University of Alberta

Picture This: Evaluating a Nonprofit Arts-Based Children's Program Through Photography

by

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Dedication

To my husband Brian and my children Jenna and Adam for their love and selfless sacrifice.

To my parents John and Louise who have supported my educational pursuits since I was a child and for which I am eternally grateful.

To my in-laws Orest and Betty for their unwavering support and devotion to their grandchildren.

To the hard-working staff and volunteers at ArtStart who give children from low-income families the opportunity to dance, to create, and to perform.

And to the parents and children of ArtStart whose stories and experiences have touched me deeply…may the arts continue to be a part of your lifelong journey.

Abstract

This research challenges the notion of evaluation as being necessarily reductive, judgmental and often leading to ill-fated results by using creative methods to evaluate a nonprofit arts-based children's program. Using photography as an ethnographic approach to form the basis of in-depth interviews and by collaboratively creating an artwork from participants' photos, the results of the research reveals that evaluation can be an enlightening and rewarding experience for stakeholders and evaluators alike. In addition, this research provided a nonprofit arts-based children's program with a useful, comprehensive evaluation and it encourages further exploration into creative evaluative techniques.

Preface

As a child I grew up during the mid-1970s on the north side of Edmonton and I feel fortunate now that I was able to attend a public school that offered an arts core program. Unlike my friends who attended other public schools in the neighbourhood, I had the opportunity to create unusual crafts, put on plays, listen to exotic music and even fire my own clay pottery in a gigantic kiln. Stigmatized, the north side of Edmonton has been and continues to be characterized as having rough, blue-collared neighborhoods speckled with low-income and semi-literate inhabitants. Despite its stigma, the north side does have many jewels–one such gem is Virginia Park Elementary School, which converted from a public standard curriculum to a public arts core program in September, 1977. I was lucky to have attended Virginia Park during its first few years of offering an arts core program. Unfortunately, while I was in the fifth grade, my family moved and I was forced to change schools. The wonderful art experiences ceased and I attended a public school that offered a standard curriculum where the arts took a backseat to the other subjects such as mathematics and science. It wasn't until high school where I was once again able to reconnect with the arts by taking art classes. However, the connection was severed yet again when I entered the workforce.

After working for several years I began undergraduate studies and since then my appreciation and interest in the arts has not wavered. At Concordia University College of Alberta, I was able to take art history classes, piano lessons, and attend plays put on by the drama students. Also, during that time, I had a supportive professor who allowed me to conduct a research project that sought to

explore a question that stemmed from my childhood. In 2000, I conducted a quantitative study, which compared two public elementary schools, one with a standard curriculum and one with an arts core program. My overarching question was "How does a public elementary school that offers a standard curriculum differ from a public elementary school that offers an arts core program (ACP)?" I conducted a quantitative analysis with 19 Grade 5/6 students from an ACP school and a standard curriculum school (SCS)[1].

The results of this study are as follows: the average age of participants was 10.684 years of age. In relation to gender, 44.7% were boys and 55.3% were females. The vast majority of children lived in houses, 86.8%. A bivariate analysis, cross-tabulation was employed to test the significance of all the data in a questionnaire. In addition, teachers of both schools were asked to provide attendance information. ACP students had a slightly higher attendance rate (97.44%) than the SCS students (96.08%). ACP students were found to have significantly higher grades than their SCS cohorts (rank one being the highest and 10 being the lowest). ACP boys ranked the highest with an average of 2.9 out of 10, compared to SCS boys ranked at 5.5 out of 10. ACP girls ranked 3.6 out of 10, compared to 6.9 out of 10 for SCS girls. Children from the ACP school came from a higher socioeconomic background. For instance, 94.7% of ACP children lived in a house compared to 78.9% of SCS children. Only 5.3% of ACP children

[1] The quantitative study conducted in 2000 included Virginia Park School and James Gibbons School. The schools were of similar size, design, and had children from similar socioeconomic status. The study set out to investigate five hypotheses: a) a school that offers an arts core program (ACP) has a higher student attendance rate than a standard curriculum program (SCS); b) children enrolled in a ACP have higher grades than students enrolled in a SCS; c) ACP children are more creative than their SCS cohorts; d) children in ACP come from a higher socioeconomic background; and, e) ACP students enjoy school more than SCS students and they are more easily integrated into higher grade levels than SCS students because they have a commonality (art).

lived either in an apartment or another type of dwelling compared to 21% of SCS children.

Looking back at this study set the tone for my graduate studies. I wanted to learn more about the influence of the arts but in a different way–a better way. And, given my background when as a child I experienced both a public arts core program and a public standard curriculum I can attest that there is a difference. To what degree of difference, I can't explain. I find myself asking, "Why do I hold dear my vivid memories from the four years spent at the public arts core school versus the two subsequent years spent in the public school that offered a standard curriculum program?" and "what type of memories would I have if I only had limited or no opportunity to experience the arts?"

Now, as a mother of two young children who are just entering elementary school, I've been mindful of their art experiences. I have encouraged painting in our home, paid for arts camps and attended plays and symphonies with both my six-year-old and three-year-old. I have also thought about how children from low-income families experience art. Knowing the expense of buying paints, symphony tickets and the like, I've thought about how difficult it must be for parents who live in poverty to provide these types of opportunities to their children. From this launching pad, I decided to pursue a Master of Arts in Sociology (MA), at the University of Alberta.

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I would also like to thank Dr. Diane Conrad for serving as the other member of my committee and allowing me to participate in her Arts-Based Research class in the fall of 2009. This class reaffirmed for me how the arts can impact our lives on a daily basis.

And, most notably, I would like to thank Dr. Rob Shields for opening the doors to my graduate work. His guidance and support as my supervisor was invaluable throughout this entire project.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION: Evaluating an Arts Program

While evaluation may appear to be a recent phenomenon it is "a new discipline but an ancient practice" (Scriven, 1991, p. 3). Program evaluation, for instance, has only been a "widely accepted field of research and investigation… since the late 1960s [while] the earliest craft workers…left a track record of gradually improving quality of materials and design, at single sites and across millennia–evaluation's signature in stone" (Scriven, 1991, vii). With the rise of program evaluation, a trend in professionalizing evaluation also took effect between 1983 and 2001. This period was known in the field of evaluation as the *age of expansion and integration* (Stufflebeam, Madeus & Kelleghan, 2000, p. 17). Stufflebeam et al. (2000) points out:

> As the economy grew…evaluation as a field expanded and became considerably more integrated. The expansion is seen especially in the development of professional evaluation societies in more than twenty countries and in the coming together, communication, and collaboration of evaluators from various disciplines. In education the reform movement has had a profound effect on program evaluation (p. 17).

For some, professionalization of evaluative work is problematic because it can be perceived as being a process that is "limited by conditioned reflexes, paradigmatic perceptions, unconscious rules of thumb, socialized definitions of the situation, and autonomic standard operating procedures" (Patton, 1981, p. 215). For others, evaluation involves judgment.

Evaluation, as it is commonly understood, is a process that renders a judgment. It is a process "of determining the merit, worth, or value of things–or to the result of that process" (Scriven, 1991, vii). Though we may not consciously

think about evaluation on a daily basis, we certainly conduct evaluations every day of our lives. For instance, a simple trip to the grocery store could involve making several evaluations–you may decide to purchase an expensive branded product versus a cheaper un-branded product because you believe it is worth the extra expense. Or, you may choose the lower-priced product because you want to save some money on that particular day. If you were a teacher, you may decide to take a student's word that she did not cheat on a test based on her merit. In its most benign form, evaluation is a daily decision-making process.

In its most damning form, evaluation can be reductive and judgmental leading to ill-fated results (Scriven 1991, Patton 1997, Gilbert 2009, Murray 2005, Colwell 2004, Thomas 2005, Scarduzio 2009). For instance, "valuing that which could be measured, rather than measuring what was valued…[or] confusing outcomes with outputs" (Gilbert, 2009, p. 1). There have also been instances when evaluators, conducting work on a limited time schedule, have provided their clients with "superficially simple solutions to the challenge of outcomes [which resulted] in shallow thinking" (Gilbert, 2009, p. 1). All of the aforementioned practices are culprits of reductive and judgmental evaluation.

Unfortunately, evaluation is often viewed as the latter and evaluation of an arts program and the arts in general can be especially problematic because of the subjective nature of the arts. As Colwell (2004) reports, "[in the United States], evaluation measures presently suggested to accompany the voluntary national standards in the arts, lack substance and may even be harmful to long-term learning" (p. 5). In addition to evaluation measures in the arts being subjective,

the value of the arts has and continues to be a contentious topic among educators, researchers, and the general public.

Legitimizing or providing utility to the arts and arts-based programming has been a saga in North America. There are scholars who support the intrinsic value of the arts and others who support the instrumentalist value of the arts. There are individuals who support having arts programs embedded into school curriculum and others who prefer to just focus on core programs (reading, writing, math, and science). According to Gullant (2007) "research findings show that the performing and visual arts challenge students to use reasoning skills–both concrete and abstract–to draw conclusions and formulate ideas…arts encourage creativity and imagination from concept to process completion" (p. 211). However, ironically, arts programs are often the first to be cut during times of educational budgetary constraints. Gullant (2007), quoting Davidson and Michener (2001), who conducted a public awareness campaign survey in the United States, revealed that "73% of respondents felt that arts were important to children's development and that arts should be available to all students, not just the economically privileged" (p.212). Yet, there is very little public outcry when art programs suddenly disappear. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is while the public has a general understanding of the benefits of participating in the arts, without proof they may not feel it is necessary to defend arts programs when they are cut. In essence language or interpretation creates a barrier. Matarasso (1998) offers his opinion as to why this might be, he writes:

> The role of the arts in addressing our tenacious economic and social problems is becoming to be more widely recognized. 'And not before

> time,' will be the response of many artists and others active in community-based arts development. But, if they know the value of participation in the arts from their daily experience, from the lives that have been changed and the growing communities, others do not. Politicians, policy-makers, professionals in other fields have still to be convinced that the arts are a serious engine of community development and regeneration. Part of the difficulty arises from the fact that we speak different languages; the artist will say, 'You've only to look at people's faces to see why [art] matters,' while civil servants [and laypersons] want to know the contribution of the work to employability, social inclusion or crime reduction.

At risk of going extinct, due to a lack of support and funding, art programs are looking to evaluation as a means of providing the "evidence" that their programs are valuable. Evaluation is important and when employed properly should be conducted in a systematic way (Colwell, 2004). Unfortunately, this approach can often be time-consuming. Given the aforementioned, why would, as in my study, a nonprofit arts-based children's program consent to an evaluation? The two main reasons I discovered was staff wanted to improve the program and wanted to have a document that would help to obtain funding.

Fogal (2005) states, "fundraising is essential to charitable organizations… boards and senior management give substantial attention to resource development and income generation" (p. 419). In Canada, for instance, many large ($50,000 or more) government grants require an in-depth application process. In these cases, an organization must include, in their application, a thorough outline of their intended evaluation including, but not limited to: the methodology they will employ, intended timeline, and dissemination plans. Even for smaller (under $50,000) awards and donations, funders may require an evaluation or be more apt

to contribute to an organization if an evaluation of the program has been done or will be conducted. In short, evaluation has value.

An evaluation, as a requirement for funding, has a monetary value–without the evaluation the organization would not qualify for funding. An evaluation also needs to be valuable to the program or organization it is evaluating. But what does a "valuable evaluation" look like? The answer to this question is…it depends on the end user(s). For this research, my end users were the staff at ArtStart.

ArtStart is a unique program because it is an organization within an organization. ArtStart is a program of E4C, a diverse, nonprofit organization located in Edmonton, Alberta, which is committed to assisting a variety of individuals at risk with the goal of changing their lives for the better and growing community.[2] While E4C has been operating in Edmonton since 1970, ArtStart only opened its doors in 2002. Specifically, ArtStart is an after-school, arts-based children's program that offers drama, private music lessons, dance, and visual art classes to children aged five to 16 whose families live in the inner-city and are considered low-income.[3] ArtStart classes run twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. It is the only program of its kind in Edmonton and it serves on average 60 children per semester–semesters run from September to December, January to March, and April to June. In the past, ArtStart has received donations and funding from various sources. These sources include but are not limited to:

[2] Paraphrased from an ArtStart brochure (2009) Retrieved from http://www.e4calberta.org/generalinfo.html.
[3] See Appendix A.

the general public (usually individuals who support the arts), The Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and Telus. While the program has been supported both by personal donations (usually supplies such as musical instruments and craft materials) and grants, these supportive infusions have no steady stream. For example, the Telus grant supported the program for two years. In other words, the state of funding for the program has and continues to be in a constant state of flux. Being fully aware of not having a steady flow of funds to support the program, the Director of Early Learning, the Program Manager, and the Program Assistant maintain a very tight budget. However, at the end of 2010 the program was in the red not only because of the general economic downturn but because many previous funding initiatives were either reduced or cut entirely. Suddenly, there was a new sense of urgency to have an evaluation conducted.

For reasons I will discuss later in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6, a Formative evaluation was the most "valuable evaluation" for this research. Moreover, this Formative evaluation was done in such a manner that was creative, democratic, equitable, and useful.

The goal of my Formative evaluation was to make it useful to ArtStart. My goal was achieved because my Formative evaluation a) pointed out the need for more tailored art classes to address the specific needs of students; b) confirmed the need to continue and improve the snack program; c) it was used in a government grant application; and d) it will be used for future funding requests because more and more funders are looking for the evidence that a particular program delivery mode has proven outcomes based on research. Furthermore, it

was democratic in the sense that it enabled the participation of all stakeholders involved and it was equitable by acknowledging that each participant had something valuable to contribute (Stringer, 1999). Most importantly, I used three creative approaches to obtain interest, solicit information, and to disseminate the knowledge gained from the evaluation. First, I was able to recruit staff and volunteer interest by hosting a creative activity at the onset of the Formative evaluation. Secondly, I chose photography as a creative approach to solicit information from participants. And third, participants and I created the *ArtStart Program Goal Tree*–we constructed a tree made of recycled materials that explored ArtStart's four program goals. The tree became a materialization of our journey together.

Figure 1. *The ArtStart Program Goal Tree composite created by the researcher and the participants. (researcher photo)*

Knowing the importance of art in this research and recognizing that a negative perception of evaluation exists, I set out to explore the following research question.

Research question

Given that evaluation is often seen as a process that is reductive, judgmental, and habitually leads to ill-fated results, how can a Formative evaluation challenge these preconceived notions and be a particularly nuanced approach to evaluating an arts program?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to not only delve into the aforementioned question, but also to: a) challenge the notion of evaluation as being necessarily reductive, judgmental, and often leading to ill-fated results (Scriven 1991, Patton 1997, Murray 2005, Thomas 2005, Scarduzio 2009); b) provide a nonprofit arts-based children's program with a useful and comprehensive evaluation; c) offer a perspective as to why evaluation of the arts matters; d) add a unique contribution to the vast body of evaluation literature; e) add a unique contribution to the limited body of creative evaluation literature; and, f) to encourage further exploration into creative evaluative techniques.

Thesis overview

In this first chapter I have introduced the problematic issues that surround evaluation of an arts program and the arts in general; provided a snapshot of how the Formative evaluation of ArtStart was conducted; stated the research question; and have given the purpose of this research. Chapter 2 explains, in detail, the pilot

project that was done for a Master of Arts (MA) class before the Formative evaluation. The purpose of the pilot project (or pre-evaluation as it is sometimes referred to in this paper) was not only to fulfill a requirement of a MA class but was also to determine the factors that make ArtStart effective. The pilot project allowed me to test my methodology (visual ethnography), my research design (in-depth interviews with a photography element, and a textual analysis of the volunteer recruitment pamphlet and the ArtStart Internet homepage), build relationships with ArtStart staff, and become better acquainted with the operations of the program. At the end of the pilot project, the information (themes pulled from the in-depth interviews and photographs) were used to create four ArtStart program goals. At the time of the pilot project ArtStart did not have well-defined program goals. Chapter 3 reviews literature on evaluation and the concept of the "trial" is discussed and how it pertains to judgment. Subsequently, I move through the debate between scholars who advocate for the intrinsic value of the arts versus scholars who advocate for the instrumentality of the arts. This chapter ends with a description of three common types of evaluation (goal-free, summative, and formative) and suggests that Formative evaluation is a particularly nuanced approach to evaluating an arts program. Chapter 4 presents my methodology and research design. I begin by offering a definition of ethnography and then define visual ethnography as it pertains to this research. Subsequently, I lay out my research design for the Formative evaluation, which was similar to my pilot project (in-depth interviewing with a photography element). A textual analysis was not done because the volunteer pamphlet and ArtStart Internet homepage

were constantly being updated. Throughout the Research Design section I have interwoven my reflexive journey (pictorial confessions), which highlights the problems I encountered while conducting this qualitative research. The purpose of including my pictorial confessions is not only to add transparency to the research but also to deepen the reader's appreciation for the difficult task of writing reflexively. In Chapter 5, I discuss my findings–a Formative evaluation of ArtStart, which focuses on their four program goals which were developed from the information gathered from the pilot project. Chapter 6 provides a summary of why Formative evaluation is a particularly nuanced approach to evaluating an arts program and discusses the limitations of the project and then concludes by suggesting more Canadian longitudinal research of nonprofit arts-based children's programs is needed.

Chapter 2: THE PILOT PROJECT: The Preliminary Evaluation

"Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things"
– Peter F. Drucker[4]

In September of 2009, I began MA studies at the University of Alberta and became acquainted with ArtStart. A meeting was held and discussions between me, the Director, and Program Manager lead to the conclusion that a preliminary evaluation of the program would be useful for funding purposes, but more importantly it would benefit both staff members as they had only been in their positions less than a year–they wanted to know more about their program.

[4] Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005) "was a writer, management consultant, and self-described "social ecologist." His books and scholarly, popular articles explored how humans are organized across the business, government and the non-profit sectors of society." Retrieved from http://en/wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Drucker.

ArtStart, like most nonprofits, apply for funds on a continuous basis and our feeling was that evaluative research of the program could better ArtStart's chances of obtaining funding–most notably government grants. Funding, as with most nonprofit organizations, is a key contributor to a program's overall success. Unfortunately, fund-raising is a challenging and laborious endeavour, which can detract staff from focusing on program goals. In the real world "we worry and speculate about mission dilution and legitimacy erosion as distractions emerge from the necessary economic endeavours…yet these are and always have been the facts of life for a nonprofit organization (Froelich, 1999, p. 246). Moreover, because of the uniqueness of ArtStart as a nonprofit arts-based children's program it faced additional funding challenges.

> *"It gets lost in the funding streams, it's not considered a social services program because it's not about prevention as it's typically understood and it's not arts because it's not funding an artist per se [artist in residence] and so it's been a really hard journey."*
>
> – Director of Early Learning

Figure 2. *ArtStart office mural.*
(researcher photo)

A lack of continuous funding had many implications for ArtStart including: resource dependence on other E4C programs, and a reduction or lack

of quality food for the snack program. It puts additional stress on staff and volunteers and limits on the effectiveness of communication through lack of upgraded computers. It became very clear that if ArtStart could not afford to have the basics such as staff, supplies and communication then the program would simply cease to exist.

> **"***This is my favourite mural, it reminds me of all the kids that are involved in ArtStart, and I really like the fact that it's a tree and it means that we foster development, and all the puzzle pieces are the kids in ArtStart, each puzzle piece was designed by a child in the program, and if ArtStart wasn't here…where would these kids have been?*"
>
> – Program Manager

Figure 3. *ArtStart Program Manager's office space. (researcher photo)*

With this in mind, I hoped the knowledge obtained by the preliminary evaluation would provide "supportive proof"[5] for funding purposes and provide worthwhile information about the program for the Director and Program Manager. Moreover, my decision to use participant photographs and quotations

[5] Supportive proof is my terminology for stating that while my evaluation will provide valuable feedback to ArtStart and they may use it for funding purposes, I recognize that various stakeholders will evaluate the feedback differently and will use it as they see fit (i.e., my feedback may provide proof for some grant applications, but not for others).

for this preliminary evaluation would provide a meaningful way to capture the experiences of participants. Participants included staff and volunteers–clients of the program were not interviewed because my MA class ethics approval only allowed individuals not at risk to be interviewed. In summary, the Director of Early Learning, the Program Manager and I were driven to support this program evaluation because ArtStart recognizes that:

> Children living in poverty have severely limited access to being involved in the arts. Involvement in the arts should not be a luxury but an accessible opportunity for all children–especially those at risk because studies have shown that involvement in the arts improves social skills, cognitive reasoning and builds self-esteem.[6]

Figure 4. *ArtStart student performing at the Stanley Milner Library in 2008. (ArtStart staff photo)*[7]

My fieldwork for my pilot project, titled Arts-Based Programming: Exploring the Factors of Effectiveness of a Nonprofit Arts-Based Children's Program, began when I attended the fall ArtStart Volunteer Orientation meeting. At this meeting I was given 15 minutes to explain my research to the attendees. I also did my best

[6] Paraphrased from the first page of the ArtStart Volunteer Opportunities pamphlet. Retrieved from http://www.e4calberta.org.

[7] Photo was used in the 2008 E4C Annual report available at http://www.e4calberta.org/pdfs/E4CAR2008.pdf

to recruit participants who were somewhat hesitant to sign up. Given the history of evaluation, it was not surprising that attendees were a bit reluctant to participate. As Patton (1997) points out, evaluations have taken:

> An end of project approach…rendering an overall summative judgment of merit or worth…such judgments came to be feared and, therefore, resisted by program staff, not least of all because a singular, one-time judgment–it worked or didn't work–could seldom do justice to the nuances of strengths and weaknesses [of a program]" (p. xii).

At the end of my presentation I handed out an informational letter[8], which gave a brief outline of how the research was to be conducted and I encouraged questions. Several attendees came to me with their questions and after satisfying their inquiries some agreed to participate–I was able to obtain contact information for five out of the 13 volunteers.

As the quote by Peter Drucker at the beginning of this Pilot Project chapter alludes to, my initial question during the preliminary evaluation was phrased, "What are the factors that make ArtStart's programs effective?" The answer to this question did not come easily. The project took three months to conclude and incorporated in-depth interviews with staff and volunteers, personal observations and a textual analysis of an ArtStart volunteer recruitment pamphlet and the ArtStart Internet homepage. Discussions during the in-depth interviews focused on photographs that the participants had taken–participants were given disposable cameras prior to the interview and asked to take pictures of their ArtStart experiences. In addition to the in-depth interviews, I conducted

[8] See Appendix B.

observations while volunteering during ArtStart class time. Observations became incredibly valuable for my critical understanding of the evaluation because not only was I able to interact with parents, students, and volunteers, but I also taught a class. This experience made me realize (from a volunteer's perspective) just how important the teacher's role is for providing direction and motivation to the children. More importantly, the experience allowed me to witness how relationships at ArtStart unfold. For example, the year-end recital gave volunteers and students an opportunity to showcase their talents collaboratively. Throughout the preliminary evaluation I was mindful of my experiences and I recorded them in my journal along with photographs that I had taken. After establishing contact and observing several classes, I conducted a literature review. It quickly became apparent that nonprofit organizations were under more than just funding pressures.

Nonprofit groups need to be effective because they are being sought after more than ever to "address the social problems that are hobbling the United States [and Canada]–problems that business and government have failed to solve" (Herzlinger, 1994, p.52). According to a 2003 Statistics Canada report, Canadian nonprofit volunteers contributed two billion volunteer work hours to their organizations–the equivalent of one million full-time jobs.[9]In addition, funder expectations such as meeting program goals and objectives are on the rise. A study conducted by Hall et al. (2003) revealed "almost half of the respondents from voluntary organizations reported that funder expectations had increased over

[9] Statistics Canada (2004). *Cornerstones of Community: Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*, Cat. No. 61-533-XPE (Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry). Retrieved from: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/61-533-x/2004001/4069554-eng.htm.

the past three years" (p.7). Meeting funder expectations can be challenging for nonprofit organizations given that there is no single way to define effectiveness. Herman and Renz (1997) report "there are as many models of effectiveness as there are of organizations" (p.187).

Rich in mixed methods content, Herman and Renz's study focuses on organizational effectiveness from a board's perspective, omitting analyses of how the rest of the organization would assess the effectiveness of their programs. This gap, I found was paramount in much of the research done specifically on nonprofit arts-based children's programs. For instance, a perusal of two journals (*Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* and *Evaluation and Program Planning*) dated from 1990 onwards, only revealed one article that discussed the effectiveness of a nonprofit arts-based children's program.[10]Even journals that focus specifically on the arts (*Studies in Art Education* and *The American Journal of Art)* revealed no useful data for the preliminary evaluation. The heart of the matter for me was the issue of program effectiveness–more specifically: "What are the factors that make a nonprofit arts-based children's program effective?" This was the primary question that drove my pilot project research.

Visual ethnography was my chosen methodology because it is a methodology that is both exploratory and descriptive in nature. As outlined by Marshall and Gossman (2006), the exploratory purpose of a study is to: "investigate little-understood phenomena, to identify or discover important categories of meaning, and to generate hypotheses for further research" (p. 34).

[10] Anderson, F. (1991). Evaluating the Very Special Arts Festival Programs nationwide: An attempt at combining subjective and quantitative approaches. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 14*, 99-112.

And, the descriptive component entailed documenting "and describing the phenomenon of interest" (p. 34). The descriptive component became very valuable to the Director and Program Manager because the information allowed them to become more acquainted with their own organization. I felt this was a significant contribution to the final report as it became the impetus for creating the ArtStart Effectiveness Model[11] which was then used as a reference tool for creating ArtStart's four program goals. And, as Mancini et al. (2004) explain "the contribution that programs can make to their communities is enhanced the more that program professionals take advantage of insights and the lessons learned that come from evaluation research" (p.9). Moreover, visual ethnography "has recently received much critical attention from scholars of the social sciences and humanities" (Pink, 2007, p. 21). Pink (2007) explains:

> Just as images inspire conversations, conversation may invoke images; conversation visualizes and draws absent printed or electronic images into its narratives through verbal descriptions and references to them (p. 21).

The research design included in-depth interviews with staff and volunteers, observation of classes, and a textual analysis of the ArtStart volunteer recruitment pamphlet and Internet homepage. My observations were conducted in a classroom setting and I took the role of a volunteer. This very useful participatory strategy is commonly known as *participant observation. Participant observation* was "developed primarily from cultural anthropology and qualitative sociology… [it] demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.100). By embracing the role of volunteer, I was able to interact

[11] See Figure 23.

with the teacher, parents, and children in an unobtrusive manner. Moreover, by immersing myself in the experience my personal reflections became "integral to the emerging analysis of [the]…group because they provide[d] [me]…with new vantage points and with opportunities to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (Glesne as cited by Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 100). Thus, participant observation was integral to the process.

In-depth interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I used an interview guide to ask questions that were based on my research question. Prior to each interview, participants were given disposable cameras and asked to take pictures of their experiences. Then the photos were developed and discussed during participant in-depth interviews. Themes from the interviews and photos were analyzed and subsequently used to create ArtStart's four program goals. For the textual analysis, staff and volunteers were asked to look at the volunteer recruitment pamphlet and the ArtStart Internet homepage and give their feedback about how effectively the message was conveyed (i.e., did they feel the volunteer recruitment pamphlet was effective at enticing readers to sign up and did they feel the homepage provided the best information for parents looking to enroll their children).

Beyond the establishment of my research design, I also had to address what I referred to as the "effectiveness conundrum." The effectiveness conundrum is simply, there is no one way to define effectiveness. But in order to make a sensible argument I felt I had to define effectiveness. And so, my resolve was to look to Forbes (1998) who posits "the emergent approach [to determining

effectiveness] holds that definitions and assessments of effectiveness have meaning, but that the meaning is (a) created by the individual or organizational actors involved, (b) specific to the context in which it was created, and (c) capable of evolving as the actors continue to interact" (p. 195). Once I had all the pieces of the puzzle I was then able to analyze my field research. Several themes emerged such as creating community, maximizing parent involvement and providing high quality art programs. In addition, ArtStart's ability to effectively embrace these themes depended on internal and external factors.

1. Creating community

One theme that emerged from the interviews was community. A way of creating community as described by participants included: physically getting into the community (i.e., holding ArtStart classes in inner-city schools as opposed to Alex Taylor School), networking with parents, and bringing people together through the arts (i.e., participating in arts programming can bring people together in new and exciting ways).

> *"We are trying to get the kids to work together to form a community, plants are growing, kids are growing and that's one of our goals is to create community and camaraderie, you want to have a connection with your community."*
>
> – Director of Early Learning

Figure 5. *Office window of the Director of Early Learning. (Director of Early Learning photo)*

2. Maximizing parent involvement

Participants talked about the importance of parent involvement. According to interviewees, maximizing parent involvement entails: informing parents of program opportunities (i.e., parent volunteer recruitment); providing safety for parents and their children; and having a sign-up book which details specific duties and informing parents of their children's in-class activities. The basic premise is that the more parents know about the program and its benefits, the more they will get involved.

> "*I can talk to them about the different positions, they can see when they last signed up for something, or if they need to make changes to it…the book is effective because it gives direction to parents–instead of being a volunteer they have positions and duties…having positions and duties gives parents direction."*
>
> – Program Assistant

Figure 6. *Front sign-in table with parent volunteer sign-up sheets. (Program Assistant photo)*

3. Providing high quality art programs to children from low-income families

Providing high quality art programs to children from low-income families as mentioned by interviewees included having volunteer instructors with expertise in their fields, having good quality art/music and drama supplies or "tools" as interviewees refer to them, and holding a showcase recital at the end of the semester.

"We have many resources. These are more like tools."
– Director of Early Learning

Figure 7. *ArtStart supply room.* Figure 8. *ArtStart resource bookshelves.*
(Director of Early Learning photos)

Internal factors

Organizational structure

Figure 9. *ArtStart's organizational structure.*

ArtStart has a flat organizational structure. The Program Manager, Program Assistant, and volunteers create the base of the program because these individuals are directly involved with the day-to-day operations of the program.

The Program Manager oversees the Program Assistant and volunteers, but also works very much alongside the Assistant in program planning, parent

communication, and volunteer follow-up. The Program Manager has increased responsibilities which include, but are not limited to: coordination with schools; securing space for the program; report writing; applying for grants; and, ensuring the program is run safely and within budget.

The Program Assistant spends a great majority of her time directly on-site. Her responsibilities include, but are not limited to: program planning; coordinating volunteers on-site; ensuring kids get to their correct room for their class; informing parents of change; supervision; monitoring parent sign-in; supply fulfillment for volunteer requests; and, setting up food and drinks for snack time.

> *"There is very little structure because we all work so closely together, like a lot of what I do the Program Manager can do and I can help her and we do that a lot because it's just her and I."*
>
> – Program Assistant

Figure 10. *Program Assistant (in flowered dress) at Delton School. (researcher photo)*

A typical ArtStart day is like a highly organized travelling show. The Program Manager ensures everything is on track–she checks for reported absences, confirms the school is open, and oversees the supplies and snacks. While this list may seem short, the Program Manager is also responsible for two

other early development children's programs in the city. She is often pulled in several directions at once–putting out fires along the way. The Program Assistant literally puts on the travelling show–ArtStart runs twice a week after school hours (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.). Usually around 3:00 p.m. she arrives at Alex Taylor School (E4C head office) and loads a van with supplies and food. Then she drives the van to either Delton School or Parkdale School (on Tuesdays ArtStart is held at Parkdale and Thursdays at Delton). Next, she sets up the classroom, ensures the instructor and parent volunteers are in their designated rooms and that snack time goes off without a hitch. When the classes are done, she packs everything up into the van, returns to the home office, unloads and makes notes for the next ArtStart day. Throughout this entire production, participants leave with something to take home at the end of the night–an art experience. The art experience could be singing a song, learning a new musical note, learning a line from a play, creating a dance or creating a piece of artwork. These experiences enrich the program and encourage the children and parents to come back night after night.

One of the main reasons children regularly attend the ArtStart program is the volunteers. These highly trained professionals create a positive environment for the participants. It has been said that without the volunteers there would be no program. Volunteers are on the frontline interacting with the children in the program and their parents. They create lesson plans and they provide supervision during class time and are ultimately the difference between whether or not a child has a good or not-so-good experience at ArtStart.

"W*ithout volunteers there is no ArtStart, so their role is vital. They are the ones planning and I try to help them out, but ultimately I want them to make a plan that they're interested in doing. We try to support them as much as we can and that will contribute to the effectiveness of the program as a whole.*"

– Program Manager

Figure 11. *ArtStart volunteers at Delton School. (researcher photo)*

The "big picture" issues are the responsibility of the Program Director of Early Learning who reports to the Chief Operating Officer. The Director has many responsibilities and therefore "wears many hats."

"*As a Director you have to wear so many different hats…the vizor is a number cruncher because we are constantly budgeting, allocating funds, applying for grants; the construction hat is we're constantly building community; the panama hat is searching out new funding; the lampshade hat is about new ideas.*"

– Director of Early Learning

Figure 12. *Office wall of the Director of Early Learning. (Director of Early Learning photo)*

Due to time constraints, I was unable to interview the Chief Operating Officer or a member of the E4C Board of Directors. However, the board's role is reflective of a typical nonprofit board where they oversee many diverse programs, they are accountable to their clients and funders, and they produce and participate in public media presentations.

E4C, the organization, was founded in Edmonton on March 13, 1970. It "is a charitable human services organization…that works to achieve effective, collaborative efforts in response to need and emergent issues...[E4C] participate[s] in networks and associations, joint ventures and partnerships in helping people connect with resources and with the community".[12] E4C's values are:

Courage–Overcoming adversity requires real courage. We recognize courage in people and support them in making lasting change.

Compassion–Compassion grows from understanding. We believe in the value of each person and demonstrate compassion in every aspect of our work.

Connection–Everyone needs to belong. We work in partnership to help people make positive connections and build healthy relationships.

Commitment–Lasting change takes time. We honour our commitment as partners in change with people and the community.[13]

There is a magnificent mural painted by Eugene Dumas located in front of E4C's headquarters (i.e., Alex Taylor School), which embraces E4C's values.

[12] Quoted from E4C's homepage. Retrieved from http://www.e4calberta.org/generalinfo.html.
[13] Quoted from E4C's homepage. Retrieved from http://www.e4calberta.org/generalinfo.html.

Figure 13. *Dumas mural.*
(researcher photo)

The plaque beside it reads:

"C*lear-eyed, determined, and strong, this vibrant portrait was commissioned in 1994 to help transform a heavily fortified drug den known as The Fortress into Kindred House, a drop-in refuge for persons involved in prostitution. Painted directly onto the rough interior concrete wall, the mural infused beauty and hope into what had been a place of evil. This mural was rescued in 2002 when the house was demolished to make room for transitional housing to assist individuals seeing to leave prostitution. A second mural that was painted on an upstairs bedroom wall is displayed at the east end of the main floor hall of Alex Taylor School, adjacent. Aboriginal artist Eugene Dumas' works are a call to heed the dignity of those living in danger on our streets.*"

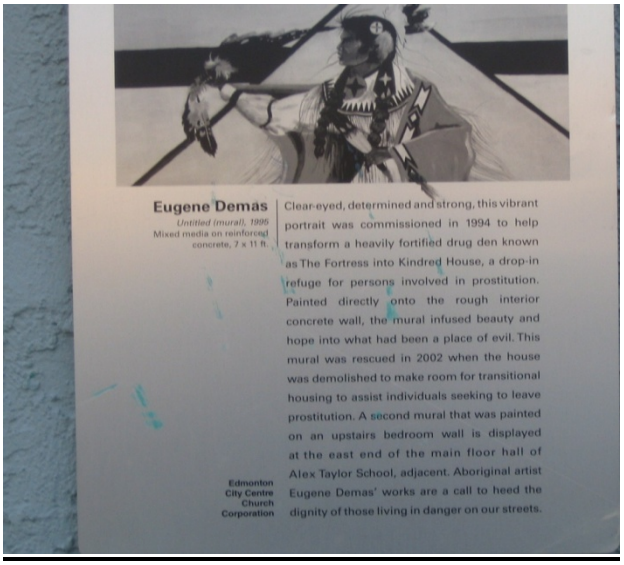

Figure 14. Dumas plaque.
(researcher photo)

While the E4C organization is diverse and multileveled, ArtStart being a small program of the E4C organization has managed to keep their program simple and their structure flat. It became apparent that ArtStart's flat structure was effective because communication flowed quickly and easily between all the levels. If an issue arose, it was usually dealt with by a few phone calls and follow-up. This structure is vehemently opposed to the multiple levels of a bureaucratic/hierarchal organization such as government.

Staff and volunteer retention

Since its conception, ArtStart has struggled with staff retention. For instance, in 2008, the Program Manager left without leaving a "blueprint" of what she had done, which left her replacement with the difficult task of picking up the pieces. In most instances there were no pieces to pick up and therefore the replacement Program Manager had to make her own decisions based on her past work experience.

"ArtStart started with a woman who wanted to have a program dealing with the arts, and thought it would be a good idea, I don't know where it went from there because she left the organization and it floundered a bit."
– Director of Early Learning

Figure 15. *ArtStart office wall.*
(Director of Early Learning photo)

Additionally, volunteer retention had been problematic. At the onset of my research I was given only two names of volunteers who had been there for more than three years. Despite volunteer retention being problematic, they have a large number of volunteers in their "volunteer pool," 45 volunteers to assist with 65 children. The managers of ArtStart recognize the importance of the volunteers because they "regard human resources not as a staff function outside the organization's operation but rather as the central conduit through which [their] organization succeed[s]"(Watson & Abzug, 2005, p. 627). ArtStart at that time was beginning to think of ways to maintain staff and volunteers. One idea that was discussed was to provide volunteers with fun and educational workshops in their areas of interest. A strategy such as this could contribute to staff and volunteer retention in the long-term. Another strategy that could have proven more beneficial for long-term staff and volunteer retention would have been to consult with staff and volunteers to create vision and mission statements for ArtStart. Watson and Abzug (2005) point out "in a decade of studies on person-organization fit, a consistent finding is that staff is attracted to organizations with which they perceived an alignment between the goals of the organization and their own values and objectives" (p. 628). At the time of the pilot project, ArtStart did not have goals. It also did not have a vision or mission statement of its own. Instead, E4C's vision and mission statements were adopted. Although all the staff and volunteers that I interviewed were somewhat familiar with E4C's vision and mission statements, well-defined vision and mission statements specific to ArtStart may encourage long-term volunteer and staff retention. In doing so,

ArtStart would benefit from gathering input from volunteers and staff on the development of the vision and mission statement. As Watson and Abzug (2005) state, “one productive task is to engage…staff [and volunteers] in a dialogue around what constitutes fit in their organization–[staff and volunteers can] work to make explicit what the fit dimensions are [and] examining the mission statement is a good way to start” (p. 628).

Communication between staff and volunteers

While communication between staff is effective given the flat organizational structure of ArtStart, there are times when communication breaks down. These moments of disconnectedness are mostly due to technical computer glitches or the simple fact that staff members are so busy they forget or give the incorrect information. For instance, on several attempts to set up interviews or conduct follow-up, ArtStart’s computers (email) and voice mail were not functioning properly–my messages would either be delayed or in some cases go missing. Additionally, on two separate occasions a volunteer and I were given incorrect information about which school the program was being held at. These instances of communication breakdown in the moment caused frustration but could have led to staff and volunteer discontentment if carried on long-term.

External factors

Funding

Funding, as with most nonprofit organizations, is a key contributor to program effectiveness. There is a common belief that in order to secure funding, value of the program must be conveyed. Value of the arts has been long debated

among educators, researchers, and the general public. Some educators validate the arts by linking to success in other core subjects such as math and science. As Edens and Potter (2007) report, “ample anecdotal evidence exists that the arts are associated with enhanced student motivation and achievement in non-art domains [and they conclude]…shifts in policy and practice have called for research findings advocating the utility or instrumental value of art in the learning process and the transfer of art learning to other subjects” (p. 282). While anecdotal evidence does exist according to Edens and Potter, their research provided insight about the utility of art in the learning process. They claimed through their research “an instrumental and utilitarian function of drawing activities…is that they appear to facilitate [mathematical] problem solving and may be a way to enhance meaningful art integration approaches in the math classroom” (p. 296).

Researchers such as Beth Olshansky, Director of the Center for the Advancement of Arts-Based Literacy at the University of New Hampshire, advocates value of the arts by linking art techniques to literacy. Olshansky (2008) has worked for two decades to develop two arts-based literacy models. These models have been researched and provide substantial evidence that “creating pictures before writing can support the literacy learning–learning of reading as well as writing–of all learners”(p. xi). At the time of the pilot project write-up, Olshansky’s Centre for the Advancement of Arts-Based Literacy was viewed by the Director as being a potentially supportive reference for ArtStart–to prove that ArtStart’s programs and the arts in general, have value for the purposes of funding applications.

"We're really trying to show that the arts has value–mental health, social health and things like literacy…all those various things, these values have so much carryover so what we have to do is show why it's important to the social service sector and then why it is important to bring arts into it."

–Director of Early Learning

Figure 16. *Books to encourage literacy–E4C head office. (Director of Early Learning photo)*

Amount of parent involvement

Parent involvement was noted in all the interviews. Interviewees expressed their hope that, in the near future, parents would become more involved in the program. Volunteer and staff felt it was important to maximize parent involvement. Maximizing parent involvement depends on parents' willingness to participate and hence, two questions and two dimensions compose the external factor of parent involvement. The first question is, "How familiar are parents with activities and the purpose of ArtStart's programming for their children? (i.e., "What do parents think their kids do in class and do they understand why their kids are doing it?") And secondly, "How much do parents physically partake in ArtStart classes?" In 2008, ArtStart conducted brief parent interviews and during these interviews parents had difficulty explaining what they thought their children

were doing in class. In light of this information, ArtStart tried to educate parents about their programs by improving pamphlets and the website. During my volunteer shifts I did observe increased parent involvement–a parent attended a mask-making class because she was interested in finding out what her child was doing. Prior to her being involved in her child's class, she had always waited outside the door.

> *"You know that mom has been sitting outside since the beginning of the semester and she asked me today what this class was about– I told her what we've been doing and invited her in…I told her, the best way to know what your kid is doing is to see for yourself, so she came in today."*
>
> – ArtStart Volunteer

Figure 17. *Parent assisting in visual art class. (volunteer photo)*

The two dimensions of parent involvement are parental needs and parental expectations. Children that attend ArtStart come from many different cultures and in some cases immigrant parents need extra help understanding what their children are doing in class. In addition, some parents expect a certain thing and they see another.

"*Parents will come and want to see their kids sitting down and writing strokes like how to draw. They want to see it structured, whereas ArtStart's philosophy is different. It's supposed to be fun, kids can move around…we have to help the parents understand what their kids are learning and we need to understand the cultural component of that.*"

–Director of Early Learning

Figure 18. *Parkdale School.*
(student photo taken in photography class)

For example, ArtStart's photography classes encourage students to work outside the classroom. Children are encouraged to explore their environment…to feel textures, to respond to nature, and to look for the unnoticeable.

Parental needs are the second dimension. Parental needs, as seen through the eyes of volunteers and staff include: providing services, classes, food, support, literacy assistance, safety, forming friendships, networking with other E4C assistance, and empowerment. By acknowledging cultural diversity and providing assistance for parental needs, maximizing parent involvement could become a reality for ArtStart.

Communication between staff and volunteers with clients

Communication to clients (parents and children) from staff and volunteers was deemed important to program effectiveness and communication breakdowns were to be avoided. Unfortunately, there was one notable breakdown that

occurred. On the first night of classes, some children did not attend because they were told to go to Parkdale School when in fact they should have gone to Delton School. Although phone calls and email went out to parents regarding the mix-up, several parents and children did not attend class on the first night because they had gone to the wrong location because they did not get the message. Fortunately, that was the only instance where I observed a communication breakdown with parents. When discussing the incident with ArtStart staff they expressed deep concern about not reaching all their clients. Their main concern was whether or not parents and children would return. Encouragingly, the following week, those who were absent had returned. As Herzlinger (2000) points out, "because nonprofits are usually subsidized and their services are frequently free, clients are more likely to forgive poor quality and ignore inefficiency" (p. 52). While ArtStart clients may expect a few communication breakdowns, too many would have quickly led to distrust and inevitably a high program dropout rate.

Communication with clients and potential volunteers via the Internet and pamphlets are also important considerations for ensuring the correct message is being sent. A textual analysis of the ArtStart volunteer recruitment pamphlet and Internet homepage was conducted during the in-depth interviews. Participants scrutinized the pamphlet and the homepage and all agreed that the pamphlet and homepage had improved during the last year but more work needed to be done. For instance, it was determined that less text and more pictures to convey children engaging in the arts could entice volunteers to sign up as well as benefit parents who were not literate or did not speak English, or embed the most common

foreign languages on different tabs of the homepage so that newcomers could read the program in their language.

> *"I know it's better than it was…I tried to think about the parents, so if I was a parent, what would I need to see on this website or what would make me register my child in ArtStart given the information on this site."*
>
> – Program Manager

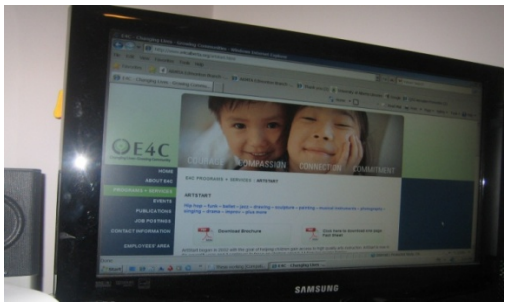

Figure 19. *ArtStart Homepage.*
(researcher photo)

Volunteer and material resources

Despite a lack of funding, ArtStart has material resources. Resources or "tools" include such items as: pianos, violins, drums, music sheets, props, and a vast array of visual art supplies. While resources seem to be ample, getting these resources to volunteers as needed was, at times, difficult. As one volunteer explains:

> *"I get to class and, surprise, half the stuff is there that I wanted and the other stuff isn't."*

Figure 20. *Setup of supplies in visual art class.*
(volunteer photo)

The reasons that were given in interviews as to why the volunteers did not receive their supplies were: communication breakdown (i.e., asking for something that the assistant was not necessary familiar with); accessibility (i.e., having the resource, but because of the office move, they could not get to it in time for the class); and, lack of money (i.e., buying a brand new piano is not possible, but getting a used one is).

> "*I don't know how well-funded they are, but I get apologies…I know there isn't enough time for stuff…like…I know they are pulled into meetings all the time, but at the same time I'm the one standing in front of the class.*"
>
> – ArtStart Volunteer

Figure 21. *Supplies at Parkdale School. (volunteer photo)*

Change

As is the case with most nonprofit organizations, change was a constant wild card for ArtStart. Change had the potential to affect internal as well as external factors. Change affected the program in a positive way–such as obtaining a grant, or in a negative way–such as when a volunteer leaves the program. Or, change could have affected the program with a combination of both positive and negative results–the example given by the Program Manager was the move from Alex Taylor School to Delton and Parkdale schools. Though the move was

difficult to coordinate, it was worth it as ArtStart was in the community more than when it had been held at Alex Taylor. Knowing how to deal with change would positively impact ArtStart's effectiveness. For instance, when the Program Manager left ArtStart in 2008 and did not leave a "blueprint" behind, the replacement ArtStart staff was left scrambling to pick up the pieces. Though initially this change had a negative effect, the changes that were implemented from "starting from scratch" actually made the program better. Now, all procedures are noted in hard-copy format with electronic backup copies, so if a staff member is sick or leaves, others can fill in or take over.

> *"Hard-copies are the most important and believe it or not, we have backup to the backup."*
>
> – Program Manager

Figure 22. *Backup 'blueprints' for ArtStart–ArtStart head office. (Program Manager photo)*

Positive change also occurred when the ArtStart office moved from their tiny office into a larger, more functional room. Some ArtStart staff, however, discussed one negative external change that occurred in the fall of 2009–the Canadian government changed the low-income cutoff. At the time of the pilot project, in order for a child to be admitted into the ArtStart program, a family

must have a total family income below the Federal Low-income Cut-off (i.e., family-of-four income level cutoff would be $41,023).[14]Prior to the pilot project, ArtStart used a subsidized scale or fee–families that were considered low-income but above the cutoff were still admitted into the program, but they paid a fee that was scaled. Essentially, higher income families paid a higher fee than families that were closer to the cutoff. The negative effect of the change was that some families that were in the program no longer qualified–the difference in some cases was less than $5,000.The affected families were given options such as to continue with one semester until they found another program or they were given a list of other organizations that offered arts programs, but at a cost. None of the options were taken by the families that no longer qualified.

Recommendations

In my final report to ArtStart, I suggested they might benefit from further community-based evaluative research. An in-depth collaborative evaluation would likely reveal much richer information. For example, I recommended that an evaluator could take the role of a facilitator while the direction and actual data collection, analysis, and knowledge-sharing could be done by ArtStart staff, volunteers, and clients.

Another aspect that would provide richer data would be to include an E4C board member in the interview process as well as parents and children. Interviewing a board member would provide insight to the uppermost level of ArtStart's organizational effectiveness. This upper-level insight as Herman and

[14] Information taken from ArtStart registration package 2009.

Tulipana (1985) point out is beneficial because "both theory and research support the contention that board composition has important consequences for external effectiveness" (p. 48). I felt, however, that interviewing the parents and children (clients of ArtStart) would be most valuable because in the end they are the ones who determine whether or not ArtStart's programs are effective.

During the pilot project I was able to test a methodology, create a research design, and acquire valuable insight into ArtStart's programs. Most noteworthy, I was able to use the insight gained to create an Effectiveness Model that was unique to ArtStart. This Effectiveness Model was used during a brainstorming session to determine ArtStart's four program goals. While my pilot project did not reveal whether or not ArtStart programs were effective, that was not the overarching purpose. The purpose was to find out what factors could determine the effectiveness of ArtStart's programs.

Effectiveness Model

The final ArtStart report and course paper were virtually the same with the exception of one small section. The paper I submitted for course credit included a Methodological Appendix section at the end. The Methodological Appendix was a requirement for the course, but was excluded from the ArtStart version because I felt it served more of an academic purpose than a funding or organizational insight purpose. While the Director and Program Manager perhaps may have found it interesting information, it would have been additional information that they couldn't use. In the end, themes that came from the interviews and photographs were used to create an Effectiveness Model, which was very useful

when used in conjunction with the final report. Moreover, these two documents were used to create four ArtStart program goals and served as stepping stones for the rest of this thesis.

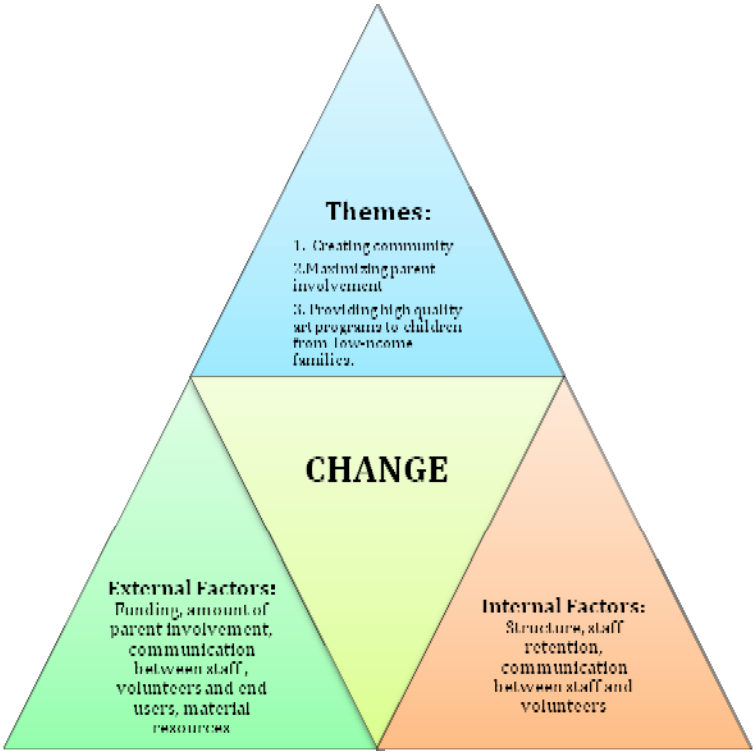

Figure 23. *Effectiveness Model*.

Chapter 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Judgment and the *trial*

When I first approached ArtStart to become involved in the pilot project, the response by the Director of Early Learning and the Program Manager was quite positive–they were eager to obtain information about their program. As the pilot project was a fact-finding mission (to find out what factors made ArtStart effective or not) the majority of participants' were only somewhat reluctant to take part. During the Formative evaluation, however, participants were much more cautious about being involved. For example, while recruiting participants at

the ArtStart Volunteer Appreciation Lunch, I was questioned extensively about ethics, methodology, and purpose. One volunteer even talked about how program evaluation is about judgment. This led me to think about judgment and the concept of the "trial."

In this chapter, I discuss the concept of "trial" and how it pertains to judgment, legitimacy and evaluation (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005). Subsequently, a comparison will be done of scholars who advocate that the value of the arts is intrinsic versus scholars who advocate for the instrumentality of the arts. Next, I review how evaluation of the arts can be problematic and describe three common types of evaluation: Goal-free, Summative, and Formative evaluation. Finally, I suggest several factors that make Formative evaluation a particularly nuanced approach to evaluating an arts program.

It is not uncommon for individuals to feel apprehensive about evaluation because it can be a rigid, judgmental process (Scriven, 1991). As was the case in this project, some individuals were quite reluctant to participate. For instance, when I was recruiting participants during the ArtStart Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, I conducted an exercise that explored individuals' perceptions of evaluation–one volunteer described evaluation as a judgment call…the final verdict. Judgment, as defined by *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2005) is "1a) formal utterance of an authoritative opinion; 2a) formal decision given by a court; 3a) *capitalized:* the final judging of mankind by God; 4a) the process of forming an opinion or evaluating by discerning or comparing; 5a) the capacity for judgment: discernment; [and finally] 6a) a proposition stating

something believed or asserted."[15] The "trial" as conceptualized by Boltanski & Chiapello (2005) is concerned with the testing of justice and legitimacy. More specifically, the trial refers to the testing of people's or organizations' capabilities in a set forum, the outcome of which results in placing those individuals in a hierarchy. Once the hierarchy has been established, the allocation of commodities commences. A set forum can be any type of "social arrangement" where a predetermined set of standards have been deemed legitimate or just. The hierarchy is simply the placement of individuals or organizations' after the test has occurred. Commodities, in this sense, are not only hard goods such as money or prizes but can also include power. To illustrate, if ArtStart applied for a large grant and was chosen over other nonprofit programs to receive the grant, it would then be able to expand and perhaps hire an artist in residency. The program could also become more powerful within the arts community if it continued to expand.

For a test to be legitimate or just, "it requires precise definition of the respect in which the beings engaged in a test are being compared with one another" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 318). Further to this, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) point out:

> *Established* tests (such as political elections, academic exams, sporting tests, equal negotiations between social partners), which are defined and recognized as such…[and] those involved in them, in one way or another, cannot ignore the fact that their judgments and actions in such situations will have enduring effects (p. 318).

This conceptual framework has been applied to many situations including, but not limited to: sporting events, management discourse, and academic exams. The trial, in my opinion, also has many synergies with evaluative research.

[15] Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/judgment.

Though the trial is not the only way to perceive evaluation, a judgment is ultimately rendered as a result of an evaluation and thus can have enduring effects. If a positive judgment has been made of a program, it is likely to be funded, to continue or be expanded upon. Alternatively, if a negative judgment has been made, it is likely a program would be forced to make changes or, at worst, lose its funding or be shut down. Prior to a judgment being rendered, an evaluand[16] undergoes a test. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) identify a test of strength which, for all intents and purposes, is "an event which beings, in pitting themselves against one another…reveal what they are capable of" (p. 31). Additionally, "when the situation is subject to justificatory constraints [an evaluative framework highlighting what is to be evaluated for instance], and when the protagonists judge that these constraints are being genuinely respected, the test of strength will be regarded as legitimate" (p. 31). In other words, for this project, the stakeholders and I determined that a Formative evaluation was the best-suited framework to investigate how ArtStart was achieving their program goals. Our agreement (genuine respect) in this case, deemed the project legitimate. The importance of establishing the "testing criteria" among the stakeholders and me before the evaluation commenced, legitimized the process. The unnerving reality of claiming a legitimate evaluation, however, is that it becomes subject for critique.

Two critique trajectories have been laid out by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005)–*corrective* and *radical*. *Corrective* critique "reveals those features of the

[16] *Evaluand*, as defined by Scriven (1991), is "a generic term for whatever is being evaluated–person, performance, program, proposal, product, possibility, and so on–by analogy with "multiplicand," "analysand," and so on (p. 139).

tests under challenge that infringe justice and, in particular, the forces mobilized by certain of the protagonists without the others being aware of it, thereby securing an underserved advantage" (p. 32-33). The purpose of the critique here would be "to improve the justice of the test–*to make it stricter*–to increase the degree to which it is conventionalized, to develop its regulatory or legal supervision" (p. 33). *Radical critique*, on the other hand, is to critique with the intent of replacing a test that has been deemed unjust. Boltanski and Chiapello write, "it is the validity of the test itself–strictly speaking, what conditions its existence–that is subject to challenge" (p. 33). As challenging and unnerving as these critiques can be, the underlying purposes of both are to ensure a just test–"to make it more consonant with the model of justice that supports judgments claiming legitimacy" (p. 33).

In evaluation, pressures associated with critiques and tests can be minimized by timely, open and continuous communication. Specifically, a response to a critique must be crafted in a timely fashion, it must address concerns in an open forum and dialogue must continue after the critique has been dealt with. By dealing with the critique head on, justice is restored and the test is once again legitimate.

But what type of response could restore justice to make a test legitimate? Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) describe two ways to respond to critiques: "demonstrating that the critique is mistaken (it is then necessary to adduce convincing evidence of this); or in making the test stricter and refining it to make it more consonant with the model of justice that supports judgments claiming

legitimacy" (p. 33). While these responses offer a direct remedy to cure the critique, it appears to me that a further diagnosis may be in order.

In an evaluation, for instance, evidence that proves a critique wrong strengthens the evaluation. Plain and simple, evidence restores justice and makes the situation legitimate. Or does it? Let's say an evaluator has almost completed her data collection and a stakeholder raises a concern about confidentiality– children at risk being photographed may cause those children to be identified as such and this may lead to stigmatization. The evaluator responds by explaining that the project has undergone a thorough ethics review and confidentiality will be maintained–verbal consent or signed consent forms have been provided by each of the participants including their parents/guardians and they are fully aware of how the photos will be used. Despite convincing evidence (approval from an ethics review board), a stakeholder may still have reservations about the evaluation; therefore, further negotiations would be required. To foster collaboration and trust between the evaluator and the stakeholder, the evaluator may agree to participants (and their photos) being removed from the study up to a set date. Or, the evaluator may decide to give all the documentation to the organization or agree to disclosure restrictions. The evaluation and the position of the evaluator are strengthened not only by convincing evidence but also by open dialogue, trust and negotiation. This situation actually occurred while I was conducting my research and to respect the parties involved, the collaborative decision was made to give the final documentation to ArtStart with future publication considerations to be reviewed as required.

Boltanski and Chiapello have provided us with two response modes that we can restore justice by providing convincing evidence to prove a critique is mistaken or we can make a stricter test. But, quick fixes are not necessarily the best medicine. More often than not, in an evaluation, it takes open dialogue, trust, and negotiation to restore justice and instill legitimacy.

Evaluators should be concerned with issues surrounding justice and legitimacy–they should strive to make the evaluation process fair and to present the facts as they are. And while there has been a movement towards more humanistic inquiry in evaluation methods it cannot be ignored that the "trial" as conceptualized by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) has many synergies with evaluative research. Most literally, when an organization informs their staff that an evaluation will be conducted it is not uncommon for those being evaluated to feel like they are being put on trial (in the traditional sense of being in court and having to defend oneself). The test, is the how the evaluation will be conducted–a plan that is executed based on evaluative guidelines, theoretical frameworks or even stakeholder expectations. Moreover, the trial is a testing of people's or organizations' abilities. As the evaluation is set in motion it is subject to critique at any given point. Subsequently, at the end of the evaluation, the organization or program being evaluated is judged according to the parameters of the evaluation–is the organization efficient? Is the program meeting its goals, etc. Once judgment has been rendered, the trial is over–the evaluation is concluded.

Judgments are inevitable in trials as they are in evaluations, but how these judgments come to be determines if justice and legitimacy prevail. In conducting

this research, I was able to determine that an evaluation can become less like a trial when it is conducted in a creative manner (more on that in a moment) and that justice and legitimacy can prevail when there is open dialogue, trust, and negotiation.

Valuing the arts–the intrinsic versus instrumentalist debate

> *Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted."*
>
> Albert Einstein[17]

A 2006 article written by Robin Wright, Lindsay John, Stephan Ellenbogen, David R. Offord, Eric K. Duku and William Rowe entitled "Effect of a Structured Arts Program on the Psychosocial Functioning of Youth From Low-Income Communities: Findings From a Canadian Longitudinal Study" describes an in-depth study which employed a number of statistical measures including but not limited to a longitudinal household study and Chronbach's alpha. Analytical strategies such as multilevel growth curve analysis, chi-square analyses and independent sample *t*-tests were also used. Studies such as these are instrumentalist by focusing on measurable outcomes (i.e., improved/sustained attendance rates and psychosocial functioning) and provide useful knowledge (John, Wright, Rowe, and Duku, 2009). However, these types of studies are unable to capture the intrinsic value of personal experiences of participants–feelings of excitement, fear, joy, devastation, frustration, or elation. A moment when a child develops a connection with his or her art teacher, for example, is lost when we focus on instrumentalist findings alone. Intrinsic experiences are

[17] Quoted from website Owl RE Wise research & evaluation. Retrieved from http://www.owlre.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/factsheet_owlre_quotes.pdf.

moments that count, but "cannot necessarily be counted" statistically and therefore we need to look for new ways of gathering, seeing, and interpreting evaluation research.

Maxine Greene, an arts advocate and philosopher, values the arts for its intrinsic benefit. Greene (1995) writing on education (arts education included) states:

> The familiar paradigms seem still to be in use; the need for alternative possibilities in the face of economic and demographic changes is repressed or ignored…[we need] to seek out ways in which the arts, in particular, can release imagination to open new perspective, to identify alternatives. The vistas that might open, the connections that might be made are experiential phenomenon; our encounters with the world become newly informed. When they do, they offer a new lens through which to look out at and interpret the educative acts that keep human beings and their cultures alive (pp. 18-19).

Greene's statement is important to this project for three reasons. First, evaluators have many types to choose from in evaluation research–familiar types include, but are not limited to: Goal-Free, Summative or Formative evaluation. And while these familiar types provide useful guides to generating knowledge, they can certainly be enriched by the arts–arts in this Formative evaluation can "provide new perspectives on the lived world" (p. 4). Second, by combining an arts perspective (photos and the creation of the ArtStart Program Tree) with a familiar type (Formative evaluation) I have sought out a creative method for evaluation research–I want to encourage imagination in the evaluation field that has traditionally been known for its lack of creativity and preference to stick to specified frameworks and methodologies. And lastly, by infusing creativity into a Formative evaluation type, the intent, "at the very least, [is to encourage]

participatory involvement with the many forms of art [which] can enable us to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, [and] what habit and convention have suppressed" (p. 123).

To *become conscious* or being *conscious* is to explore "the possibilities of seeing what was ordinarily obscured by the familiar, so much part of the accustomed and the everyday that it escape[s] notice entirely" (Greene, 1988, p. 122). Simply stated it is "releasing the imagination" (Greene, 1995). In order for us to release our imagination Baldacchino (2009) explains that we must realize our "situatedness," which "implies one's being critically conscious of being in a situation–which also implies a distancing from where one 'is'" (p. 111). Aesthetic experiences for example, "imply such forms of critical distance, because the imagination cannot happen when the object to be imagined is present…what art does is distance us from our situation by allowing us to take the leap from the ordinary into the extraordinary" (p. 111). Greene (1987) also affirms that distance is necessary to allow "the work of the imagination–the cognitive capacity that summons up the 'as if,' the possible, the what is not and yet might be" (p. 14). Martin Heidegger (1971) also weighs in on the subject, when he writes, "a work [of art], by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness…the work holds open the Open of the world" (p. 45). In other words, Greene and Heidegger argue that art experiences challenge the everyday and engage our consciousness so that we can look beyond our current horizon and reach for unknown places and spaces. This is consciousness.

Dewey also equates being conscious to an aesthetic experience where an individual is able to propel themselves out of "here and now" into an imaginative realm of what could be. A *conscious* individual uses their personal history to negotiate between the "here and now" and the realm of what could be–this in-between state is imagination. Dewey (1958) writes:

> All *conscious* experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality. For while all the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes *conscious*, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather…the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination. But the experience enacted is human and conscious only as that which is given here and now is extended by meaning and values drawn from what is absent in fact and present only imaginatively (p. 272).

The opposite of this consciousness is "anaesthetic"–individuals in this state are disengaged–they accept the status quo because they fail to recognize any alternative. Greene (2001), writes, "anaesthesia…implies numbness, an emotional incapacity, and this can immobilize, prevent people from questioning, from meeting the challenges of being in and naming and (perhaps) transforming the world" (p. x). Greene and Dewey encourage us to "break through a horizon [to] ache in the presence of the question itself…[in hopes of] creating tension and to reach beyond (Greene, 1988, p. 124). This is the intrinsic value of the arts.

Using a creative approach to evaluation can potentially break thorough a horizon and allow evaluators to reach beyond. However, we cannot ignore scholars that have an instrumentalist view because we live in a world driven largely by quantifiable results.

In stark contrast to Greene and Dewey, Johnson comments on Pierre Bourdieu, describing an instrumentalist approach to understanding the value of the arts. Bourdieu (1993) defines "cultural capital as a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations" (p. 7). In other words, cultural capital is not a tangible commodity; individuals acquire cultural capital (knowledge, education, an artistic skill set, etc.) throughout their lifetime. Individuals who have a high education, for example, have more cultural capital than someone with no education. In relation to this research the theory of cultural capital is useful to understand the uneven distribution of accessibility to the arts. Much "like economic capital ...cultural capital [is] unequally distributed among social classes and class fractions" (p. 7). Hence, children living in poverty have difficulty obtaining cultural capital; a program such as ArtStart provides children living on the fringes with an opportunity to increase their cultural capital. This in turn has social benefits. As children from low-income families acquire cultural capital they can become more equipped to "level the playing field"–to challenge stereotypes and move beyond their current circumstances. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory provides some added background information to understand why programs such as ArtStart are beneficial.

Programs such as ArtStart are seemingly becoming more instrumentally "valuable" as businesses–government and organizations (profit and nonprofit)

begin to look for ways to increase profits. Daniel H. Pink (2006), an author and contributing editor for several business magazines describes this shift as follows:

> The past few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind–computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBAs who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind–creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people–artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers–will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys (p. 1).

Although ArtStart's philosophy is intrinsic–it is about "feeding the soul," one cannot ignore the instrumentalist value of the program for funding purposes. As artists and their skills become more valued, children who partake in arts programs will have an advantage over children who have limited or no exposure to the arts. In retrospect, this shift is supported by Bourdieu's cultural capital theory. Children who are able to acquire cultural capital will be able to navigate the work world more effectively than those children who are not able to capitalize on cultural capital. According to Pink (2006), "once companies satisfy [the basic] requirements [of price and quality of a product], they are left to compete less on functional or financial qualities and more on ineffable qualities such as whimsy, beauty, and meaning" (p. 78). In other words, artists of all kinds will be counted upon to make products that are unique, that are aesthetically pleasing, and reach out to people in a novel way.

We have also seen instrumentalist support in the educational realm. Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2001) write:

> Information collected in schools where arts integration has taken hold suggests that standardized test scores are positively affected by the presence of arts in classrooms. Schools where the arts have been a consistent presence show gains in both reading and math scores (p. 87).

This instrumentalist type of information is often highly compelling to parents who value reading and mathematics as important skills for their children's future and reinforces value judgments. However, it would seem somewhat irrational to justify one subject on the basis of standardized test scores of another subject. For example, we don't justify math by reviewing standardized tests in English because they are valued independently (Burnaford et al., 2001).

The intrinsic versus instrumentalist debate will no doubt continue on as more information becomes available. In my view, the arts can be valued for their intrinsic and instrumentalist benefits, the trick, however, is to find out which "benefits" benefit any given context. For example, the arts in this project are valued for intrinsic reasons rather than instrumentalist reasons–the benefit of ArtStart is that it "feeds the souls" of children. On the other hand, the arts can have instrumentalist value for funding purposes. Or the arts can have both intrinsic and instrumentalist benefit. The instrumentalist benefit of a sellout theatre crowd, for instance, could produce a sizeable profit (instrumental value), which in turn allows the theatre company to continue production and thus deepen its connection with its audience (intrinsic value).

As this debate carries on, evaluators working within the arts will need to be particularly aware how it relates to the evaluation model and stakeholders. Evaluators who conduct a Goal-free or Formative evaluation would be wise to

focus on the intrinsic value of the arts whereas Summative evaluations would support instrumentalist benefits, which are often demanded by funders.

Stakeholders in the human-services sector would likely respond better to a report that focused on the intrinsic benefits of the arts whereas boards or government stakeholders may respond better to a report focused on the instrumentalist benefits. Regardless of whether you support the arts for its intrinsic or instrumentalist value, the point to be made is that the arts are valuable.

Evaluation in the arts can be problematic

Evaluation in the arts can be problematic because "even though learning experiences in the diverse fields of the arts include cognitive aspects, the innate qualities of the arts themselves involve learning that is afferent, or emotional in nature, and precise measurement is not always possible" (Stake, 1975, p. 4). An ideal evaluation would then consist of: rational decisions, objective observations, and legitimate recordings. Unfortunately, Murray (2005) points out "the fact is that the evaluation process is rarely rational and objective…and once matters become subjective, they quickly become political" (p. 349). It is political in the sense that "whenever one of the parties involved disagrees with the reasons for the evaluation, the type of evaluation to be undertaken, the methods used, the interpretation of the results, or the way the results are used, there will be a political element to the evaluation" (p. 368). Evaluation of arts programs and the arts in general are subjective because individual opinions differ. Moreover, disagreements during an evaluation process are inevitable. However, to what

extent often depends on the relationships between those involved and agreements that have been put in place.

Recent community-based evaluation (CBE) trends can limit the intensity of disagreements (political and otherwise) by encouraging a spirit of collaboration. Butterfoss (2006) mentions, "since the 1980s, the public health community has witnessed a shift from a model of practice and research on the community to one of practice and research with the community" (p. 323). Also since the 1980s, CBE has expanded beyond the public health sector and we are now seeing nonprofit groups, businesses, schools, and industry practicing CBE. And, it continues to grow as governments and large funding agencies view it as a desirable form of evaluation because it provides in-depth information that has been compiled by key stakeholders at all levels.

CBE however, is not simply collaborating in every aspect of an evaluation. Cockerill, Myers, and Allman (2000) offer this comprehensive and useful definition:

> It is a philosophy of inquiry that encourages active participation in the evaluation process from all involved communities. Community-based evaluation can accommodate a wide range of methods, from conventional quantitative to critical methodology, while allowing for variation in the nature of action and participation of involved communities. A community-based evaluation project may range from a full action research perspective to nothing more than the permission of a community to engage it in an evaluative initiative (p. 351).

CBE is a viable approach for evaluation within the arts because it can diffuse the intensity of political disagreements. Unfortunately, more often than not, it is a time-consuming and labour-intensive venture. Most CBEs begin with the creation

of a very time-consuming and detailed planning guide. Once the framework has been laid out, "training of [stakeholders] in the activities of [community-based] evaluation, and the time required for this, are areas that demand special attention" (p. 353). If, however, an evaluator has a flexible time schedule and is able to coordinate the involvement of all stakeholders, then CBE becomes more than just a viable approach…it becomes a desirable approach.

In addition to the problem of subjectivity of the arts, another issue that can occur in all forms of evaluation is the inability to "provide conclusive analyses of why the results came out as they did…most outcomes have multiple causes, and opinions can easily differ over which are the most important ones" (Murray, 2005, p. 351). To avoid this conundrum Weiss (1990) suggests evaluators need to "pay attention to the political nature of program decision making" (p. 173). Knowing who and how the decisions are made within an organization (arts organizations included) can be the difference between having your evaluation graded as useful or not. Including board members in the interview process can be an excellent strategy to finding out how decisions are made and who makes them.

The problems that exist in evaluating the arts boil down to the political nature of subjectivity and the political nature of decision making. The political nature of subjectivity means that the arts are inherently subjective (i.e., individual opinions will differ) and therefore disagreements are likely to occur over what an individual believes is the most valuable benefit of the arts. For instance, an art collector could value an arts program for its outputs (great artwork that can be bought and sold). Or a teacher can value an arts program for its outcomes

(children tapping into their unique gifts), or it can be valued for its outcomes and outputs (children creating unique works that are sold during a silent auction to raise money for their school). To what degree each value is supported will be determined by the political clout of each stakeholder.

The political nature of decision making relates to how each decision comes about. Is it a decision that takes all stakeholders into account? Or is it a decision made by board members only? Is it a decision based on funding? Or is it a decision based on anticipated need? Questions such as these offer much deliberation and therefore the strategy given by Weiss (1990) or an approach such as CBE can prevent or at least minimize the two significant problems of evaluation in the arts–disagreements brought about by differing opinions and the political nature of decision making.

Three common types of evaluation

There are many developed models of evaluation, all of which have strengths and weaknesses. I, however, have decided to narrow my focus to three very well-known, but also very different models for the simple fact that it would be difficult to critically analyze all of the options within the scope of this thesis.

Summative evaluation

Summative evaluation reviews outputs and the processes that have created those outputs. It seeks to answer finalistic types of questions such as, “Should the program be continued? If so, at what level? What is the overall merit and worth of the program?” (Patton, 2008, p. 305). More often than not, Summative evaluation is conducted by an external evaluator and there is a general consensus among

evaluation scholars that “the aim [of Summative evaluation] is to report *on* it, not report to it” (Scriven, 1991, p. 340).

Summative evaluation is ideal in situations where the evaluand has been in existence for some time, is very stabile and the intended users would be major decision makers (e.g., government or a board of directors). While this type of evaluation is ideal in some situations, it does involve considerable risk because the judgment rendered at the end of a Summative evaluation is most often a pass or a fail. Patton (2008) points out that the stakes are very high–“the future of the program can be at stake, though evaluation findings are rarely the only or even primary basis for such decisions” (p. 139). In other words, decision makers will consider many factors before they choose to continue or end a program; however, the results of a Summative evaluation can be very convincing and therefore can hold more weight than the other factors under consideration.

Another weighty consideration within Summative evaluation is clarifying the distinction between the merit and worth of a program. Simply stated, “merit refers to the intrinsic value of a program (e.g., how effective it is in meeting the needs of those it is intended to help)…whereas worth refers to extrinsic value to those outside the program (e.g., to the larger community or society)” (Patton, 2008, p. 113). Determining the merit and the worth of a program goes back to my discussion of how evaluation of arts can be problematic. It’s difficult because the criteria upon which the merit and worth are based can often be subject to debate amongst stakeholders. For instance, different stakeholders coming from varying backgrounds have their own agendas and biases. During the onset of a Summative

evaluation (and all evaluations for that matter) clarifying the values up front is crucial for rendering judgment. The Joint Committee Program Evaluation Standards (1994) provides the following guidance as it pertains to "Values Identification: The perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings should be carefully described, so that the bases for value judgments are clear" (p. 43).

Once the parameters of a Summative evaluation have been worked through, the information generated provides useful knowledge. However, a further cautionary note offered by George and Cowan (1999) reveals that quantitative inquiry "does not cover interpersonal processes or any unintentional outcomes" (p. 10). Summative evaluation, while useful, is a model that does not allow for the nuances of everyday life. Heavily quantitative in nature, Summative evaluation renders a finalistic judgment that usually ends in a pass or fail grade. Although this model may be useful for a funding application that requires statistical information, it would not be the best evaluative choice for a human-services program whose stakeholders value the nuances qualitative information can provide. A better choice, depending on the context (stakeholders involved, type of human service, etc.) could be Goal-free evaluation.

Goal-free evaluation

Goal-free evaluation (GFE), as the name alludes, is evaluation conducted in such a manner that the evaluator "avoid[s] all rhetoric related to program goals" (Patton, 2008, p. 274). GFE "in [its] pure form…the evaluator is not told the purpose of the program, but does the evaluation with the purpose of finding

out what the program is actually *'doing'* without being cued as to what it is *trying to do*"(Scriven, 1991, p. 180). In other words, every attempt is made to conduct the research without focusing, mentioning or writing about a program's goals, vision or mission statements.

GFE emerged as an alternative to goals-based evaluation because evaluators became frustrated when there were disputes "over goals" or were mislead by organizations that had "fuzzy goals" (Patton, 2008). Even when organizations have clear and firmly established goals, problems can arise. For instance, "too much attention to measurable goals can distort a program's priorities" (Patton, 2008, p. 273). When this happens, evaluators and stakeholders are caught up in doing only what can be "quantitatively measured, which is dependent on the state of the art of measurement and limited by the complexities of the real world…[the result of which is] a powerful focusing on (what gets measured gets done) and a potentially distorting consequence [occurs]" (p. 273). GFE, then, is "an option to attempt to identify all the effects of the course provision [or program]" (George and Cowan, 1999, p. 10). Such an approach, however, is daunting because the success of GFE depends "considerably on open-ended questionnaires, unstructured interviews, record keeping, and on the rationality and objectivity of teachers, learners, and especially evaluators" (p. 10). In other words, it's time-consuming, labour-intensive, requires objectivity, and a lot of flexibility of all parties involved.

As mentioned in my introduction, at the time of my pilot project, ArtStart had no set program goals and therefore the main purpose of my pilot project

research was to determine what factors made ArtStart effective so the information could be used to create their program goals. Unknowingly, I had conducted a form of Goal-free evaluation. I gathered "data on a broad array of *actual effects* and evaluat[ed] the importance of these effects in meeting demonstrated needs" (Patton, 2008, p. 274). It was also time-consuming, labour-intensive, and I had to maintain a high degree of flexibility throughout the project. But, where I fell short was the objectivity requirement suggested by George and Cowan. While I tried to maintain an "objective distance" (my own term for not getting caught up in the personal stories of my participants) the fact remains, their stories touched me and it was impossible to maintain an objective distance. While program staff and I considered the report produced at the end of the pilot project to be fair (there were positive and negative points), I find it difficult to imagine a GFE (or any evaluation) that is as objective as George and Cowan suggest. In my view there is an element of subjectivity in everything we do and evaluations are no exception; therefore, we should acknowledge that subjectivity and move ahead.

The wonderful thing about GFE is that it can unearth very interesting facts about whatever is being studied–this model allows an evaluator to focus on what is really happening without "being constrained by a narrow focus on stated goals" (Patton, 2002, p. 170). To this end, "qualitative inquiry is especially compatible with GFE because it requires capturing directly the actual experiences of program participants in their own terms" (p. 170). Another benefit of GFE is that it doesn't discount the actual effects of the program. As Scriven (1991) points out, "the whole language of 'side-effect' or 'secondary effect' or even 'un-anticipated

effect' tended to be a put-down of what might well be the crucial achievement, especially in terms of new priorities" (p. 56). In short, what is aimed for is not always the most meaningful "effect."

Despite the many benefits of GFE, it has been criticized by leaders in the evaluation field. Marvin Alkin (1972) argues, "in reality…Goal-free evaluation is not really goal-free at all, but is simply directed at a different and usually wide decision audience" (p. 11). Alkin's argument does have merit because Goal-free evaluations conducted between the early 1970s and 1990s were generally done with internal and external evaluators. Internal evaluators "stay home and mind the goals while external evaluators search for any and all effects" (Patton, 2008, p. 276). Today, it is very difficult to find evaluators using a pure form of GFE. Instead, evaluators prefer to mix GFE with other evaluative methods to provide information that is localized for intended users and for wide decision makers such as government (Patton, 2008).

Formative evaluation

The purpose of *Formative evaluation* is to inform frontline program staff of what is working or not working in their program. The information provided in a Formative evaluation is used by program managers, administrators, and the like to learn more about their program and what can be done to improve it. Unlike Summative evaluation, it does not render a finalistic judgment, but rather it is focused on how to make things better. George and Cowan (1999) note "the intention [of Formative evaluation] is to identify [the] scope and potential for improvement…[it] is formative when the outcome is a list of suggestions and

decisions for action, and for development" (p. 1). Formative evaluation "can often be at its most effective when it does no more that suggest neglected aspects of the process which merit remedial or developmental attention" (p. 31). Like George and Cowan, I consider Formative evaluation as a type of edifying building block for program improvement and student learning. They write, "arranging for Formative evaluation is the means by which you can build into your present plans the possibility of an eventual refinement of what you are doing at present…it is the source of the data on which you will base your judgments about improvements and fine-tuning to be made" (p. 9). To go one step further, I would say that it is also a useful preparatory stage for a Summative evaluation. While it is more likely for a Summative evaluation to be conducted as a standalone evaluation (i.e., a quantitative evaluation done for a funder), a Formative evaluation conducted prior to a Summative evaluation can provide in-depth knowledge of how a program has changed (improved or not) over time. In addition, a Formative evaluation that employs a qualitative methodology can balance a summative judgment that has been rationalized by quantitative results. Case in point, if a program had a 70% attendance rate, the program may be judged as "less than average" by a funder whose expectations are at least 90%. This percentage, however, can be viewed as an accomplishment by the same funder if a Formative evaluation has been conducted by the program, the results of which show the students' desire and willingness to continuously attend. But, due to lack of transportation or other factors, it can make it very difficult for students to attend on a continuous basis.

A benefit of Formative evaluation in cases such as the aforementioned is the evaluator's ability to capture human emotions, thoughts, and experiences. Evaluators are able to do so because Formative evaluation predominantly employs qualitative methods as its mode of inquiry. For this project, visual ethnography being a qualitative method was especially useful as I was able to connect with people as we talked about their experiences at ArtStart. This connection would have been impossible if I had conducted a quantitative survey.

Another benefit of Formative evaluation is that it involves low to moderate risk. Patton (2008) explains, "generally, at the end of a Formative evaluation, program staff will make adjustments…[which] enhance [program] implementation and outcomes…small changes involve low stakes [while] major improvements increase the stakes" (Patton, 2008, p. 139). George and Cowan (1999) also suggest that a two-stage Formative evaluation can render very useful information. The first stage is "a broad frame enquiry, to determine where to aim a more focused study later, then the focused study" (p. 25).

At the conclusion of a Formative evaluation (or any evaluation), evaluators must consider how their results will be received. George and Cowan (1999) have laid out six possibilities that are noteworthy (I have provided my own ArtStart examples to illustrate George and Cowan's possibilities, which are italicized).

1) *reinforce a need for change* – there is an established shortfall in the ArtStart program, but nothing has been done to correct it. The Formative evaluation provides new information and is an impetus for change.

2) *amplify a suspicion* – there is a suspected shortfall in the ArtStart program and the Formative evaluation provided the impetus for change.

3) *inform review and debate* – there are no glaring shortfalls in the ArtStart program, but the Formative evaluation has shed light on a new aspect that needs to be addressed.

4) *discover unperceived needs* – there is a "mismatch" between what the ArtStart is expected to provide and what is actually provided and a review is in order.

5) *establish an unperceived need* – there is a confirmed "mismatch" between what ArtStart is expected to provide and what is actually provided and action is required.

6) *change attitudes* – there is a disconnect within the program (i.e., E4C board members are not supportive of the arts), Formative evaluation in this instance can provide evidence to change attitudes.

(George & Cowan, 1999, pp. 32-34)

As the above suggests, the purpose of Formative evaluation is provide a building block for change. For this research, it is meant to inform and reveal aspects of potential areas for improvement. It is also flexible, entails low to moderate risk, and encourages qualitative methodology. For these reasons and more to be revealed, Formative evaluation is a particularly nuanced approach to evaluating an arts program.

Chapter 4: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This methodology and research design chapter begins by offering a definition of ethnography and explaining what visual ethnography means in this research and why it was chosen as my methodology. I have also discussed photo elicitation, the value of photography, participant observation, and will explain why a Formative evaluation was chosen for this research and how it came to be. Subsequently, I will describe *Appreciative Inquiry*, which is a relatively new

asset-based approach that focuses on the positive aspects of an organization that is being evaluated rather than the negative aspects. Within this research design section I give details of the photography element of the Formative evaluation and describe how the use of creativity and metaphor can enrich data by deepening the interview process. This research design section has also been interwoven with my reflexive journey (pictorial confessions). But, before I offer a definition of ethnography and what visual ethnography means in this research, I will now explain why I feel reflexivity is important part of qualitative research and a risk worth taking.

Reflexive risk

I once asked a very wise professor what the difference was between "reflection" and "reflexivity." Her response to me was, "well, they are a bit different, since 'reflexivity' implies reflecting on one's positionality/identity/etc. in relation to the social world, and then potentially re-working them…reflection is a much broader and internally passive process."[18] With this reflexive understanding foremost in my mind and camera in hand, I wanted to include my reflexive journey in this research design section to not only add transparency to this research by capturing my natural biases but also to deepen the reader's appreciation for the difficult task of writing reflexively.

As I began writing this research design section, I quickly realized, however, that my reflexive journey was in fact a set of pictorial confessions. Susan Smith (2006), a Principal Lecturer at Leeds University in the UK,

[18] E-mail correspondence between me and Dr. Sara Dorow, University of Alberta, Department of Sociology.

encourages reflexivity and confessionals in writing qualitative research and explains:

> The writing up and publication of a full confessional tale of qualitative work to complement the traditional realist writing up a qualitative data is a useful way of enhancing self-reflection, increasing the credibility of research. It also provides a permanent record of the small details of both the author's and the participants thinking, which may have a deeper significance when analyzed formally…this may particularly valuable in highlighting and exploring broader social issues affecting the researched, which may otherwise have been lost (p. 214).

While I struggled with subjectivity and personal bias in the pilot project, the degree of this struggle pales in comparison to the Formative evaluation component of this thesis; I felt I had to "come clean" as it were. But coming clean is not easy to do because it involves risk–risk of embarrassment, risk of not being taken seriously or potentially being seen as too emotional. For those who have been a part of ArtStart (staff, student or otherwise) risk involves possibility. When ArtStart takes a risk, they see it as a possibility that can lead to new developments, new beginnings or new awareness…and hopefully to better things. For example, when I was asked to provide ideas for a recent United Way funding interview, I suggested that an ArtStart student and I perform a mini skit to give life to the program. The idea was to re-enact my first interview with an ArtStart student in front of the United Way interview panel. The idea had an element of risk because funding interviews are structured and performing a skit deviated somewhat from that structure. The Director of Early Learning and Chief Operating Officer discussed the risk and decided that bringing the program to life was important and so the student and I were given permission to perform a five-

minute skit. In the end, it worked out well because the United Way panel thanked us for being a part of the funding selection process and for bringing the program to life.

Like those at ArtStart, I also believe risk is about possibilities and therefore the purpose of interweaving my pictorial confessions throughout this research design section is to add transparency to the project by capturing my natural biases and to possibly deepen the reader's appreciation for the difficult task of writing reflexively.

Visual ethnography

Ethnography as defined by Sarah Pink (2007) is:

> A process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced (p. 22).

While Pink's definition provides a rubric for understanding ethnography she also admits there is "no simple answer or definition of what it is that makes an activity, image, text, idea, or piece of knowledge ethnographic" (p. 22). Similar to the "effectiveness conundrum" I encountered in my pilot project (i.e., there is no one way to define effectiveness, but I still had to define it to make a logical argument), I have sought out a definition for ethnography that offers guidance as to what it is, knowing that the definition is subject to context and may be "redefined differently in different situations, by different individuals and in terms of different discourses" (Pink, 2007, p. 23). Visual ethnography is my chosen

methodology for this research. It means being immersed in participant observation, being open and flexible while conducting in-depth interviews, being responsive to participants' photographs and comments about their photographs and being reflexive towards my own involvement in this research. In support of this, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) write that ethnography:

> Involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions–in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (p. 1).

Regarding the visual component of ethnographic inquiry, Harper (1988) comments "many sociological categories are based on observable phenomena, and indeed, many of these can be understood better if frozen in a photographic image than they can if written about in a field memo" (p. 61).

The reason for choosing visual ethnography as my methodology was to obtain rich qualitative data. Specifically, I wanted participants to capture their experiences on film so we could discuss not only what was happening in the photo but more importantly what their photos conveyed. Personal narratives were critical for understanding what their photos conveyed and I as the researcher had to recognize that there are internal and external narratives of an image. Marcus Banks (2001) who coined the terms internal and external narratives explains:

> The internal narrative of an image is the story the image communicates. This is not necessarily the same as the narrative the image-maker wished to communicate; indeed it can be often markedly different. This is linked to, but analytically separable from what I call the external narrative. By this I mean the social context that produced the image, and the social relations within which the image embedded at any moment of viewing (p. 11).

For this research, I was able to obtain internal and external narratives by the process of photo elicitation. Photo elicitation is a process where:

> The roles of research and subject are altered. The interviewer [is] more like a student of the subject…as the informant studies images of his or her world and then talks about what elements mean the interview produces information that is more deeply grounded in the phenomenology of the subject. A photograph, a literal rendering of an element of the subject's world, calls forth associations, definitions, or ideas that would otherwise go unnoticed (Harper, 1988, p. 65).

Knowing how well the photography element worked in the pilot project (i.e., photographs captured participants' experiences and deepened the conversations during the interviews), my decision to repeat the process in the Formative evaluation came easily. In addition, photography as an art form had natural synergies to this research.

The value of photography

Photography as an art form began "during the second half of the nineteenth century" (Janson, 1997, p. 774). For instance, early documentary photography is considered an art form and is often valued because it can exhibit the harsh realities of life. As an exemplar, New York police reporter, Jacob Riis (1849–1914) photographed the gangs of New York. Alternatively, photography that fell under the art category of Pictorialism, embraced Victorian England values, which meant "beauty above all meant art with a high moral purpose or noble sentiment, preferably in a classical style" (Janson, 1997, p. 775). Photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), for example, is known "for her portraits of the men who shaped Victorian England…[and the beautiful] women who were married to her closest friends" (Janson, 1997, p. 776). During

this time, the value of photography as art was debated. The "Photographic Society of London, founded in 1853, became the leader of the movement to convince doubting critics that photography, by imitating painting and printmaking, could indeed be art" (Janson, 1997, p. 775). In modern times, and particularly for this research, photography is valued not only as an art form but also as a means to tell a story, document an event or to simply preserve a moment.

Throughout this research, photographs provide a "visual narrative" the value of which creates deeper meaning. A visual narrative "suggests a role for still photography similar to that of narrative ethnographic films or ethnographies that are built around social life as it unfolds" (Harper, 1988, p. 63). Deeper meaning, as Pink (2009) suggests, can be done by:

> Using a camera [which] provides ethnographers with the possibility of creating (audio) visual research materials that invoke not only the visual or verbal knowledge that might be produced through interviews or observations. Rather, it implies that such research materials might provide a route into the more complex multisensoriality of the experiences, activities and events we might be investigating (p. 101).

All photographs in this research are valuable then because they tell a story, document an event or preserve a moment. A few photographs taken by students also warrant special notation. Figure 27 and Figure 51 are not only valued because they tell a story, but are also valued as an art form–the aesthetic qualities of each photo. Figure 27, for example, was selected because of the student's candid comments about it and its formal qualities: the contrast between light and dark shades, clarity and juxtaposition of the school and tree. Similarly, Figure 51 was selected for the student's insightful comments and its formal qualities: contrast

between the rough rocks and the smooth steps, its monochromatic colours, and line.[19]

Photography also added a visual aspect to my participant observations– photos provided valuable depth to my participant observations.

Participant observation

As easily as the decision was to keep the photography element in the Formative evaluation so, too, was the decision to continue with participant observation as the means to observe the program. During the pilot project, participant observation meant observing and photographing while I volunteered in class. Specifically, I assisted volunteers and students with art projects during class time on selected evenings (usually once a week on Tuesdays) and took photographs of my experiences and observations. During the Formative evaluation I continued to volunteer, however, taking photographs became more of a natural process. Instead, I would go from class to class and take pictures of things, places, and people that interested me or struck me as significant. I was not concerned about taking a perfect shot or an aesthetically pleasing shot, I simply captured moments that meant something to me.

Other differences that occurred between the pilot project and Formative evaluation regarding my participant observations included: the frequency of visits, the rotation of visits, and the timing of visits. I changed the way I conducted my participant observations from the pilot project because I had difficulty visiting all the classes. Throughout the pilot project, I would spend the majority of my time in

[19] A formal analysis of this photo would include line which "can be used to build more complex shapes or to lead your eye from one area of the composition to another." Retrieved from http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/students/features/formal-visual-analysis.aspx.

the visual art class. The problem of observing once a week in a specific class is that it is difficult to get a good sense of what other classes are doing. Therefore, during the Formative evaluation, I changed the way I conducted my participant observation in three ways. First, I changed the frequency of my visits, going every Tuesday and Thursday night. Second, on each of my visits, I spent a brief amount of time in each class talking, photographing and helping volunteers, students and parents. Lastly, I varied the time I entered the classes. On a few days I started volunteering before children would come; this gave me a good sense of how much work the Program Assistant has to do before ArtStart classes begin. On most days I would start at the beginning or midway through class time. This gave me a good sense of how volunteers keep classes under control and how important snack time is. For snack time, it is important that the food is there before class starts or at the very latest by midway through class time, otherwise children are too hungry and that affects learning and to some degree class control. Because I brought the snack every night, almost all of my participant observations were done prior to the midway point of classes. Rarely, did I stay until the class was over.

During my visits I took notes and took photos of moments that I felt were significant and that could be analyzed from different aspects. Figure 32, for instance, is a zine magazine on display at the fall recital. It is entitled *The Tree of the Future*. While attending the fall recital I flipped through the pages of this zine and thought about what the future of ArtStart would be. The zine itself had photographs, drawings, and quotations that related to self-image and questions

where each of the contributors would be in the future. After the recital, I had the opportunity to talk to volunteers and staff and each had a unique memory about the zine project. Some remembered the fun they had with the students while creating the zine. Others recalled how interesting it was to see students explore the political nature of the media. Although not all of my photos can be analyzed from as many different aspects as Figure 32, each one is meant to enrich this research project.

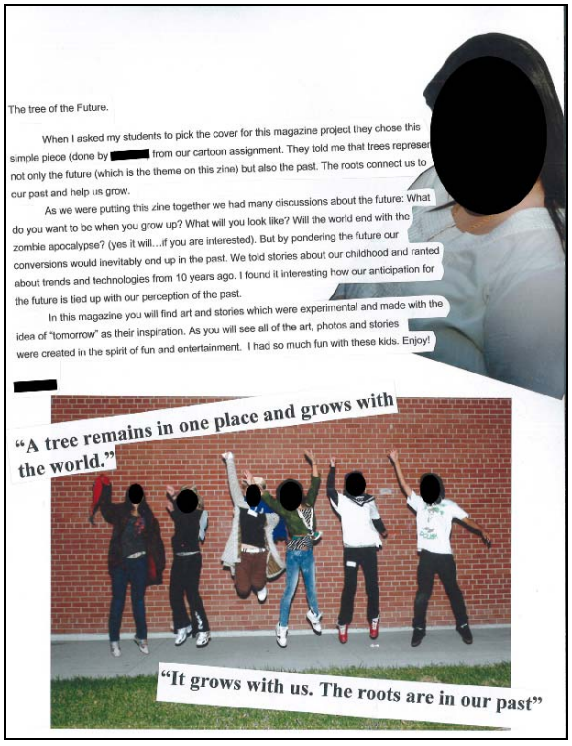

Figure 24.*The introduction of* The Tree of the Future *zine magazine. (ArtStart staff photo)*

Research Design

How the Formative evaluation came to be

Building off the success of the pilot project and with a keen desire to continue our work together, the Director and Program Manager of ArtStart and I sat down one afternoon to discuss what type of evaluation would best suit all the

stakeholders. On this day I also started documenting the evaluation in a personal journal. This strategy was very useful for keeping track of contacts, major decisions, “hiccups,” and everything in-between. During this meeting, the first order of business was determining who exactly the stakeholders were. After consulting with key volunteers, staff, and clients we concluded the information would be used mostly by office staff. The office staff wanted an evaluation that would provide valuable information about how to improve services offered by the program and could be useful for funding purposes. Specifically, the Director and Program Manager wanted to know what needed to be done to achieve their four, newly established, program goals. Parent and student experiences were deemed most important and the information gathered from in-depth interviews and photographs would essentially shape the future direction of ArtStart. A decision was also made to keep the research design similar to the pilot project. The research design for the Formative evaluation only differed from the pilot project in two ways. First, no textual analysis was done for the Formative evaluation because the volunteer recruitment pamphlet and ArtStart Internet homepage were constantly being updated. Secondly, themes would be analyzed with ArtStart’s program goals in mind and the information generated would subsequently be used to improve the program.

With the big questions answered we began to drill down to determine stakeholder involvement. Despite good intentions and consultations with stakeholders, it quickly became apparent that a highly interactive community-based approach was problematic for several reasons.

First, the Director and Program Manager were too busy to look into specific evaluative models (i.e., Summative, Goal-free or Formative evaluation). In addition, volunteers and clients were not interested in becoming part of this decision process. Instead, they allowed me to choose the method–they trusted my judgment based on the relationship we had built over the past nine months. The relationship I had built with ArtStart was open, collaborative, and driven by a common cause–to create more knowledge about the inner workings of the program and to give feedback about how ArtStart could achieve their four program goals. Secondly, a highly interactive community-based approach was not feasible because volunteers claimed not to have any spare time and in confidence expressed their disinterest in collecting or analyzing data. They were only semi-interested in being interviewed. Third, I realized that even if the staff, volunteers or clients wanted to be involved in any aspect of the research other than being interviewed, it would endanger the project being completed in a timely fashion–I received ethics approval in May and only had four weeks to complete my interviews with clients before the semester ended in June.

Given the aforementioned, my conclusion was not to use a highly participative community-based evaluation approach. Instead, I opted to consult with key stakeholders (the Director of Early Learning, Program Manager, Program Assistant, and three long-time volunteers, parents, and students) as much as possible during critical phases of the evaluation. Most often, these consultations included brief meetings, e-mails, and phone calls with the Director of Early Learning and the Program Manager. It was also a way of "checking in"

and it provided a useful strategy for staying on track. For instance, during a meeting with several key stakeholders, I was told how to contact a board member who had been very involved with ArtStart. This meeting saved me time and likely frustration because while the names of board members are public knowledge it would have been difficult to find out which board member would know the most about ArtStart without contacting several or all of the board members first. In addition, I could not make contact with any of the Board members directly; I had to speak to the Executive Assistant to the CEO and Board of Directors (EACBD) first. To save time, the Director of Early Learning gave this gatekeeper a "heads-up" that I would be contacting her. Once contact had been made with the EACBD, she contacted a long-time Board member and then I was given his personal contact information. After deciding who the key stakeholders were and how they were going to be involved throughout this project I was then able to forge ahead.

The next step was determining an evaluation model. Summative, goal-free and formative models of evaluation all have their strengths and weaknesses and each could have provided a suitable framework for my evaluation of ArtStart. The question really was which one of three would be the best? To determine which model to use, I reflected upon my pilot project and recent discussions with ArtStart clients and wrote down keywords that described the people and the organization in my mind. To me, ArtStart staff and volunteers are *passionate* about the arts and their clients. The program made and continues to make *positive change* in children. The program created and is now aiming to achieve *specific*

program goals, and it is an *efficiently run* program. Once I had jotted down these keywords, I immediately recognized that they were all asset-based. A recent asset-based trend in evaluation had offered a starting point to determine which of the three evaluation models would best suit my evaluative research.

Appreciative inquiry

Until recently, it was not uncommon to find evaluations that were deficit-based (Coghlan, Preskill, and Catsambas, 2003). Evaluators would often take the approach that focuses on the weaknesses of an organization. This mode of inquiry reveals the deficits. A creative way to encourage organizations to participate in an evaluation is through assets analysis. Assets analysis is an empowering form of evaluation which "is the opposite of needs assessment...where needs assessment determines deficiencies to be corrected, assets analysis identifies strengths to build on" (Patton, 1981, p. 79). In the past, many human service agencies have focused on needs assessment (client needs) while ignoring "staff needs, political needs, organizational needs [and] funder needs" (p. 79). This intense focus on needs assessment according to Patton (1981) has become "a powerful ideological concept" (p. 79). The concern then "is that the focus on client needs has become so pervasive and dominant that program staff and evaluators have largely ignored client strengths and assets" (p. 79). Centering their attention, evaluators concentrate on "what is wrong and what is not working, often concluding their work with a list of recommendations to improve the evaluand" (Preskill & Coghan, 2003, p. 1). Assets-based evaluation, on the other hand, is concerned about strengths of an organization or program–it is asset-driven. Appreciative

inquiry, for example, is a "new asset-based approach [used in evaluation and comes]from the field of organizational development…[it] is a process that inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of what is in an organization in order to create a better future" (Coghlan, Preskill &Catsambas, 2003, p. 5). Preskill and Coghlan (2003) also conclude that appreciative inquiry is "ultimately a process and a method for asking questions designed to strengthen a system's capacity for organizational learning and creativity" (p. 1).

After consulting with the Director of Early Learning and the Program Manager, we decided to use appreciative inquiry as the mode of questioning for the following reasons: a) being relatively new, this asset-based mode of inquiry provides a fresh and creative alternative to deficit-based inquiry; b) questions framed in a positive manner put participants at ease and can generate rich forms of data such as storytelling; c) appreciative inquiry works naturally with qualitative research; d) participants can openly discuss their "wishes" for the program; e) appreciative inquiry has been reported to be a mode of conversation that "yield[s] creative possibilities for coordination [collaboration]" (McNamee, 2003, p. 24). Given the aforementioned, an interview guide was created with questions framed in a positive manner to allow for exploration of the program's strengths.[20]

While creating the interview guide, one of the concerns that I had about using an appreciative mode of questioning was whether or not I was deliberately ignoring what problems may exist. As Rogers and Fraser (2003) report:

[20] See Appendix C and D.

> Appreciative inquiry is based on the heliotropic principle: that people and organizations move toward those things that give them energy and life. Just as plants can grow lopsided as they reach for the light, there is a risk of distortion in what appreciative inquiry evaluations focus on and the activities they encourage. By seeking as explicitly for positive features as appreciative inquiry does, it runs the very real risk of papering over substantive problems and in fact colluding with the powerful people who want the unexamined to remain so (p. 77).

My first reflexive confession relates to the appreciative-inquiring interview guide I constructed. Like a good researcher, I took a copy of the interview guide with me to every interview. But instead of using it like I did in the pilot project (referencing it often to stay on track), it became more of a note-taking-after-the-fact tool. To elaborate, five interviews were very candidly conducted and hence the interview guide became largely an unused tool because all I could really do was listen to participants' stories and experiences. These interviews were naturalistic and "naturalistic inquiry calls for ongoing openness to whatever emerges in the field during interviews" (Patton, 2002, p. 402). I became so enthralled in their personal stories and experiences that I would only write down a few keywords or sentences. Then, after the interview concluded, I would rush to my car and frantically record any other thoughts I had. Fortunately, all my participants agreed to be recorded and when I reviewed the keywords and sentences with the recordings and my post-interview notes, I found the amount of detail was far richer than what my pilot project had been able to reveal. During the pilot project, I followed my interview guide almost word for word and took notes during the interviews. I believe now that this strategy may have prevented me from really listening to my participants in the pilot project.

Figure 25. *Frantically recording notes in my car. (researcher photo)*

Secondly, I must confess that it was extremely difficult to write anything negatively about the program. After spending 18 months of interviewing, journaling, observing, and volunteering, it became incredibly difficult to be critical of the program because of the dedication and passion the staff and volunteers exhibit in everything they do for ArtStart. When things went wrong, and things did go wrong, I would feel pangs of guilt whenever I noted it in my journal or referenced it in the evaluation. During an interview, for example, a nine-year-old girl expressed that she was bored in drama class and instead would prefer a computer class. After that interview I mentioned it to ArtStart staff, but to date nothing has been done despite follow-up. I was told it would be difficult to find enough computers to hold a class not to mention a volunteer to teach the class. I recorded the experience in my field journal and noted it as a short-term recommendation in the conclusion portion of the Formative evaluation in Chapter 5, thus leaving out the girl's negative actual comments.

Figure 26.*The troubled researcher.*
(researcher photo)

Looking further into the appreciative inquiry literature offered guidance as to whether or not I was deliberately ignoring what problems might exist. McNamee (2003) reports, "the point is not to avoid such topics but rather to mine the resources and strengths that are part of the program in order to improve or in some way alter the parts that are not working" (p. 37). You may wonder…but how exactly is this done? The answer is, through a process of "natural selection." As an illustration, in 2000, the International Women's Media Foundation Africa Program (IWMF) contracted Encompass LLC (an evaluation and consulting firm located in the United States) to carry out an evaluation of their program using appreciative inquiry. In 2003, Catsambas and Webb wrote an article about the evaluation and in it they note a memorandum written by Sherry Rockey (the Executive Director of the IWMF in 2000) to Encompass LLC, it states:

> The "problems" are dealt with in a more implicit way. By discussing effectiveness and success, the elements that do not fall into those categories become apparent through a natural selection process. The "wishes" approach brings critique in through the back door. The question is structured positively–i.e., "how can we strengthen, what do we want to see in the future." In that way the participants can address critiques from a productive standpoint,

> without blame and defensiveness. Instead of responding that it is wrong to not have African leadership the response becomes "our wish is to move toward more African leadership in the future." The critique is in there. The wish to do something different in the future is the critique. It's not necessary to call it a "problem" (p. 49).

Through the process of natural selection, I discovered that appreciative inquiry reveals deficiencies of a program in a positive way and hence, I felt comfortable completing the interview guide and using appreciative inquiry. Moreover, literature provided additional support for using appreciative inquiry for this project. Conditions for appreciative inquiry, according to Patton (2003), include: "when change needs to be accelerated, when there is a desire to build evaluation capacity–to help others learn from evaluation practice, when there is a desire to build a community in practice [and] when it is important to increase support for evaluation and possibly the program being evaluated" (p. 90). Once the interview guide had been completed it was reviewed and approved by the Director of Early Learning and the Program Manager. Still, the outstanding element at this point was to decide which model of evaluation to use. Through another process of natural selection, the model that I chose and that the Director and Program Manager approved was the formative model.

The formative model was chosen because: qualitative methods were used in this study which is a natural fit for Formative evaluation; the study used an appreciative inquiry approach, which is also a natural fit for Formative evaluation; the study's primary focus was to provide information about how ArtStart could achieve their four program goals (Summative evaluation was eliminated because the focus was not about "if" ArtStart was achieving their goals, it was about how

ArtStart can continue to improve and move towards achieving their program goals); and, since we were all aware of ArtStart's four program goals (we created them from the information gathered in the pilot project and participants would see them written on the four leaves of the ArtStart Program Goal Tree[21]) the goal-free option was also eliminated. Most importantly, Formative evaluation is flexible and is conducive to creative modes of inquiry and thus an excellent mode for evaluating a nonprofit, arts-based children's program. In addition, I incorporated a participant observation element to engage closely with participants. With all the elements in place I was ready to begin the recruitment of participants.

Research participants

My goal was to interview: Board members (2), the Director, Program Manager, Program Assistant, volunteers (2), parents (4-6), and children (4-6) of various ages. However, as it would turn out, this was a lofty goal given the limited amount of time to conduct interviews–the Director of Early Learning suggested that I complete as many interviews as possible before the end of June as the semester was coming to a close. It was important to conduct as many interviews as possible in that four-week period because the volunteers, parents, and children would have been with the program since the prior September (a full nine months) or longer, whereas if I waited until the new semester started in the upcoming fall, participants would likely only have a few months' experience with the program. To jump-start the recruitment process, I attended the annual ArtStart Volunteer Appreciation Lunch. During the luncheon I gave a PowerPoint presentation that

[21] See Appendix E.

highlighted the pilot project and then ended the presentation with a creative evaluation activity.

The luncheon included staff and volunteers, all of whom I anticipated had different ways of learning and listening. Patton (1981) writes, “people learn in different ways…different kinds of messages and different media for delivering messages affect people in different ways” (p. 145). Taking Patton’s words to heart, I made the decision to have a formal presentation and a creative activity to engage as many people as possible. The presentation was met with few questions; the creative activity, however, caused a frenzy of questioning and some excellent feedback. The activity, derived from Patton’s book entitled *Creative Evaluation* (1981), was conducted as follows. First, I gave everyone a pen and a piece of paper. Next, I emptied a bag of household items onto the table in front of attendees and asked them to pick something out. The household items included, but were not limited to: elastic bands, a whisk, *Monopoly* Money, a light bulb, a hammer, tape, and a child’s ball. Subsequently, I asked the attendees: “When you hear the word evaluation, what comes to mind?” (p. 97). The task was to write down their thoughts about evaluation while thinking about the object they had picked–I gave them five minutes to complete the task and then I asked each person to talk about the words they had written down. The feedback was rich. For instance, one volunteer picked *Monopoly* money and talked about payoffs–taking a positive approach and saying that there are many payoffs to evaluation such as new knowledge (what’s working) or what’s not working which can lead to improvements, or evaluation can support funding initiatives. A second volunteer,

who had picked up a hammer talked about how it made her think about judgment and that evaluation can be a final verdict. Another picked a light bulb and talked about the glass being fragile and how the clients that are in ArtStart can be fragile and that the evaluator needs to be cognizant of that. Another volunteer picked an elastic band and advocated for flexibility in the evaluation approach. The ideas were recorded and I took them home. After my talk was done I opened the floor to questions–suddenly I was in the hot seat. One volunteer asked about ethics approval; her concern related to children at risk being photographed. I explained that participants would be encouraged to take photos of their experiences, focusing on art projects and to avoid taking photos of faces. Additionally, any photos that are included will have parental approval. Another volunteer asked about methodology, another about theory, and another asked about the time commitment. After answering the questions, two of the volunteers agreed to participate in the evaluation. As you can imagine my journal entry for that day was quite lengthy and so worthwhile. Worthwhile in the sense that if I had only done the PowerPoint presentation and handed out an informational letter as I had done in the pilot project, I would not have obtained the rich amount of information that I had on that day. In all, I was able to interview Board members (2), the Director (1),volunteers (2), parents (3) and children (5) between the ages six and 14.

The photography element

Participants were given disposable cameras prior to their interviews and were asked to take photographs that reflected their experiences at ArtStart. The

rationale for asking participants to take photos was to investigate the meanings of the photos and to explore the narratives of them during subsequent interviews. The photography element in this research had "two key values." As Pink (2007) explains:

> First, they are derived from photographic moments that were meaningful to the people who took the photographs, and within a particular narrative of events. Secondly, when our informant-photographers discuss these photographs they place them within new narratives and as such make them meaningful again (p. 91).

Instructions for taking photographs were kept purposely limited to allow participants to fully express their experiences of ArtStart. Some participants did ask for more direction and I guided them by saying, "take photos of a typical ArtStart class or a typical work day." Cameras were collected and photographs developed prior to the scheduled interviews and they provided a launch pad for discussion.

Prior to conducting an interview, participants were required to sign a consent form. Adult participants signed the consent form just before we would start the interview. As some participants were children, parents or guardians of the children were also required to sign the consent form. This proved to be problematic in one case.

My third pictorial confession is about a child who I interviewed without a signed consent form. I met this child during the pilot project and while observing him during class he was quite disruptive and showed disrespect to a few volunteers. Despite his disruptive and disrespectful nature, there was something quite unique and special about him, he was bright and talented. I was able to find

this out by working with him on an art project and from discussions I had with him during class time. He explained to me that he was bored and frustrated with the art program because he wanted a photography class instead. As the months went by his behaviour changed considerably because ArtStart was able to incorporate a photography element into the class–they even managed to get him a camera with a zoom lens. By the end of the semester, he was actively participating in class and was even assisting the Program Assistant with her duties. I was astounded at the difference and desperately wanted to interview him for the Formative evaluation. When the time came to conduct the Formative evaluation, he was still attending ArtStart and he was interested in being interviewed, so I told him he had to get the consent form signed first. On numerous occasions, I put a consent form in his backpack or gave it to him directly, but every time we met to do his interview, the consent form was either missing or forgotten. In exasperation and with time running out, I asked ArtStart if I could contact the parents directly. Due to confidentiality, I was not permitted to contact them directly right away and therefore the Program Assistant contacted his mother via telephone and asked on my behalf if he could be interviewed. His mother provided the Program Assistant with her verbal consent. On the day prior to the interview I was permitted to contact her directly to ensure everything was on track. I called her and requested that she sign the consent form and send it with him the next day–she agreed. However, on the day of the interview the consent form was once again forgotten. Knowing the mother had consented verbally twice over the phone, once to the Program Assistant, and once directly to me, I went

ahead with the interview. And, after consulting with my Committee and ArtStart (ArtStart had a release form which was signed by his mother granting permission for his photo and comments to be used to promote the program), his interview and photos were included in this research. An amendment was also submitted and approved by the Ethics Review Board. Today, he is no longer with the program because he and his family have moved out of the province. I, along with the rest of the ArtStart staff miss his wit and smile, but luckily we have his thoughts and photos to prove that ArtStart makes a difference in children's lives:

> *"You know the disposable camera you gave me* really sucked!*…the only pictures that turned out were the ones I took outside…the one I really like is this picture…the contrast between light and dark…the crowding of the tree and the building around the big open space…the sky. If we do this interview thing again, let me use my camera then I'll show you what I can really do."*

Figure 27. *The corner of Parkdale School*.
(student photo)

Interviews were semi-structured–meaning, that while an interview guide was used, the main discussion focused on participants' photographs. Participants were asked to discuss their photographs/experiences with ArtStart and subsequently

were given the choice of where to place their photographs on the ArtStart Program Goal Tree.[22] The placement of the photographs was relevant to the participants' interpretation of how ArtStart was meeting their program goals.

Expanding on my previous research with ArtStart, I wanted to explore the new program goals of ArtStart and to discover how those goals (those categories of meaning) are experienced by ArtStart clients. I also needed to provide ArtStart with an updated descriptive analysis (the evaluation) so they could continue to improve and expand. The four program goals that I sought out to investigate were:

1. Empowering children to tap into their unique and creative potential
2. Engaging parent involvement by building supportive relationships
3. Providing a safe and open arts environment with a developed curriculum
4. Learn the value of teamwork and the importance of friendships and community

For each photo the participant had taken, the picture was discussed and the participant was asked if they felt the photo related to any of the goals on the tree. If it did, they would place the photo on the leaf on the tree that best represented their experience in relation to that program goal. Specifically:

a) There were four leaves on the tree, each describing one of the program goals of ArtStart.

b) After discussing each photo the participant was given the choice to place the photo on one of the leaves of the tree that best represented their experience.

c) If a participant chose not to place a photo on a leaf (i.e., they couldn't relate their experience with an ArtStart program goal),

[22] See Appendix E.

then I encouraged further discussion surrounding the experience or I kept it off to the side for further analysis.

d) Each photo was placed on different coloured matting to identify at a glance which photos belonged to children, parents, and staff (i.e., children's photos were matted on pink paper, parents' photos on blue paper, and staff's photos on green).

e) Each photo also included the participant's quote or a keyword that best described their experience in the photo. Quotes and keywords were deemed important to the key stakeholders at ArtStart. Not only did it give deeper context to the photo, but I was told it was also very important for funding purposes.

The interviews were recorded with the consent of participants and I also provided snacks. ArtStart already had a snack program that consisted mostly of prepackaged foods; I simply added a variety of fresh foods (i.e., fruit, vegetables, baked goods, meat, and juice). As many of the clients would come either straight from school or work, the food helped not only to fill empty stomachs, but also to create a relaxed environment for the interview–especially with the children. Some children decided to eat while being interviewed–they picked up their food from the snack area and brought it into the interview room. Those who did would munch on their food and we would talk casually, one girl even said it was "like a picnic." While providing snacks created a casual atmosphere for interviewing, it was somewhat detrimental in one case.

My third pictorial confession relates to the snack program. At the onset of this project I planned to provide snacks to the children and parents being interviewed. After the first interview, it was very apparent that providing snacks to some and not to others was very unfair and so began my metamorphosis from researcher to "snack lady." Every Tuesday and Thursday I brought fresh fruits,

vegetables, drinks and baked goods–items that supplemented the ArtStart snack program, which consisted mostly of non-perishable goods from the Edmonton Food Bank. To some students and parents, I became known as the "snack lady," and I have to admit there is nothing better than feeding hungry families and being called the "snack lady," but at one point, I believe that "feel-good" feeling came at a price. During one particular interview a young girl commented that I should bring apple juice for snack time because that was her favourite and then proceeded to ask me how long I was going to stay with the program. It didn't occur to me at the time, but looking back, this young girl may have provided me with answers that she thought I wanted to hear so I would continue with the program. In this instance the dialogue was not free-flowing as the other interviews had been–I referenced the interview guide often. This was the only time I used the guide extensively.

Figure 28. *Snack prior to interviews.*
(researcher photo)

Figure 29. *Snack during interviews.*
(researcher photo)

Another strategy I used to make participants feel comfortable was to purposefully interview them during ArtStart time. Recognizing that transportation for many of the participants was an obstacle, and due to the limited time, all the interviews with the exception of the Board members were done on location (either at Delton or Parkdale School).

While investigating how stakeholders were experiencing ArtStart's four new program goals, I kept an open mind and engaged creatively with the participants. Patton (1987) states:

> There are no rigid rules that can be provided for making data collection and methods decisions in evaluation. The art of evaluation involves creating a design and gathering information that is appropriate for a specific situation and particular policymaking context. In art there is no single, ideal standard. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and the evaluation beholders include a variety of stakeholders: decision makers, policymakers, funders, program managers, staff, program participants, and the general public. Any given design is necessarily an interplay of resources, practicalities, methodological choices, creativity, and personal judgments by the people involved (p. 9).

One of the ways I included creativity into the process of my evaluation was the use of metaphors. For example, instead of using the Effectiveness Model (see Figure 23), which I developed in the pilot study, I chose to create a Program Goal Tree. The Effectiveness Model was a segmented triangle with various concepts which people outside of the ArtStart management team would find difficult to follow. The Program Goal Tree (tree as a metaphor) allowed for creative expression. To elaborate further, ArtStart wants to "grow" community, a branch can be understood as reaching out to the community, buds or leaves can be seen as program goals; roots of the tree can be viewed as funds which nourish the tree. The connection (tree metaphor) was also used in prior work with participants–children in the program coloured puzzle pieces which were used as leaves and placed on the tree, which subsequently became a mural that now hangs in the Program Manager's office (see Figure 3). Patton (1987) argues that, "metaphors, similes, and analogies can be powerful ways of making connections between seemingly unconnected things, thereby opening up new possibility by unveiling what had been undetected" (p. 93). During one interview with a child, for example, the tree stimulated deeper conversation. The child had taken a photo of the Program Assistant, and during our initial conversation about the photo he said he enjoyed talking to her during class breaks–nothing more was mentioned. Then, when I asked him if he would like to place the photo on the tree, he really struggled. After a few moments of awkward silence (both of us just staring at the tree), he asked if there was a leaf for "redundancy." Confused, I answered, "No there isn't." As if a light bulb had been switched on, he talked about how he felt

her job was boring because she was constantly doing the same thing over and over. His insightful comments described how the Program Assistant had to constantly pack up supplies, run from room to room to allocate those supplies, open doors, ensure children were in the correct class, and so on. If our conversation had simply ended after discussing the photo and had not been continued while staring at the tree, it is very doubtful that "redundancy" would have come up. In this case, the tree triggered his comments and allowed me to obtain richer data–this child recognized that the Program Assistant's valuable time is often wasted by picking up supplies from one school and driving them to another school. More importantly, his comments (to be elaborated on in Chapter 5) provided backup to the need for permanent storage facilities at Delton and McCauley schools. The tree provided a creative element not only to this interview but for all the interviews with the exception of the Board members.[23] In essence, the tree provided a creative means by which to deepen the conversation.

After a photo was placed on a leaf of the tree, the participant's keyword or quote was marked on the back of the photo. After the interview was completed, the photos were collected and placed in a sealed plastic bag and later placed in my research binder with the corresponding, transcribed interview. I was not able to leave the photos on the tree because the tree was not big enough to have all the participants' photos on it and I was worried about photos falling off the tree during transport from interview to interview. Like the Program Assistant, I had to

[23] Due to time restrictions and limited on-site interaction with Board members and the day-to-day operations of the program, Board members were not given cameras and hence did not have pictures to place on the ArtStart Program Goal Tree. Alternatively, their interviews focused more on how Board decision making occurs and what the attitude of Board Members was towards ArtStart.

carry my supplies from school to school every time I conducted an interview. Once the interviews were completed, I began to analyze the data.

Data analysis

Each interview was transcribed, using a responsive interviewing model for analysis, with this responsive model being one that "proceeds in two phases" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 201). According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), the researcher uses the literature and the research questions as a base and then "prepare[s] the transcripts; find[s], refine[s], and elaborate[s] concepts, themes, and events, and then code[s] the interviews to be able to retrieve what the interviewees have said about the identified concepts, themes, and events" (p. 201). During the second phase, the researcher compares "concepts and themes across the interviews" (p. 201). Many of the themes that originally surfaced in the pilot project were also evident in the Formative evaluation. For instance, parent involvement, teamwork, community, safety and comfort were all present in both the pilot project and the Formative evaluation

To elaborate further, client, volunteer, and staff feedback that was encapsulated in photos and quotations brought to life the realities of the program. Using these, the Board member transcripts, and my own observational notes and photos, major themes were drawn out and then refined to ArtStart's four program goals. In the first phase, I prepared the transcripts and photos by looking for four broad themes: a) uniqueness and creativity; b) support parent involvement; c) comfort and safety; and d) teamwork, friendship and community. In the second phase, I began by drilling the identified broad themes down to ArtStart's four

program goals. Uniqueness and creativity became ArtStart's number one goal–empowering children to tap into their unique and creative potential. Support parent involvement became ArtStart's goal number two–engaging parent involvement by building supportive relationships. Comfort and safety became ArtStart's goal number three–providing a safe and open arts environment with a developed curriculum. Teamwork, friendship, and community became ArtStart's goal number four–learn the value of teamwork and the importance of friendships and community. Then I compared the refined identified themes across all the interview transcripts including participant photographs and my observational notes and photos. The realities were then summarized to highlight what was working in the program and simultaneously revealing what was lacking. As a way of continuously "checking-in," program shortfalls that were brought to the Director of Early Learning, the Program Manager, and the Program Assistant's attention and recommendations were made. All the interviews were completed by the end of the semester (June) with the exception of those conducted with the Board members, which occurred at the end of the following semester.

Creating a composite ArtStart Program Goal Tree

In September, I returned to the program to observe several classes and to continue assisting with the snack program. While the majority of the research gathering had already been done during the previous semester, I felt it was important to keep in contact with the program to see if any changes had occurred that were worth noting. My observations during these subsequent visits were recorded in my journal and were very useful for providing additional feedback to

ArtStart about how the program had changed since June. I also returned to renew my contact with the participants to find out if any of them were receptive to the idea of building a new ArtStart Program Goal Tree together.

At the onset of the evaluation it was my intent to have the participants' create a composite ArtStart Program Goal Tree. My plan was to have a transportable cutout of the tree and have participants place their photos on the leaves permanently and that the tree would become this interactive, growing collage of experiences. Unfortunately this was not to be. The major problem was that I was not able to find a suitable (transportable) base for which to place the pictures upon. Colleagues suggested fabric, but fabric would not be sturdy enough to keep the pictures from bending and getting damaged. Others suggested cardboard or Bristol board, but in the end I opted for black foam-core in two 48-inch by 36-inch segmented pieces.[24] The black foam-core was the most practical because, when transported, dirt and scuffs did not show up; the base was sturdy enough to keep pictures from bending and getting damaged; it was strong enough to stand on its own; it was big enough to hold all the pictures of each participant's photos; and, it was light. Although the foam-core served its purpose (it was a creative way to enrich participant discussion during the interviews), I still wasn't pleased with the outcome–I had hoped it would become a work of art that could be displayed. At a loss, I asked several participants if they were interested in building a new ArtStart Program Goal Tree and to my surprise, they were very enthusiastic.

[24] See Appendix E.

During the last two weeks of the fall semester a visual art volunteer, her class, and I set out to create a new ArtStart Program Goal Tree.[25]

Towards the end of that semester, the class had been working on enviro art projects–students were learning how to make paint with common household products such as flour and spices. The volunteer suggested that we continue with this theme by providing students with the enviro paint, various recycled materials, the pictures the interviewees had taken and a base (the trunk of the tree) and then let them take over from there.

On the first night, students started by sharing their ideas about how to approach the project. They decided to use the enviro paint to cover the recycled tubes that were the trunk and create leaves from the pictures. Soon the class was erupting with creativity and discussion. The students used old wire hangers for branches and we talked about coppicing, which is "the process of cutting trees down, allowing the stumps to regenerate for a number of years (usually seven to 25 years) and then harvesting the resulting stems."[26] On the second night, the tree was completed and we all learned something. As one seven-year-old girl expressed:

> "*Trees are special…we shouldn't cut them down, but if coppicing is like being reborn, then I guess it's okay, as long as the roots don't die…trees have many roots that grow deep into the ground…and if you destroy those, then the tree dies and that's no good.*"

[25] See Figure 1, Figures 30 and 31.

[26] Retrieved from http://www.countrysideinfo.co.uk/woodland_manage/coppice.htm.

Figure 30. C*reating the base of the tree. (researcher photo)*

Figure 31. *Making enviro paint for the base of the tree at Delton School. (researcher photo)*

This activity was the perfect way to complete the research gathering. The tree represented the children at ArtStart and how they need to be rooted in a supportive environment to avoid being "cut down"–marginalized. Like a tree, these children can grow their unique gifts and perhaps even be "re-born," but in order to do so they must be respected and be given an opportunity to do so.

CHAPTER 5: The Formative Evaluation

Figure 32. Zine magazine: *The Tree of the Future.*
(researcher photo)

"*I think it's fun, so, like, before it was like I'm here just because it's a time filler and I really didn't think I could do art, I just couldn't. And now I can; now this semester I signed up for art classes because I know I can do it. Like I didn't think I had any talent whatsoever and I know now I do. Now I figured out I'm not as bad as I thought."*

– ArtStart student, 14 years old

Change is vital, improvement the logical form of change.

James Cash Penney[27]

This chapter contains all the elements of ArtStart's Formative evaluation. It begins with a brief introduction, then explains the purpose of the Formative evaluation and moves into how ArtStart is meeting each of its four program goals. As the Director of Early Learning and the Program Manager were interested in how the E4C Board felt about ArtStart, the E4C Board's perspective about ArtStart is also mentioned. I conclude this chapter by stating that ArtStart provides a vital service to the city of Edmonton and I note the changes and improvements the program has made since the pilot project. I also provide a

[27]Penney, James Cash. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/jamescashp226511.html.

summary of short-term and long-term recommendations for the program and finally suggest that ArtStart would benefit from continuous evaluation that is both qualitative and quantitative.

Introduction

During the past two decades, "nonprofit organizations [that are] engaged in human service delivery are experiencing serious threats to their survival due to dramatic changes in their environment" (Alexander, 2000, p. 287). Since the 1980s, "the changes that occurred in the government nonprofit partnership… marked the beginning of a transformation in the norms of nonprofit relations and the requirements for survival" (p. 292). Now, nonprofits are continuously feeling the pressure to compete with for-profit businesses that are operating in the same service areas. In response to these changes some nonprofit organizations have sought out revenue generating strategies and have become quite successful at not only sustaining their programs but also growing their services and clientele. For example, The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts (a nonprofit organization in Edmonton that provides art lessons and support for individuals with developmental disabilities) generates funds by running exhibits and selling the students' artwork in their Stollery Gallery. The Kids in the Hall Bistro (a program of E4C that provides on-the-job experience in a restaurant located in Edmonton's City Hall) generates funds from catering and day-to-day restaurant business. Nonprofit programs such as ArtStart, however, are at great risk because they do not have a revenue-generating strategy and therefore have "increased financial vulnerability from reduced government funding, a shift from grants to service

contracts, and heavy competition for foundation, corporation, and individual donor support" (p. 287). One of the major downfalls of this sole reliance on funding is there are often fluctuations in cash flow. Fluctuations in cash flow can jeopardize such things as staff retention, purchasing of supplies, the number of clients admitted into the program, staff morale, and overall effectiveness of the program. To better an organization's chance of securing funding on an ongoing basis, evaluations can be very useful in providing the necessary background or evidence to make a strong case or bid for the organization.

Due to lack of funds, time, and resources, ArtStart has never been able to conduct a formal or extensive evaluation. Program administrators have done their best by carrying out telephone follow-ups and collecting small written response surveys, both of which have provided helpful tidbits to better the program. However, these tidbits are often not enough when applying for large or ongoing government and private grants.

Purpose of the Formative evaluation

The purpose of this Formative evaluation is to: a) build on the pilot project conducted in 2009 so that ArtStart can continue to move towards the successful implementation of their four program goals; b) to deepen the knowledge of ArtStart staff and volunteers about their program; and c) to provide information for future funding applications.

Program Goal #1: Empowering children to tap into their own unique and creative potential

ArtStart takes great pride in providing high quality art programs. The philosophy forming the basis of their high quality art program is a philosophy of exploration that allows children to explore their environment freely and openly. Children are guided by well-trained volunteers and are encouraged to contribute to their learning. In the drama classroom, for example, children learn about improvisation. The volunteer will explain the concept and then allow children to make up their own dialogues and short plays. In dance class, children are shown basic hip-hop moves and then are given the opportunity to choose their music and create their own choreography. In visual art classes, volunteers explain the concept behind recycled art and then allowed children to pick their materials and create their own masterpieces. A 14-year-old student who had been attending ArtStart for three years talked about the positive change that has occurred in the hip-hop class:

> *"I think it's working pretty good, before the class was pretty structured, the teacher really didn't allow us to express ourselves. Now, it's like we make up our own routine, the routine is ours. And it's more about us now. We're free to do what we think."*

Figure 33. *Hip-hop class in the Parkdale School gymnasium. (student photo)*

During my observations, I saw volunteers encourage children to explore their creativity and uniqueness in every class. For instance, volunteers would often provide limited but constructive feedback. This strategy worked well because the children were aware that the volunteer was in the room to assist at any time and that the feedback would be non-judgmental. Additionally, this non-judgmental feedback would often lead to further exploration by a child and have positive effects. A volunteer that has been working with ArtStart for two years explains:

> "*Well, like today where the shy girl really came out of her shell and she had confidence in what she was doing, like the shy girl came in late today and she really didn't know what to do in the movement and I said, well let's move like the first thing that comes to your mind…and she couldn't think of anything and I said, well really try and she said nothing comes to mind…so I said okay…let's do nothing and then the girls came up with these really great movements and it was just fabulous…they walked like zombies and it was really great that we were able to use her suggestions even though it was really difficult for her to think of something, so I think that's one of the best things–like establishing community, being able to support each other.*"

Figure 34. *ArtStart Creative Movement class.*
(volunteer photo)

Also, while observing, I would see children supporting each other. I saw children discussing their projects with each other, collaborating, problem solving, joking, and yes, sometimes fighting. Naturally, in any discussion, a difference of opinions can instigate a fight. On these rare occasions, I witnessed volunteers taking a diplomatic approach to keep peace and order in the classroom. On one occasion, during a visual art class, two boys were arguing over paint. One boy called another boy stupid for mixing two colours of paint together (the task was to create a picture using primary colours). The volunteer calmly walked over and explained that primary colours mixed together can create wonderful shades–when red and yellow are mixed together, they make orange. The targeted boy was instantly relieved because he was not scolded by the volunteer–instead he was commended for his creativity and the other boy who had made the derogatory remark decided he wanted to mix his colours also. Then the volunteer gave the entire class the option to paint in primary shades or to create their own shades. Soon, children were mixing and sharing their ideas about how to create new colours. At the end of the class, there was much to clean up–paint was all over the tables; some had made it onto the floor and chairs. The volunteer asked those who didn't have a class or a parent waiting to stay behind to help clean up. Instead of groans, several children willingly offered to help as they continued their discussions over the sink:

"Look at the way the paint swirls down the sink…it's like a liquid rainbow…and look at the green chunks…it's like space alien snot…[laughter…yeah like boogers…hey, maybe we can make space rockets next class…let's ask the teacher."

Figure 35. *Painting with primary colours.*
(volunteer photo)

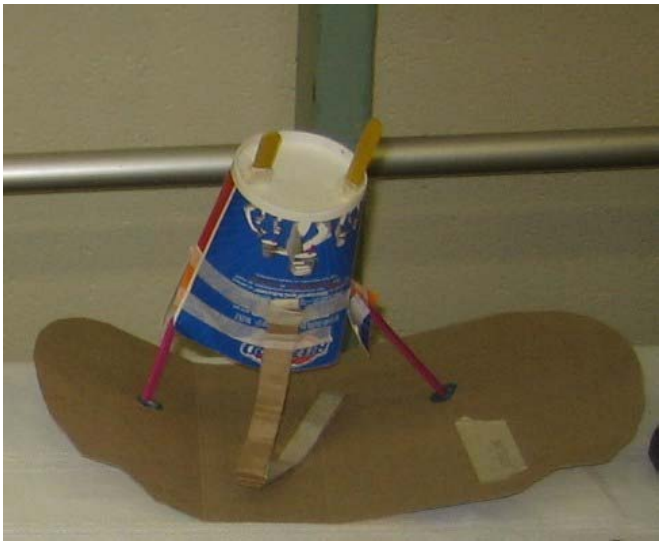

Figure 36. *Creating space rockets.*
(researcher photo)

This lesson started out as an introduction to primary colours and quickly morphed into a creative space journey–each child charting their own course of exploration.

The extraordinary patience and flexibility that this volunteer showed paid off in many ways. The children felt valued for their suggestions, they gained confidence as their ideas were implemented and they built a network of friends thus creating their own community.

Other factors that contribute to ArtStart's high quality art programs include: a) recruiting volunteers that have expertise in their field; b) having a venue that is conducive to learning; c) having the appropriate supplies for each program; d) having enough supplies for the program; and e) having a theatre to be able to perform the end of semester recital.

a) Volunteers

Every semester begins with the recruitment of new volunteers and the sign-up of returning volunteers. Each volunteer who expresses interest in joining the program is interviewed and if accepted, must agree to security and child-intervention checks. Once volunteers have been recruited, a volunteer orientation is held. During this orientation, the Program Manager and Program Assistant welcome volunteers and thank them for their interest. They also hand out documents to inform the volunteers about program details such as: dates, times, location, contacts, sign-in procedures and other rules of safety.

The aforementioned procedures have been put in place not only to ensure the safety of the children, but also to make certain that the volunteers are serious about participating in the program. Volunteers at ArtStart are serious about their role as teacher and the responsibility that is associated with that role. Several volunteers told me that they want to ensure their students are given the best

experience possible and have often researched class design, alternative teaching methods, and even behavioural strategies to deal with troublesome students. As one volunteer states:

> "*I have a lot of great resources, like I was able to take a creative movement workshop and I learned a lot of really great things that help me teach here…and if I'm asked to teach something that I'm not familiar with, then I can research it. I have books, and music and a lot of other resources, so that really helps in a pinch when something has to be offered."*

Figure 37. *Creative Movement class at McCauley School. (researcher photo)*

Volunteers come from various backgrounds: recent graduate students, current university students, working professionals, retired schoolteachers, and individuals who have a background in the arts. Volunteers are passionate about the arts–they believe the arts have positively contributed to their lives and therefore feel very strongly that all children should have the opportunity to experience the arts. They also recognize the value of "giving back" to society–the volunteers at ArtStart provide a vital service to children from low-income families

that have limited or no exposure to the arts. When asked, "why do you volunteer at ArtStart?" A volunteer's reply was:

> "*I grew up dancing and I always had that opportunity…I love it…I love to dance…it has added to my life and I just really want to give back, to be able to have others experience it. I feel I have something to offer…I was dealt a certain card in life and it's been a really good one and so I am in a position to give back."*

Figure 38. *ArtStart recital held at Alex Taylor School (volunteer with arm around student). (researcher photo)*

The volunteers at ArtStart provide an invaluable service–without volunteers there would be no ArtStart. ArtStart coordinators (Director, Program Manager and Assistant) recognize the invaluable service of the volunteers and do their best to provide commendation–usually a thank-you card or small gift. The volunteers that I interviewed felt this recognition was sufficient–the real gift, they say, is seeing the positive change in children. With that being said, two volunteers suggested professional development in the form of a behavioural workshop as a thank you. Quite often at least one child in a class has some type of behavioural issue and

volunteers are not always equipped to handle outbursts or full-blown tantrums. As a way of strengthening the volunteer's skills and benefiting the clients of ArtStart such a workshop would be an excellent way to say "thank you."

b) Venue

One of the persistent challenges that ArtStart programmers face every semester is the question of where to hold the classes. In prior years, Alex Taylor School was the primary venue for ArtStart classes. However, the continued expansion of Alex Taylor office space threatened ArtStart class space. Recognizing the need for more space and the desire to connect more closely with the community, ArtStart programmers accepted an invitation from the City Centre Education Program (CCEP) to move ArtStart's Tuesday night to Parkdale School. During the 2008/2009 semester, ArtStart became involved with the City Centre Education Program (CCEP). CCEP, formed in 2001, "is a ground-breaking [group]…of seven [Edmonton] inner-city schools that have come together to create a positive learning environment."[28] Now in its 10th year, CCEP is an active force of five inner-city schools, serving over 1500 students. The core beliefs of CCEP are very much in line with ArtStart's program goals making the collaboration a good fit. The core beliefs of CCEP are: 1) Poverty cannot be a limiting factor for children's education; 2) "good for the best is good for the rest"–everything the kids in suburbia get, inner-city kids get, too; and 3) the need to move from *me* to *we*–focus on collaboration.[29]

[28]Information retrieved from http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s5g.html.
[29]Information retrieved from http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s5g.html.

From the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2010 ArtStart's venues were Parkdale School and Delton School. But there would be another change before the end of 2010. Due to reduced enrollment and need expressed by the Edmonton Public School Board to save money, Parkdale School closed its doors on June 30th, 2010–ArtStart would once again be on the move.

A new venue had to be sought out for the September 2010 semester and after months of searching and negotiation McCauley School, in the heart of the inner-city, agreed to provide space to ArtStart on Tuesday nights. This change in venue has positively impacted the program in several significant ways.

First, the entire program is held on the 3rd floor, which keeps children all together and reduces the amount of time the Program Assistant (PA) has to leave the greeting area. At Parkdale classes were held throughout the school, making it difficult for the PA to manage the greeting area, which is a table at the entrance where volunteers and clients sign in. Luckily, the PA was fit enough to run up and down multiple flights of stairs and resourceful enough to recruit parents to help with sign-in. At Delton School, on Thursday nights, the PA still had to leave the greeting area to unlock doors, set up classrooms, take children to their designated areas, and coordinate snack; however, due to increased parent involvement the running around dramatically decreased. Second, McCauley School has recently been renovated and classrooms, hallways, and sitting areas are bright, clean, and spacious.

"I love this room, it's so new and open…kids really like coming here."

– Program Assistant

Figure 39. *New art room at McCauley School. (researcher photo)*

Figure 40. *Art room at Delton School. (volunteer photo)*

There is even a large, brightly lit central area at McCauley School with tables and chairs where parents occasionally meet and socialize. Children can also be seen working in this area on homework while they wait for classes to begin and it is the ideal spot for having a snack because there is enough room for the children to sit

together. Since the move to McCauley School, snack time at both schools has become more organized. At Parkdale School there was no common area, so children would take food and eat it in class, in the hallway, or wherever they could find a place to sit down. Now at McCauley School and at Delton School the Program Assistant has scheduled snack where everyone eats together and children can be seen busily eating and sharing stories.

Another positive outcome of being at McCauley School is that it can be easily accessed by foot by local residents, and by car or by bus for clients that live further away. McCauley is also spacious enough to store ArtStart supplies. ArtStart is permitted to leave supplies in cupboards and in a closet. This limits the amount of supplies taken back and forth to Alex Taylor at the end of each night. And finally, the school is home to The McCauley Transitional Centre. The McCauley Transitional Centre is a school-based academic program for newcomer families who speak little or no English and have had interruptions in their education. In addition, it is a place where the students and families are able to participate in after-school and evening activities such as ESL, drop-in basketball, and ArtStart. The positive impact of being in the same building as the transitional centre is that immigrant children are enrolled at ArtStart and relationships have begun to grow. Currently, there is discussion between ArtStart and a Somali group of women that is interested in providing dinner for the families on Tuesday nights. If this comes to fruition it will be a major benefit to the program because ArtStart will no longer have to provide snack on that night (saving money and the

PA's time), it will build community (what better way to meet new people than over a plate of food?) and it will fill hungry bellies–a win-win scenario for all.

c) Having appropriate supplies for each program

Supplying the program can be a challenge. For instance, if an ArtStart client is set on taking violin lessons and there are no violins available, a piano is not an appropriate substitute. Fortunately, ArtStart has quite a substantive collection of musical instruments and therefore, children can and do go home with a musical instrument of their choice. A 13-year-old student who has been attending ArtStart for three years explains:

> *"My lessons are fantastic, I've been with my teacher for a few years now and when we're apart I can practice at home."*

Figure 41. S*tudent artwork and violin at home. (student photo)*

Figure 42. *Music supply room at Alex Taylor School. (Program Assistant photo)*

d) Having enough supplies for the program

ArtStart has done a remarkable job supplying volunteers with supplies, or "tools" as ArtStart staff and volunteers refer to them. Every week the Program Assistant provides markers, crayons, paints, brushes, magazines, fabric, glue, and a number of other basic art supplies. These are considered everyday tools and anything "over and above" can be requested via telephone or e-mail to the Program Assistant. In most cases, the Program Assistant is able to fulfill a request within a week. If the request is for an obscure or costly item, it can take longer than a week for the request to be fulfilled. To keep supply costs down, volunteers will often bring their own supplies. This is just another example of how dedicated ArtStart volunteers are. During the pilot project, some of the volunteers expressed frustration when supplies were either forgotten or simply could not be provided. During this evaluation, however, not one volunteer interviewed expressed concerns about a shortage or forgotten supplies.

While supplies appear to be sufficient (no one interviewed felt there was a shortage), there is room for improvement. While observing the program, I noticed that much of the Program Assistant's time is consumed by packing up and moving supplies from one school to another. Even though ArtStart has some supplies stored in a closet and a cupboard at McCauley School there still aren't enough supplies for both schools. Instead, items such as paintbrushes, which are used on both nights, need to be transported from location to location because there aren't enough for both schools. Less costly and readily available items such as construction paper and magazines are in ample supply and can be stored at McCauley, which means there are fewer items for the Program Assistant to take back and forth. In an ideal situation, ArtStart would have enough supplies to fully stock both school programs. Unfortunately, at this time, there aren't enough basic supplies to do so and even if ArtStart did have enough, Delton School has no storage space for ArtStart. Therefore, the Program Assistant will continue to transport the supplies from one location until a solution is found.

To build up their supply stock and to improve community awareness ArtStart successfully gained the support of two Edmonton arts core schools in December 2010. Mount Royal Elementary (MR) and Virginia Park Elementary School (VP) offer arts core programming to their students. Understanding the importance of the arts to everyday life, MR and VP asked their students to collect supplies for ArtStart during their annual Christmas donation campaign. A tree in each school was decorated and placed outside the school's main office. Students were then asked to donate what they could and place their donations on or under

the tree. The combined donation of both schools was approximately $300. Small initiatives such as these create an extended community support network and are simple to execute. If these initiatives are replicated on an annual or ongoing basis, they can build up the supply stock, can lower the number of dollars ArtStart has to invest in art supplies, and essentially provides a sustainable form of funding for the program. As the Principal of both MP and VP writes in the November 2010 newsletter:

ArtStart Community Project

Mount Royal and Virginia Park students demonstrate a strong concern for others in our community. This Holiday season, we have chosen to partner with ArtStart, an important organization in Edmonton. ArtStart is a partner with the City Centre Education Project and supports children from low-income families by providing classes in art, music, drama, and dance. Classes are led by volunteers and provide a source of learning and community for the children involved. ArtStart relies heavily on donations from the community and this is where Mount Royal and Virginia Park can help. This holiday season, students at both campuses will lead a campaign to help collect needed art materials and cash donations. We are asking students and their parents to donate art supplies or money to purchase supplies. Some of the most needed items are paints, gluesticks, paintbrushes and art paper. We will be decorating our school Giving Trees with the art materials that are donated for ArtStart. Thank you for helping creativity take root in our community.

– November 2010 VP and MP Newsletter

Figure 43. The *"Giving Tree" at Virginia Park Elementary School. (researcher photo)*

e) Having a theatre to perform the end-of-semester recital

One of the keys to success of the program is empowering children to tap into their unique and creative potential. In years past, ArtStart has been able to put their students on stage. In 2008, students performed at the Stanley Milner Library. However, during the pilot project, the end of semester recital was held in the Alex Taylor School gymnasium. While this venue was able to accommodate a large number of people, children's performances and experiences would have been enhanced by a stage. For example, parents during this recital had trouble seeing their children because everyone was seated at floor level; a stage would have given them a better view. The acoustics in the gym were not conducive to the solos that were sung and it was very difficult to hear the children who performed plays. A theatre or a school stage would have alleviated many of these problems.

While conducting the Formative evaluation, the Avenue Theatre, a fully operating theatre provided a new venue for ArtStart students to perform.

Figure 44. *The Avenue Theatre.*
(researcher photo)

This was an exciting development for parents, students, volunteers, and staff. Not only was the recital well organized, it provided children with a real theatre experience. From being hushed backstage to being in the spotlight, the children who participated in this recital felt and were indeed the stars. To maintain a high quality recital, a venue such as the Avenue Theatre is necessary.

"Being on stage is extra special…you're in the spotlight."
– ArtStart Student

Figure 45. *Student performing on-stage at the Avenue Theatre. (Program Manager photo)*

Program Goal #2: Engaging parent involvement by building supportive relationships

During the pilot project, the need for parent involvement became evident. According to interviewees of the pilot project, engaging parent involvement entails: a) informing parents of program opportunities (i.e., parent volunteer recruitment); and b) providing safety for parents and their children and informing parents of their children's in-class activities. The basic premise is that the more parents know about the program and its benefits, the more likely they

will get involved. During my interviews, however, even when parents are very familiar with the program and their children's activities, they still find it hard to be involved. One parent who volunteered almost every night comments:

> "*Well, it's hard–parents probably have to work or need a break and don't necessarily want or can be involved. It's even hard for me sometimes because there are so many other things I should be doing–cleaning, laundry…that type of thing.*"

Figure 46. *Parent Orientation Night at McCauley School. (researcher photo)*

Since the pilot project, good strides have been made to engage parents so they become involved with their child's learning.

The first and most significant improvement was made in the delivery of information to parents on Parent Orientation Night. On the first night of classes parents are required to attend a meeting that explains what ArtStart is, what programs are offered, what ArtStart expectations are for parents and children as well as an overview of safety and sign-in procedures. I observed two parent orientations–one in the pilot project and the second during the fall of 2010. The second orientation was held at McCauley School in a room that was brightly lit.

The Program Manager also provided snacks. Parents were immediately engaged as they walked in and they mentioned how inviting the school was. Michael Sikes (2007), a scholar and advocate for the arts writes:

> A welcoming school is different. In such a school, the front office is a gathering place where visitors are greeted with eagerness rather than suspicion, find smiles rather than exasperated sighs, and see abundant student artwork and other evidence that children–and by inference, their parents–are valued there (p. 2).

After the orientation, parents rushed to put their names on the parent sign-up sheet–a scene that I did not observe in the pilot project. The presentation was also very organized, which kept parents engaged throughout. Before I left that night, I checked the sign-up sheet and all the hall monitor/greeter positions were filled, with only a few snack supervisor positions remaining–a remarkable improvement.

While parent volunteerism has improved, parent involvement in classes has not. I observed parent volunteers helping with snack and sign-in; however, on only three occasions did I see a parent inside a classroom. To encourage more parent participation in the classrooms volunteers and staff could: a) hold a meet-the-teacher night; b) hold a special-event night, c) hold an open house, where children are tour guides; d) ask parents if they have a special skill they would be willing to share in the class; and e) ask grandparents to share their stories in class and have all the students create a dance or artwork about the story. As ArtStart continues to grow "a key to gaining the involvement of parents is having a place for them in the school…a small room such as an unused office" (Sikes, 2007, p. 112). Any of the aforementioned could improve parent participation, but perhaps the most powerful is "engaging parents through their own traditions" (p. 94). For

instance, a parent can become a resident artist if they have a skill in a traditional craft (music, art, etc.) and are willing to help out for a semester. Sikes (2007) states:

> Not only can this have the effect of appropriately honoring the parent, but it can also provide a powerful demonstration that the family's tradition constitutes a legitimate knowledge system that has been passed down over generations and that it encompasses unique, teachable information and skills…through this, the parent may be elevated to a status equal to the teacher (p. 112).

Another way to increase parent involvement is to encourage more parents to become involved in the recitals. Parents can provide technical support, provide set-up and take-down support or any other type of assistance as long as they are able to enjoy their child's performance or artwork during the recital. Similarly, parents can become an extra pair of hands in large-scale community collaborations.

In August 2010, ArtStart students were featured in a play called *Theo in the Spotlight*, a production held at the very popular Edmonton Fringe Festival. Events such as these not only provide ArtStart children with an exceptional opportunity to "strut their stuff," but also it is a time for parents to get involved and take pride in the skills their children have developed.

Figure 47. *Fringe poster.*
(Program Manager photo)

Program Goal #3: Providing a safe and open arts environment with a developed curriculum

Of the four program goals, this has been met most successfully. Since the pilot project, all interviewees reported feeling safe (security) and feeling safe to express who they are. ArtStart has many security measures in place such as locked doors, sign-in procedures, hall supervision, staff and volunteer security checks and a buddy system if a child needs to go to the washroom. While there are many security measures in place, clients and staff do not feel like they are "lock-down" because the measures are standard in many schools and other after-school programs. As a nine-year-old boy explains:

"Safety and comfort…are a given. I don't come in here and get all paranoid and worry that someone's going to kidnap me."

Figure 48. *Locked front-door handle at Parkdale School. (student photo)*

Safety begins on the first night of classes when children are organized into groups according to which class they have been enrolled and subsequently supervised until their class starts. Once children are familiar with their classrooms they are permitted to go to class on their own (usually by the third class). This safety measure has improved since the pilot project. Through the beginning of the pilot project, I observed children not staying in their groups, not sure which groups to go to and parents unsure of where to leave their child. During this Formative evaluation, I observed the opposite. Children understood the importance of standing with their groups until class started (a parent was recruited to help with supervision), parents were more apt to leave their children, and after the second class, almost all of the children were going to their classes on their own.

The children at ArtStart also feel safe to be themselves because volunteers are flexible and the curriculum they teach is often modified to fit students' interests or needs. This flexible environment is conducive to learning as well as building friendships as one 13-year-old girl acknowledges:

> *"I've been able to make a lot of friends. I have a best friend now…best friends are important and I feel ArtStart has family values–you can be yourself–it's safe. Your teachers make you feel comfortable–there are many benefits to ArtStart."*

Figure 49. *Girls "hangin' out" in the Parkdale School gymnasium. (student photo)*

Program Goal #4:Learn the value of teamwork and the importance of friendships and community

As the aforementioned quote and picture allude to, children at ArtStart do make friends and are able to collaborate together on projects, dances, and plays. As one seven-year-old student explains:

"This class was hard–we learned about origami…I didn't even know what that was, but our teacher explained it and the bigger kids helped the little kids…we all helped each other…like a team we figured it out…it was really cool, but really tough."

Figure 50. *Visual Art class.*
(parent photo)

Students also talked about their understanding of community and the value of it.

As one girl, age seven, recalled:

"*This wall reminds us of ArtStart…me, my sister, and all the kids are the rocks…each of us is different, but we are together because of the cement wall…this makes us really strong…ArtStart is the cement wall that holds all the rocks together…the rocks and cement make community…we hold each other together in a community…ArtStart is community.*"

Figure 51. *Stone wall (location of photo unknown).*
(student photo)

Community, as Smith (2001) points out, "implies both similarity and difference" (p. 4). For instance, children share a similar ArtStart experience, but come from

different backgrounds. Or, community as understood by a child is about a collection of rocks, held together by cement to make a strong foundation whereas community understood by the Director of Early Learning is about:

> "*This inner-city community faces challenges…and we want ArtStart to be a place for families to go to that provides safety, encouragement, exploration…even mentoring.*"
>
> – Director of Early Learning

Figure 52. *Driving through the McCauley area in Edmonton. (Director of Early Learning photo)*

ArtStart has been able to successfully encourage teamwork, friendships, and community among students. To build on this success, ArtStart needs to extend their reach to the parents and guardians of the students. As mentioned in the parent involvement section of this chapter, ArtStart has made good strides to get parents involved in the day-to-day operations of the program (sign-in, hall monitoring, and snack assistance). However, in order to build a stronger community, parents and guardians need to be included beyond the everyday.

An option that has been looked at, but has not yet come to fruition due to lack of funding, is parent classes. Parent classes would run at the same time as children's classes and could include developmental topics such as literacy, computing skills or "just for fun" topics such as scrapbooking. Parents who were

interviewed expressed interest in all of these topics. One-night workshops that focus on topics such as money management, parenting strategies or healthy choices could also provide a means of creating community. Attendees could be given opportunities to network with businesses, banks, charitable organizations, and health-care providers–this would be a way of creating social capital. Social capital, as outlined by Putnam (2000), refers to social "networks [that] involve (almost by definition) mutual obligations…that foster sturdy norms of reciprocity: I'll do this for you now in the expectation that you (or perhaps someone else) will return the favor" (p. 20). Reflecting on Putnam's social capital definition, Smith (2001) remarks:

> Child development is powerfully shaped by social capital. Trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity within a child's family, school, peer group, and larger community have far-reaching effects on their opportunities and choices, and hence on their behaviour and development (p. 11).

Putnam's social capital concept also relates back to Pierre Bourdieu and his thoughts about cultural capital. Cultural capital (the acquisition of knowledge), like social capital (the acquisition of networks), is unevenly distributed among social classes and therefore low-income families may find it difficult to access even basic support systems. This imbalance furthers the need for a program such as ArtStart. ArtStart, through networking and program expansion, would provide a sense of balance in the lives of their clients and would undoubtedly deepen its roots in the inner-city community.

The E4C Board's perspective of ArtStart

During the early planning stages of this evaluation, ArtStart staff expressed their interest in knowing how the E4C Board viewed the ArtStart program. ArtStart staff wanted to know if the Board valued the program and to what extent their program was supported in relation to other E4C programs.

The E4C Board is comprised of 16 members from various backgrounds including retired lawyers, church leaders, business leaders, and educators. In comparison to other nonprofit organizations in Edmonton, the E4C Board is considered large. While large boards can be problematic (decision making takes longer as there are more opinions to consider), the E4C Board, according the Chief Executive Officer, has an intensely collaborative spirit and is able to make decisions in a timely and highly effective manner. Timely and highly effective decision making is crucial for the success of the E4C organization because anything less would put their programs at risk. E4C is known as one of the largest and most diverse nonprofit organizations in the province of Alberta and hence drawn-out, in-effective decision making would result in a reduction of service to clients who are often in crisis situations.

Programs such as Kids in the Hall Bistro (KIHB) that provides at-risk youth aged 16 to 24 years the opportunity to learn on-the-job and entrepreneurial skills and Crossroads (CR), a program that provides support to children and adults involved in prostitution and who are at risk of sexual exploitation, depend on timely and efficient decision making because clients come from crisis situations. According to Board member interviews, decisions regarding these programs can

take Board priority due to the "immediacy" of the situations that occur with high-risk individuals. The children of ArtStart, however, may or may not come from crisis situations and is a much smaller program in comparison to KIHB and CR and therefore demands less of the Board's time. In addition, other E4C community support programs such as McCauley apartments and Meadow's Place, that offer housing for low-income people with mental illness, demand considerable amount of the Board's time. This in turn further limits the amount of time and attention given to smaller programs such as ArtStart.

Board members that were interviewed explained that any program can demand the Board's attention at any given time–meaning, any program can be discussed during a meeting, but priority is given to "issues of the day." Issues of the day are usually related to funding initiatives and other time-sensitive issues. For instance, ArtStart became a focus of discussion when a new opportunity arose for United Way funding. Board interviewees also stated that while ArtStart is a small program that is not on the "radar" all the time, all Board members are supportive of the program and the arts.

One of the ways ArtStart staff can heighten Board awareness is by providing personal invitations to the ArtStart recitals that are held at the end of every semester. During the 18-month evaluation period, I observed only one Board member attend a recital. Encouraging Board attendance at a recital can be difficult because Board members quite often have demanding schedules that limit their free time to attend such functions. However, a personal invitation (a letter specifically written or drawn by an ArtStart student) as opposed to an e-mail sent

by an ArtStart staff member can be very compelling and may just entice a few more Board members to attend. Another strategy is to have a mini-presentation during a Board meeting. For example, if the Board cannot make it to the recital, bring the recital to the Board. A 15-minute play or a musical solo played during a coffee break can be easily worked into the tightest of Board agendas. And finally, ArtStart may increase awareness with Board members and the public by holding a mini-presentation at a church–a church that a Board member belongs to.

Raising Board and public awareness of the ArtStart program will be a continuing challenge for the Director, Program Manager, and Program Assistant unless they are able to get help in the form of additional funding and staff. Additionally, small initiatives such the Virginia Park and Mount Royal Christmas supply drive, to bigger community events like the *Theo in the Spotlight* production at the Fringe Festival, should become regularly scheduled awareness campaigns to spark dialogue and commitment to the program.

Summary

ArtStart provides a unique and vital service because it is the only nonprofit, arts-based children's program in Edmonton that offers a variety of private and group classes to children aged five to 16, who come from low-income families. The children who attend ArtStart classes have limited or no access to the arts and therefore the need for ArtStart is vital. During this 18-month project, numerous changes and improvements have occurred that have positively impacted the program. These changes and improvements happened so quickly that often, as I was writing, changes and improvements were being implemented.

Changes

The change of venue from Parkdale to McCauley School is working well: The McCauley building has been upgraded and thus provides an enhanced learning environment for ArtStart students. The building has room to store ArtStart supplies. The building houses The McCauley Transitional Centre (TMTC) and thus provides a networking opportunity for students, parents, staff, and volunteers. Finally, since all the classes are held on the third floor at McCauley, children are kept in one area and this increases safety while reducing the amount of time the Program Assistant spends away from the greeting area.

The change in program flexibility has enhanced student creativity and confidence. The children, who had been with ArtStart for more than two years, remembered earlier classes being more rigid where explicit lesson plans were followed. More recently, however, volunteers are embracing student input and have exhibited flexibility with their lesson plans. In short, students have expressed their delight of being able to express themselves safely and openly.

A less notable change that could potentially have big payoffs has been ArtStart's recent focus on small funding initiatives. The staff at ArtStart has been working on smaller initiatives such as school fund-raisers and charity/silent auctions to stabilize their funding. These small initiatives can stabilize funding streams if successfully implemented and repeated on an annual type of schedule (i.e., every Christmas, VP and MR schools collect donations under their Giving Tree) or a charity/silent auction could be held every spring.

All of the aforementioned changes have positively impacted the ArtStart program and will continue to do so until other needs or factors come into play at which time they will need to be reassessed.

Improvements

The most notable improvement during the past 18 months has been program organization and communication. At the onset of the pilot project, the Director, Program Manager, and Program Assistant had been in their roles for less than a year. At the conclusion of this Formative evaluation, all of them were still working in their roles, having completed a full year of programming. With the steep "learning curve" behind them, program organization and communication has improved because the staff has learned through experience the nuances of the program (i.e., what's working or not working) and hence can act accordingly. Specific areas of improved program organization include: communication, parent orientation night, the first night of classes, snack time, and the end-of-semester recital.

Communication between parents, students, staff, and volunteers has improved. Interviews during the pilot project revealed communication breakdowns between all of the aforementioned groups. Occasionally, parents would claim they didn't receive an e-mail, students would forget to give their parents forms, staff e-mails and voice messages would be lost or volunteers would complain about missing supplies (even though they remember leaving a message with the Program Assistant). On the contrary, observations and interviews during this evaluation revealed communication has improved. I observed no claims of

missed supplies or lost e-mails, voice messages or forms, and though I did not ask specifically if there were any communication problems during the interviews, participants did not mention a "wish for" better communication. Also, parent volunteerism has increased because the information communicated to the parents during the Parent Orientation Night was clear, professional, and engaging.

The first night of classes during the Formative evaluation, compared to the first night of classes held during the pilot project, was more organized. Children were put into groups before the first class began and then subsequently ushered into their classes as a group. While this strategy was also implemented during the pilot project, the Program Assistant now has more parental support and hence is more effective at crowd control. The key to continued organization on the first night of classes would be continued parental support.

Snack time is also more organized because the Program Assistant, with the assistance of parents, prepares the snack and all the children eat together. This arrangement improves supervision as all the children are in one area. It shortens clean-up time and strengthens the bonds between the children as they share stories while eating. Improvement in the assortment of snacks (i.e., healthier snack choices) was also noted by volunteers and clients.

The end-of-semester recital has vastly improved compared to the pilot project. The move from Alex Taylor School to the Avenue Theatre has provided children and parents with a better experience. Children experience what being on stage is all about. Parents can actually see their children up on a stage, whereas before at Alex Taylor, children performed on the floor and parents in the back had

difficulty seeing. Furthermore, ArtStart provided recital attendees with a beautiful program. In summary, the ambiance of the theatre provides everyone involved with a sense of going to a show–many dressed up for the occasion.

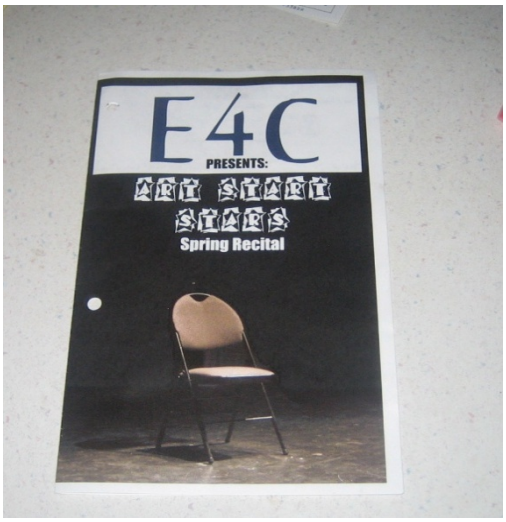

Figure 53. *Recital program.*
(researcher photo)

Other notable improvements are increased program diversity (e.g., enviro art) and overall stability. Volunteers and the Program Assistant worked very hard to offer a diverse array of classes to keep children interested. For example, enviro art was a huge hit.

Figure 54. *Children's enviro art on display at the end-of-semester recital.*
(volunteer photo)

Overall stability of the program has increased since the pilot project. While I conducted the pilot project, the program staff was constantly reacting to change as opposed to anticipating and preparing for change. In contrast, while I conducted the Formative evaluation, program staff were always anticipating change (such as the closure of Parkdale School) and were prepared when the change took effect (secured McCauley School). This preparedness has stabilized the program and has instilled confidence in the participants that the program will continue to run despite the various funding obstacles. And it is perhaps this growing stabilization that will one day enable ArtStart to have more staff, resources, funding, and perhaps a building of their own located in the inner-city.

Short-term and long-term recommendations

The following is a quick reference list that provides specific suggestions about how to improve the program in the short term and long term. Suggestions have been provided by students, staff, volunteers, and parents.

Short term:

- Offer computer classes (graphic design, digital imaging, introduction to computers)
- Start a laptop computer drive (i.e., ask for laptop donations)
- Offer classes that have a food element (make edible art)
- Offer small tokens during special days (a small gift a Christmas, some candy at Easter or Valentines, etc.)
- Organize a class trip to the theatre to see a play
- Offer classes for parents: Scrapbooking, drawing, parenting, introductory computers or basic English
- Make snack time…dinner time

- Create awareness by asking local media do a feature on ArtStart
- Translate online information and enrollment forms into Chinese and Somali

Long term:

- Obtain funding for an artist-in-residence
- Secure a permanent location
- Create a core, and broad, volunteer base
- Research new arts trends and incorporate them into classes whenever possible
- Enhance volunteer program by offering workshops (i.e., how to deal with children with disabilities or behavioural issues)

There is little doubt that in order for ArtStart to implement any of the above-noted suggestions, an increase in funding or donations would be necessary. If fund development can be optimized, the program could have long-term effects on students, parents, and volunteers. As noted by an ArtStart Logic Model (a recent document developed for a funding campaign), benefits for participants can include long-term effects such as success in school, participation in the arts in later years, and self-esteem. Parental long-term effects can include: gaining an appreciation for their children's artistic expression and continued exploration of their children's artistic abilities. A volunteer long-term effect noted in the ArtStart Logic Model indicated that 90% of volunteers reported an excellent experience with students and staff in this program and this high rate of satisfaction can lead to volunteers promoting and supporting the program as well as recruiting more volunteers.

Where to go from here?

Moving forward, ArtStart would benefit from continuous evaluation. To obtain a broader scope of feedback, ArtStart should implement a mixed-methods evaluation approach. A mixed-methods approach combines qualitative and quantitative data in the evaluation. ArtStart could continue with the formative model, or a qualitative questionnaire that provides constant feedback with quantitative data such as surveys, attendance rates, volunteer retention rates, and the like. As resources are limited the Formative evaluation need not be as in-depth as this project, but rich enough to provide useful feedback (i.e., interviews without the photography element). The survey should include targeted questions that explore the strengths and weaknesses of the program. And subsequently, all this information can be further supported by attendance rates, volunteer retention rates, and the like. By implementing a continuous evaluation strategy that incorporates a mixed-methods approach, ArtStart may be in a better position to apply and secure funding. If funding is secured and an evaluation is required by the funder, then it is crucial that ArtStart evaluators understand the funder's expectations. For instance, "funders report that they expect more evaluation information than they did in the past and are increasingly looking for evaluations that report on the outcomes of the programs and projects they fund rather than those that report on outputs" (Hall, Phillips, Meillat & Pickering, 2003, VII). Or, if there are multiple funders, then ArtStart may have multiple expectations to consider and will have to work in partnership with all stakeholders involved.

The key to success for ArtStart is to continue to work in partnership with their stakeholders in the evaluation process and to increase funding and awareness of the program. These measures will help stabilize the program. Once the program has stabilized, then the next step would be to conduct a Summative evaluation. As Burke (2010) suggests, "both formative and summative assessments are necessary; moreover, they complement each other" (p. 1).

The stories, pictures, and recommendations in this evaluation are meant to provide useful feedback so ArtStart can keep on supporting children and families in an arts-enriched environment. ArtStart provides a unique and vital service and as the Program Manager expressed early in the pilot project:

"If ArtStart wasn't here…where would these kids have been?"

Figure 55. *The last day of classes before the Parkdale School closure. (student photo)*

The children, parents, staff, and volunteers of ArtStart have taken me on an unforgettable journey and thus I am forever grateful to them. It is my sincerest hope that this research will, in some way, contribute to the growth of this very important program. Whether it is used in funding initiatives, public awareness campaigns or simply for internal purposes, I feel I have given a fair and accurate assessment of things as they are right now. And it is with much optimism that I

see the ArtStart of the future as being a program that continues to branch out into the community to sow the seeds of artistic creativity.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: Why Formative evaluation is a particularly nuanced approach to evaluating an arts program

> *Practical judgment based on ineffable forms of understanding should not be regarded as irrational. Such judgment might reflect the highest forms of human rationality.*
>
> – Elliot Eisner[30]

In this thesis, I have explored Formative evaluation and how it is a particularly nuanced approach to evaluating an arts program for the following reasons: it is a non-reductive framework that provides constructive feedback rather than a finalistic judgment; it allows for creativity and flexibility for evaluators and evaluands and therefore challenges preconceived notions of evaluation as being necessarily reductive, judgmental, and often leading to ill-fated results; and finally, it is conducive to qualitative measures which can capture the subjective nature of an arts program and the arts in general. Each of the aforementioned reasons was surveyed in the following manner:

Providing feedback rather than a finalistic judgment

Client, volunteer, and staff feedback was encapsulated in photos and quotations which brought to life the realities of the program. Along with Board member interviews, my observational notes and photos, all these realities were analyzed in two phases. In the first phase, I prepared the transcripts and photos by looking for four broad themes: a) uniqueness and creativity; b) support parent involvement; c)comfort and safety; and d) teamwork, friendship, and community.

[30] Eisner, Elliot. (1994). *The educational imagination on the design and evaluation of school programs* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan College Publishing Company. p. 370.

In the second phase, I began by refining the identified broad themes into ArtStart's four program goals. Uniqueness and creativity became ArtStart's goal #1–empowering children to tap into their unique and creative potential. Support parent involvement became ArtStart's goal #2–engaging parent involvement by building supportive relationships. Comfort and safety became ArtStart's goal #3–providing a safe and open arts environment with a developed curriculum. Teamwork, friendship, and community became ArtStart's goal #4–learn the value of teamwork and the importance of friendships and community. Then I compared the refined, identified themes across all the interviews and photos also including my observational notes and photos. The realities were then summarized to highlight what was working in the program and simultaneously revealing what was lacking. Recommendations were also made.

Creativity and flexibility

This research challenges the notion of evaluation as being necessarily reductive, judgmental, and often leading to ill-fated results by using creative methods to evaluate a nonprofit arts-based children's program. I strove to make the evaluation creative and flexible in context by "being situationally responsive, methodologically flexible, consciously committed to matching evaluation approaches to the needs and interests of those with whom [I] work[ed], and [was] genuinely sensitive to the unique constraints and possibilities of particular people and circumstances" (Patton, 1981, p. 67). Specifically, I used three creative approaches to obtain interest, solicit information, and to disseminate the knowledge gained from the evaluation. First, I was able to recruit staff and

volunteer interest by hosting a creative activity at the onset of the Formative evaluation. Secondly, I chose photography as a creative approach to solicit information from participants. And third, participants and I created the *ArtStart Program Goal Tree*–we constructed a tree made of recycled materials that explored ArtStart's four program goals. The tree became a materialization of our journey together. Creative evaluation also entails being absorbed in the experience, as Patton (2002) explains, "creative fieldwork means using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening…creative insights come from being directly involved in the setting being studied" (p. 302). I have come to understand my experiences and the various roles that I have undertaken in this research (i.e., researcher, observer, volunteer, snack lady, etc.) through a reflexive journey which has been interwoven throughout Chapter 5. However, rather than simply writing reflexive paragraphs in Chapter 5, I chose to also include photographs (i.e., my pictorial confessions) as a creative means by which to deepen my understanding and the reader's to further explain the problems I encountered while conducting this research.

Formative evaluation is conducive to qualitative measures, which can capture the subjective nature of an art program

Formative evaluation provides feedback on what is and what is not working in a program. While feedback of a program can be provided in a survey or questionnaire (as is typical of Summative evaluations), the richest form of feedback can come from qualitative interviews. As I conducted the qualitative interviews in this project, I remained flexible. Meaning, the interviews ranged between naturalistic (conversational), semi-structured, and in one case, fairly

structured (I used the interview guide extensively). By implementing qualitative inquiry and a Formative evaluation model, the participants were able to explain how ArtStart has impacted their lives. Children told stories about the friendships they had developed, the skills they had learned, and the self-confidence they had gained. This would have been lost in a summative/quantitative evaluation.

Suggestions for further research

While this Formative evaluation was effective at capturing the experiences of the participants, it does fall short of providing a full range of information–it does not include quantitative data, which is useful for funding initiatives that require quantifiable outputs. Even though funders are now becoming more interested in program outcomes as opposed to outputs, the fact remains that a balanced approach to evaluation (using qualitative and quantitative methods) would provide the widest array of information. Accordingly, an evaluation that included both qualitative and quantitative methods would be highly desirable if there were multiple funders.

Another limitation of my research is that it is based on a single case study. Further exploration could include multiple nonprofit arts-based organizations. And finally, there would be much benefit in conducting longitudinal research as existing literature that addresses evaluation of nonprofit arts-based children's programs in Canada is very limited.

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Appendix A

Federal Low-Income Cut-off Guidelines

Who Qualifies

Our classes are for children 5-16 years that meet the Federal Low Income Cut-off Guidelines.

Family Size	Federal Low Income Cut-off by Year	Federal Low Income Cut-off by Month
2 People	$27,484	$2,290
3 People	$33,789	$2,815
4 People	$41,023	$3,419
5 People	$46,529	$3,877
6 People	$52,476	$4,373

Retrieved from ArtStart homepage at: http://www.e4calberta.org/artstart.html.

Appendix B

Pilot Project Informational Letter

Arts-Based Programming: Exploring the Effectiveness of Non-profit Arts-based Programs

"Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things."
– Peter Drucker[31]

This information letter is intended to give you a "snapshot" of my research project. My research project intends to investigate the broad question "What makes non-profit organizations effective in their delivery of arts-based programming for children?" More specifically, this project will explore, "How do managers and volunteers at ArtStart define and assess the effectiveness of their organization to carry out arts-based programming for children?"

We will begin our journey by exploring your workplace. You will be given a disposable camera and I would ask that you take pictures of whatever you feel is significant in relation to the aforementioned questions. Be as creative as you like and take as many pictures as you like as there are no guidelines. Have fun with this task, but please keep in mind that we are looking for are "clues" of effectiveness (i.e., "What makes these photographs significant in your mind?" "How do the photos convey ArtStart's effectiveness?")

Once the photos have been developed, we will meet to discuss them and other topics in a scheduled interview. Interviews will be casual, tape-recorded with your approval and approximately 1 hour in duration. All information will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at 780-000-0000.

I hope this will be a rewarding experience for you and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Susan Kisilevich

[31] Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005) "was a writer, management consultant, and self-described "social ecologist." His books and scholarly and popular articles explored how humans are organized across the business, government, and the nonprofit sectors of society." Retrieved from http://en/wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Drucker.

Appendix C

Interview Guide for Staff and Volunteers

Picture This: Evaluating A Non-Profit Arts-Based Children's Program Through Photography

Participant Information
Participant Name: _____
Participant Contact Ph._____
Position: _____
How long in the position? _____
Date of Interview: _____
Start time: _____

Checklist: Computer, microphone, extra batteries, 2 pens, 2 pencils, paper, snacks, ArtStart Program Goal Tree foam-core, watch, address and phone number of location to meet interviewee, 2 consent forms, appropriate matting for pictures (10), small rectangular stickers for quotes (10).
*Reminder: Ask participants if they want to place their photos on the tree once they are finished discussing each photo

_____

Interview Question #1
Why do you volunteer /Work at ArtStart?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #2
Explain why these photographs are significant to you (i.e., what makes these experiences important?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #3
How do you see ArtStart fulfilling their program goals?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #4
How do the various ArtStart programs (Drama, Visual Arts, Music) differ in meeting the program goals?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #5
Can you think of (an) example(s) of how/when an ArtStart program goal was met?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #6
What do you wish for ArtStart? Probe: What do you want the future of ArtStart to look like?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #7
What kind of resources do you feel you have to meet ArtStart's program goals? Probe: Do you feel you have enough networks to support parents, materials for the program, etc.?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #8
What do you like about the snack program? Probes: How do you feel about the snack program? Are children hungry or not when they come to class? Do you think the children are still hungry after they've had an opportunity to eat at the snack table?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #9
Why is ArtStart important to you? Probe: what aspects of ArtStart are most important to you? (i.e., learned something new, well organized)
Notes:_____
_____

Goal-specific questions:
1) How does ArtStart provide a safe and open arts environment?

2) How does ArtStart empower children to tap into their unique and creative potential?

3) How does ArtStart engage parent involvement by building supportive relationships?

4) How does ArtStart teach the value of teamwork, the importance of friendship and community?

End time: _____

Appendix D

Interview Guide for Parents/Children

Picture This: Evaluating A Non-Profit Arts-Based Children's Program Through Photography

Participant Information
Participant Name: _____
Participant Contact Ph._____
Parent or Child: _____
Age _____
Date of Interview: _____
Start time: _____

Checklist: Computer and microphone, extra batteries, 2 pens, 2 pencils, paper, snacks, ArtStart Program Goal Tree, watch, address and phone number of location to meet interviewee, 2 consent forms, appropriate matting for pictures (10), small rectangular stickers for quotes (10).
*Reminder: Ask participants if they want to place their photos on the tree once they are finished discussing each photo

_____

Parent/Child Interview Question #1
Why do you attend ArtStart? Or, Why does your child(ren) attend Art Start?
Notes:_____
_____

Parent/Child Interview Question #2
Explain why these photographs are significant to you (i.e., tell me about your experiences with ArtStart)?
Notes:_____
_____

Parent Interview Question #3
Are you a parent volunteer? If yes, why do you attend your child(ren)'s ArtStart class? If no, why don't you attend your child(ren)'s ArtStart class?
Notes:_____
_____

Parent Interview Question #4
If ArtStart offered adult classes at the same time as your child's class would consider staying or volunteering at the program?
If no, why?
Notes:_____
_____

If yes, what type of classes would interest you (Probe: Art, Music, knitting, cooking, workshops to help with parenting skills, tax assistance, etc.)
Notes:_____
_____

Child Interview Question #5
Does your parent or guardian volunteer?
If yes, why do you think they attend?
If no, why do you think they do not attend?
If ArtStart offered adult classes at the same time as your class,do you think your parent or guardian would consider staying or volunteering at the program?
If no, why?
If yes, what type of classes do you think might interest your parent or guardian?
Notes:_____
_____

Parent/Child Interview Question #6
What do you think ArtStart's program goals are? Or, what do you think ArtStart is trying to do for you (your child[ren])?
Notes:_____
_____

Parent/Child Interview Question #7
Can you think of an example(s) of how/when an ArtStart program goal was met? Probe: Can you think of an example when ArtStart provided you with a positive experience?
Notes:_____
_____

Parent/Child Interview Question #8
What do you wish for ArtStart? Probe: What do you want the future of ArtStart to look like?
Notes:_____
_____

Parent/Child Interview Question #9
How do you feel about the snack program? PROBES: are the children hungry or not when they come to class, is there enough food at the snack area, is there enough variety in the food, is the food nutritious, do you think the children are still hungry after they've had an opportunity to eat at the snack table?
Notes:_____
_____

Interview Question #10
Why is ArtStart important to you? Probe: What aspects of ArtStart are most important to you? (i.e., learned something new, well organized)
Notes:_____
_____

Goal-specific questions:

1) How does ArtStart provide a safe and open arts environment?

2) How does ArtStart empower children to tap into their unique and creative potential?

3) How does ArtStart engage parent involvement by building supportive relationships?

4) How does ArtStart teach the value of teamwork, the importance of friendship and community?

End time: _____

Appendix E

The ArtStart Program Goal Tree

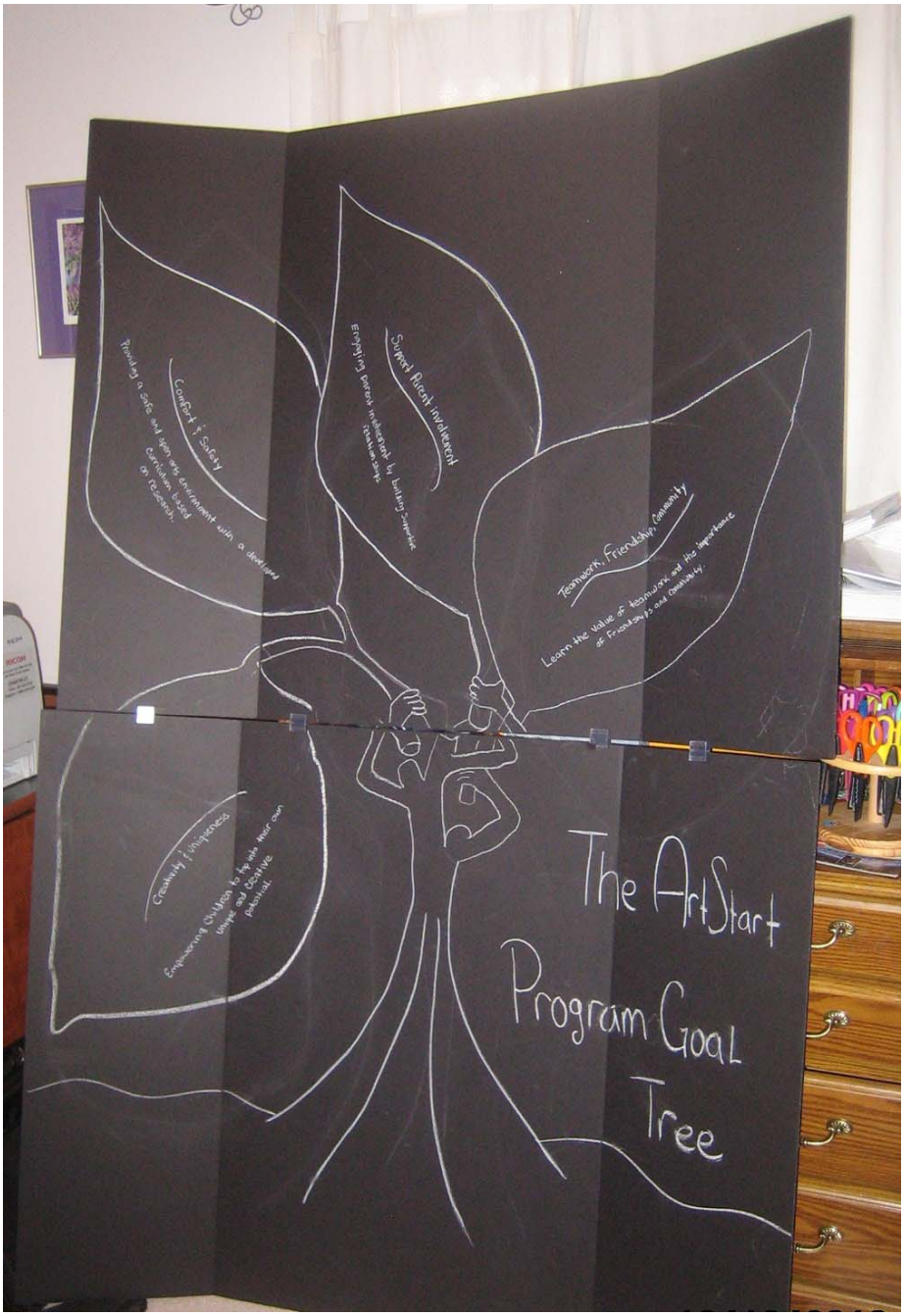

Figure E1.*The ArtStart Program Goal Tree on foam-core used during interviews. (researcher photo)*

APPENDIX F

Pilot Project Methodological Appendix

Critical Reflexivity

"We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us."

– Marcel Proust[32]

In recent literature, "reflexivity has become something of a buzz-word" (Pink, 2004, p.367). Somehow, I must have picked up on the reflexivity vibe because as I began my research journey, I soon became aware that reflexivity was very important to understanding my role as a researcher, observer, volunteer, and participant. All of these roles became entrenched during various stages of my research project and it was only through reflexivity that I became aware of this. Reflexivity, as Pink (2004) points out, "should be taken seriously rather than just engaged in as a token measure…the knowledge that is produced through any qualitative research encounter (visual or not) should be understood as the product of a specific interaction between researcher and informant(s)" (p. 367). Moreover, Pink (2007) calls "attention to the meanings that people create when they combine images and words [which, in turn,] can create exciting new knowledge" (p. 86). The photos taken by my participants provided depth to their stories and by discussing them together, our conversations had a natural flow–we were no longer strangers, we were collaborating and exploring together. Sarah Pink's writings regarding reflexivity also included discussion about the "meaning of the camera in…[a] particular setting" (p. 367). Pink suggests not only thinking about the

[32] Proust, M. Retrieved from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marcelprou122572.html

relationships between researcher and informants "but also the role of the camera in that relationship" (p. 367). So, with my camera, I will take you on a reflexive journey explaining my relationship with ArtStart.

Pressure:*"I'm getting too close…how can I be objective?"*

> "The following concerns are associated with such access: the expectations of the researcher based on familiarity with the setting and the people…ethical and political dilemmas; the risk of uncovering potentially damaging knowledge; and struggles with closeness and closure." (Alvesson as cited by Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 62).

Figure F1. *External pipes located in a hallway of Alex Taylor School. (researcher photo)*

Surveillance: "*These kids think I'm a volunteer…but I'm really observing them.*"

> "This argument interrupts the romance of empowerment that drives much current ethnography, obscuring the surveilling effects of the best of researcher intentions" (Lather, 2007, p. 482).

Figure F2. *Surveillance mirror in stairwell at Alex Taylor School. (researcher photo)*

Institutional Ethnography: *"ArtStart is such a small program of this big E4C network."*

> Institutional ethnography "is the approach [that] directs empirical investigation toward connections among local settings of everyday life, organizations, and translocal relations of ruling" (Holstein, 2006, p. 293).

Figure F3. *E4C headquarters – Alex Taylor School.*
(researcher photo)

Information Overload: *"Yikes! My research portfolio looks like ArtStart's backroom!"*

> "A potential problem with ethnographic studies is seeing data everywhere and nowhere, gathering everything and nothing" (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007, p. 161).

Figure F4. *ArtStart's archive room.*
(researcher photo)

Moving towards the light: *"I think this Effectiveness Model might work."*

> "One of the reasons for carrying out evaluation research is the increasing public accountability of those initiating and carrying out …activities to address social problems and improve the quality of public-sector services" (Kelly, 2004, p. 464).

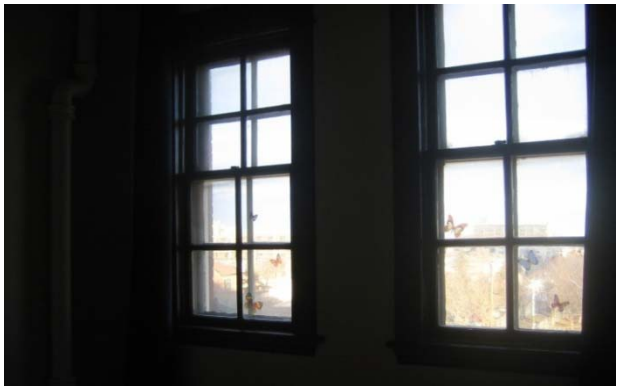

Figure F5. *The old ArtStart office – cleaned out. (researcher photo)*

The big picture: *"Some of the factors that make ArtStart effective are…"*

> Forbes (1998) posits "the emergent approach [to determining effectiveness] holds that definitions and assessments of effectiveness have meaning, but that the meaning is (a) created by the individual or organizational actors involved, (b) specific to the context in which it was created, and (c) capable of evolving as the actors continue to interact" (p. 195).

Figure F6. *The new ArtStart office at Alex Taylor School. (researcher photo)*

On the door is a mural created by children who have attended ArtStart. ArtStart is a place where kids create unique art, form a community, and at the end of it all…put on the best show possible.