachers, and principals(n12) educated children on how to behave appropriately as an audience of a dramatic performance. Their null actions, or what they didn't do (e.g. discuss issues of aesthetics, issues relating to contents, or attitudes toward theatre), were equally revealing. There was no preparation or follow-up; neither classroom teachers nor specialists used the program notes distributed to teachers in advance to prepare students for the event.(n13) In both in- and out-of-school performances, the lack of explicit and implicit guidance on how to "hear" and "see" contributed to the students' difficulties in gleaning meanings from the performances. Part of that null behavior had to do with classroom teachers' lack of expertise in the arts; when it came to art, most of them shied away from the role of an intellectual/aesthetic guide, a role that required, in their eyes, expertise in the subject matter. Teachers' actions and inaction in school performance sent a distinct message about the arts' isolation from the subjects in the traditional academic curriculum. The emphasis on good behavior throughout the school day and during the performance highlighted the centrality of dutiful compliance, in contrast, for example, to experience and intellectual engagement. It reiterated the message about the irrelevance of performance to school life, and reinforced the idea that performances are relaxing, a relief from academics, rather than challenging, interesting sources of knowledge and understanding.

Summary

We noted the general low priority for interpretation, meaning making, and aesthetic experiences in all three genres of arts used in the schools. A related issue examined in these three genres of art concerns the types of knowledge that are cultivated in the operational curriculum of them. To what extent do we discern the knowledge and ways of thinking of the artist, the maker, concentrating on "how to" (e.g., "What happens if I do this?" "How can I use that technique in my work?" "How is this artist's ideas and problem solving relevant to my own work?")? To what extent do we discern the knowledge of the art critic, the perceiver, interacting with the artwork, concentrating on noticing and understanding (e.g., "What does this artwork say to me?" "What are the formal, technical, and expressive qualities in this work?" "How do they shape my experience of it?") Clearly, the stances of the maker and the perceiver are interrelated. John Dewey(n14) suggested that both offer multiple entry points into the aesthetic experience: when they function together in an integrated way, combining creation and appreciation, they enhance our experience. Research suggests that even preschoolers can assume the stances of producer and perceiver; artistic development occurs as a result of children's ability to juggle their activities as creators and viewers.(n15) Indeed, children's early representational drawings often emerge as a result of a dialogue between production and perception.(n16)
In view of that research, as well as the wealth of suggestions for ideal curricula in all arts subjects, the lack of emphasis in all three art genres on the knowledge and skills of either maker or perceiver is striking. Observations revealed that students rarely initiated discussions and asked questions. Rather, the dominant pattern was for concepts or specific tasks to be presented, establishing a fairly substantial structure that did not allow space for reflection and personal interpretation. That is tied with the low sense of students' ownership and investment. With the absence of inquiry, reflection, and interpretation, art (mostly in visual arts and music) became diluted and its power lost.

The power of the arts to serve expressive and intellectual ends, facilitate new understanding, redraft vision, and help develop children's interpretive skills is strongly affected by the general school practices and culture. The potential of art to inform children's lives and trigger in them deep experiences is diminished. The goals of school art seem to be far more attentive to mainstream educational norms than they are to artistic concerns. Like many school disciplines, school art is tamed down within school boundaries, and consequently, its potential for evoking powerful emotions is diminished. One way that is achieved is through focusing on technical matters--concepts and skills--rather than holistic, social, political, or expressive concerns. The operational curricula of the three genres become superficial and "safe," as they avoid meaningful issues and the wilder ends of the emotional continuum that could be evoked and expressed, effectively eliminating the problems that art could raise.

Context for School Art

The meaning of any kind of art is inseparable from the conditions under which it is generated and experienced. The fine arts, for example, are historically linked to religion and spirituality, nationalism and patriotic values. They evolved in awe-inspiring churches, and luxurious courts, thrived in concert halls and museums. Art in contemporary society is not a monolithic idea or practice but is filled with conflictual values and perspectives. We attribute art and artists with degrees of intensity, passion, vision, intellect, and single-mindedness beyond the scope of the ordinary individual. The training of artists is strict, and talent is essential, as is the mastery of technique, the ability to think in and communicate through the medium, the knowledge of the art form's terminology, and an appreciation of its development. We speak of art as timeless and transcendental. At the same time, we note art's service to politics and its function as a commodity.

Unlike the fine arts, school art functions in contexts that are neither artistic nor elitist. School art evolved in educational settings of the nineteenth century with the expansion of public-school and mass education. Its incorporation into the general curriculum was a struggle from the very beginning, and it has never quite assumed equal citizenship with the academic disciplines that have constituted the foundations of schooling. During the 150 years of its existence, school art rode different ideological and pedagogical waves, assuming radically different functions: the highly utilitarian; the humanistic, which aimed to cultivate the mind and the spirit; and the expressive and emotional. Those ideological views aside, contemporary reality of school arts is tinged with the bare necessities of educational settings: most principals and administrators I talked with said that the arts were there primarily to comply with union requirements of release time for classroom teachers.
But the role that the arts play in the public schools is more complex than what was acknowledged by principals; it is a role that is both marginal and central to the ways that schools establish their presence as institutions. Arts disciplines are peripheral to the core "academic" curriculum; school art is another layer added to the many separate areas of instruction present in today's schools. In that sense, the curriculum is a byproduct of the idea that curriculum should build from the basics, or essential knowledge, outward to the peripheral, or less-essential, knowledge. The three Rs are at the center, and art, although more deeply institutionalized than, for example, anti-drug programs, still exists on the outskirts. Yet, as we observed, the major moments for which the entire school comes together as a whole, whether in performances for its members and the community, or in the decorations for holidays and special events, center around the arts. These performances and decorations, unique to schools, serve school goals in their contents and forms of presentation. In the next section, I examine the shaping of school arts by their context.

Role and Structures for Arts Specialists

The dilution of school arts as practiced by classroom teachers can be attributed to teachers' lack of knowledge and expertise in subject matter, lack of aesthetic awareness, and lack of skills in producing and analyzing art. That dilution, however, is intriguing when it comes to arts specialists. Specialists are knowledgeable of the qualities of the arts in the real world--sophisticated technique, creativity, and excellence. And yet it was only in a few of these specialists' classrooms that one could sense the power of any of the art genres. I believe that the roles of specialists and the structures in which they operate are central to the understanding of school art.

Art teachers represent a distinctive subculture within the school, with special meaning to themselves as insiders and to classroom teachers as outsiders. Art teachers are typically seen by children (as well as by other teachers and administrators) as offering relief from the rigor or tedium of academics. That is reflected in the allocation of space: One's room is a highly significant possession in school terms, symbolizing professionalism, autonomy, and self-control. In their rooms, teachers had control over use of materials and rules for comportment--autonomy that was lacking in most other arenas of teacher life. It is indicative of the image of art within the culture of schools that half of the observed schools had no rooms for art teachers. That constituted a marked difference not just from regular classrooms but also from other spaces--libraries, gyms, and offices for social workers and counselors. Those arts teachers that did have rooms of their own often operate in a space that is not meant to be for art but houses computers and other school "stuff."

This state of affairs has implications beyond image and status; space shapes content and activities of arts instruction. Itinerant visual art teachers, for example, were constrained by the lack of storage space for their art materials and partially finished art projects; they sought not to have to store uncompleted projects in the regular classroom or on their cart. For production as well as appreciation of fine art, they opted for projects that could be finished in a short amount of time, using materials that were not heavy or cumbersome to cart around. Dance/drama and music teachers, in like fashion, opted for few or no props and simple musical accompaniment (as opposed to, for example, the use of multiple instruments that can facilitate composition).
When art teachers did not have their own classrooms, the mess generated by studio art activities or by moving desks around to rearrange space for dance/drama activities could cause problems for classroom teachers.

Time

Arts instruction typically took place within a weekly, narrow thirty-minute slot. In music and dance/drama, where the activities—singing songs, doing movement exercises—consisted of several short "units," that did not seem to pose a problem for arts specialists. But in visual arts, which required sustained time for reflection and experimentation with materials, a thirty-minute time slot was highly constraining. In most classrooms, visual arts teachers had time to give a short introduction of an art skill (about twelve minutes), conduct a brief practice session in that skill (about fifteen minutes), and offer an extremely brief evaluation of the experience (often a minute or less). Because of limited time, interpretation, expression, appreciation and discussion were marginalized.

Limited time constrained the curriculum to projects that the children could quickly clean up by themselves. Although most art teachers acknowledged that primary-grade students need to experiment with paint and color, they are not always able to clean everything up well. Consequently, to fit with the tight schedule, specialists focused on drawing, using crayons and construction paper, or on gluing and pasting, avoiding painting and other messy materials.

The scarcity of time also meant that there was little time for evaluation, for looking over the work that was done in the previous class while it was still fresh in mind. Within the school culture, evaluation represents accountability, and accountability is central to the system. There was little evaluation, specialists complained, because there was little time. Conversations with teachers invoked an additional, ideological aspect of evaluation in the arts: Evaluation was often regarded as incompatible with the function of art, which was perceived to be "self-expressive" (in spite of the fact that it did not function that way). Evaluation, then, was regarded as a criticism of the child, rather than a facilitator of teaching, serving to expand students' skills and sensitivities. A related issue concerned teachers' belief that students' self-esteem is tied to the absence of criticism, rather than to active encouragement and the challenge of developing a sense of accomplishment. I believe that the lack of evaluation symbolizing achievement contributed to students' lack of investment in art.

Constraints of time and space, and their impact on instruction, discourage arts specialists from assuming leadership positions in schools, instead creating added technical and emotional pressure for arts specialists to fit and conform to school expectations—to be "good enough." The communities of practice in the school, which I discuss in the following section, exert considerable psychological power on arts specialists. Not surprisingly, within this environment, most arts teachers had little energy or incentive to aspire and create the extraordinary, the exquisite, a source of meaningful aesthetic experience.

Communities of Practice

The School Arts Specialist: Constructing an Identity
Arts teachers live within a community of non-arts teachers, with little contact with the larger art world. Within their buildings, they are typically the only arts teachers in their subject. The larger community of the school is not an art community, but typically one centered around the "basics" of academics. Classroom teachers rarely see the relevance of aesthetics and expressivity to their own concerns.

Likewise, principals are concerned with test scores in academic subjects and with accountability to parents, which are important for public relations with the community at large. In that public relations role, administrative expectations of arts education highlight school performances in social functions, perceived as a good representation of the school. For visual art, expectations include putting up bulletin boards and decorating the schools with student work. The emphasis is on the presence of art as decoration or entertainment, accessible to all factions of their communities and not controversial.

School culture does not focus on expanded ways of seeing, listening, and moving. It does not cultivate the acquisition of artistic skills or the creation of one's own interpretation. Furthermore, in the schools, emotion, creativity, and expression are often considered loose cannons that could fire off with disastrous results. Keeping school art nice, teachers believe, makes art manageable within school confines, and management is a primary concern for school practitioners. The performance and expression of art, then, has to be tightly controlled. In a culture in which intensity, passion, and ownership are marginalized, the arts can become diluted, superficially decorative, and entertaining. These expectations of school arts are reflected in both formal and informal evaluations, for which grading is based on mere participation and goodwill, rather than on talent, the pursuit of excellence, or the expression of feeling and ideas.

There are additional factors that shape the status of arts specialists in the school and, consequently, the status they can lend to their art in the school. Classroom control and the ability to work well with students is one such factor, as is the ability to negotiate positively with classroom teachers and to create allies among different faculty members. Arts specialists may also gain support from one another, informally or formally. In one of the districts studied, specialists regularly sought to build a unified curriculum that would create common arts terminology, and change existing structures for arts education. Those meetings were important forums for discussing shared concerns and frustrations, and for initiating successful changes in contents and formats. My suggestions in the next section are based on the success of those discussions in terms of the improvements they produced.

Implications for Change

There are policy implications on several levels. From the perspective of teacher education, both in pre- and in-service, the three genres of school art require different areas of expertise for teachers. Child art is based on an understanding of children's development as well as the ability to guide them in interpreting the world and communicating meaning through artistic media. Fine art requires knowledge of classical art (and perhaps also jazz, folk, and other authentic genres). Not less important, it requires the ability to connect children in meaningful ways to works of art, incorporating constructivist strategies (through, for example, "visual thinking strategies," developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yanawene). In its performance manifestations, art
for children requires the ability to discuss performances, tying concepts to personal meanings. The continuous dialogue and integration of the three genres of art is essential to a meaningful arts curriculum, not unlike the interaction between reading and writing.

Policies should also address technical, structural, and substantive constraints of arts education within the school context. School art is the site for complicated interplay between artistic notions and pluralistic community values and desires. A blend of educational and artistic expectations and the agendas of schools seem to be dominant, manifested in the structures of space and time for form and contents. Institutional presence and operation carry considerable power in shaping the experience of its members. In that sense, school art differs in significant ways from art as it is found in non-school locations that provide different circumstances and conditions for the production and appreciation of art.

The authentic worlds of fine art and child art are based on experience, interpretation, and communication, conveying diverse values and perspectives. In those worlds, art is an autonomous and free activity, aiming at exploration and psychological transformation. Each of the original goals of the three genres of art implies socialization toward different values and roles in society. The fine arts, for example, represent the "best of our culture," focusing on knowledge of masterpieces of excellence in ideas and skills. Thus, those who promote fine art in the schools wish schools to connect children to the conversation of great cultural heritage. Art for children is seen to facilitate the acquisition of important ideas and skills, making them accessible for children. Child art places children in the role of the artist, emphasizing reflection and personal interpretation, regarding as central inner wisdom and curiosity of the child. I argue in this article that all three sets of goals have been overruled by existing structures of time, space, and technical priorities, which emphasize the importance of following directions and having routinized processes and products, rather than experiencing moments of insight and intensification.

Clearly, the experience of school art is infused with the values, norms, and conventions of schooling. The larger issue concerns the kind of contribution that art could make to the school curriculum, whether it accommodates current values or is used in an Archimedian sense to expand and broaden the curriculum. Constructions of meaningful interpretations and expressions of ideas and feelings are best described as a classroom or school culture rather than as a method, best brought out through exemplars of its practice than through definitions, lists of concepts, skills, and key attributes. As we examine hindrances to a more authentic arts education, whether as child art, fine art, or art for children, it is clear that no amount of "ideal curriculum" developed outside the immediate school context can fully address the problem of arts education. Effective, relevant policies require the inclusion of school practitioners in deliberations with scholars and policymakers to discuss improving arts education. The increasing recognition of teachers as professionals with expertise and knowledge places arts specialists as instrumental partners for collaborative policymaking.

The conceptualization of the fine art, child art, and art for children genres can expand the discourse beyond the arts, to other academic subjects. The relevance of the distinction to literature and writing is obvious. I would argue that it is also highly relevant to other school subjects such as math (involving the genre of "fine math," "child math," and "math for
children"), science, and social studies. Some of the issues facing arts curricula can be discerned in those other school subjects, and ideas generated within an arts context could be useful for them. Thus, classroom teachers can benefit themselves and others by participating in the conversation. This dialogue between arts specialists and classroom teachers is central to the establishment of a positive, supportive community of practice within the school. The more clearly that the arts are seen as belonging to the social and intellectual milieu of the school, the greater chance art has of playing an important role, enriching and informing school culture.

Small, interactive group discussions can be a productive format. Existing groups comprising teachers of various subjects and researchers are the North Dakota Study Group, and Dialogue in Methods Education. These groups meet annually to discuss problems and issues in math, science, and language arts. Emphasizing close connections between theory and practice, their members generate important implications for policymaking. The establishment of similar groups to generate ideas for policy in art education could be structured as part of local and national conferences, including the National Art Education Association or the Music Educators National Conference, which already function as important meeting places for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. Task forces can focus on macro- as well as meso- and micro-levels. Macro issues address the expansion of arts specialists' roles and their involvement in the school community in ways that maintain the integrity of arts. Meso-level issues can examine local structures and conditions for arts education in the building. Micro-level issues can explore strategies for eliciting students' interpretations of and in art, and evaluation of students' artwork. The grounding of these discussions and recommendations in teachers' experiences and immediate concerns is what, I believe, makes them relevant and powerful to improvement of arts education.

Notes

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(n3.) See also Thompson, "'I Make a Mark."


There are examples of "child art" in music education practice, but they are not common in the United States.

See also Thompson, "'I Make a Mark.'"

For example, when students were required in an art specialist's class to make a tree by tearing pieces of paper and pasting them on another sheet of paper, the properties of the materials, and the fact that students had no developed skills and little time and motivation to experiment, led to the relative uniformity of their products.


"Art for children" is epitomized in literature and visual illustrations in children's books; however, literature was not a focus in those studies.

The relative emphasis on "fine art" and "art for children" varied in the different textbooks. Correlated with that, but more dramatically opposed, were the explicit and implicit goals of the textbook activities and their organization. Some (such as those in the Holt series, for example) highlighted a holistic approach, high-level problem solving skills, and an emphasis on experience and creativity. Other textbooks featured the acquisition of musical concepts as labels (high versus low notes, short versus long, fast versus slow tempo), and a "drill and practice" orientation.

Arts specialists typically did not participate in those events because of their scheduling.

Classroom teachers told me that sometimes they asked the children what their favorite pieces were, and the children sometimes noted details such as the dancers' outfits.


Though, as my colleague Margery Osborne wisely pointed out, anti-drug programs are derived from moral education, which is deeply entrenched in American public schooling, and may be the original idea behind the initiation of public schooling in the nineteenth century. The
actual subject matter or discussion varies (drugs, teen pregnancy, or family values), but the moralistic style has been fundamental to our school system.

(n18.) L. Bresler, "Visual Art in Primary Grades: A Portrait and Analysis," in Early Childhood Research quarterly 7 (1992): 397-414; See also Thompson, "I Make a Mark."

(n19.) When music teachers had their own rooms in two of the three schools observed, they typically used a wider variety of activities, incorporating listening to music playing on recorders and Orff instruments.

(n20.) That was not the case in music, in which the local specialist focused on singing skills rather than on concepts.


(n22.) Traditionally, fine arts as adapted to the school, places less emphasis on the viewers' personal interpretation and more emphasis on perception and acquisition of knowledge. New approaches such as the "visual thinking strategies" (see Housen's article above), incorporate construction of personal meaning by basing questions on children's interpretation. See also note 19.


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