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LIVING ARTISTRY IN TEACHING: ONE TEACHER'S STORY

BY

JAN ANTONIUK 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled LIVING ARTISTRY IN TEACHING: ONE TEACHER'S STORY submitted by JAN ANTONIUK in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of my classroom practice. It is an account of my work with children, in the 1995-1996 school year, as we engaged together in narrative inquiry in order to explore artistry in teaching and learning. It is composed of my stories of classroom practice and the children's narrative accounts of how they understand artistry.

Attention is drawn to artistry as a metaphorical field through which we reflected upon features of teaching and learning (Eisner, 1995). The narratives highlight artistry as that which is embodied within the weave of our experiences. The study reveals insights into understanding artistic approaches to teaching. It also opens a conversation for teacher researchers and is an invitation to engage in imaginative action and in the exploration of new artistic possibilities.

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PROLOGUE

> Each story is at once a fragment and a whole;
> a whole within a whole.
> (Trinh, 1989, p. 123)

In August 1994, I returned to the classroom after having spent a sabbatical year engaged in graduate study. As a researcher thinking about a possible focus for this inquiry, I was interested in exploring my teacher stories. Envisioning this study as becoming a shared journey with children, I also hoped to listen to the stories of the children with whom I lived in community.

It was important for this research to be grounded in our particular teaching-learning context and, therefore, my questions needed to arise from my work with the children. Despite my growing enthusiasm about beginning this study, I was conscious of the fact that time was necessary for relationships to develop between the children and myself, if we were to engage together as co-researchers on a quest for understanding that would honor a multitude of voices.

As a graduate student, I had been drawn to narrative inquiry, as I have learned that it is through the "deliberate storying and restorying of [my] life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p. 259) that I make and re-make meaning of my experiences. It is through narrative that I give shape and expression to my experiences and awaken to new ways of knowing, and I now looked to narrative as the research method through which I would come to understand my teaching experiences and the experiences of the children's lives. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) further my understanding of narrative inquiry as a study of the ways humans experience the world:

> Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction, we use the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon story and the inquiry narrative. Thus we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. (p. 416)

As I began to read in the area of narrative, I also paid close attention to the work of other people with regard to 'story' (Carter, 1993; Coles, 1989; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Barone, 1992). Witherell and Noddings (1991) write:

> The stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture...They attach us to others and to our own histories...and contribute both to our knowing and our being known. (p. 1)

Carter (1993) embraces story as being central to the organization of knowledge and to research in teaching:

> Story is a mode of knowing that captures...the richness and nuances of meaning of human affairs...Story is a distinctive mode of explanation characterized by an intrinsic multiplicity of meanings...sorrow, joy or indecision cannot be expressed in definitions, statements of fact or abstract propositions...Story, with its multiplicity of meanings,...provides special access to knowledge that arises from action...making it especially appropriate to the study of teaching. (pp. 6-7)

Stories provide a means of imagining new possibilities for the future. As we reflect upon experience through storying and restorying educational practice and research, "the horizons of our knowing" shift as we envision changes in our practices as teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994).

The work of Paley (1979, 1986, 1990, 1992) shows the importance of narrative in teaching, learning and research, and particularly inspired me to think about bringing together classroom research with teacher research through listening to children. As a teacher researcher in her own classroom, Paley's narrative accounts centre around her experiences with young children. She writes:

> We are not, any of us, to be found in sets of tasks or lists of attributes; we cannot be defined or classified. We can be known only in the singular unfolding of our unique stories within the context of everyday events (Paley, 1990, p. xii).

Paley recognizes the child's perspective as that which seems to be "organized around the imperative of story" (1986, p. 128), and, for her, "the act of teaching became a daily search for the child's point of view" (p. 124). Her research engagement "provided an open-ended script from which to observe, interpret, and integrate the living drama of the classroom" (p. 124).

The writing of this study began as ideas were first formed. I had been thinking about artistry, and my wonderings led me to consider the role of the arts in my life and how my artistic knowledge is embodied within the weave of my teaching story. Although I was unsure of the actual direction of this inquiry, it was through stories that I came to discover my research questions.

The narrative inquiry that follows is a story of twenty-nine children and myself as we engaged in shared inquiry. It begins with two stories which, through their telling and retelling, enabled me to frame questions of teaching and artistry. *A Story of Aaron* and *Musical Passages: Variations on a Theme* raise questions about

living artistry in teaching and learning. These stories also draw attention to how my engagement with music and other artistic endeavors informs and enables me to find meaning in my teaching. Throughout this thesis, I have used italicized print to indicate stories.

Chapter I

A STORY OF AARON

> To learn and to teach, one must have an awareness of leaving something behind while reaching toward something new.
> (Greene, 1995, p. 20)

He quietly placed a white paper crane on my desk. A gift modeled with care from a square of lined writing paper. Later I discovered it, gently nestled between the books. A found treasure created by a child's hand. I gingerly lifted the delicate creation, all the while marveling at its angular intricacy, its simple beauty. Who was its maker? My eyes searched our classroom and came to rest upon Aaron.

He sat at his desk reading a picture book. Randomly strewn about and below him on the desktop and floor were papers, a duotang, felt pens, and his running shoes. His indiscriminate arrangement of personal belongings defined his individual space and each day visually reminded us of his presence and the special place he held within our teaching-learning group.

I had worked with Aaron for fifteen months. Our shared story began at the beginning of the previous school year when Aaron, a year three student whose development in many ways was similar to children two years younger, had been assigned to my year 2/3 grouping. We had continued together through to the present year when my assignment as a year 4 teacher enabled me to continue working, for a second year, with twelve of my students.

Aaron, small in stature for his nine years, lived with his maternal grandparents. His dark hair, big black eyes and unusually long eyelashes were physical features he chose to highlight in self-portraits. When his face reflected happiness, I saw a smile that seemed to reach a mile wide and fill our classroom space with the light of a thousand candles.

I continue to wonder about the many stories Aaron had lived prior to his arrival into our classroom. Frequent stories told about Aaron focused on negative plot lines and spoke of a child whose knowing and way of being in the world often did not fit the school story. I listened intently to these tellings, and, at the same time, I attempted to puzzle out what I had heard. I searched for alternative tellings, for new meaning. Where were the other pieces, the stories that would help to create an authentic picture of this child? And what about Aaron's view of the world he knows? How would *he* story his school experiences? What was *his* sense of place within his learning community?

Aaron responded with a bright smile, his face glowing with pride, when I voiced my delight at finding the beautiful paper crane. My wonderings about the gift prompted a response. "I made it! It's for you. I made it for you." *Other children gathered round as Aaron told of how he had learned to make paper cranes from a Japanese exchange student who had lived with his family during the summer months. Our reading of* Sadako *(Coerr, 1993) earlier in the week had reminded him of this lived story. As he continued to speak, I thought of Aaron's intrigue with*

paper creations and of the many times he chose to occupy himself with designing, cutting and molding, each time sharing with us a special part of who he was.

In a quiet moment after the other children had dispersed, I asked Aaron if he would like to make paper cranes out of origami paper. He eagerly nodded his head, and his eyes twinkled as I told him that I would find a package of special multi-hued paper. After whispering excitedly to his group members about his upcoming project, he went back to reading. At the end of the day, all of his belongings had been put away inside his desk, an unusual occurrence for Aaron.

The paper crane had been created in the midst of a quiet moment set aside for reading. What if I had insisted that Aaron read at that particular point in time? What would I not know about Aaron? He had a need for movement, a need to change activities more frequently than the other children. How do we help children to discover and explore the things that are of significance to them, to pursue that which is of immediate importance to them? How do we create nurturing and supportive spaces? Aaron had used what he saw as a space for artistic expression for making cranes. Did other children yearn to enter into such spaces? And how can I, as teacher, create such openings?

The following day, the child who came through our classroom door embodied a new sense of purpose and determination. "I have a really good story to write! It's about paper cranes and how they come alive." And again that afternoon he emphatically announced, "I need to write my story." Aaron carried this unbridled enthusiasm with him for a number of days as he worked on his piece.

One morning as he re-read a section of his writing, he discovered that "it [didn't] make sense". As I watched Aaron cut the sheet of foolscap apart in order to add a new section, I thought of his usual struggles with writing; of how through his pieces he often storied himself within the negative plot lines that he had come to know as having been scripted for him; of his preference to verbalize his ideas or to use art materials to create images of the people and objects in his world; and of how, this time, he seemed to be composing a new story line. This time, he seemed engaged in his learning more like an artist who held a passion for creating and who embodied a sense of forming an aesthetic whole.

The celebration of Aaron's work traveled to places outside the walls of our classroom. Late one afternoon while in conversation with a colleague, I noticed a display of literature on the side counter of her classroom. One of the picture books in particular, Tree of Cranes *(Say, 1991), commanded my attention. As Susan spoke about the study of Japan in which the year two students were engaged, I conversed with her about Aaron's interest in origami.*

The following morning, the children and I drew together on the carpet and I shared the picture book, Tree of Cranes, *with my teaching-learning group. The students clustered around quickly to listen to a story related to an interest that recently had captured their imagination. "This is a special book for Aaron," one of the children remarked.*

Through Aaron, they, too, had become intrigued by paper cranes and, perhaps most significantly, recognized within this moment an important connection

to his learning and the celebration of his unique story. Perhaps, like me, they were awakened to a new story Aaron was living out.

The enchantment of the story was a beautiful prelude to the moment when I shared with the children an invitation that had been extended to Aaron to teach the art of paper folding to a group of year two children. "That's ***really*** *special for Aaron," a child commented. Aaron's eyes danced around the circle of children. And, in turn, all eyes were on Aaron who reached out to us with one of his brilliant smiles. When asked what he thought about the idea of sharing his knowledge with other children in the school, Aaron, nodding his head, immediately responded, "Yes! Yes, I'd like to do that!"*

During the night the temperature plummeted to -26°C. I drove through the frosty morning gray. As I entered the school parking lot, a sudden gust of wind cut through the snow that lay across the lane in front of me, designing new patterns of white, blending and shaping one small drift into another. Sitting on the curb, directly behind my parking stall, was a small solitary figure holding a red and white striped knapsack, his black toque pulled down low over his forehead, a gray scarf wrapped securely around his face. Aaron. He was beside my car door even before I had a chance to climb out. "Did you tell Mrs. Smith that I want to come? Did you find a time?," he asked with a sense of urgency.

I smiled and explained that Mrs. Smith would welcome him into their classroom at any time during the school day, and that she was very excited about his interest in teaching the Japanese art of paper folding to the year two children. As we walked together toward the front door of the school, I asked, "When might be

a good time?" Aaron gazed ahead into the distance. "Well... Maybe when we are quiet reading and they are quiet reading, I could work with four kids at a round table," he offered, sharing his assumptions about other classrooms based upon that which he had come to know.

The boy who greeted me that morning in the cold, frozen parking lot was there because he had been presented with the opportunity to share his newly discovered talent with another teaching-learning group, and *this* had become the most wonderful occurrence in the world to him. Or perhaps it wasn't newly discovered to him, only to the rest of us - newly recognized and valued by others.

During the ensuing week, Aaron looked forward with anticipation to working with our neighboring classroom community. When the planned time arrived, together we walked the short distance across the hallway. Possibly sensing the newness of the experience or possibly knowing that transitions are often difficult and fraught with uncertainty, he had requested that I accompany him as he entered into a new learning environment. Introductions were made, a group of students gathered at a round table located in one corner of the classroom, and Aaron began his teaching - and learning. I returned to work with my other students.

A while later I looked in next door and observed Aaron working with a new group of children. Each individual was deeply engrossed in the activity and appeared not to notice my presence. One of the youngsters, delighted with her creation, proudly held up her paper for all to see. "Oh...There's one more step. It's

not quite finished. You still need to do one more step", Aaron replied softly in response.

Aaron left our teaching-learning group three months after we had all shared in the lived story of the paper cranes. His family had moved to a new home. At the conclusion of our first morning following his departure, one of the children came to me and pensively remarked, "It's quieter in here today without Aaron. But, you know, I kind of miss that rustling sound..."

Aaron's collection of brightly colored origami creations softly rides the air in our classroom, suspended from the ceiling upon three delicate lengths of translucent thread. Paper cranes, floating gently, gliding effortlessly in flight.

I tell this story as one that embodies many questions and wonders about my teaching and the lived curriculum of children. As a teacher, I am challenged to understand the unique needs of children 'like Aaron'. Imagining new possibilities and making spaces in which these children can explore alternative plot lines and live new stories often is difficult.

This is the story of one child. Yet the questions that echo within are of importance to the lives of all children with whom I mutually construct a shared story and with whom I create shared knowledge and meanings. How do I make students feel significant? How do I provide opportunities for individuals to show what they

know? How do I create spaces for children's stories; spaces in which I draw out, hear and respond to students' voices and minds; spaces where we engage together within community in living out and celebrating the stories that are our own?

I continue to hold a vivid and powerful image of Aaron "working like an artist with a vision" (Paley, 1979, p. 55). In retelling this story, I wonder about the role that artistry plays in my practice. How do I enable students to learn in an artistic way? As a teacher and researcher, I want to look at the artistry in my teaching; the artistry in being awake to alternate new plot lines in children's lives; the artistry in constructing inquiry spaces which make apparent many learning possibilities and which present children with the freedom to explore multiple forms of interpretation. As Eisner (1995) writes:

> ... recognizing artistry in teaching provides us with a way of thinking about teaching - a metaphorical field - through which to see and reflect upon features of teaching that we might not have seen or thought about before. When teaching is conceived of as the practice of an art we are more likely to seek out its artistic features, we are more likely...to look for expressivity in the performance of both teachers and students (p. 16).

Like Eisner, I view teaching as the practice of an art. In order to understand artistic approaches to teaching, I need to reflect upon features of teaching and learning that I may not have seen or considered before. I need to explore metaphors related to teacher as artist/ learner as artist. I begin by looking back to other places in my life where I have been an artist.

Chapter II

NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS

> The purpose of art is the gradual lifelong construction of a state of wonder.
>
> (Gould, 1983, p. 198)

Two collections of music rest upon the floor next to the piano. One contains bound editions of works by composers Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin and Schumann - cherished, much played pieces from my years as a music student. The other is comprised of sheet music selections including comparatively recent acquisitions of musical and lyrical arrangements for piano and the voices of children.

As my gaze settles upon the top piece in the latter pile, I am called upon to consider the personal relevance surrounding this composition. *Wintersong* (Brontë & Snyder, 1993), a piece with flowing melody set to an original poem written by Emily Brontë, creates an image of blossoming "wreathes of snow" and the "cold delight" and "frozen beauty" of a glistening winter landscape. It is a piece that holds much significance for me, in that my introduction to this music came at a time, two years past, when I was invited to assume the role of accompanist for our school choir. As Connelly and Clandinin (1988) remind me, embedded within the living out of this new story and revealed through the storied expression of this experience, is embodied knowledge which speaks of a connection between my past experiences, my present experiences and possibilities for the future.

Coming to Music, Coming to Dance

I am aware of how the threads of my personal narrative influence and shape the meanings I construct of my living. I tell my childhood story as one in which the artistic culture of the world was revealed to me and in which I was invited to participate. Music, dance, literature and paintings filled the scenes of my early childhood years, providing me with a rich cultural background and with exposure to multiple ways of coming to know my world as well as multiple ways of thinking about and storying my experiences.

Compelling rhythmic patterns. Magnificent melodies. Brilliant crescendos and gentle diminuendos. Movement and energy. Emotion. A sound experience floated through the air, wrapping itself around my world whilst I engaged in my play.

Music was a constant presence in my childhood days. I remember my fascination with a large piece of 'furniture' from which escaped the splendidly evocative sounds of music, a wonder to which I was drawn again and again. The 'Hi Fi' occupied a space in our family's living room and housed, inside its high gloss wooden cabinet, a stereo, a record storage compartment and a radio. I spent many hours in this living room space and often found delight in looking at album covers in an attempt to learn the story around which each piece had been composed.

Music provided, for me, a sensory joy. Yet, although I found pleasure in listening to traditional and contemporary children's songs and rhymes, I hold

stronger, more vivid memories of the recordings that belonged to my mother. At a young age, I came to know the music of Debussy, Brahms, Bach, Saint-Saëns and Sibelius; the symphonies of Beethoven, Dvořák and Mozart; Měndelssohn's Midsummer Night's Dream *and Tchaikovsky's* Swan Lake *and* The Nutcracker Suite. *I felt the fast, frenzied tempo of Rimsky-Korsakov's* Flight of the Bumblebee, *and I was moved by the plaintive emotion of Harry Belafonte singing* Day O *to the traditional calypso beat of the islands of the Caribbean. The gloriously stirring, sometimes joyful, sometimes soulful, strains of these works seeped into my being and remain with me still.*

I embrace this knowing as that which continues to shape and illuminate my lived story by enabling me to construct new meanings of my experiences. Perhaps it is this embodied connection that prompted me, during my sabbatical year, to see the rippling river from Smetana's *Ma Vlast* as a metaphor around which I might describe my graduate journey:

> A symphonic poem tells the story. A river created by the melodic union of two springs flows through the landscape. The river travels through woods alive with the sounds of a hunt, past a village celebration, and in and about mythical water nymphs frolicking in the yellow light of the moon. Gaining momentum the river finally passes into the city of Prague.
>
> The Moldau has been a favorite of mine since I was a young child. Each time I listen to Smetana's nineteenth century composition, I feel the

> power and beauty of this music that depicts the movements and grandeur of the river. I think about the new story I am living and liken my graduate experience to the movement of The Moldau - a combination of undulating rhythms and tempos, swells and subsidence, momentums, tensions and unions. (February, 1994)

As a child, the arts wove their way through my living in other ways as well. They reached into many corners of my life, sometimes touching gently, oftentimes moving powerfully, yet always existing as a substantial presence.

The upright grand piano, seemingly massive to the diminutive size of a young child, stood in a small room just off the front foyer. The wooden carvings on its outer casing jutted and curled, arranged in the pattern of a whirling motion. From the front hallway looking in, I watched and listened with fascination as my mother's music students rehearsed their pieces.

The piano was my first encounter with a musical instrument and in subsequent years, although I was fortunate to have opportunities to learn to play various other orchestral instruments, the piano became the instrument that I came to study and know most intimately. As a piano student, I inhabited the world of the artist's imagination, a space of creativity and solitude. Oftentimes, I engaged in musical experiences with other young pianists and performed before a variety of audiences.

Today, I continue to have a need to seek out opportunities in which I can attempt to breathe life into a piece of music. I often wonder why it is that I am drawn to the piano. Why do I need to be close? As I search for an answer, I know that by being at the piano I am in a space where I can explore, risk-take, discover and learn; it is a place where I can find quietude, inspiration or solace. I believe that music has the power to touch one deeply. Much can be revealed through music. To be able to express myself musically is an aesthetic experience through which I find much joy. I wonder when it was that I came to know that although I was playing the composition of another individual, that even though I attempted to re-create the musical ideas of a piece - the notes, the tempo, the dynamics - the manner and nuances, the tone and the feeling with which I played were my own.

A tambourine, with rawhide stretched taut to the tan-colored wooden frame, can still be found in a closet. It is hung over the crook of a hanger letting the decorative turquoise, purple and pink ribbons tied to its edges fall freely into the space below, reaching their full length. The sight of the colored ribbons transports me back to a ballet performance in which the exuberant sounds of the tambourine rang through the air as I, together with other dancers, gave expression to our interpretation of the Tarantella. *As I once again feel the vivacious movements of this high-spirited Southern Italian dance, of the ribbons and myself dancing as one, I am reminded of the beauty embodied within this art form: one cannot know the dancer from the dance. There exists a unity between self and music whereby the dancer is an expression of the music.*

The story belongs to my childhood. It is a story of finding pleasure in movement, of embracing the music and expressing myself through the language of dance, of having the opportunity to develop creativity through performance, of being engaged artistically with others in a shared experience. These memories are rekindled as I open an envelope enclosing an invitation to a 'Tea Dance' - an invitation sent by a former teacher from my years as a ballet student. As I reflect upon this long ago connection, I see how a childhood story has reached forward and found its way to my present living.

My receiving the card also prompts vivid recollections of the many aesthetic experiences and creative possibilities to which I was exposed on many family outings. Viewing live performances of the ballet, the symphony and the opera, and visiting art galleries provided frequent opportunities to experience the unique beauty, the compelling drama, and the moving/magical expression of a diverse range of rich artistic works. As a fascinated listener/participant (Gould, 1983, p. 223), I entered into ballet stories such as *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, *Coppelia* and *Giselle*. I traveled through operas such as *The Tales of Hoffman*, *Madame Butterfly* and *La Bohème*. As I journeyed deep into the centre of different spaces and places, from one artistic medium to another, I was exposed to various sensory experiences and to ideas which had been created in various symbolic forms.

Many childhood hours were filled with events that encouraged me to explore the world of creation. Paper, fabric, trimmings, crayons, small pieces of wood, boxes and other found materials were made available to me. I busied myself with designing, cutting, building and shaping. I created props to accompany my

imaginative play, and I designed art work. I worked hard at my play and was drawn in by an enticing wealth of possibilities.

If one searches the shelves of my bookcases, many stories that I received and came to know as a young child still can be found. I treasure these children's books. Surrounding each volume are special memories of happy times shared with my parents and siblings, of a surprise trip to a downtown bookstore with an aunt, of stories that teased out a smile, of stories that touched deeply and brought forth tears.

I often think about how I have filled the shelves in our school classroom with copies of some of my favorite literature. I want to share with my students something I have grown to cherish, something which provides me with inspiration, something which often engages the essence of my being. I continue to find the magic...still.

In my life, I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to grow and learn surrounded by extraordinary works of art and by numerous invitations to engage in an artistic way of knowing. I believe that my learnings from these experiences - embodied knowings about sources of meaning, discipline, risk-taking, intuition and improvisation - disclose insights into creative possibilities for curriculum making.

What I realize now is that my childhood stories speak of my living as being shaped by my participation in different facets of artistry. I retell my stories as ones in which I came to know my world in multiple ways - through living a balance between doing and receiving (Dewey,1934, p. 45); through creating, listening, responding and performing; by living in community with other musicians and dancers, and by spending solitary moments engaged in acts of creation and/or reflection. Writing these stories has called me to consider how the arts bring meaning to my teaching

and to the teaching-learning environment for the children with whom I mutually construct a shared story.

What follows is the second story to which I referred in the prologue that enabled me to frame questions of teaching and artistry. Living this story opened a window to my gradual construction of new understanding.

Musical Passages: Variations on a Theme

The days prior to the school Christmas concert are remembered as a time in which I focused with great intensity on a flurry of activities. We had just completed conferences with students and their parents, and choir rehearsals were at a peak. I was immersed in an atmosphere charged with festive electricity. The school foyers and gymnasium were bedecked in Christmas finery. The last string of lights had been strung along the gymnasium wall. Final staging and sound adjustments were complete. The singing voices of children wafted through the building.

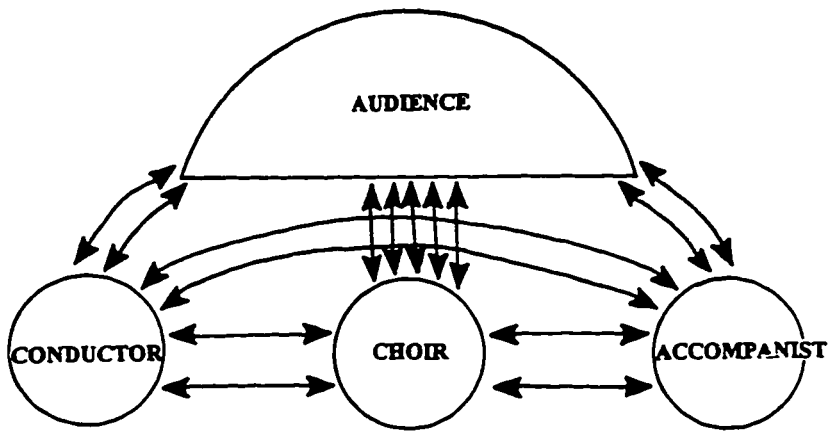
Being at the centre of a musical production is demanding yet exhilarating. I had forgotten how exciting it could be. The children, our music teacher and I joined together to orchestrate and rehearse our musical selections. I listened intently to our creations, feeling every note and nuance, each subtlety, the emotion. I recognized and valued our shared experience as a time to learn from, and with, one another. I was attentive to the shared collaborative process of working together to figure out final composition adjustments, to create new endings to pieces that otherwise would have been too lengthy, and to support each other in our roles. I felt deeply the power and joy of a community working together, a

"simultaneity of voices" (Gould, 1983, p. 47) engaged in musical thinking, teaching and playing in order to create an artistic whole.

I continue to hold vivid images of our early December rehearsals. I remember thinking how I had first thought that assuming the role of accompanist meant that I would come to rehearsal prepared and ready to play. And I would *just* play my part. Yet, from this new vantage point, I had acquired a new perspective of the relationship that exists among the singers, the conductor and the accompanist. In a collaborative musical creation, there exists a complex interplay of refinements and adjustments in response to the musicianship of others. As accompanist, I sometimes followed the lead of the others and oftentimes I found myself assuming the lead. There is an artistry involved in the making of a musical performance - in the making, in the doing, in the sharing. Through this choir experience, I came to understand how an accompanist plays an integral role in this aesthetic endeavor.

My understanding of this artistic process is represented schematically through the following design. This drawing (Figure 1) visually portrays the complex interaction among conductor, choir, and accompanist. It is through performance that the artistic relationship is extended to the audience.

Figure 1: Interaction Among Conductor, Choir, Accompanist and Audience



Perhaps most significantly, I remember this musical experience as being instrumental in my coming to recognize my personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). I had entered into this new context with a great deal of uncertainty. Yet in this "new place, seeing again the events, relationships, and configurations of the old" *(Grumet, 1991, p. 75)*, I recognized and was able to draw upon embodied knowledge pertaining to the creative process. From my place within the midst of a group of musicians working together to create an artistic whole, I began to think of myself as 'artist'.

In retelling my story, I have come to see how I slowly had been awakening to the artistic process as a metaphor for the teaching and learning that happens in the classroom. My artistic involvement has enabled me to make connections between

music making and classroom curriculum making. It has enabled me to find meaning in my teaching and learning.

I seek to understand how the things I value as artist are lived out in the classroom setting. As a teacher researcher, I want to explore questions about artistry in teaching and learning. Is artistry displayed in my teaching and, if so, in what ways? How does my knowledge of the artistic process inform my teaching and guide the relationships I hope to establish with my students? How do I hear and respond to the unique voices and diverse songs of each individual, and how do we join together to create an artistic whole? What is the influence of artistic approaches to teaching and learning within a community of learners? How do my experiences enable me to create a community with my students in which we are able to make artistic decisions whilst living and learning in the world of the artist's imagination? And of what educational consequence is this engagement for students? Do children recognize artistry in teaching and does this knowing make a difference to their learning experiences? Eisner (1995) poses similar questions.

With a "seeing eye and a hearing ear" (Eisner, 1991, p. 40), I entered into a narrative inquiry that focuses upon teacher as artist and learner as artist. This study explores my lived story of teacher/learner, the stories of the children with whom I shared a classroom context, and the story we composed together as learners on a shared journey. This research sought to understand the ways in which artistry in teaching and learning was lived out within our classroom community. By engaging in conversation and through storying experiences, this research also sought understanding of the ways in which the children experienced artistic qualities of teaching and learning, and the meanings they constructed around their experiences.

Chapter III

COMPOSING THE STUDY

> The depth of human experience...depends on the fact that we are able to vary our modes of seeing, that we can alternate our views of reality.
> (Eisner, 1988, p. 17)

Creating Form

As a teacher researcher concerned with illuminating artistic qualities of teaching and learning, with exploring questions of curriculum-as-lived by teacher and students, with creating spaces that honor a multitude of voices and multiple ways of knowing, and with uncovering the rich textures and layers of meaning within interwoven and unfolding stories of classroom living, I chose to use personal experience methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) that would allow for ongoing interpretation and construction of a plurality of meanings from which recurring narrative themes might emerge. For this study, a variety of *field texts* (p. 419) was constructed as representations of experience. These texts included stories of classroom experience, field notes, individual and group conversations with children, journal reflections and my own autobiographical writing.

I recognize the centrality of relationships to the research process. As Clandinin and Connelly write:

> Central to the creation of field texts is the relationship of researcher to participant... Researcher relationships to ongoing participant stories shape the nature of field texts and establish the epistemological status of them (p. 419).

In this study, the nature of field texts was shaped by my relationships with the children and emerged from my intentions and purposes in exploring and reflecting upon questions related to artistry in teaching and learning. As the students and I lived a shared story of narrative inquiry, we were "at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). What was told, as well as the meanings constructed and reconstructed around each telling, was shaped by our relationships as we continued to live our stories within an ongoing experiential text.

Writing stories as representations of experience began in the fall of 1994 upon my return to the classroom. As I searched for a research topic, I wrote storied accounts of my teaching and learning experiences. As I reflected upon these stories - stories that were part of my knowing - many personal wonders and questions became apparent that led me toward establishing a framework for this narrative inquiry.

Throughout the research journey, I continued to construct narrative accounts of lived experiences. Often these accounts grew out of field notes comprised of contextual information about classroom events, the physical teaching/learning environment, observations of the children's interactions and activities, and my activities as a researcher and an active participant in events. Personal thoughts and wonders related to practice were recorded in a reflective journal to which my advisor responded; this text provided another means of interpreting meaning.

Autobiographical writing considered the connections between my lived experiences and my teaching and research interests.

In an effort to represent the voices of those with whom I lived together in community, I endeavored to provide an authentic conversational space within which I could attend to children's voices as they shared experiential stories and expressed, in different ways, their knowings and the meanings they were constructing about artistry in teaching and learning. Conversations were held in May and June 1996. I initially met with each child individually. Although the focus of our conversations was determined by my research purposes, I concerned myself with the making of "a space of dialogue and possibility" (Greene, 1988, p. xi), a space that beheld "opportunities for the articulation of multiple perspectives" (p. xi). I viewed each conversation as a unique creation: I sought to follow the path of the storyteller as each personal narrative unfolded. As Coles points out:

> Stories are renderings of life...They can offer us other eyes through which we might see, other ears with which we might make soundings (1989, pp. 159-160).

Within our learning community, I also encouraged conversation between and among students. Subsequent to our one-to-one conversations, the children gathered together in groups of five in order to engage in mutual inquiry, to dialogue with one another as they storied individual and shared classroom experiences, and to construct collaborative reflections and interpretations. These conversations became ongoing as the students and I continued to engage in the process of reflection until the end of the school year, constructing and reconstructing data as we went along. Both group

and individual conversations were audio-recorded and later transcribed into written field texts.

In chapter four, the research story that was shaped from these field texts tells of my stories of practice. The narratives of experience I constructed include stories of children, stories of space, and stories of events. In chapter five, the research narrative captures the children's experiences: it represents their voices and their meanings of artistry in teaching and learning as it was lived out within our classroom context.

I am mindful of who I am in this study. I am aware that in writing narrative accounts I am "constructing narratives at several levels" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10). My presence in this work in "multiple I's" (pp. 9-10) - as teacher, learner, researcher, research participant and author - compels me to be attentive to issues of trust and relationship.

Relationships and An Ethic of Care

This research journey added another dimension to the realm of daily classroom living. It became part of the weave of our ongoing engagement in teaching and learning. As a teacher researcher living in a community co-created with children and as a collaborator in learning with my students, there was a need to consider ethical questions directed toward the "maintenance of community, the growth of individuals, and the enhancement of subjective aspects of our relationships" (Noddings, 1986, p. 510).

This narrative is embedded within an "ethic of caring" (Noddings, 1986) and embraces the notion of fidelity in research for teaching as a "direct response to individuals with whom one is in relation" (p. 497). In my work with children in shared inquiry, it is important that a "language of relation" (p. 499) guide my thinking. I believe I have the responsibility of creating a research space within which care for each participant is of prime concern, a space within which attentiveness to the quality of relationships needs to be situated at the foreground.

From the onset of this study, sensitivity was demonstrated toward student needs as the children and I negotiated a research relationship. Issues of voice in the research process were significant. The narrative stories which would emerge from this inquiry needed to be representative not only of my story of the research but also representative of the voices of the students. Britzman writes of the connectedness between relationships and voice:

> Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community...The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process... Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of her/his experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process. (in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4)

Because I wanted to ensure that both the children's stories and my own were valued and respected as part of the tapestry of the classroom, issues of voice within the research relationship needed my constant attention. As I engaged in the writing process, I was always aware of the tension that existed in my being able to hear and represent multiple stories and interpretations.

My conversations with the children and their parents began as I shared with them the nature of my proposed study and possibilities as to how the children's conversations, stories and projects could be included in the inquiry process. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from this study at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Pseudonyms were used for all participants and for the school context. Prior to its inclusion in the thesis, the research text was made available to the children and their parents for final approval or revision.

Chapter IV

LISTENING TO MY VOICE: CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES OF ARTISTRY

> A story [is] a gift built on multiplicity. One that stays inexhaustible within its own limits. Its departures and arrivals. Its quietness.
> (Trinh, 1989, p. 2)

It is through looking at the stories I live and tell that I am able to discover and understand the artistry in my teaching. In this chapter, I have reconstructed narratives of experience that include stories of children, stories of space, and stories of events. The stories I tell of the children are as a result of having shared with them in the living of these experiences as teacher, learner and researcher.

As I move into sharing a narrative of my practice, I give pause for reflection upon the creation of this text. Throughout the writing process, I have struggled to create a language through which I can ably convey the rich sensory experiences in which I have participated. I have found it difficult to find the words to express the subtleties of my ways of knowing. Eisner (1991, p. 40) writes:

> The creation of a picture, or a poem, or a musical composition requires... knowledge of the unfolding qualities with which one works... It is clear to anyone who has struggled with the task of doing so that there are no linguistic equivalents to the qualities experienced in this process.

The ideas and images I form and the meanings I construct from my sensory experiences can be expressed through a variety of forms of representation. Narrative is but one medium of expression, and, yet, I look to narrative as the way through

which we understand our lives and to the possibilities that exist for the "artistic treatment of [this] form of representation" (Barone & Eisner, 1995, p. 45).

I joined together on this research journey with twenty-nine year four children, a mix of girls and boys of multicultural ethnicities. For twelve of the students, our shared story had begun the previous year when we had worked together in a year 2/3 grouping. Throughout the course of this study, I viewed the children, with whom I lived together in community, as co-researchers and collaborators in an inquiry which became melodiously interwoven with the composite sounds of our classroom.

Stories of the Classroom

The following stories of practice, from a collection of many, have been reconstructed in order to portray a sense of how a full world was created for the children. It is through narrative that I am able to approach artistry from different angles in order to consider the artistic possibilities inherent within each teaching/learning moment. These stories, individually and collectively, give an emerging sense of how artistry in teaching and learning, in its variations of rhythm, tone, cadence and intensity, was lived out within our classroom context.

Making Spaces, Imagining Possibilities

As I stood in the centre of my newly assigned classroom, vivid images came to mind of other such moments when I first had set sight upon a new teaching and

learning environment that I would share with children. Reflecting upon why these moments have been so memorable, I recognized them as being times of excitement, of wonder, and of possibilities yet to be discovered; as times of imagining, of creation, and even of uncertainty and risk-taking. This particular space, within which I engaged in this reflection, has since come to hold such memories as well.

The classroom, the design of which was inspired by an early icon of the Canadian prairie - the one-room schoolhouse, was one of a cluster of four classrooms situated adjacent to the school's central multi-level learning resource centre, an area which could be accessed by traversing a combination of stairs and ramps. Gray carpet covered two-thirds of the classroom floor area and was banked along two of the walls by large white tiled areas. At one end of the learning environment, the carpet diagonally led down two steps from the main floor space into a cozy corner; rose-colored cushions lined the lower sections of the three walls. Rising high over the cozy corner was a skylight which, on the exterior of the building, formed a 'metaphorical bell tower'. From within the classroom, double doors opened onto an adjoining classroom and they, along with the shared study spaces located just outside our room and each of the other three classrooms in the cluster, spoke of the possibility of community between teaching-learning groups. The soft gray, rose and burgundy color scheme was echoed in the furniture pieces - the student desks (perhaps more accurately described as tables with pull-out trays that could be arranged in different groupings), the large round and rectangular tables, and the metal bookcases and filing cabinet. Display shelves, a sink and counter space scaled to children, various types of storage cabinets, a whiteboard, bulletin boards and a coat area were also physical features.

My initial impression of this classroom in 1994, like the others I had worked in within this school prior to my sabbatical leave, not only was of an environment filled with tremendous teaching and learning possibilities but also was of a space filled with light. Natural light had found its way into the room through the skylight, the cozy corner windows and the bank of windows that ran the length of one of the classroom walls. Each time I enter a new classroom, I remember how and why I have come to notice the affect natural light has on one's learning environment and the way in which it contributes to the aesthetics of space and often enables space to be utilized. Once again, as I explored this new classroom, I remembered the story of my first teaching assignment some years ago and the day I first became acquainted with the room I would share with my students:

> I squeezed through an opening between the furniture and then slipped around the side of the wardrobe. As I played a few chords on the piano, my gaze fell upon the outer wall of the classroom. Images appeared before me - children running to the window to herald the arrival of the first falling flakes of winter; to marvel at a brilliantly colored rainbow high in the sky; to watch a robin strutting across the lawn; or even to feel the warmth of sunshine on their faces. Images, yes. But that is all that they were. They could not be anything more. The wall was a solid expanse of white from one end to the other. It closed us off from the outside world.
>
> (Reflections - December, 1993)

The classroom I entered in August, 1994, was very different from the classroom of years before. Within this new environment, I began to create 'our space' - a place for the children and myself as artists. During much of the time I spent alone within the classroom in August, I thought about the importance of designing space with the children in mind and how, at the same time, the children upon their arrival would be part of the design of the classroom. Some decisions were easy. My many personal copies of favorite children's literature, picture books and novels, found a home on the display shelves. Books, as an inspiration, needed to be visible and accessible to both me and the children. As I unpacked boxes and began to cover bulletin boards with brightly colored corrugated paper and borders, I thought about possibilities for celebrating each child within this space. I envisioned an environment within which each individual would feel able to create, to imagine, to risk, and to discover. I think of the children and myself as learners sharing a journey, and I wondered how this could become a place within which each child would grow to experience a sense of belonging to our learning community and a sense of ownership for the things that happened in daily living. How would I create a nurturing and supportive space within which I would hear, respond to and celebrate the children's stories; spaces in which children would feel able to discover and explore the things that were of significance to them? I wondered about how I could group the furniture in such a way that connections between students would be encouraged and relationships would develop. How could I design space in order to provide areas for individual, small and large group activities, for quiet and active project work, and for celebratory events? Where would I create display areas for children's work - in celebration of their

accomplishments and as a way of coming to know the unique stories of each individual, a way of providing others with ideas and possibilities for their own work?

I knew that I would not find answers to many of my wonders and that only in co-creating a community with the children as we worked, played and learned alongside each other, and through my responsiveness to the children and to the 'music' of the classroom, would we discover teaching and learning possibilities and ways of being 'in relation' with one another.

Music has existed as a substantial presence in my life and, too, has woven itself through my teaching story. As I prepared the classroom for the children and myself, I was aware of how my personal narrative influenced and shaped the ways in which I thought of this new learning environment. Since my first teaching assignment, I have been fortunate to have had a piano in my classroom. The same piano has travelled with me as I have changed schools and teaching assignments and continues to be a primary consideration when I am making spaces for children. August, 1994, was no exception: I placed the piano diagonally at the top of the steps that led down to the cozy corner so that the children and I could easily cluster together in song. For me, music adds another beautiful dimension to teaching and learning, as it presents children with the possibility of exploring yet another form of interpretation and exposes them to new ways of thinking about and storying their experiences.

The next four stories, stories that speak to what happens when the children arrive - as children like Samantha begin their writing; as a parent comes to spend

time in our learning community; as we engage in special projects; as children like Alexander make connections between lived experiences and literature - are illustrative of the ways in which artistry finds expression as the children and I engage in choreographing the curriculum that is lived out within our shared classroom context.

Letters from Samantha

It was during one of our times set aside for writing. Samantha found me across the room listening to another student's writing piece. She waited patiently until we were finished, yet it was quite apparent that she felt she had something very important to share. Her entire being radiated excitement.

Samantha proudly presented the first page of a story she had begun writing that day. Writing did not come easily to Samantha. I had worked with her for two years and had come to know that often she was presented with quite a challenge in her attempts to express herself in written language. The fact that she was so excited that morning about her work was reason for me to take especial notice.

The first page of Samantha's story was composed of lines of writing interspersed with two large blank spaces, one about one-third of the way down the page, the other at the bottom of the page. Into each of these spaces, she had glued small envelopes that she had fashioned out of scraps of lined paper. Contained within each envelope was a letter, a response to the writing that had come before.

As Samantha proceeded to talk about each piece of her work, many questions and wonders danced through my mind. I asked Samantha how she had

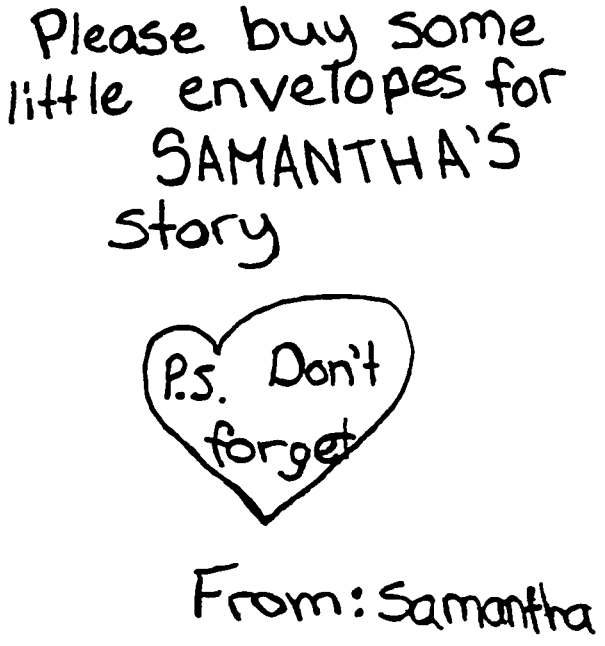
come to write this piece, a beautiful collection of letters that one could open up and read. Samantha's gaze rose to the open shelves situated on the wall behind me on which were displayed a selection of children's literature, personal copies I had gathered over the years.

"There!", she exclaimed. "From one of the books you read last year - The Jolly Postman *(Ahlberg & Ahlberg, 1986). I was sitting at my desk thinking about what I could write. I looked over at the shelf and I saw* The Jolly Postman. *It gave me the idea to write a story like that with letters and little pockets."*

Samantha continued to compose her letters and construct her book over the course of the following few weeks. As she typed her work onto the computer, she found herself to be confronted with dilemmas of how to leave appropriate-sized spaces for the envelopes and whether to handwrite or type the letters that would be enclosed inside. Again, The Jolly Postman *and a newly acquired addition to our classroom collection,* The Jolly Pocket Postman *(Ahlberg and Ahlberg, 1995), were the catalysts for ideas and possibilities.*

One morning, in a conversation with Samantha, she wondered if we could find a few 'real' envelopes that would be small enough to attach to her pages. Together, we unsuccessfully searched our classroom and the school's office supplies. I told Samantha that I needed to stop at a stationery store sometime during the week and if she wrote a reminder note to me, I would purchase a few small envelopes. Later that day I found the note on a corner of my desk:

Figure 2: Samantha's Note



This particular piece of literature had sparked a connection for Samantha. One year after having listened to this story, she had discovered within it possibilities for her own writing.

A Celebration of Each Individual

Early evening sunlight reached into our learning environment. Through different entry points - the west bank of windows, the pyramid-shaped skylight, the square panes in the cozy corner - it glinted off the furniture, the carpet and the

learning centres; it blanketed the brightly colored paper that stretched around the outer walls of the classroom; it illuminated the pieces of children's writing, art work and other projects that were celebrated within this space.

I stood in the middle of this play of dancing light and floating shadows, the sole inhabitant of a quiet classroom prior to a parent information evening. It was the end of September. I had just returned to teaching after having spent a year on sabbatical as a full-time university student. Feeling refreshed and energetic, I *was excited about discussing program possibilities with the families of my students.*

As my gaze shifted to various places around the classroom, I thought about (and I have thought about often since then) the different learning spaces in which I recently had lived as a student. I recognized that the individual who had journeyed a year earlier into the world of academe had grown and changed: my experiences had left me with new perspectives, with new ways of viewing the lived world I shared with the children. Each part of this learning environment seemed to have acquired new meaning. Yet, while I felt that I now embodied greater understanding of what was important and needed to be present for young children, I was also, perhaps more than ever before, feeling like a learner who had merely begun *to explore the many pathways of teaching. I was certain that there was so much I didn't know.*

That evening, I read a story to the parents - The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush *(dePaola, 1988). I chose to share with them this particular piece of literature because of the way it beautifully portrays the message of discovering and valuing, within one's community, the special gifts and contributions of each individual. I believe that we are richer for the* diversity *that exists within each*

teaching-learning group and that our classroom spaces need to celebrate each individual for what they can do and what they are able to contribute to the whole. As I spent time addressing this aspect of what I saw as being essential to a child's learning, I simultaneously wondered if parents would appreciate the message contained within the story as being an important part of their child's schooling.

At the conclusion of the evening, one of the mothers approached me. "Now I know what the difference is," she began. "We've finally found it." As she told the story of her son's years in school, I realized that I was being given a response to my wondering. She spoke about her son's previous learning experiences as having been very positive. However, he seemed to be unsettled. "This year, there is a calm within Cam. Now I know why. As I was sitting here, I asked myself - What is it in this room that is so special? I've finally figured it out: it's the nurturing. I had tears in my eyes as you were reading the story. Looking around the room there is a warmth, a celebration of each individual. Yes, it's the nurturing."

I move back in time, now, to a point earlier in the evening. I had finished my presentation and a conversation had begun between the parents and myself. A woman, whom I have known for a number of years after having taught two of her children, asked me if there was one most important thing which I had learned from my university experience that I had brought back to my teaching practice. Immediately I knew what that something was.

At the university, I had been fortunate to have been welcomed into a community of scholars. I believe that my graduate experience was rich and rewarding because of my good fortune in having had the opportunity to join together with other 'artists in community'. As a participant within a research

community, conversations and connections were strong and important threads that wove their way throughout and in-between many pathways as I joined together with fellow students and faculty members in a shared journey of 'coming to know'. I think of this experience as a time for immersion in reflection upon practice; a time for inquiry, growth and change. The collaborative component of this reflexive process - rich dialogue and the exchange and exploration of ideas, queries, sense-making and suggestions within supportive collegial networks - was invaluable.

Life as a student has prompted me to consider the parallels between my graduate work and the lived world of elementary classrooms; it has provided me with an interpretive frame within which I have acquired new understanding and insight into the school experiences of children; and it has caused me to reflect upon and be ever thoughtful about the learning communities we hope to co-create with our students: communities in which teachers are able to view themselves as facilitators of student growth and as 'enablers' in helping children to 'shape their knowing'; communities in which we are able to dialogue with children, to listen to children with care and curiosity (Noddings, 1984; 1992), and to become partners in inquiry, engaging together with children in the process of thinking and in the roles of teacher and learner.

Memory Boxes

A memory is ... something as precious as gold
something warm
something from long ago
something that makes you cry
something that makes you laugh

(Fox, 1984)

Over a period of a few weeks, the students and I read a number of stories that focused on a 'remembering' theme (Bahr, 1992; Clifford, 1985; Fox, 1984) . Each story, in a unique way, illustrated how many of the artifacts we collect over a lifetime are significant in that they call forth many special memories and stories.

Subsequent to our enjoying this collection of literature, each child was invited to create a memory box (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) filled with a few items that were, in some way, a reminder to the child of a special moment or happening in his or her life. As the boxes were created, the children brought them to school to share with us the special memories, stories and traditions contained within.

As the children began to talk about their memories, I became aware of the fact that we were experiencing something quite extraordinary. The children and I were intrigued by the items each individual had chosen and mesmerized by the telling of stories that surrounded each memory, making it significant. So involved were we in this special activity that one hour passed, and we had only been able to celebrate the work of two students.

Over the course of the week, each student had the opportunity to present their memory box. It was evident that much thought had gone into this project, beginning with the choice or creation of a box. Some of the children had searched their homes for special boxes, while others had decided to design and decorate a box out of found materials. In some instances, we saw how families had become involved. The box may have belonged to a parent or grandparent and had been given as a gift expressly for the purpose of this project.

We were attentive to talk about the process of selecting special items for one's memory box. We listened and watched as Aaron showed us a birthday card sent to him by his mother who lived many kilometers away and whom he only saw a couple of times during the year. We were introduced to Barney, a small much-loved Teddy bear with patches of worn away fur, who had been given to Cam by his grandparents when he was a toddler. Cam talked about Barney as 'being there for him' when he felt sad and just wanted to be by himself. Many individuals voiced personal connections to the shared stories.

And late one afternoon, a parent stopped by to voice her delight over our memory box project, as it had provided her with insights into what was important to her child. She especially was moved by her son's choice of a photograph of close family friends - relationships that he valued in his life.

As I now reflect back upon this story, many wonders fill my mind. I had chosen to invite the students to engage in this project approximately two-thirds of the way through the school year. Would Cam have been comfortable sharing 'the meaning of Barney' earlier in the year? Would Aaron have felt safe enough to talk

about his special relationship with his mother knowing that his family story was unique and different from the others in our teaching-learning group? Would the children, as audience, have been as interested and responsive to each other's sharing had there not been time for friendships and trust to develop?

Alexander's Notebook

> The house was a book, and Uncle Wrisby and Aunt Elda the characters. From the moment that Arthur walked in the front door, he was a new character ... in the life story of his aunt and uncle. He noted, recorded and stored in his head the old colored-glass windows, the long hallways and the worn stairways with sunshine at the top.
>
> (MacLachlan, 1980, p. 11)

The children and I had come together to continue with our reading of Arthur, For the Very First Time *(MacLachlan, 1980). On this particular morning as we embarked upon a new chapter, Alexander quietly reached into one of his jean pockets and drew out a small notebook, one that fitted neatly into the palm of his hand. He searched his pocket a second time and produced a short, stubby pencil topped with a worn down eraser.*

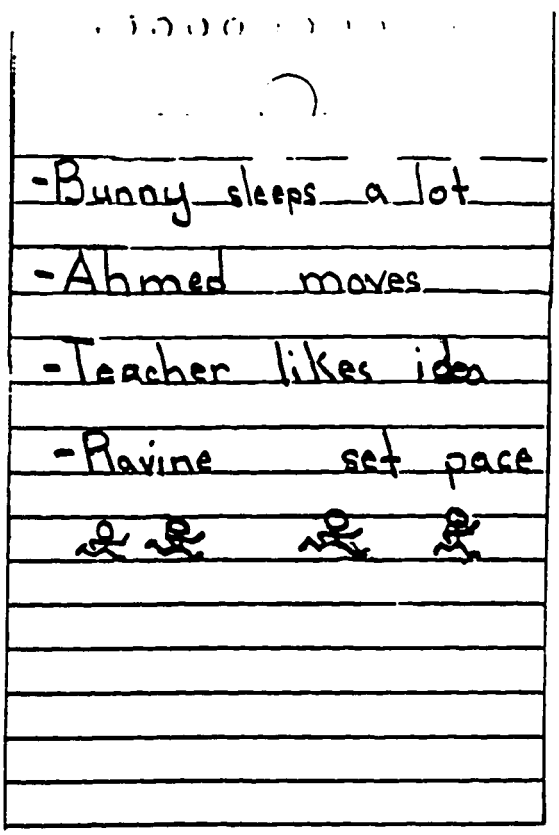
> I write about people, things I see, everything I think about - the things that happen to me. (pp. 13, 39)

A pause in our reading provided Alexander with an opportunity to share the connections he was making with the story. "I have a notebook like Arthur's," he

exclaimed, proudly displaying the items he now held in his hands. Some of the other children acknowledged that they knew of Alexander's newest project. "Yes, he does! He writes down notes just like Arthur."

Alexander explained that he liked Arthur's practice of carrying a journal in which he jotted down happenings as they occurred. "Because I had a little notebook at home, I decided to do it too." I asked Alexander if he would be willing to share something from his book with us. Nodding his head, he flipped back the cover and read from the top page:

Figure 3: Alexander's Notebook



Alexander, using Arthur's sometimes point-form, phrase format as a model, had recorded lived events from the previous day. Alexander's notes had begun at home with observations of his rabbit. He had included the move of a student from our teaching-learning group to another as, in mid-September, our school was still in the process of adjusting class sizes in response to an increased student population. At the end of the regular school day, Alexander's writing had journeyed with him to the track club where he recorded instructions received from his coaches. A quick sketch of some of his running mates concluded his day's entries.

During our reading of the story, I had shown the children the print layout on some of the pages of the novel and how the bold style font distinguished Arthur's journal writing from the main story text: Alexander's writing was received by smiles of recognition and with amazement at how he had been able to meaningfully connect our literary experience to his own life experiences.

> Imaginative work is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground...[it] is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners.
>
> (Woolf, 1929, p. 53)

I think about why I have chosen to focus upon these particular stories over many others that could have been shared within this space. What do these stories say about artistry?

Through storying and restorying my experiences, I have come to see that artistry encompasses the whole way in which I live my teaching. I have come to recognize the possibilities of artistry that are held within each moment. Artistry is being expressed in August as I make spaces for children and imagine possibilities; artistry is being expressed through the ways in which classroom displays are arranged and in the imagining and connections these displays spark for children; artistry is expressed within relationships; artistry is expressed in the choreography of celebrations and special events that are shared.

As I reflect upon the preceding stories, I am called to consider important aspects of the artistic process that helped to sustain the intensity and commitment with which the children engaged in learning. I see space, time and community as being interwoven elements from which artistry emerged in my teaching and from which artistry emerged in the children's thinking and inquiry.

Classroom space was designed in a way that I hoped would encourage individuals to create, to imagine and to discover. As I created space, I was mindful that I wanted children to work together in shared activities, and in other space which would invite children to explore personal interests and individual pursuits. Woolf (1929) reminds me of the significance of having a space for artistry, of the importance of being able to create within "a room of one's own". The arrangement of physical space is also significant in the ways that it might encourage relations between individuals and might open doorways into coming to know the unique stories of others.

My lived stories of the classroom draw attention to the relation between artistry and 'time': time for engaging in artistic endeavors, time in the sense of

freedom from other responsibilities, time for coming to know what we value, and time for trust to develop within relationships. Samantha's engagement in her writing project speaks of time needed for the living out of artistic expression. The celebration of our memory boxes speaks of time needed for the sharing and appreciation of other artists' work. The evening I spent with parents speaks of time needed for dialogue, for sharing ideas, and for nurturing and valuing each individual for what they are able to contribute to the community. And Alexander's story, of making connections between his lived experiences and literary worlds, draws attention to the time needed in order for children to learn in an artistic way.

Through her journals, Carr (1966) stories many of her artistic experiences around the inspiration she received from other artists' work and around the ways in which she came to be influenced by her contemporary artistic community. As I reflect upon my stories of teaching, I recognize community as a critical element in enabling the children and I to teach and learn within the world of the artist's imagination. It was through relationships that children such as Samantha, Cam, Aaron and Alexander began to think of themselves as creators, as authors and as illustrators. Through talking, listening and reflecting within an atmosphere of trust, care, acceptance and attentiveness to one another (Noddings, 1984, 1992) they derived a sense of belonging and felt able to share the stories that were their own. Dissenyake (cited in Eisner, 1995) observed how sharing artistic work and living within community inform one another:

> Community is furthered when a group has the opportunity to celebrate and to share. The arts help build community by providing the objects and ceremonies that contribute to the glue culture needs to hold together. (p. 8)

Artistic communities are not without dissension and tension. It is often the tensions that propel them forward. Our classroom as an artistic community, within a school, often found us negotiating the tensions between the story of school and the story of artistry that we were trying to compose.

Tensions and Dilemmas: Making Space for Artistry

By constructing narratives of experience, I am able to explore the role that artistry plays in my teaching. Through this storied account, I am aware that it is important also to pay close attention to the stories that speak of the tensions, the dilemmas and the struggles involved in trying to engage in artistry.

The onset of this study happened to coincide with my request for a new teaching assignment working with year four students. While this placement enabled me to continue working with twelve students for a second year, I also found myself placed within the position of 'crossing over' into 'division II'. In the midst of my enthusiasm, I did not anticipate that the move would cause me to begin to question many of the things I knew about children and how they learn, nor did I foresee some of the new challenges to achieving and maintaining artistry that it would present.

Struggles with Space

In September 1995, I welcomed twenty-nine year four children into our classroom community. Immediately, I began to see how the number of children

within this teaching-learning group, many more than I had been accustomed to in division I, presented new issues having to do with the design of classroom space. The children and I spent much of September searching for solutions. In conversation, we considered possibilities that might alleviate our struggle of trying to live together within an environment that afforded little room for movement.

As we struggled with space, I looked to places outside the walls of our classroom as offering possibilities. Messages I received, from the visual images in many of the other classrooms and from the voices to which I listened, advised me that I would "need to have rows".

As we struggled with space, I thought about my early childhood background and how designing places for learning centres had come to be, for me, one way through which children could feel able to pursue learning interests that were powerful and important to them. I wondered what we could do to accommodate these learning areas, areas that I saw as being essential to our daily classroom living. In the following piece, I reflected on this story of space:

> I still am unable to figure out a way to make our classroom space work for us. The students have offered many ideas. We have found room for twenty-nine student desks yet the arrangement is too confined, and we are talking about possible solutions. I think I'll ask [our custodian] to help me move my desk into the space suggested by Jesse. I wonder if I really need a desk at all. It seems to take up much needed room. I have come to the grim realization that some of the areas we hope to use for centres will need to be dismantled. This is so distressing

to me because some of the most exciting learning occurs in these peripheral spaces. Our principal continues to suggest that by removing the piano we will solve our problem. He just doesn't understand. His suggestion will not even be considered by myself *or* the children.

(Reflections - September, 1995)

As we neared the end of the first month of school, it became clear that the children and I were struggling with numbers in other ways as well:

We have attempted more than once in the past few days to engage in dialogue as a group of thirty. So many individuals were eager to contribute, too many at once. When we continued our conversation again later in the day the enthusiasm had waned. We had lost the momentum, the spark. What I am amazed by now is the fact that, for whatever reason (as a possible way of working with a larger group?, weariness?, was I heeding voices from outside?), I had drawn the children in. I had begun to act but not in ways in which I believe and not based upon what I know about children. Had the outside voices begun to impact upon my teaching?

(Reflections - September, 1995)

A few days later, through watching the children, I came to an important realization:

> It is the children who have helped me to see that having a large class is not a reason for questioning what I believe about children and how children learn. On Wednesday afternoon, as I stepped back to watch, I saw something very remarkable. Shannon and Samantha were acting out a play in the cozy corner. Nicholas, Courtney, John, Amy, and Lauren were painting at a round table. Mandy and Caroline were writing letters and messages at the friendship centre. A group of children had walked down to the library to read and exchange books. There it was, right in front of me. The children were showing me what it was that they needed.
>
> (Reflections - September, 1995)

It was from the insight I had gained from the children that I was reminded of Bateson's (1989) reference to life as an improvisational art form:

> [I]mprovisation involve[s] recombining partly familiar materials in new ways, often in ways especially sensitive to context, interaction, and response. (p. 2)

As I reflected upon the concept of improvisation, I thought about the embodied knowledge I hold through my knowing of improvisatory arts such as music and dance. Subsequently, I began "to look at [our space] problems in terms of the creative opportunities they present[ed]" (p. 4). Together, the children and I discovered new space possibilities, within and outside of the walls of our classroom, that enabled us, still, to give expression to artistic ways of teaching and learning.

This story speaks to the tensions that exist between the story of school, which is not lived out in terms of artistry, and my story of trying to live artistry in teaching and learning. I think of how artistry is a struggle because it involves reinventing self; it involves rejecting the standards of others and creating one's own.

Evaluation Dilemmas

At the beginning of the school year, the children and I were confronted with having to set time aside in order to engage in testing. The administration of basic achievement tests and spelling tests were a school-wide requirement and needed to be completed prior to the end of the month of September. On one of these 'test giving' days, I wondered about my place as 'teacher':

> The children were restless today, and I found my role in the classroom to be unfulfilling. I spent two long sessions administering two lengthy spelling tests. Shades of May and June. Why have staff only spoken of passing on last year's test results? What about portfolios?
>
> (Reflections - September, 1995)

This piece speaks of tensions in assessment. We live in a climate whereby what we are evaluating is to be measured necessarily by a specific grade score. The tensions that exist are pervasive and seem to be increasing as the educational system moves toward accountability as measured by test results, rather than accountability

that would respect artistry in learning. I acknowledge these prescriptions as being the reality of teachers, and this topic offers a possibility for future study.

How does one evaluate artistry? How does one 'capture' learning that is artistic? Greene (1995) writes:

> Only when teachers can engage with learners as distinctive, questioning persons - persons in the process of defining themselves - can teachers develop what are called authentic assessment measures, the kinds of measures that lead to the construction of new curricula. (p. 13)

Greene calls me to consider this in my own teaching. I wonder how I can think about authentic assessment and artistry. When we create spaces within our learning communities for dialogue and possibility, for reflection, and for listening to the meanings that children construct of their experiences, we are opening windows to multiple ways of coming to know the unique stories of each child, as she or he lives a personal journey of becoming. Yet, where does that leave me with my dilemma of evaluation? When we create these spaces, the dilemma does not disappear.

Chapter V

LISTENING TO CHILDREN'S VOICES: CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES OF ARTISTRY

Life is art...
(Cam, age 9)

In the previous chapter, I have reconstructed a narrative account of my practice, in order to create a sense of my artistic experiences as teacher, learner and researcher.

In this chapter, the research story captures the children's experiences: it represents the voices of children and their meanings of artistry in teaching and learning as it was lived out within our classroom context. In an effort to understand my practice, it was important to come to know the children's views of reality and to understand the textures and layers of meaning they ascribed to their classroom living. I wanted to understand the extent to which students recognized artistry in teaching and how they made sense of this artistry. Within an authentic conversational space, I concerned myself with attending to children's voices, in order to hear their expressions of the knowings they were constructing and to understand the ways in which they made sense of their world through experiential stories, drawings, and, through what had become for them, memorable images.

A space of dialogue and possibility was created within which the children were invited to reflect upon experience, to discuss art and artistry, and to share the meanings they were constructing. My one-to-one conversations with individuals and

our subsequent small group conversations attempted to honor multiple accounts and interpretations, and enabled me to grow in my understanding of how artistry was experienced within our particular context. While each conversation followed the unique path of the storyteller, the focus was determined by guiding questions. In my desire to discover whether or not students recognized artistry in teaching and learning, initial dialogue centred around their knowings and meanings of *'artistry'*. However, because I sought understanding of my own teaching through the senses of the children, I needed to provide them with ways of thinking about the artistic qualities of their experiences on *their* terms. Drawing from Dissenyake's conception of art as "making special" (cited in Eisner, 1995, p. 8) and speaking of art as special moments of artistry, as special lessons or projects, as creative moments, or as celebrating imagination, I hoped to enable the children to consider the presence of artistic features in teaching and learning by using their *own* language.

Subsequent to our conversations, the children also represented special moments of artistry through the creation of pencil drawings.

This narrative journey added another dimension to our classroom living and, therefore, it was important that our shared inquiry be embedded within an ethic of caring and that a language of relation guide my thinking. Within my ongoing relationships with the children, mutual trust existed that facilitated the conversational process. My relationships with the children were also important to the ways in which I understood their stories. As a teacher-researcher living in a community co-created with children and as a collaborator in learning with my students, I embodied insight into our shared experiences that helped me to make sense of the children's interwoven stories - stories that were pieces of a larger tapestry.

In shaping the research story, I drew from field texts that had been created from conversation transcripts, stories, drawings and my field notes. As I constructed and reconstructed the children's stories of experience, I searched for recurring narrative themes. What was revealed by attending to the voices and work of the children, as they attempted to tell of their experiences, were story fragments that beheld their understandings of what they thought artistry was and of how they knew artistry. Through the telling of these story fragments, the students were sharing their ways of knowing artistic qualities and their reflections on what was meaningful and of significance to them within our classroom context. Thus, rather than highlighting emerging themes, I have made sense of the data by bringing into focus / illuminating the children's multiple *ways of knowing* artistry in teaching and learning.

In order to capture a sense of how the children know artistry, I have composed a piece, a coming together of voices and stories, within which we hear the children's recollections of experience. Here, I embrace the metaphor of music: Gould's (1983) contrapuntal vision provides me with evocative language and a precise way of thinking about the essence of this piece of the research text:

> For the essence of counterpoint is simultaneity of voices, preternatural control of resources, apparently endless inventiveness. In counterpoint a melody is always in the process of being repeated by one or another voice: the result is horizontal, rather than vertical, music. Any series of notes is thus capable of an infinite set of transformations, as the series (or melody or subject) is taken up first by one voice then by another, the voices always continuing to sound against, as well as with, all the others. Instead of the melody at the top being supported by a thicker harmonic mass beneath (as in vertical nineteenth-century music), Bach's contrapuntal music is regularly composed of several equal lines, sinuously interwoven... (p. 47)

In the following piece, the sounds of the children create a "simultaneity of voices" from which emerges a "melody" that is echoed from one child's voice to another. The "sinuously interwoven" lines of the melody, that represent the children's ways of knowing artistry, are "capable of an infinite set of transformations" as conversation is shared among the children and as "the voices...continu[e] to sound against, as well as with, all the others".

As I shared in first conversations with the children, I asked them to consider what artistry meant to them. I was fascinated by the meanings the children held; some were to be expected, and others were surprising, insightful and profound. The knowings which emerged from these conversations deepened my understanding of the unique meaning-making of each child. In the following excerpts from these conversations, some of the children voice their understandings of artistry:

> Artistry is how you feel. When you draw a picture, it's like expressing your feelings in a picture. Writing in our journals...is just like artistry. The journals are nice journals. We could express our feelings in them. (John)

> Memories can also be artistry because they hold the thoughts of the fun and laughter you had with that person. The cranes that Aaron made are also like artistry, and they're presentable to share to other people. (Haley)

> Artistry is basically something that you *do*. (Megan)

> You create artistry in your mind... People are artistry. (Matthew)

> The pieces are sort of like a picture from somebody's heart. (With reference to a shared art project to which each child created a piece of the whole) (Matthew)

Artistry is something that people poured their heart and soul into making. Artistry could be thinking of an idea because you have to make a decision of what to do. (Caroline)

Artistry is sharing. Artistry can be music or dance or things like that. We're sharing *that* all the time. (Jenna)

Artistry is something special that people can do. It takes a long time to do, it takes a long time to learn, and it takes time to figure out what you're doing. Artistry *is* the way you work and how you do what you do when you do it.

Artistry isn't just pictures...It can also be writing because writing can be art in a way of feelings. And feelings can be art because they're usually different, and they mean different things to different people.

Artistry is sometimes just life. It can be many things. It doesn't have to be that you have a pencil, a paper or a paintbrush and that you're drawing something. It's what you do in life. Life is art because usually it's beautiful. (Cam)

People are artistry in their feelings and the way they think about things and in the way they are a friend to other people.

Music is artistry because someone has worked on it to make sure each note goes together and each note sounds good. Someone has put pride into that.

Artistry can be your imagination...

Nature is artistry... Anything that's beautiful is obviously artistry. (Lauren)

As I listened with care to the children's voices, I was struck by the diverse meanings that emerged from their responses and what I saw as the range of ways in which they live and understand artistry. Traditional views held by children like John, Lauren, and Haley, with their references to drawing, writing, music and Aaron's paper cranes, link to what we commonly think of as 'fine arts'. Cam draws attention to the importance of hard work, time, care, and technical skill in creating something artistic. Aesthetics and emotionality are a focus for John and Cam as they talk of artistry as "expressing your feelings", and Caroline also makes a connection between artistry and deep feelings when she says, "Artistry is something that people poured their heart and soul into making". Knowledge of artistic processes involving "imagination" and "creation" is shared by Lauren and Matthew. I was amazed by Haley's and Jenna's thoughts on "sharing" with "other people", in that it speaks of the interaction that exists between the artist and one's audience. From the girls' understandings of this reciprocity and through listening to Megan's voice - "Artistry is basically something that you do" - I am reminded of Dewey's (1934) view of art as experience and of the need to live a balance between doing and receiving. Matthew and Cam also highlight the relationship between people's lives and artistry in ways reminiscent of Dewey.

In listening to the children's voices in conversation and later from reading and analyzing transcripts of conversations, four ways through which the children know artistry emerged: through events and daily life in the classroom; through relationships and living with others in community; through sharing as both creator and audience; and through the process of becoming.

Knowing Artistry Through Physical Space, Artifacts and Events

As the children entered into dialogue with myself and one another, as they reflected upon their learning experiences, and as they explored ways of making sense of their shared stories, I began to see how, for the children, the classroom environment and the artifacts within our shared space were symbolic of artistry in teaching and learning. Physical space and classroom artifacts held meaning in that they evoked memories around which the children were able to construct and reconstruct stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

Cam spoke of knowing artistry through living within the physical space of our learning environment. He shared his understanding of the artistic processes of imagining and creating:

> The classroom is a creation in itself, really. [The architect] designed it, so it was a piece of *his* imagination - his imagination, teachers' imagination, parents' imagination and the [school board]. They all wanted it to be different because not everybody's the same. It's a piece of imagination and it's artistry together because after the imagining was done, they made it. [The architect] designed the imaginary into artistry to make it real. The artistry started as imagination and it grew to be artistry. (Cam - Group conversation, June 20, 1996)

During the time I engaged in conversation with John, he spun his body around on his chair, his eyes all the while searching the room. As he noticed the visual, he shared his sense of how the arrangement of furniture and the inclusion of specific things within our classroom was of artistic significance:

> There is the piano, the writing board, all the books, and another thing is the puzzles. A lot of other classes don't have puzzles. The desks are all in little groups. It's arranged so that you could talk to everybody and so

> that you're close to some people...Instead of just being in the corner or in the middle of the room *alone*, you have somebody to talk to. (John - Conversation, May 30, 1996)

In this excerpt and in the one that follows, John also considered how the design of space enables community building and creates possibilities for conversation and connection making between individuals:

> The cozy corner is where you can all go to get together. And you can have fun in there. It's like a big circle and you're all joined together. (John - Conversation, May 30, 1996)

Caroline and Haley reflected upon the significance of some of our classroom artifacts. Of special meaning to Haley were things she saw as being *unique* to our teaching-learning group:

> We have lots of things to do with artistry in our class. We have stories, we have art, and we have pictures. At the friendship centre, we have art: we draw and write messages and other things. And *that's* artistry. (Caroline - Conversation, May 28, 1996)

> Not many classrooms have a friendship centre or a display of books. Usually in this grade level you just have chapter books instead of storybooks. Not many classrooms have a centre for illustrating. (Haley - Conversation, June 18, 1996)

Samantha talked about how, through literature, she had discovered possibilities for her own writing:

> I like working on my writing workshop pieces. I'm making a story that has these little envelopes and I put letters in them. It's just like a *Jolly Postman* book except for it's different. It's not the same. I looked around the classroom, and I used people's names, and I just got some

> ideas from the classroom. I looked up at the books [on one of the display shelves] and I saw *The Jolly Postman* book. So I just decided to write a story like that, but different. (Samantha - Conversation, June 18, 1996)

Through our conversation, Samantha enabled me to understand how she recognized and valued the artistry within classroom displays that enabled the artistry in her learning.

It was through her participation in classroom events that Lauren had come to know artistry. In conversation, she considered her experience of having lived the artistic process - of planning and creating an artistic work and of her engagement in the reciprocal acts of doing and receiving:

> Artistry happens in our classroom not just when we're doing art. It's when we're doing writing and book talks and artistry when we're singing. That's *really* artistry because when you're singing, you're getting your voice ready. You're singing and getting your voice pumped and it's becoming beautiful so people can hear it. Other people can hear how nice your voice is and how much you like to sing. (Lauren - Conversation, May 23, 1996)

As I talked with the children, it became clear that they knew artistry through everyday life in the classroom. Artistry was infused throughout all events and throughout the shared physical space of our learning community. As well, the children saw classroom artifacts, such as literature, writing pieces, art work and the piano, as being symbolic of artistry in teaching and learning.

Knowing Artistry Through Relationships and Living in Community

It was through their storying around classroom artifacts that I came to understand the ways within which the children viewed our ongoing relationships as being significant in that they enabled artistry in teaching and learning to be lived out within our classroom space. Through living in community, they had come to know about individuals and had come to value diversity, they had made connections with friends, and they had come to believe in working together in a collaborative spirit, all of which contributed to their ways of knowing artistry. I particularly was struck by the great significance they attributed to our 'story quilt', a large felt creation designed in the style of a patchwork quilt, and the meanings they saw as being embodied within it.

Our 'story quilt', named by the children because of the stories it would hold and tell, was worked on over a period of time. The idea for its creation was sparked by literature we had enjoyed in which plot lines centred around the making and significance of patchwork quilts. The children were fascinated by the words in one of the books, "A quilt won't forget. It can tell your life story" (Flournoy, 1985). From our literary experiences, the children initiated talk about how we could make a quilt that would be representative of the life stories of each individual in our teaching-learning community. We explored possibilities and decided that our quilt would be a modified version of the ones we had read about. It would be a felt creation, thus enabling each individual to design and cut out a multi-colored felt illustration that was representative of special memories, people, and events from each person's life around which stories could be constructed. Each individual glued

the pieces of his or her felt picture to a square-shaped backing of the same fabric before all thirty 'stories' were brought together to form a whole. Two of the children represented our story quilt through pencil drawings (Figure 4, Figure 5).

Figure 4: Cam's Representation of Artistry

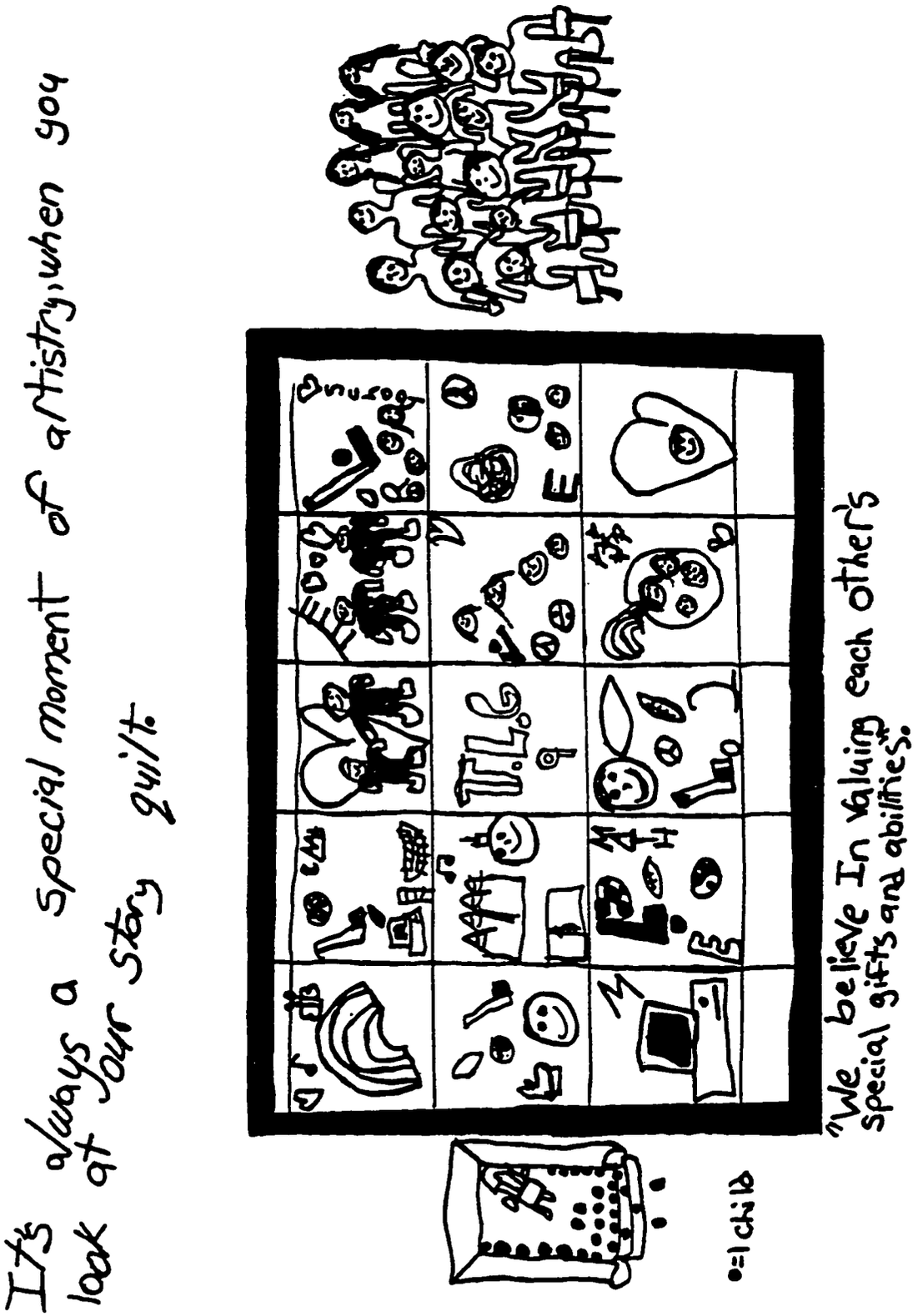
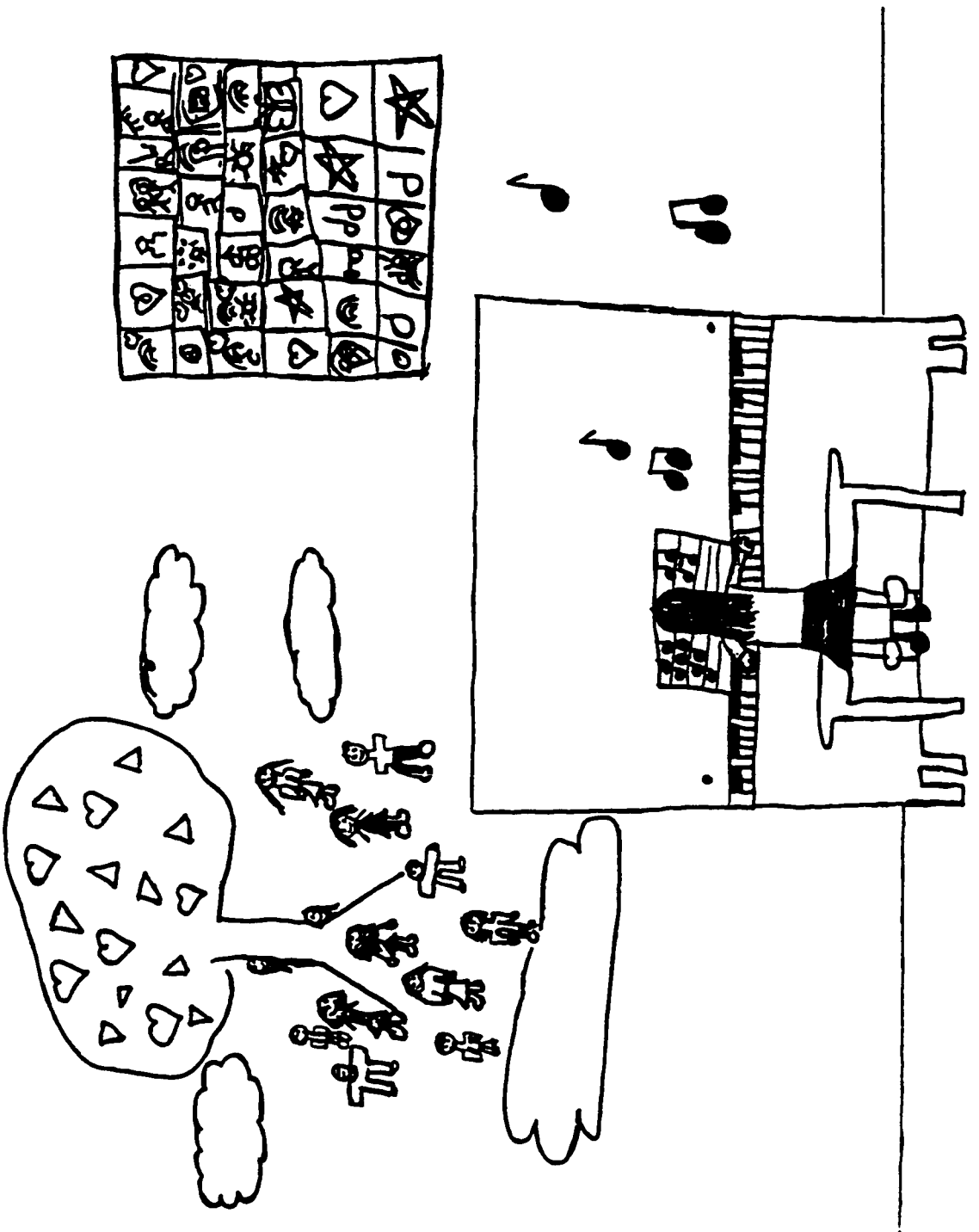


Figure 5: Lauren's Representation of Artistry



As we engaged in research conversations about artistry, the completed story quilt, in all its brilliance, decorated one wall of the classroom. Jenna, thoughtful in her responses, beautifully shared a sense of the significance she placed upon the story quilt. For her, it told of individual experiences yet, at the same time, celebrated the story of our relationships with one another as we lived together within community:

> The quilt is special because it tells stories. We thought about things that were important to us, and we cut it out of felt and used it to make a quilt. It tells stories about our families. It tells stories about what we like to do. It's special because everybody did it, and there's something special about everybody. (Jenna - Conversation, May 30, 1996)

To other children, the beauty of this shared creation was as a result of their having worked together:

> Artistry could be our story quilt because it has pieces of artistry that kids in the class have made *together*. And it's a lovely piece of art that hangs in our classroom on the east side. (Cam - Group conversation, June 20, 1996)

The quilt represented a sense of belonging in that, as Cam pointed out, "The story quilt was a special project because everybody has a piece on the quilt. Nobody's piece is missing" (Conversation, May 23, 1996). Haley also spoke of the importance of feeling as though one belongs to a community and, as well, draws my attention to relationships and the value she placed upon coming to know the special gifts and talents of her peers:

> The quilt is special because each and every person made a square. If one person wasn't here to make one, then it wouldn't be full. Each square recognizes one of the students in the classroom and what is special and unique about them. (Haley - Conversation, June 18, 1996)

In listening to Amy's words, I recognize how our classroom provided her with a sense of place. Friendship was of importance to her: it was through her relationships with others that she acquired a sense of well-being and was provided with opportunities to learn from, and with, others:

> Our classroom is special because all of us are friends. We all know each other. Our quilt makes our classroom bright. It just makes me happy when I walk in sometimes. It's just a place where all our friends are. We can work together, and we can learn more. All our friends are here. (Amy - Conversation, June 5, 1996)

Lauren's and Cam's dialogue, from part of a group conversation, also reveals a sense of the significance they placed upon classroom relationships and the ways in which they valued diversity:

> We're all friends in our classroom. We work together and that's really special. People are artistry in their feelings and the way they think about things and in the way they are a friend to other people. (Lauren - Group Conversation, June 20, 1996)

> ...In their differences. That's what makes them pieces of art. Just special. (Cam - Group Conversation, June 20, 1996)

The following excerpts help me to understand Kristen's and Haley's ways of knowing artistry through living in community. Not only through their relationships with others were they able to seek support and find encouragement but, as

individuals, they also saw a responsibility to contribute something back for the good of the group:

> Creative moments in our classroom are like when we do writing. We ask each other for ideas, and it sort of makes a whole new story. (Kristen - Conversation, June 5, 1996)

> When we do art projects, it's not something that's very little. It's something special that we all do together. (Haley - Conversation, June 18, 1996)

Through our conversations, the children shared understandings of how, as we lived our stories within an ongoing experiential text, our relationships with one another were significant in that they enabled artistry in teaching and learning to be lived out within our shared context. The stories the children constructed around classroom artifacts, especially our story quilt, enabled them to voice their ways of knowing artistry through living in community.

Knowing Artistry Through Sharing - As Creator and Audience

I begin this piece of the research story with Nicole's words:

> We celebrate our book talks, and the cranes that Aaron gave us are special. He made them, and he taught people in our class how to make them. And he left them for us to remember him by. (Nicole - Conversation, June 18, 1996)

This story fragment captures Nicole's way of knowing artistry as both personal creations yet creations which, in celebration, communicate with others: through contributing something back to one's community, the children share possibilities and provide inspiration for those who follow. She saw how her artistic story continues to be interwoven with the artistic story of Aaron, who had left our learning community, through the artistry that lives in her memories.

My conversation with Nicole provides a focus for this section of the research text in which I explore the children's meaning-making as they made connections between artistry and sharing, sharing both as creator or presenter and as audience. Lauren reflected upon this connection in the following:

> Music is artistry because someone has worked on it to make sure each note goes together and each note sounds good. Someone has put pride into that. And they know that people will like the music and compliment it. Giving that person a compliment would be kind and then you'd be giving artistry to *them*. And they'd be giving artistry back because you get to listen to the music. (Lauren - Group conversation, June 20, 1996)

Gould (1983) speaks of the significance of the encounter between music and listener, of "a listener more participant in the musical experience" (p. 223). I believe that this viewpoint is not unique to the expression of music, and that Gould's reference to the relationship between creator and audience offers insight into other artistic manifestations. I see this notion of reciprocity echoed in Jenna's words:

> Artistry happens in our classroom. We do all kinds of things in our classroom: we write and we read and we share things...Artistry can be music or dance or things like that. We're sharing *that* all the time. It's special because it encourages people to share *their* dances that they made

> up or whatever they did. And so they won't feel so afraid to share their work. (Jenna - Conversation, May 30, 1996)

Feelings of pride are connected to the way Cam lived artistry within our classroom. He understood sharing with others as being a time of reciprocity in which his voice is heard, a time in which he receives recognition for his artistic contributions, and a time in which, through his interactions with others, new learning occurs:

> It makes you feel important sometimes. Like people *want* to listen, *want* to look, *want* to learn about it, *want* to know more and ask more questions to learn more. (Cam - Conversation, June 20, 1996)

The meanings Cam shared remind me of Dewey's (1934) understanding of the sustaining connection between art as a creative act and the aesthetics of perception and appreciation. (pp. 46-47)

Mark recognized the aesthetic qualities that are embodied within our story quilt. In the following excerpts, he focused upon perception or "seeing". For Mark, the planning, creation, and celebration of our story quilt enabled him to "see" others. He came to know and appreciate the stories of other individuals, their talents, and the things that they value. Through this conversation, Mark revealed his knowing of how 'looking' enables one to discover that which is special:

> The quilt was a special project. It's special seeing all the different qualities of the kids in our class...seeing what the kids can do with felt because sometimes that can be hard. And seeing what other people's talents are and things that are special to them. (Mark - Conversation, June 6, 1996)

Lauren draws my attention to the value she placed upon conversation as a way of celebrating learning and of sharing ideas. Like Jenna and Cam, she spoke of knowing artistry through her participation as both creator and audience:

> Celebrating imagination is when we share our work. That's celebrating! When someone shares, it has a big conversation and everybody joins in. Everyone would join. So being a class is special to me. (Lauren - Conversation, May 23, 1996)

Haley and Jenna shared their thoughts on the value they place on listening to stories that others tell and retell:

> We celebrate imagination in the cozy corner when you're reading a story. Sometimes people tell stories about their lives and what happened to them. The story just kind of reminds other people of the things that happened to *them*. (Haley - Conversation, June 18, 1996)

> Reading books is special and writing is special because you can remember them. You can tell *those* stories. Stories are special because you can tell them to anybody. (Jenna - Conversation, May 30, 1996)

As they reflected upon sharing stories as being "special" and a way of "celebrat[ing] imagination", I began to see how the girls valued stories as holding possibilities for understanding their own lived experiences, thus enabling them to construct new meanings of their experiences.

Emerging from the children's responses were understandings of the reciprocal relationship that exists between the artist and one's audience. As I listened to their voices, it became clear that the children knew artistry through sharing as that which

sustains a connection between the creative act and the aesthetics of appreciation and enjoyment.

Knowing Artistry Through the Process of Becoming

> People were making things. They were talking about things and doing a whole lot of things. It's so hard to remember. You have to have a time machine and actually talk about it while it's happening. Record it and then record it again because there's *so* many things that people did that represented artistry. (Cam - Group conversation, June 20, 1996)

As the children made sense of their experiences of artistry, I began to see how the story fragments they were sharing were recollections of overall experiences rather than specific moments in time. Cam, in his reference to the artistic process, caused me to think about other wondrous research possibilities would I have been able to record conversations with the children throughout the school year as they engaged in various projects at various stages of the artistic process.

By listening to the children's voices, I was learning that they embodied a sense of the artistic process as being a process of becoming. I was struck by Jeremy's sense of this process of becoming as he storied the creation of a class mural:

> We celebrated imagination when we were making the tree. Everybody had a different imagination of what it would look like. One person thought it would look like this and somebody else thought it would look like something else. And then now when you look at it, it's not what you thought it would be but it's *so* good! (Jeremy - Conversation, May 28, 1996)

In this excerpt, Jeremy shared his knowing of artistry as involving transformations as one engages in the work of imagining, creating, and sharing. Lauren also voiced her understanding of the imaginative process and of pieces coming together in reference to the same mural:

> Art can be imagination because your imagination thinks of things that will be artistry. It can think of different things like drawing a flower or a rainbow or a tree. Like our tree was imagination, and it's now artistry. It started with imagination, and now it's a beautiful tree with lots of kids. (Lauren - Group conversation, June 20, 1996)

John and Megan constructed meanings of the artistic process around the ways in which they had come to know our classroom environment:

> The classroom is artistry because you need to design it. It looks like it does because we kept taking care of it. (John - Group conversation, June 21, 1996)
> ...Because we're new kids, and we took care of it. We're new to the classroom and it will still be artistry. It will just be different artistry all the time because new kids will be in the classroom all the time. (Megan - Group conversation, June 21, 1996)

I was intrigued by Megan's and John's sense of how *care* was necessary in order to preserve the artistry that was lived within our classroom. Through her words, Megan beautifully described what she saw as the sustaining relationship that existed between the artistry within the classroom environment and the individuals who lived together within this context.

Further to the notion of the process of becoming, and emerging from the children's responses, were knowings of artistry as commitment to, and passion for,

one's work, and of artistry as engagement in composing, designing, and creating. Matthew acknowledged the artistic process as involving a time commitment:

> Pictures are artistry because people work hard on them for long, long times, and then they display them or put them in a book. (Matthew - Conversation, June 6, 1996)

Jeremy allows me to come to an understanding of how he sensed an artistic connection between commitment to one's work and pride in creation:

> When somebody makes something really cool like a really good writing piece, then that's a creative moment. When somebody draws a good picture, like if we had a project in art or something, and somebody made something really good, that's a creative moment. (Jeremy - Conversation, May 28, 1996)

In the following excerpt, Cam shared his knowing of the artistic process as involving commitment and desire:

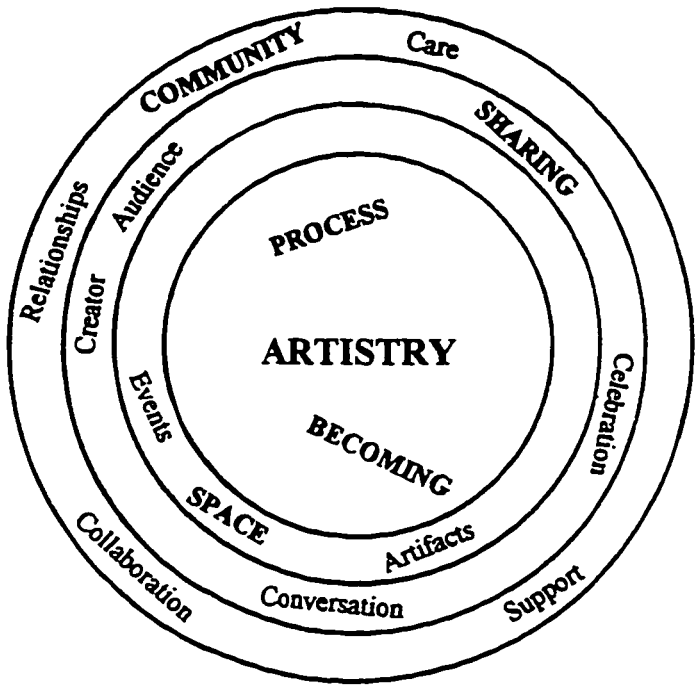
> If you're imagining things, it's basically a dream that you want to strive for...The story quilt was a special project...It took a long time for everybody to make their own important special piece about themselves that they liked. The book talk projects are *really* special to some people because of how long it takes to make these. I know right now that I'm making something *really* big. It's going to take until like June 2, my birthday, to finish it up or *to be finished.* It's a special project because you've got to put your heart into it and you've got to have the desire to do a good job. (Cam - Conversation, May 23, 1996)

The children embodied a sense of the artistic process as being a process of becoming. Their responses made clear the ways in which they knew and lived

artistry - as engagement in imagining, composing, creating and sharing, and as involving commitment to, care and desire for, and pride in one's work.

Previously (Figure 1), I used a visual depiction to portray my sense making of the artistic process as understood through my involvement in musical performance. Through my conversations with the children, I have come to represent this process in a different way (Figure 6).

Figure 6: The Artistic Process



This drawing represents the children's ways of knowing artistry. It reflects the understandings they shared as to how artistry in teaching and learning, and the opportunity to live the artistic process, is enhanced and supported through the design of the classroom, through sharing both as creator and audience, and is encompassed or enabled by relationships and living in community.

Chapter VI

REFLECTIONS : LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD TO PATHWAYS AND POSSIBILITIES

> We shape the stories we tell and hear, constructing possible futures and even possible selves.
>
> (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 80)

In this final chapter, I reflect upon my research journey in order to consider what I have learned and experienced. It was through story that I discovered a beginning for this narrative inquiry, it was through story that I was able to construct and reconstruct new meanings of my teaching, and it now is through story that I look ahead to new beginnings and next questions and wonders.

Response to Writing

There have been many moments when I have paused to consider my good fortune in being able to share in the living of this research story with others. I have not been alone on this journey, and often it was from the interest and excitement that the children and their parents showed in this study that I acquired a sustaining energy.

As I finished writing the research story, I began, once again, to contact the children and their parents. The research text was made available to them for final

approval or revision. Since the children's conversations, stories and projects had been created during the previous school year, I needed to locate some of the children in different teaching-learning groups within our school, whereas to reach others, I traveled to their new homes in neighboring city communities.

One afternoon, as a spring storm blanketed our school, I met with the children from other classrooms. We clustered together in one of the cozy corner areas of the library as, directly above us, heavy rain and hail pounded incessantly against the expansive skylight, thus making it difficult for our voices to be heard. The children left with pieces of writing that they would read with their parents that evening.

When I called Samantha's home, her mother presented me with a lunch invitation, and later, after she and her daughter had read the research text, requested a copy of the piece for Samantha's memory box.

It was on a backyard deck that I received response to my writing from Aaron and his grandmother. Aaron, who had grown taller in the year since I had last seen him, leaned against the deck railing of his home and shared one of his bright smiles. "That's a very nice story," he said. His grandmother added, "I had tears in my eyes when I read this story. Thank you. This is very special. Both Aaron and I would like to keep copies".

From the mother who figures as an important character in one of my stories of the classroom - A Celebration of Each Individual - I received a handwritten response:

> The paragraph on page 40 is absolutely accurate. The only addition I'd make, and perhaps this is reflection more than accurate representation - I really don't know - but I felt like your classroom physically was "decorated" with a sense of belonging for each child, that he or she was an integral part of that classroom, that it was their room too, not "the teacher's" classroom (as it was when *I* went to school - the room "belonged" to the teacher, not the students). What an amazing effect changing the "ownership" of the room had on my understanding. My emotional response that night was overwhelming!
>
> (June 22, 1997)

It is through these relationships and from these responses that I am reminded of the rewarding nature of this research that was lived as a shared story between the children and myself. Our meaning making was shaped by our relationships as we continued to live our stories within an ongoing experiential text. Our conversations occurred at a point later in the school year, in acknowledgment of a rhythm to classroom life that is not completely known in the beginning months of school. The children and myself needed time to not only develop relationships with one another, but we also needed to live the artistic process within our teaching/learning context before we were able to reflect upon it.

Throughout this study, I have learned much from the children. They have been my teachers. As we engaged in this narrative inquiry, it was through conversation and through shared experiences of teaching and learning that we opened "possibilities of seeing, hearing and understanding" (Greene, 1988, p. 21).

Living the Research Story: Living the Teaching Story

I recognize my teaching as being an ongoing inquiry into my life and the lives of the children. As this study progressed and I became immersed in this work, my research story became intimately connected to my classroom story. I thought of my research as teaching and my teaching as research - Dewey's notion of life as an ongoing inquiry.

Finding the Research Questions: Opening New Wonders

It was through Aaron's story that I came to frame questions for this inquiry about artistry in teaching and learning. I now see this story as being composed of narrative threads that came to be woven throughout the research text. This story is about narrative beginnings, stories of the classroom, curriculum making and children making sense of artistry. For me, it now presents a new wonder. How do we capture those 'fleeting moments' that set children on their way to engaging in significant artistic endeavors? Le Tord (1995) captures this fleeting sense through poetry:

A Blue Butterfly

He
painted,

dazzled

by
the
light

he
held

on
his
brush

just
for

an
instant

like

a
blue

butterfly.

Bijou Le Tord

In considering this ' fleeting sense', I am thoughtful about the questions it poses for me as a teacher researcher. As a narrative inquirer of my own practice, how can I, within classroom living, capture those moments that pass swiftly by?

My engagement in teacher research was not without struggle. As the threads of teaching and research became more and more interwoven, I found that this study became a search for time. I sought time for immersion in this work. I needed to find space for analyzing data and for writing. Some days I was tired and felt the stress and the strain of trying to discover and live a balance between teaching/research and campus life. Searching for time also meant making choices. During some of the months I devoted to the writing of this thesis, I lessened my teaching days from five to four. Having a three day time period enabled me to settle into my work, to become immersed in writing in order to try and reach below the surface to deeper understanding. I now recognize this search for time as being a reality of teacher research.

Being a narrative inquirer of my own practice, through the process of teacher research, has moved me to think about always being thoughtful and wide awake to what I am doing in the classroom, to making use of imagination and to cultivating "multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same" (Greene, 1995, p. 16). I work hard at being a teacher. Does my being awake to artistic possibilities make a difference to the children? Does it influence who Aaron, Samantha or Cam will become as people? Will the children remember these experiences in future years? I wonder how these stories of artistry might encourage teacher educators to consider new possibilities for preservice teachers. What new directions might teachers and teacher educators follow, if they were to embrace artistry and come to create spaces for dialogue and for new imaginings about artistic ways of knowing teaching and learning.

A New Space of Possibility

> What I saw first were all the places to love.
> (MacLachlan, 1994, n.p.)

This August, once again, I will be creating a new classroom space for the children and myself. I am moving 'through the double doors' to the classroom that adjoins the room in which the children and I engaged in this narrative inquiry. I view this move as being filled with wondrous possibilities. The unique physical shape of the room intrigues me as, this time, the cozy corner is raised a few steps from the main floor area so that it overlooks the classroom as well as the library.

> All the places to love are here...no matter where you live.
> (MacLachlan, 1994, n.p.)

I am excited about creating a place for the children and myself as artists. What will still be important? There will still be places for a story quilt and memory boxes; there will still be spaces within which we will come to hear, to know and to celebrate the unique stories of each individual; there will still be spaces in which the children and I will be able to explore untapped possibilities and seek new understandings. As Trinh writes:

> The story never stops beginning or ending.
> (1989, p. 2)

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