

## Creative Arts Education: Rationale and Description

*In order for curriculum to provide the moral, epistemological, and social situations that allow persons to come to form, it must provide the ground for their action rather than their acquiescence. It must be submitted to their reform, be accessible to their response...Curriculum is a moving form.*

- Grumet, 1988, p. 172

Creative Arts Education includes art, culture, design, architecture, multimedia, skill, passion, imagination, inspiration, problem solving, research, and innovation – all contributing to the birth of new ideas.

In July, a draft *Scope and Sequence* for *Arts Education* was submitted as an addendum to the general construct *Scope and Sequence* submitted in June. An early prototype, it was designed in response to voices from the field who consistently and passionately advocate for curriculum that is flexible and responsive to students, teachers and the context of their learning.

This submission\* represents an evolution of that construct based on ongoing work with the network. It **does not fit within the July model, but rather represents our next thinking** about how *Learning Outcomes* might be structured for *Creative Education*. It functions this way:

- Dynamic relationships among the four components (*disciplinary ways of knowing, to what end, through what means* and *the big why*) form a complex network within which unique and contextualized learning outcomes emerge.
- Experience (*creating, reflecting, lingering, observing, questioning, performing and so on*) is creative education. The particularities of these experiences - the nature of the encounters with art, artists and art-making; the kinds of growth and change one seeks and finds in oneself and one's practice - are determined by the teacher and student, in the context of their learning.
- Teachers, in collaboration with practicing artists in the community, develop expertise as arts educators through their own lived experience. The breadth, depth and complexity of the technical skill, habits of mind, and creative and expressive elements of the arts cannot be adequately captured within a written text. In this model, teachers draw on their passion, experience and deep disciplinary wisdom in order to design meaningful, enduring learning for and with their students. In this model, a teacher's syllabus (in the broadest sense of the word) replaces standardized, predefined student learning outcomes.
- Issues, events, and values in the community, as well as the personal experiences, expertise and interests of students give shape and form to the learning experience.
- Assessment within the arts seeks to further the individual artistic growth and development of each learner. Teachers and students become increasingly attuned to what matters within their discipline or sub discipline - their technique, expression, repertoire and range; their voice or passion or patterned ways of being; their risk-taking, connection-making, resiliency, creativity, innovation - their deeply personal and individual ways of becoming artists.

- Learning outcomes, therefore, are what occur in *this* class, at *this* time, with *these* students based on teachers' deep disciplinary expertise, pedagogical watchfulness and thoughtful, responsive instructional design. They are contingent.

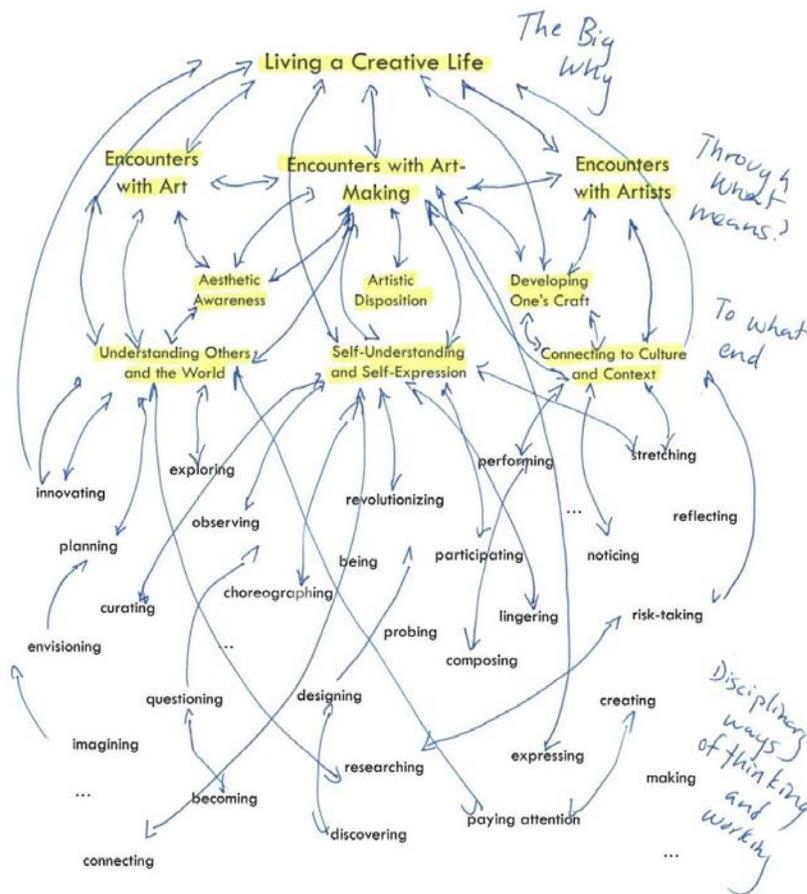
*The journeys [students] take through the patterned sound we call music, through the visual forms we call painting, and through the metaphorical discourse we call poetry and literature are means through which students can discover their potential to respond. In other words, the arts can help students find their individual capacity to feel and imagine.*

- Elliot Eisner, 2005, pp. 134-5

\* Throughout this document, the terms art, arts, artist, art-making, etc. refer to the arts broadly, including but not limited to, dance, drama, music, visual and media arts.

## Four Components

The dynamic relationships amongst the four components of this model for arts education might be visualized this way:



Attached (Appendix ?) is a video that illustrates the structure and function of this model. It can be accessed here as well:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/qtrasjdf0pv3qz8/Arts%20Outcomes%20Sept%202014.mov?dl=0>

### **The big why:** Living a Creative Life

The purpose of arts education, regardless of scale (from a simple interaction between a teacher and student to the purpose of arts education ? large) is *living a creative life*.

Art, in our day-to-day lives, is a kind of 'aliveness' (Dewey, 1934) where one notices what there is to be noticed, takes pleasure in the creative or aesthetic, and makes meaningful connections to oneself, one another and the world.

Arts education will not live to its full potential when it is understood as an isolated program, contained within certain courses and schedules and defined by a narrow set of experiences. Neither will it flourish as a taken-for-granted part of everything we do. As with literacy, numeracy and cross-curricular competencies, arts education can and should be intentionally and explicitly incorporated into all disciplinary areas. In living a creative life, experiences in a science lesson might be of an artistic nature, wellness might be achieved through art-based experiences, and mathematics learning can contribute to imagination and creative expression. While the disciplinary boundaries can and should blur, we position arts education as a way of thinking and working that can be recognized, cared for, and cultivated in highly intentional ways. Thus, arts education may be interdisciplinary, may be of the arts, broadly, or may be specific to a particular artistic discipline.

*...an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what there is to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. When this happens, new connections are made in experience: new patterns are formed, new vistas are opened.*

- Greene, 2001, p. 6

### **Through what means?:** Encounters with Art, Encounters with Art Making and Encounters with Artists

Encounters with art, art-making and artists are the means through which learning in, through and about the arts occurs. Encounters are intentional undertakings, designed to nurture engagement between people, places, objects, ideas and experiences. They have the potential to transform who we are as individuals and how we live in the world - to reshape the relationships between our lives and the lives of others, allowing new patterns and connections to emerge. Encounters with art, art-making and artists are not mutually exclusive, and typically occur in conjunction with one another. These experiences involve:

- being immersed in the great works of humankind, from architecture to art, from the stage to the screen;
- exploration of human environments and the natural world;
- venturing into innovative, unique or surprising spaces;
- living the dynamics of culture, history, events, issues and the arts;

- hearing multiple voices and viewing from multiple vantage points;
- delving into the enduring questions of the human condition;
- exploring the role of art in giving voice to the voiceless, challenging the status quo, revealing social assumptions and questioning norms, traditions and values;
- recognizing the ways that the arts affirm, reflect and bring to light the beauty and complexity of the world;
- slowing down, lingering and noticing - appreciating sensory, emotive or communicative experience and noticing elements of form and technique;
- getting to know, network with, and learn from local artists and others active in the arts world;
- working alongside and talking at length with other artists to learn the language, techniques, culture and nuances of the discipline;
- probing the dynamics of artist/audience relationships;
- dialogue and critical analysis;
- exploring and investigating relationships between technique and communicative intent;
- investigation and play with a variety of materials and techniques;
- using elements and forms to achieve a certain purpose or effect;
- creating within constraints;
- integrating diverse ideas and approaches;
- building technical proficiency, a broader repertoire of techniques and a deeper understanding of disciplinary theory;
- experiencing joy.

Encounters with art, art-making and artists provoke us to interpret what we are experiencing and cause us to consider different perspectives by saying that we “must break with the taken-for-granted...and look through the lenses of various ways of knowing, seeing and feeling in a conscious endeavor to impose different orders upon experience” (Greene, 2001, p. 5).

***To what end:*** Aesthetic Awareness, Artistic Disposition, Developing One’s Craft, Understanding Others and the World, Self-Understanding and Self-Expression and Connecting to Culture and Context

Transformative learning occurs when learners are changed through their experiences. Who we are as individuals and how we are as artists continually changes and evolves. Through encounters with art, art-making and artists, we become increasingly attuned to ourselves and the world. Through these encounters, we cultivate certain ways of being and knowing as an artist: aesthetic awareness, artistic disposition, developing one’s craft, understanding others and the world, self-understanding and self-expression, and connecting to culture and context. Growth in these areas is not measured against standards for age or grade, but is recognized and reflected back in all its complex, recursive, dynamic patterns through attentive, generous, purposeful interactions between student and teacher. Growth in each of these areas is interdependent and interrelated. The distinctions between one area and another ought not to be treated as crisp and well-defined, but should live comfortably with one another.

- **Aesthetic Awareness**  
*But what is aesthetic education? How can it lead to the discovery of new vistas, to the bringing of severed parts together and making things (for a moment) whole? Most simply, most directly, it is education for more discriminating appreciation and understanding of the several arts. The first concern for those of us engaged in*

*aesthetic education is to find ways of developing a more active sensibility and awareness in our students. To bring this about, we believe, we have somehow to initiate them 'into what it feels like to live in music, move over and about in a painting, travel round and in between the masses of a sculpture, dwell in a poem.'* (Reid, 1969, p. 32) *This is the starting point: the ability to feel from the inside what the arts are like and how they mean.*

-Maxine Greene, 2001, p. 8

Aesthetic awareness relates to:

- being present with one's own art, one's art-making and the art of others;
- awareness of and attunement to the nuances of art forms;
- sensitivity, discrimination and connoisseurship;
- relating to and interpreting creative works;
- the ability to hear, see, edit and analyze one's own work and to adjust accordingly;
- engaging in and practicing open-mindedness, challenging old habits of mind;
- noticing;
- the capacity to look at things as if they could be otherwise;
- as Maxine Greene (2001) might say, "educating persons into faithful perceiving".

- **Artistic Disposition**

*The arts develop dispositions and habits of mind that reveal to the individual a world he or she may not have noticed but that is there to be seen if only one knew how to look.*

- Eisner, 2008, p. 12

Artistic disposition relates to:

- embodied understanding;
- curiosity, imagination and inventiveness;
- an inclination to explore and improvise, to generate ideas, innovate and create;
- finding inspiration in the world around us;
- recognizing familiar and divergent patterns and relationships;
- learning through experimentation, trial and error, success and failure;
- reflecting on, revising and refining work over time;
- confidence, agency and freedom;
- flexibility, adaptability and an awareness of self and others;
- taking creative risks;
- persistence.

- **Developing One's Craft**

Developing one's craft relates to:

- developing both depth (accuracy, precision, sophistication, polish, etc.) and in breadth (range) of techniques and skills;
- knowledge of the structure, theory and historical context of the artistic discipline;
- application to produce desired effects;
- experimenting with forms, structures, materials, concepts, theories, media and art-making approaches;
- planning, developing and producing creative works;
- collaborating in the creative process;
- exploring the potential and limits of various art forms or instruments;

- practice, and becoming practiced;
  - developing a personal style.
- **Understanding Others and the World**  
*[Aesthetic education is] part of the human effort (so often forgotten today) to seek a greater coherence in the world...so that they may break through the "cotton wool" of dailyness and passivity and boredom and come awake to the coloured, sounding, problematic world.*

- Greene, 2001, p. 7

Understanding others and the world relates to:

- waking up - becoming attuned to one's surroundings;
  - being alert to and making meaning about others and the world;
  - designing objects, places or systems;
  - understanding the triangular relationship between the artist, the art and the audience;
  - developing and expressing understandings of the ideas, emotions, values and experiences of others;
  - thinking deeply, conscientiously and with consideration for many perspectives and alternatives;
  - taking an active place in the world;
  - understanding the power of art to provoke a reaction, to shape people's thinking and to influence change.
- **Self-Understanding and Self-Expression**

*[The arts] provide profound human meanings unavailable in any other way.*

- Reimer, 2002, p. 85

Self-understanding and self-expression relates to:

- developing and expressing understandings of one's ideas, emotions, values and experiences;
- exploration and expression of self in and through one's own work or in response to the works of others;
- asking questions;
- noticing and acting on those things that call us to them;
- developing the sense of well-being that emanates from learning that provides space for reflection, participation and a voice in one's own learning;
- making connections between context, communicative intent, creative approaches and technique;
- distinctiveness of personal approach;
- willingness to push one's personal boundaries.
- as Eisner (2008) might say, *discovering our own interior landscape.*

- **Connecting to Culture and Context**

*We need to listen to other echoes in the garden, [Said] reminds us, to attend to the continuity of old traditions as well as to the connections only now being disclosed.*

*Both require a consciousness of location, an awareness of both contemporaries and predecessors.*

- Greene, 1997

Connecting to culture and context relates to:

- how the arts reflect the world we live in back to us;
- reflecting, reconfiguring, remixing, questioning and pushing back;
- thoughtful discourse;
- exploring how the arts defines culture and culture defines the arts;
- developing awareness of cultures, contexts, issues and events beyond our own experience;
- living the arts through various disciplines and various disciplines through the arts;
- tracing histories;
- engaging with topics, issues and circumstances that require attention or that call us to act.

***Disciplinary Ways of Thinking and Working: Learning as Being and Doing***

The arts are characterized by certain ways of thinking and working. While not unique to the arts, they nevertheless speak to ways of being - ways of learning - that foster aesthetic awareness, artistic disposition, developing one's craft, understanding others and the world, self-understanding and self-expression and connections to culture and context. They can and should be experienced within and across all disciplines. These ways of thinking and working include but are by no means limited to:

collaborating connecting creating creating meaning critiquing curating designing discovering empathizing exploring expressing	imagining innovating investigating lingering living with ambiguity making observing participating paying attention performing persisting	planning practicing probing producing reflecting researching revolutionizing risk-taking slowing down taking action ...
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***Teacher as Professional within Community of the Discipline (A Lived Syllabus for Educators)***

The living fields of artistic disciplines invite a lifetime's study. Teachers, as students of their practice, mentors to their students and members of communities of artists, commit to that study. Through experience, and in collaboration with practicing artists and other experts in the field, teachers curate a disciplinary syllabus that guides their teaching practice. They stay abreast of research, issues, events, and emerging trends; carry and care for histories and inheritances; recognize patterns and relationships; become attuned to meaningful learning progressions; develop mastery of tools and techniques; engage with meaningful topics and notice what matters. In this way, the teacher is able to bring conceptual and procedural knowledge into the learning experience meaningfully, purposefully and strategically in service of each student's learning.

## End Bit

*To construct a meaningful world requires that we conceptualize patterns of the environment, recognize the rules that are both tacit and explicit in our social life, and feel sufficiently free to play and to take risks so that conceptual invention can occur. The creation of these patterns means in part the construction of structures that hang together, that are coherent, that express both order and interest and enable us to make sense of the world. This sense making is, I believe, an artistic act.*

- Eisner, 2005, p. 369

Again, a description of the structure and function of this model of learning outcomes for Arts Education is available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/qtrasjdf0pv3qz8/Arts%20Outcomes%20Sept%202014.mov?dl=0>

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