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Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary Education

by

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Abstract

Children's experiences are the cornerstone of all that matters in elementary schools. It is therefore the purpose of this study to shed further light into what those experiences might be, particularly as they are present in arts-infused education.

Over a period of almost two school years I followed a group of primary grade students in and out of their classrooms at Central Arts Elementary School in an urban mid-Western Canadian school district. Through conversation, recordings, artwork, scripts, and visual images, as teacher-researcher-artist, I collected a series of moments that I believe best describes the nature of these students' experiences in arts-infused education. Concepts of identity, place, imagination, and self were explored. I considered the lived curriculum of the classroom, and also the ways in which the children's experiences with the arts resonated alongside my own artistic endeavours.

The study is a multi-method inquiry informed by arts-based, narrative, and ethnographical research practices. There are elements of ethnodrama, in the ways in which some events are portrayed through scripted descriptions in a concluding chapter of the work. Children's art, and the art of classroom life are revealed through both image and text. Puppets, masks, and a variety of other artistic media are brought forward for the purposes of consideration and discussion. In all, the work is unique in its attention to the words of children, and extended researcher engagement.

Implications of the study include the importance of listening to children when they speak, continuing to offer the arts as pathways to greater awareness in schools, and considering children's relationships as powerful mentoring experiences for one another.

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Chapter One. Introducing the Study

> Levi, an elementary school student, tore a corner from a paper in his notebook. He scribbled something upon the paper, then crumpled it up, and pushed it into his pocket. The rest of Levi's class had begun making preparations to leave school for the day, and Levi was not eager to be left behind. Casting glances about the arts classroom, eyes pausing to rest upon musical instruments, drama costumes, dance props, and a myriad of paints, papers and books, Levi headed toward the door, just behind a group of his friends. He passed by the teacher and thrust a crumpled bit of paper into her hand. Levi left the classroom without speaking aloud, so the teacher unfolded the paper to reveal his message. The boy had written: "Thanks for taking us away from our desks." (Notes to file, October 4, 2004)

I have been Levi's teacher. When I remember his message, I think about the ways in which children come to know of their lives in elementary school. I consider that which offers freedom, and that which inspires.

Levi might say that the arts offered him unique experiences. The arts were a reprieve; they had taken him "away" from his desk. While Levi may simply have appreciated freedom from the physical encumbrance of a piece of school furniture, I believe that there was more to his message than just being away from his desk-place. Levi and his classmates had an opportunity to be away in another realm, in places made possible through their experiences with the arts. In addition to sharing gratitude for these opportunities, Levi may also have been expressing

his wish to continue his artistic education. He understood the altering of ordinary classroom reality through his experiences with the arts.

How do children create possibility, and represent themselves through their encounters with the arts? In early years, how do we see, feel, hear, move, understand together -- and how do our elementary school arts experiences become significant? In order to learn more about the ways in which children come to understand themselves in school, and specifically, within arts-infused classrooms, I am moved to research and study. I wish to understand and explain how children experience lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993) within arts-infused educational settings.

I draw upon my own narratives of experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) in attempting to more deeply understand lives of teaching and learning. I consider the arts to be all things creative, including, but not limited to: music, drama, dance, visual, and literary arts. An “artist” is one who pursues the arts; however, the role of artist may be fluid and shifting, depending on circumstance. For example, I slip in and out of artist-role, the way I slip through roles of student, teacher, friend, sister, partner. An artist I have been, am, and can be, as Greene (1998) might say.

How are stories of the arts in my life played alongside those whom I have encountered as part of my work in schools? What connections might be drawn? When I consider Levi’s story of gratitude, for having been taken “away” from a desk, I am prompted to consider the ways in which I have experienced the arts, and for the times I have been taken “away,” too. I consider my own stories of the arts and how they have moved me.

On a practical level, the arts have offered employment, as I have spent much of my adult life teaching music, drama, dance and visual arts in elementary schools. The arts have also allowed me frames for educational research, as through my experience as an arts teacher, I was able to conceptualize a study of arts-infused education, and to write about this in the form of a doctoral dissertation. However, prior to my own research and employment, in my earlier years, I often found myself encircled by the arts. In music collections, for hours at a time, I would be spirited away by Bach, Beethoven, and the Beatles, to name but a few. Listening to music, and playing the songs on a variety of different instruments, allowed me to feel a personal escape, to be in an away-place, from the time I was in elementary school, onward. As the years went by, I continued to learn music. I acted in plays, and I explored clay sculpture both in curricular and extra-curricular lessons. I loved these experiences, and any time I could, I sought them out. I felt that the arts were good for me. Perhaps like Levi of whom I wrote, I too enjoyed getting away from a desk, being taken away by the arts.

I do not wish to suggest that my other school experiences, those of mathematics and physical education classes, for example, were less than memorable. I had some wonderful moments throughout all of my school days. When I consider deeply though, it is the memories of the arts I experienced growing up that stay with me the most. If I think back to the times of my childhood and adolescence, the memories that are best are the ones that allowed me to explore my creative interests. I feel grateful for those moments. I feel that they were my chance to find freedom, in what might have otherwise become a

restrictive existence. I was able to get away from time to time, to appreciate, and to imagine. The arts had, in a large part, contributed to the creation of my mind (Eisner, 2002).

Remembering Arts in the Early Years

> I remember my public school arts experiences … I loved drama … I remember every play in which I was involved. I also remember a great deal of my private piano lessons … I don't know if this is because the instruction was so personal and targeted, or if the large amounts of time spent practicing each day in preparation for lessons has stayed with me. (Notes to file, January 16, 2007)

What is remembered from our school days? I think about the students I teach, and wonder what parts of their elementary years will have resonance. Will their experiences with the arts be fondly remembered? How may children be defining their lives through their arts experiences in school and beyond?

Greene (1995) writes of "transformations, openings, possibilities" (p. 17) that can be met though the arts. In considering my own experiences, I am moved to believe that the wonderment the arts have offered me over the years have caused me to become an advocate for children's involvement in the arts. I have studied and taught the arts in private studios and public schools, and I have had opportunities to pursue the arts in public education. My lessons and experiences were many, and yet I would have liked to have had even more arts in my school background -- both in formal training, and for freedom of expression. As a child, I did not personally attend arts-infused elementary or secondary schools, schools

that offer primacy to the fine and performing arts (Eisner & Day, 2004), but I know that I would have liked to. Now in adulthood, I turn to explore the arts in school as a teacher-researcher.

Elementary School Teacher-Researcher

I have been a teacher in Western Canadian elementary schools for over 15 years, and I continue to teach professionally in elementary schools as I complete graduate research in education. In addition to general elementary classroom subjects, I also teach special-emphasis courses in music, drama, visual art and dance. In the past, I have also taught an arts-based course in a university pre-service teacher education program. I see myself as a teacher-researcher when I raise questions about my own practice, and consider the meanings people make from their school experiences. I am particularly interested in the experiences of children in arts-infused classrooms, in how students consider their arts experiences in schools.

I am drawn to research in early elementary school for a number of reasons. First, I am a teacher of young children. I appreciate the opportunity to conduct research that may inform my practice. It is possible that through understanding the experiences of children, even if they are not students for whom I have a professional responsibility, that my pedagogical growth may be enhanced. In the classrooms of early childhood, I am encouraged to wonder and explore. I feel that I can belong there, drawn in by the open way that many primary school rooms are designed; invited by varied displays and friendly opportunities to enter in. Finally, I choose research in early childhood, because I have always felt welcomed by the

students and their teachers. I do not feel like a nuisance, being there alongside the teacher and her class. Rather, along with my role as a researcher, I have felt accepted as a trusted, useful adult in an educational situation.

Early in the 2005-2006 school year, I began a qualitative research pilot study in an arts-infused grade one classroom at Central Arts Elementary School.[1] The school is described within the community as a place in which to experience education through the arts. The school recognizes music, drama, dance, and visual art as essential in the education of children. I was not professionally assigned as a teacher in Central Arts, although I have taught in similar schools. I appeared as a researcher and school volunteer to the students, staff, and community when I entered Central Arts Elementary School. As the 2006-2007 school year commenced, I expanded my preliminary study at Central Arts, to make it the key piece of my doctoral work in education.

Research Questions

Four questions are central in guiding this inquiry:

1. How do children come to understand themselves and their worlds through their experiences with the arts?
2. What is the lived meaning of curriculum in arts-infused educational settings?
3. How do children reveal a sense of place and self through artistic endeavours?

[1] Pseudonyms are used for the names of the school, and for students, teachers and others associated with this research study.

4. What might I (as researcher) say about the arts experiences of children that resonates with the ways in which I have experienced the arts in my own life?

Significance of the Study

Research within arts-infused classrooms has relevance for teachers, administrators, and curriculum planners. When arts curriculum endeavours appear in schools, it is important to consider their effects on students, teachers, and others. Currently, there is significant research on the arts in early childhood (Emme, 2005; Davidson, 2004; Kindler, 1995; Tarr, 1995; Thompson, 1995; Tickle, 1996) and on arts-infused curricula (Cornett & Smithrim, 2000; Efland, 2004; Eisner & Day, 2004; Jensen, 2001; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005), but there is limited in-depth inquiry into the combined interests of arts-infused curricula and early childhood learning, particularly research that draws special attention to lived curriculum and children's experiences. My research intent is to contribute to the literature in the field, and to articulate how arts-infused education may offer particular opportunities for teachers and learners, while paying special attention to the experiences of children in schools.

I wish to explore how arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 1997), may be met in an elementary school research study. I am interested in the collection of research ideas through the arts, and in the case of this dissertation: puppets, masks, images, and the writing of scripted descriptions. The pursuit of arts-based research in elementary schools is significant because the methodology is relatively new, but rapidly expanding (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008).

More arts-based research studies in education will, hopefully, allow the interpretation of research results to be multi-faceted and expansive (Prosser, 1998). Arts-based research, in this work combined with narrative and ethnographical influences, becomes a form of multi-method qualitative study (Geelan, 2003). I hope that my work may open paths to future inquiries of the arts in elementary schools.

Theoretical Perspectives: Communicative Endeavours, Lived Curriculum, and Layers of Identity

In previous research studies I have considered poststructuralist theories (Hobday-Kusch, 2001; Hobday-Kusch & McVittie, 2002) in framing inquiries. When working within a poststructuralist framework, researchers are able to examine discursive practices (Lather, 1991), to challenge and subvert modernism (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995), and to expand binary or dualistic understandings (Kamler, 1999). In prior classroom research, I have considered the formations of discourse communities (Davies, 1991; Hobday-Kusch & McVittie, 2002) and the ways in which students structure their language and interactions within those communities. I have also been intrigued by the ways in which children negotiate what Bakhtin (1986) refers to as their communicative endeavours, in order alternately to invite and discourage participation in classroom conversations. According to Bakhtin, most languages are incapable of neutrality, and discourse is situated and mediated by contexts of written and oral communication. Within communicative endeavours, and specifically in the talking of children, I believe there is much to be attended to. Communication

develops thoughts, and vice versa. Concern for children's conversations is necessary when attempting to understand the lived curriculum of classrooms.

Aoki (1993) makes the insightful distinction between the curriculum as planned; that which prescribes what is to be taught and learned, and the lived curriculum; that which is everyday in the classroom and constant. Aoki asserts that through attention to the lived curriculum, rich description will result from "allowing space for stories, anecdotes and narratives that embody the lived dimension of curricular life" (p. 263). The stories emerge from my experiences, from the students, and from others who are part of the school. As Aoki explains, openness to these possibilities leads toward the multiplicity of in-betweens, moving from planned to lived curriculum and creating deeper awareness.

Memory, cultural objects, narratives, and literacy practices all contribute to the layering of human identity (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). These "layers … [are] continually being changed with time and experience. As new interpretations emerge, old memories change. What was known and what is known continually affect one another" (p. 193). A discussion of identity, as it is experienced in early childhood education arts initiatives, is present in this dissertation, and theoretically understood as a process of ongoing construction, with emphasis on interpersonal connection (Bruner, 1990). It is understood that "the lives and selves we construct are the outcomes of this process of meaning construction … selves are not isolated nuclei of consciousness located in the head, but are distributed interpersonally" (Bruner, 1990, p. 138). The revelation of interconnected stories and identities convey senses of place and self.

Role of the Researcher

In Chapter Three, I will offer more details as to the ethnographical, arts-based, and narrative methodologies that are drawn upon in this study. Specifically, as to the role of the researcher, Van Maanen (1988) tells us that in ethnographical studies the researcher *is* the research instrument. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquirers as highly visible within the lived and told stories in their work. Eisner (2008) speaks of "persistent tensions" (p. 17) that arts-based researchers must contend with, including the recognition of ambiguities, and possible distractions of aesthetic forms. With these tensions in mind, I proceed cautiously as researcher at Central Arts School. I am gatherer, interpreter, synthesizer, artist, and writer. There is a great deal of responsibility here, and it is fraught with perils. Merriam (1998) outlines possibilities and concerns of qualitative researchers generally:

> In a qualitative study the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data and, as such, can respond to the situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information. Conversely, the investigator as human instrument is limited by being human -- that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere. (p. 20)

Merriam suggests that a "tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 20) is necessary, as is sensitivity, and attention to clear communication. Ideas of tolerance and sensitivity must resonate with the researcher.

I saw my role as researcher at Central Arts School as somewhat fluid, shifting as the situations required, from seeker to observer, to patient watcher, and sometimes active initiator of ideas in the classroom. I described myself alternately as a classroom volunteer, a guest teacher or artist, and a university researcher -- a discussion I will develop further in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Depending on the circumstance, and the presences of observation, story, and artistic opening, my role as researcher was not one, but many. In all however, I was guided by Merriam's (1998) suggestions of tolerance for ambiguity. I progressed with great care, with the understanding of Noddings' (1992) comment: "Caring is a way of being in relation, not a specific set of behaviors" (p. 17). I believe that my role as researcher was sometimes made more complex because of the care I had for my research community. At times, I would find myself adjusting my role for them ... moving from "Researcher" to "Classroom Assistant" or even "Colleague". At other times, our ways of being in caring relation with one another must have meant that they were also adjusting for me.

Respectful Research Relationships

The underpinning of my work at Central Arts School has been the intent to form respectful research relationships. I believe that my background as arts educator, and also my prior research initiatives placed me in a position to be effective in this new research situation. One of the cornerstones of my previous research encounters has been research reciprocity (Wolf, 1996) within the research community ... establishing trust, and then also offering some possible advantages to the research participants for the time spent together in research.

Wolf describes the ways in which the researcher " … constructs and reconstructs her identity and deals with her positional vis-à-vis the researched" (p. xii) as key in establishing ethical fieldwork. Developing research reciprocity, in as much as it may come to be, is a valuable consideration, according to Wolf. When completing a previous research study *Who's Laughing Now? Humour in the Elementary Classroom* (Hobday-Kusch, 2001), I was guided by the research participants, in terms of what they found valuable, interesting, or important to understand. If at times our interests lay in different areas, we would work to address these. I was also interested in what I might be able to do while I was with the research participants to improve their educational experiences.

Although it was an ongoing negotiation, I believe we established research reciprocity when I undertook the field study for my master's thesis (Hobday-Kusch, 2001). At the time, I offered my contribution to the relationship through the sharing of my musical knowledge with the students of the school in which I was conducting research. Music lessons were what the students and teachers said would be of benefit to them, and they knew I had skills in this area. Knowing that my research time surrounding these music lessons was accepted, benefited me. It took us several weeks to come to this mutual agreement of teaching and researching, but I believe that the negotiations were significant as we worked together to establish reciprocal, respectful relationships.

Throughout my time at Central Arts, I assisted the classroom teachers in designing and facilitating arts projects and lessons. At times, I acted as teacher's assistant, and classroom helper. I read with children, sang with them, and

followed them outdoors to help at recess. I communicated with staff at the school to let them know of my research interests, and to answer their questions wherever possible. In all this, I hope that research reciprocity came to be.

Part of respectful research practice in education is allowing and even encouraging participants to consider the findings alongside the researcher (Geelan, 2003). As my study progressed, I kept in regular contact with the principal of Central Arts School so that she could remain aware of how the work was progressing. I was very clear that I was not there to evaluate teaching practices. I also wanted to be assured that my study was still welcomed within the school. Regular contact with classroom teachers, students, and their families all contributed to respectful research relationships at Central Arts School. I was there to fulfill a researcher role, but there was no reason that I could see why such a position could not also be reciprocal. It could be beneficial for both the researcher and the researched -- living and learning together in an arts-infused classroom.

Language, Scripts, Images

Throughout the course of my research, I was concerned with the key role of language, as it occurred in conversation (Gallas, 2004). I paid attention to the language of the research participants first, in order to render an account of experiences that was acceptable. Beyond this, however, I was also concerned with the ways I, as researcher, employed language tools in thinking, speaking, and writing. As Merriam (1998) reminds us, the frameworks in which we provide structure for our studies are deeply embedded in our discursive practices. We must consider what those practices are. Communicative acts (Bakhtin, 1986), the

ways we recognize that it is not merely language, but the ways in which we structure a myriad of gesture, inflection, and relationship in our communication attempts must be considered, in both the researcher and the researched. As Bakhtin said, and I believe: language is incapable of neutrality.

I spent a long while crafting my research questions, in order that they would reflect clarity, relevance, and respect for the participants and for the readers of this work. I wanted the questions to be both thought-provoking, and also a guide for how the research work might unfold. Carefully considering research questions is part of concern for language.

Another language concern is the way in which the words of the participants are represented. To this end, I used actual dialogue to represent the language of students in Chapters Four and Five. Throughout the document I specified "personal communications" to indicate the places in which the words of Central Arts staff and community have been influential. I switched language to scripted descriptions in Chapter Six, all as part of attention to the research situation, and the negotiation of language as it can appear in arts-based research documents. In all, I did not want to speak *for* research participants, but to leave open places from which their words (and my own) might shine through. In this way, I hope that the study is multi-layered and multi-voiced. I hope that our communicative acts (Bakhtin, 1986) have been honoured.

In an attempt to offer the readers of this work other places to enter into the study, I have included a series of images in Chapter Seven. As I will describe more fully, the use of images provides opportunities for readers to interact with

the research data in previously unrealized ways. The images I have included are meant to provide a richer understanding of the school, its occupants, and myself as researcher.

Considerations and Validations

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) discuss how certain sensibilities inform the validation of a qualitative research study. Instead of quantitative notions of fact and proof, key considerations in qualitative research relate to *verisimilitude*: does the work *seem* real? Also important in qualitative work are ideas of emotionality, personal responsibility, multi-voiced texts, dialogue with participants, and an ethic of care (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Such sensibilities are considered throughout this research study.

Trustworthiness of research data in my study at Central Arts School was sought through the processes of initial observations, conversations, activities with research participants, and continued perception-checking as research findings are written and displayed. Upon completion of the Central Arts research, my concern is that the study has addressed my research questions, and that the work has the potential to inform future school practice.

Finley (2003) assesses arts-based qualitative inquiries through a series of questions, including the following:

- Is there evidence of an ethic of care among the participants and the researchers?
- Is there evidence of a blurring of roles, of researcher being researched and of participants as researchers?

- Have researchers been willing to experiment with form, both in their practice of research and in their representations? (p. 294).

I would add to Finley's recommendations that an arts-based inquiry should also allow for the self-examination of the researcher as an artist. Declaring oneself an "artist" can be somewhat problematic (Greene, 1998), but putting forth one's own artistic dispositions and experiences (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008) is important in arts-based inquiry. Reckoning with the notion of self as researcher and artist, or shifting through the various roles as the case may be, is an essential consideration during an arts-based research study.

Research Site and Participants

As indicated, this study focuses on the elementary students of Central Arts Elementary School, located in a mid-western, urban, Canadian school division. Letters were sent to the principal of the school, the school division's deputy directors, the teachers, and the students' parents or caregivers to introduce the proposed study (Appendix A, B, C and D). I provided consent forms for all involved in the study: classroom teachers, the children's parents or guardians, and the children themselves (Appendix E, F and G). After gaining consent, I conducted observations of grade one and grade two students in their regular school settings, while appearing to them as a researcher and a classroom volunteer. I explained my research inquiry to the students in age-appropriate terms. Throughout the study I have used pseudonyms for students and staff. These pseudonyms were chosen to reflect the language of the elementary school in which the study was conducted, so students are referred to by first names (i.e.

Ryan, Sandy, Mara, etc.), and staff by their titles and initials (“Mrs. G,” “Mr. L,” and so on).

As the pilot study began in their grade one classroom in November 2005, I was eager to follow these same students into their second grade of elementary school. I re-entered Central Arts School in December 2006 and conducted research there until the spring of 2007. The research site was well suited for arts-based research, as the school was in the process of becoming an arts-infused school. Students and teachers were accustomed to arts initiatives in their school, and they seemed to welcome a chance to express their views.

Research ideas were collected through field notes, audio and video recordings, and through arts activities such as puppetry, masks, and improvised theatre. Recorded material was transcribed, and participants were asked to sign a release form (Appendix H). For a time, a research assistant entered the classroom with me. At the suggestion of the university’s ethics board, the assistant signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix I). It felt a bit strange asking the research assistant to sign, because, as I will describe later, the assistant was actually my own mother! A retired schoolteacher and puppeteer, she entered the field with me for a while to help the grade one students create their own puppets during the pilot study for this dissertation.

Participants were selected in accordance with my wish to work within a classroom of primary schoolchildren. The school authorized my research to begin in a grade one classroom; as the pilot study drew to a close, I decided that I would like to continue with the same group of students in the following year. Central

Arts School allowed me to resume research as the students entered grade two (2006/2007). In the second grade classroom, there were also younger students, in grade one, combined as a grade one/two split class. As new students joined the group, and as others moved away, I recorded their comings and goings in my field notes. I consistently asked new students, parents/caregivers, teachers and school officials for consent before continuing the study (Appendix J, K, L, M).

Limitations and Delimitations

The study was delimited as follows:

- The participants in the study are students and staff members from an elementary school within a mid-western, urban, Canadian school division.
- The initial (pilot) study extended from November, 2005 through April, 2006.
- The next phase of study extended from December, 2006 through June, 2007.
- Research findings were gathered via ethnographical observations, informal conversations, and arts activities.
- Research findings are expressed through expository and narrative writing, dialogue, scripted descriptions and images.

The limitations of this study are subject to the qualitative research frames used. Peshkin (1993) writes that qualitative research is criticized because it is not "theory driven, hypothesis testing, or generalization producing" (p. 23). Any results from the Central Arts research should not be generalized beyond that

specific setting without caution. Another limitation that may affect this work involves the opinions of readers as to the worth of arts-based, ethnographical or narrative research. Because the study was constructed through a blending of qualitative methods (further discussion in Chapter Three), there will not be evidence presented in facts and figures, nor will there be a presentation of quantifiable charts and graphs. Instead, I offer related literature, a new study, and images, scripts, and stories to describe my time in the field.

A final limitation that should be mentioned is that of my own experience. Although I have proposed to consider my experience as part of the research questions, I am limited by my own wisdom, by my life as an artist and teacher, and by all other aspects of the human condition. This study, from its beginning to its end, is bound by the experiences of the author.

Keeping Balanced While Living the Curriculum

Throughout the duration of my time as researcher in Central Arts School, I was aware that in addition to writing about the arts and arts education in elementary school, I was also living them. I am an arts teacher by vocation, and arts enthusiast in my personal time. I knew it was probable that I would see the arts in optimistic ways, as an arts-for-children advocate, because that has been my experience -- it is the way in which I live. In order to keep balanced, and to remain open to all the possibilities while in the research field, I would need to step back occasionally, and imagine what it might be like to dislike the arts, to be overwhelmed, and possibly even frightened by them. As Greene (1995) reminds

me, I would need to be awake to the experiences of all children in the study, not just the ones who lived their arts/lives in ways similar to my own.

I am an adult, and as such, I hold certain agency, what (Lather, 1991) defines as powers of choice, and this offers me feelings of freedom and opportunity. Many of the children in Central Arts School arrived there by happenstance, and not by their own choosing. They are there because they live in the area of a school that was designated as an arts-infused school. I needed to be careful that my enthusiasm for arts and the study of the arts was respectful of all experiences that may be contained within a public elementary school. Keeping balanced would include constant perception-checking with the students and others who were part of my work. Further, the reflexive, recursive nature of qualitative fieldwork in an elementary school (Oberg & Ellis, 2006) meant that I would need to be mindful and considerate in questioning the nature of children's experiences. Questions such as: What might best protect children's interests? How could I balance my own agenda (research, writing, teaching the arts) alongside that which I hoped to discover? While living the curriculum, I was aware that I was also constructing it -- as present and future experiences for my own students, beyond the walls of Central Arts School. How could I balance that which I was learning with that which I was teaching?

Reading This Work

Over the next several chapters, I will review literature that I believe to be relevant to arts-infused curricula and study. I will discuss experience, imagination, and identity in classrooms. Early childhood education will be

considered through multi-method (Geelan, 2003) qualitative inquiry, including classroom ethnography, narrative, and arts-based research. Becoming part of a research community at Central Arts School, and considering the lives of those within is the heart of this dissertation. I look closely at children's conversations, and at how they create a sense of place and themselves in arts-infused educational settings. I also consider stories of teaching and the arts from my own life that resonate with that which I experienced in the field.

I collected pages and pages of field notes from the experiences I had as a researcher at Central Arts School, but for the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen not to overwhelm the reader with extensive classroom incident-reporting. Instead, I have chosen specific research moments that were indicative of larger themes. I will return to several key research moments, in different ways, throughout the chapters. Readers will glimpse varying facets of the research occurrences, as they see, for example, a puppet show through reported dialogue (Chapter Four), as a place-event (Chapter Five), and presented again as image (Chapter Seven).

The work may be read as pieces of elementary school life as it was from 2005-2007 in two classrooms in Western Canada. Though somewhat specific, these pieces can also be expansive, depending on how they are viewed and subsequently interpreted. I employed the use of scripted descriptions and images in my research study. In so doing, curiosity and conversation commingle in determining how research stories of Central Arts School are shaped. Through reading this work, I hope that new stories will emerge -- stories of multi-method

research, of practical curriculum endeavour, and also stories of self that hold meaning for teaching and learning in elementary schools. Hopefully, readers will appreciate the ways in which research participants' lives are reflected in this work. Above all, I wish my dissertation to stand as a document that honours arts-infused educational activity.

Chapter Two. Reviewing the Literature

In order to offer background to my research queries, it is necessary to consider the writing of others in the field. In pursuit of connected literature, I have looked at the authors of arts-infused curricula and elementary school experience, place, and identity. In this chapter I will consider the writings of researchers who have completed studies on the above, and also search for gaps in the literature in which my study may rest. Earlier, I suggested that while there have been many studies on the arts and early childhood, there have been relatively few that combine the interests of extended research-time in the field, and in-depth focus on children's experiences therein. For these reasons, I am compelled to consider the arts-infused literature and curricula that comprises the school lives of those within Central Arts School. Because my research questions are rooted in the lives of children in their school places, I have looked at literature that can both support and question the nature of school experience. In all, I am seeking to add breadth to my study, and also to allow readers of this work a glimpse at the teachers, researchers, and theorists who have preceded me, and made my work possible.

Arts-Infused Curricula

Considerable literature exists regarding arts-infused, integrated, and/or arts-focused educational programming (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Cornett & Smithrim, 2000; Efland, 2002; Eisner & Day, 2004; Gardner, 1989/2006; Greene, 1995; Jensen, 2001; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). Arts education in curriculum has something of a controversial history according to Luftig (2000). There has been little agreement in the professional literature about

what children who have studied the arts in school should know and exhibit, and essentially, there is something of a discord between a curriculum that has goals in cognition and achievement, and one that concerns itself with putting students in touch with themselves and their cultures (Luftig, 2000). While it is not my intent in this literature review to go into exhaustive detail on all of the arts-infused, integrated/focused authors, there are some who must be explored further, for the particular contributions they have made to curricular development at Central Arts School. I will focus upon the authors who staff members of the school have named directly or indirectly as influential in shaping the approaches taken at Central Arts. Although the terms "arts-infused," "arts-integrated" and "arts-focused" are sometimes used interchangeably (Parsons, 1998), for the purposes of this study I will use "arts-infused" in descriptions of curriculum, as that is how Central Arts Elementary School has been described to me by its staff members (Mrs. G, personal communication, October 22, 2004; Mr. L, personal communication, October 25, 2005).

In an introductory conversation, the school principal of Central Arts indicated to me that a number of authors have guided the school's intent to become "arts-infused" (Mrs. G, personal communication, October 22, 2004). These have included Jensen (2001), whose book, *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, offers examples of cognitive research that is supportive of arts programs in schools. Also mentioned by the school principal, Cornett and Smithrim (2000) see the arts as meaning makers: "Students can be more productively active, physically and mentally, because the arts offer additional learning modes, have special

motivational properties, and celebrate interpretation of the world in multiple ways" (p. 3). Such ideas have inspired the curriculum-planners of Central Arts (Mr. L, personal communication, October 25, 2005).

The work of Jensen (2001) was particularly influential in the development of programs at Central Arts School. Jensen states:

> What makes us most human is what will be the most desirable commodity. That's [sic] the ability to thoughtfully regulate, express, and channel emotions into arts such as music, performances, movement, painting, and design. Art will increase, not decrease in value. (p. vii)

It must be noted that Jensen is neither an arts educator nor an artist. He is a researcher, whose compilation of studies on the arts, the brain, and learning have lead him to suggest that the arts are vital to children's education. Jensen has written several "brain-based" research books (Jensen 1998, 2001, 2006) that follow similar arguments. In *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, Jensen (2001) posits that research on the arts, learning, and the brain demonstrates that the arts merit a place in public education equal to that of the other disciplines. Some arts educators may be concerned by the suggestions that Jensen offers, as "they sound more like quick fixes for educational ills" (Miller, 2002) than realistic ways in which the arts may be of benefit to teachers, students, and parents. That being said, the book has become a staple on the bookshelves of teachers at Central Arts School, for both its accessibility and for its advocacy of the arts.

Cornett and Smithrim (2000) suggest more reasons to integrate the arts into elementary classrooms:

> The arts are fundamental components of all cultures and time periods … [they] … teach us that all we think or feel can not be reduced to words … [they] provide avenues of achievement to students who might not otherwise be successful … the arts develop a value for perseverance and hard work … [they] are a necessary part of life … there is a strong positive relationship between the arts and academic success. (pp. 4-7)

The staff of Central Arts School keeps a book in each classroom by Cornett and Smithrim. The writers have been influential in plans for the school curriculum.

Going beyond the staff suggestions for literature on arts-infused education, I continued to search databases, and found further literary support for the school's educational initiatives. Eisner (2005) suggests that there are many ways in which arts-infused curricula contribute to learning potentials, including the power that the arts have to influence judgments about qualitative relationships. Engagement in the arts can promote the understanding that problems can have more than one solution. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives, and make vivid the possibility that neither words in their literal form nor numbers can exhaust what can be known. Eisner (1998) reminds us that the limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition, and that the arts traffic in subtleties.

Efland (2002) considers how a cognitively oriented conception of the arts may broaden understanding and increase learning. He points out that the arts are not uniquely the domain of professional artists, and that through curricular infusion in schools, the arts may become a pursuit for all students. Efland asserts that the arts must be re-conceptualized, not just seen as entertainment or

extraneous in education and life, but as modes of meaning-making. Discussing "cognitive flexibility theory" (p. 105), he suggests that arts experiences allow learners to interpret, adapt, and apply knowledge in ways that are helpful in many educational contexts. As such, the arts serve as something of an "integrative vehicle" (p. 105) to other disciplines. The interpretation of a work of art, for example, becomes meaningful as it contributes to culture-building. We understand something of the culture that extends within and between the artwork, both artist and rendering, when we delve into social contexts that surround the work. Further, "the imagination argument" (p. 159) allows us to construct multiple understandings. We can "find significant connections, draw inferences, and solve problems" (p. 159). While interpretation and imaginative cognition may occur through a variety of curricular pursuits, Efland maintains that within the arts, it can begin at much younger ages (i.e., in early childhood). As Greene (1995) observes, young children may be transformed through their experiences with arts-infused curricula.

Provincial Arts Education Curriculum Guidelines

Local curriculum guide documents that pertain to Central Arts School divide the strands of elementary arts education into four: visual art, music, drama and dance. Emphasis is placed upon the creative/productive, cultural/historical, and critical/responsive elements of each strand (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006). It is suggested that each of the strands receive equal attention in classrooms in minutes per week: 50 minutes per strand for students in Kindergarten through the eighth grade. Prior to the renewal of provincial curricular documents in 1989,

drama and dance were not required to be taught weekly to elementary school students. Thus, historically, more time was suggested for visual art and music each week in a regular classroom setting, while drama and dance were not formally attended to as part of the provincial curriculum for elementary students until the early 1990s.

The shift from music and visual art alone, to a four strand, sometimes integrated arts education program in Saskatchewan elementary schools occurred in accordance with curriculum reform efforts orchestrated by the Minister's Advisory Committee on Curriculum Instruction, that began in the 1980s (Swerhone, 1993). The advisory committee worked to have arts education defined as "the study of dance, drama, music, and visual art through three components: cultural/historical, critical/responsive and creative/productive. The aim of this curriculum is to enable students to understand and value arts expressions throughout life" (p. 2).

Philosophically, curriculum change for arts education in Saskatchewan has been influenced by reform efforts in the United States, such as the discipline-based art education movement (Swerhone, 1993). DBAE, according to Dobbs (2004) is an approach to teaching and learning the arts which includes art making, criticism, history, and aesthetics (appreciating and distinguishing art from other sorts of phenomena). DBAE stands in ideological contrast to art education as creativity/self expression, or art simply for art's sake. Introduced by the Getty Institute in the 1980s, DBAE had many advocates according to Dobbs, even after the abandonment by its patrons in the late 1990s. Although the impact of DBAE

was more diffuse in the Canadian context, the implications of discipline-based arts education may be seen as contiguous in some respects with current Saskatchewan arts education curriculum guides. Smith's (2004) assertion that "The teaching of art should be grounded in the interrelated disciplines of art-making, art history, art criticism and aesthetics" (p. 1) is reflected in the emphasis upon the integrated nature of the creative/productive, cultural/historical, and critical/responsive elements in the Saskatchewan arts education curriculum guidelines.

At Central Arts School, arts-infused education comprises some of the elements of discipline-based arts education. In my observations at the school, history, criticism and aesthetics were often integrated with art making activities, in essence, attending to the Saskatchewan arts education curriculum guidelines with integrity. Even so, as a Saskatchewan arts educator of some years, I am compelled to consider the tenets that comprise provincial arts education curriculum documents. While I appreciate the value of cultural/historical and critical/responsive elements of arts education (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006), I also understand the importance of creative/productive aspects in the arts. Art-making itself must not be sacrificed in our attempts to provide balance through history and criticism. Currently, the Saskatchewan arts education curriculum suggests that history, appreciation and production of art may be taught in an integrated, overlapping manner (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006). Specific time in the periods of minutes is not set aside for coverage of each of the modes.

I believe it is important for children to explore their worlds through the creation of art. I am not sure how soon history and criticism should be brought into the equation, although Saskatchewan Learning documents advocate for this beginning in the first grades of school. It may be interesting to note how many of my research observations at Central Arts are rooted in actual art-making incidents themselves. Interesting also, will be the times in which I report upon children's academic (cultural, historical, critical, responsive) reactions to works of art. In all, a balance of Central Arts discipline and practice will be reflected through the words and actions of its students. The students and their teachers are guided by their curricular documents, but they are not restricted to them. It is possible that future studies could explore further the connections between discipline-based arts education, and the current Saskatchewan arts education curriculum.

Central Arts School recognizes the provincial arts education curriculum, and constantly tries to teach it well (Mrs. G, personal communication, October 22, 2004). The value of the arts and the ways in which they contribute to the growth potential of children are not to be underestimated. The statement: "In addition, the program recognizes that artists are thinkers. Their ideas have contributed and continue to contribute to an understanding of human existence. The arts education curriculum provides a place for their ideas" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006) reaffirms the strong contribution that arts education makes to students' whole learning experience.

Identity and the Arts

I continue to search for literature that specifically supports my interests in early childhood education, identity, and the arts. I am interested in children's stories of identity, and especially in the ways in which they may define themselves through the arts. I believe identity, or the propensity we have to be at once in touch with ourselves and with the myriad of multiple possibilities that constitute and/or invent our realities can be multiple, fluid and shifting. There is no shortage of literature on identity and teacher-researchers. Clandinin et al. (2006) write of our identities as our "stories to live by" (p. 9). These identities are "continuously composed and re-composed in the moment to moment living alongside children, families, administrators and others both on and off the school landscape" (p. 9). It is the notion of fluidity, and the re-composition of identity that seems most salient when considering children's identities through their arts experiences.

Emme (2005) observes that: "Every self portrait is a revelation" (p. 26). Consequently, he advocates to art teachers that art practices such as self portraiture, drawing journals, and other artistic endeavours are essential in order to allow students to explore the ideas and issues that are unique to them. Emme insists that children in elementary schools must have opportunities to undertake meaningful art projects, even if this means relinquishing some [teacher] order and control in the classroom, and allowing things to become temporarily chaotic so that students can be free to make their own artistic decisions. Through such

artistic freedoms, concepts of identity and personal development are able to surface and to be explored.

Eisner (2002) touches on a wealth of possibilities for identity and personal development, as experiences with the arts "liberate us from the literal" (p. 10). We can experience alternative identities through the arts when we imagine the world as artists conceive of it. One can take a walk in someone else's shoes, through the appreciation of an artist's work, to borrow Eisner's metaphor. We tolerate ambiguity, and explore the uncertain along with our "interior landscapes" (p. 11) through the arts. As Eisner puts it most beautifully, "The arts when experienced in the fullness of our emotional lives are about becoming alive" (p. 83).

Ellsworth (2005) writes of play, the arts, and transitional space, and how identities may be construed in early childhood through these frames. In her work, Ellsworth found that children wished to "jump into" (p. 72) abstract paintings, and that "the outcome and direction of play are unknowable when there is a release from compliance to everyday rules and habits" (p. 77). Ellsworth suggests that opening these possibilities for children has consequences for teachers also, as "pedagogy…takes place elsewhere, in the space of play of difference between teacher and student" (p. 77). However, "by inviting us into relation, by holding the potential for our engagement… [the] difference between self and other, self and the world, the self in the here and now, and the self in emergence" (p. 81) open us to opportunities where new identities are formed. Not dismissing challenges within these identity formations, Ellsworth refers to a "crisis of learning… In order to learn something new, we must lose the part of our identity

that depends on not thinking that thought… We are “me/not me” in the moment of learning” (p. 89).

Davidson (2004) reminds us that “The arts, by their very nature, value embodied knowledge to a greater degree than many of the traditional disciplines found in schools” (p. 197), and as such, are invaluable as sites of identity-formation. Embodied knowledge -- the intersections of body and mind, the places where they intersect and entangle -- is inspired through and within our arts experiences. As artists, researchers and teachers, memory, reflection, representation and interpretation are all intertwined, and according to Irwin (2004), this results in a “third space” (p. 29), a site of identity-construction where similarities and differences may be found together.

Greene (1998) writes of her own sense of incomplete identity, and the ways she encounters identity through the arts:

> Teaching, writing, speaking, looking at paintings, listening to music, reading (always reading), I know the challenges are always new. The questions still gather, and I relish my sense of incompleteness. I can only live…with a consciousness of possibility, of what might be. (p. 256)

Greene (1995) sees “transformations, openings, possibilities” (p. 17) in our engagement with the arts, and suggests that we must “seek out ways in which the arts in particular can release imagination to open new perspectives, to identify alternatives” (p. 18). In order to further investigate identities and alternatives, “teachers and learners find themselves conducting a kind of collaborative search,

each from his or her lived situation" (p. 23). Collaborative searches for identity cannot be underestimated:

> Not only can teachers feel the importance of releasing students to be personally present… they can also be reminded of the need for students to develop a sense of agency and participation and to do so in collaboration with one another. (p. 104)

Experience, Education, Imagination, and the Arts

I am interested not only in children's gaining a sense of identity through the arts, but also in the nature of their educational experiences. As Dewey (1938) notes, "There is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (p. 7). He reminds us that "a primary responsibility of educators… [is that they] contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile" (p. 35). As an arts teacher, I often consider that I am providing a set of experiences to my students. Sometimes they learn from these experiences and, at other times, in spite of them. Dewey argues, "Education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience – which is always the actual life experience of some individual" (p. 113). According to Dewey, teaching and learning are the continuous processes of reconstruction of experience, with every present experience an influential force for future experiences. Dewey further suggests that educational experiences which are immediately valuable and contribute to the greater good of society are key in progressive movements. Organizing subject

matter by taking into account one's previous experiences improves a person's access to future growth.

As for art as experience, Dewey (1934) states that the experience occurs continuously because of the interactions of the processes of living. In other words, it is not only the material work of art that must be celebrated, but the development of an artistic experience: "Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception" (p. 19). For Dewey, art as an experience is not separated from human senses; rather art is constantly interpreted, shaped, and changed through human awareness. Dewey suggests it is not just "museum art" (p. 6) that is worth considering, but also the art of everyday life. In extrapolating Dewey's arguments, we might see the everyday artwork created by children as valuable and meaningful -- both as means of understanding the children and as a way for them to make sense of their broader societal contexts. Children, in turn, embody the knowledge of their experiences (Davidson, 2004).

The notion of embodied knowledge resonates in arts-infused educational initiatives, since, as Davidson (2004) points out, the arts by their nature value bodies and minds, where they intersect and entangle, to form the bases of meaning and representation. We experience the arts, and in so doing, have embodied knowledge of their forms and contents. We are open to imagining further experiences, and in so doing, become privy to additional learning potentials, according to Davidson.

Eisner's (2002) comment: "Imagination, that form of thinking that engenders images of the possible" (p. 5) highlights the potential of imaginative opportunities in education. He further asserts that, among other things, the arts teach attention to relationships, flexible purposing, using materials as medium, shaping form to create expressive content, as well as the exercise of imagination.

Of imagination, Greene (1995) states: "Imagination may be our primary means of forming our understanding of what goes on under the heading of 'reality'; imagination may be responsible for the very texture of our experience" (p. 140). Connecting imagination and the arts, Greene says "…the arts…leave us (and should leave us) less immersed in the everyday and more impelled to wonder and to question" (p. 135).The arts can leave us uncomfortable at times according to Greene, as "they may…move us into spaces where we can envision other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them" (p. 135). I would therefore suggest, in agreement with Greene, that attention to early childhood arts experiences means that imagination in classroom contexts provides opportunities to see the world as other, to envision possibilities.

Gallas (2004) looks at imagination not based on teacher-orchestrated events, but everyday incidents of imagination that are part of regular classroom life. She observes that: "Creativity is … construction of the new, while imagination is a form of thought in which the new is brought to awareness" (p. 121). Gallas (2003) further notes that: "we know intuitively that imagination is important, but it is difficult to describe how, when and why it is important" (p. 3). The descriptions of students' imaginative experiences during seemingly ordinary

school days that are present in my work shed light on some aspects of this question. It is possible that through these encounters with imagination, more will be revealed about the learning that goes on in the arts in early childhood.

The Arts in Early Childhood

My study is informed by prior research studies on the arts and early childhood that inform this study have examined language (Barroquiero, 2004; Zander, 2003), children's responses (Thompson, 2003; Tickle, 1996), and social interactions around artistic learning (Kindler, 1995; Tarr, 1995). Language, or in this case, "student talk" (Zander, p. 117), may be considered as research participants work and play together in their arts-infused classrooms. Zander recognizes that student silences are also worthy of attention, and that teacher silences leave open places for students to affect curriculum: "We must become aware of finding places in schooling that provide communicative structures in which students can talk and through which teachers listen to them with respect" (p. 131).

Tickle (1996) concentrates on children's responses to art and art education, recommending that "case studies of practice" (p. 35) be built in support. Thompson (2003) adds to the repertoire of case studies, suggesting that children's responses in arts situations are, in effect, a chance to explore their daily, lived worlds. The ideas that are represented in their artistic creations and in their responses to art are worthy of consideration and respect:

> Creating situations in which children are encouraged to explore their unofficial interests in the art room ... [there exists] the possibility of seeing

> children differently, as individuals engaged in the production and interpretation of the culture in which they live. (p. 45)

Tarr (1995) explores social interactions in children's arts settings. It is noteworthy that "children negotiated issues about the acceptance of specific kinds of art forms, self-concept, the work-related value of production and order" (p. 27). Social interactions within arts settings are not limited to art alone. Kindler (1995) found that "unrelated social speech" (p. 97), along with a "propensity toward appraisal of one's own and other's ... work" (p. 91) were significant in her study. Kindler likens early childhood art contexts with folk cultures of the world, "where people gather together and where what we would describe as art explorations occur during social events" (p. 103). Kindler argues that the social context in which children's art is rooted is their everyday experience, and as such, it is the seemingly ordinary interactions that occur during experiences with the arts that are worthy of further investigation. Understanding children's interactions with the arts is central in my research.

On experience and early childhood arts education, Samson (2005) notes that through the arts, "we take into our own being the experiences of others and realize that not everyone sees the world as we do" (p. 75). The arts have the potential, even in early childhood, to be liberating:

> It [the arts] brings us from our own individual perspectives of the world to those of others ... broadens our horizons, brings us to understand the place of other in our society, and invites us to imagine things as if they could be otherwise. (p. 79)

Through the arts, primary school children develop variant possibilities for themselves and others. The arts can offer alternative experiences, identities and places.

Parents, teachers and young children are shaped by their autobiographical stories and also by broader narratives. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) speaks of the "ghosts" (p. 3) in classrooms, which become sometimes unconscious replays in ongoing classroom experiences. Adults remember their lives as children in schools, and re-enact these stories when trying to understand the new experiences of their own children and students. Lawrence-Lightfoot reminds researchers and teachers that "we are custodians of their [the parent's] most precious person" (p. 14). As such, research into the arts in early childhood must be conducted in ways that offer all of those concerned a chance to share authority (Oyler, 1996), and to feel open to multiple interpretations of classroom events.

Students may function as "mutual mentors" (Eisner, 2002, p. 216) in arts classrooms. Students, even those in the years of early childhood, can mentor each other as they draw, paint, sing, act, and dance together. As they sit beside each other in classrooms, they may be mentors to one other. Mentorship, that which facilitates partnerships in learning (Weinberger, 1992) is not to be underestimated. According to Gordon (2007), mentorship creates a space of possibility, allowing human beings to evolve. Mutual respect, trust, and inspiration all come from mentorship experiences.

The Arts and Creating a Sense of Place

One of my research questions necessitates a review of the literature as it pertains to place. Since Central Arts Elementary School emphasizes arts programming, I wished to know if arts infusion offers enhanced possibilities for children to construct and inhabit their concepts of place. How do children and adults create place in an arts-infused school? Is it possible to be moved by the arts -- to experience new and different places both virtual and actual (Tuan, 2004)? I believe that children's conceptions of school places are linked to their imagining and negotiating identities.

When I speak of creating place and a "sense of place" (Hay, 1988, p. 159), I am concerned with how place may be considered as possibilities and experiences, how meanings and memories might be formed. Ashcroft (2001) says that "Place forms itself out of the densely woven web of language, memory and cultural practice, and keeps being formed by the process of living" (p. 156). In an arts-infused environment, it is possible that unique places may be created, through both artistic endeavours and the thoughts and words associated with them. A sense of place as described by Hay (1988) is a personal connection with place, built up through involvement, "individually based, but group informed, localized ... transforming mere space into a personal place" (p. 160). The arts activities at Central Arts may be opportunities to further understand how place and/or a sense of place may be created among children. As students live out their experiences, as they communicate their feelings in their arts-infused school, their stories of place may actually be generated through their encounters with the arts.

Ellis (2005) suggests that “to use place as a central idea in research is to use it as a question rather than as a specific claim about its nature or role” (p. 55). My questions concerning the lived curriculum of an arts-infused elementary school involve attention to place in the same way that Tuan (2004) asks, “Isn’t it true [of places created by the arts] that we pause before them, rest in them, and are, in one sense or another, nurtured by them?” (p. 3). I became interested in exploring the processes, and the role of the arts in these processes, through which children create places within their school. How would children of this school be affected by arts-infused curricula, and how might this contribute to an enhanced sense of place?

Some prior research in education, the arts, and place offers narrative, holistic accounts (Cadwell, 1996; Galindo, 2001). Galindo explores complementary aspects of art-making in social and natural environments. Of place, especially as place is experienced in the outdoor adventures of children, Galindo maintains that “Arts ... are the vehicle through which children may express their interior world and communicate with both nature and community” (p. 12). Lippard (1997) tells us that our senses of place are “invaluable social and cultural tools providing much needed connections to what we call ‘nature’ and, sometimes, to cultures not our own” (p. 33). Lai and Ball (2002) confirm that art educators are “acutely aware” (p. 47) of the intimate relationships amongst art, education and place; they encourage future researchers and educators of these topics to expand these discussions to include broadened definitions of art and place. In their study, Lai and Ball examined yard art, that which surrounded the

home of mid-Western American families. Broader consideration of artwork enhanced this research of art and place: “We believe it is imperative that educators concerned with place not restrict consideration only to those works conventionally considered art proper” (p. 64). In other words, we expand our conceptions of art.

Ellis (2002) speaks of the importance of attending to children and place: “A form of curriculum ... place can be understood as facilitating nurturance, especially through meaningful relationships” (p. 69). As I observe students moving among their peers, as they interact with staff and others in the school, what might I come to understand about their relationships? How are stories of student lives enacted? What might be uniquely understood from the things students say and do in places of creativity?

Inquiring Into Classrooms With and Through the Arts

Arts-based curricula and arts-based research are both considerations in this dissertation. As I conduct searches with and through the arts, I have become more aware of the openings inherent in alternative curricular orientations. Aoki (1993) and Greene (1995) have been particularly influential for me. Aoki speaks of the multiplicity of in-betweens in moving from planned to lived curriculum: “allowing space for stories, anecdotes, and narratives that embody the lived dimensions of curricular life” (p. 263). There is a “pedagogic reaching as a letting go and letting be” (p. 264) as we inquire into our classroom experiences, and seek to understand, and to be understood. Throughout my study of children’s experiences in arts-infused classrooms, I felt the dynamic tensions of “letting go

and letting be" while I negotiated my own and others' ideas of learner, teacher, researcher, and artist. The in-betweens became dwelling places for me during my research activities and they are now, as I continue to live stories of curriculum, and attempt to represent my work.

Greene (1995) says the arts offer "… transformations, openings, possibilities: teachers and teacher educators must keep these themes audible" (p. 17). We must "seek out ways in which the arts, in particular, can release imagination to open new perspectives, to identify alternatives" (p. 18), as the arts "offer new lenses through which to look out at and interpret the educative acts that keep human beings and their cultures alive" (p. 18). Greene recognizes classrooms as places in which teachers and learners conduct collaborative searches, "each from her or his lived situation" (p. 23). I hope that through this current study and otherwise, the arts, and inquiring through the arts, will make possible the greater communication of ideas between child and adult, learner and teacher, researcher and researched.

Moving from arts-based notions of curriculum into arts-based research, we find that arts-based inquiries have the potential to "change minds"(Barone, 2008, p. 28). He continues to say that by being epistemologically humble, and socially engaged, the challenge and possibilities in arts-based teaching and research can "politely but powerfully … artfully change the conversation … [making] one wonder what … should and can become" (pp. 46-47). According to Diamond and van Halen-Faber (2005), arts-based educational research allows us "to draw on multiplicity, transience, temporality, and change all as rich resources" (p. 83).

Unlike traditional forms of education research, which can be “non-metaphorical, disembodied, literal and so limited” (p. 83) arts-based inquiries take us to “previously unimagined places” (p. 83).

Mienczakowski (2001) and Saldaña (2005/2008) specialize in ethnodrama. This form of arts-based inquiry has its roots in performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003). Ethnodrama can take the form of performance and/or fictionalized writing in dramatic scripts (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001). These scripts and performances have the power to “present and represent a study of people and their culture” (Saldaña, 2005, p. 2), and as such, they can inspire the researchers and the researched to more deeply engage with research materials.

Image-based research is described by Prosser (1998) as having the potential to liberate research encounters, as “we use images not only as representations of the objective world, but also to communicate our deepest feelings” (p. 1). Other authors, such as Harper (1998) make arguments for the use of visual data in research, as “images enlarge our consciousness” (p. 38), and add depth to the understanding of particular research situations. Denscombe (2003) suggests that interpreting an image as a “cultural artifact” (p. 278) will move the focus away from simply the content of the piece itself, and into questions about the context from which the image came, and the purposes it serves. A “symbolic representation” (p. 5) can lead to the uncovering of ideologies and cultural codes.

Schechner (2003) describes art has having the ability to transform raw experiences into more palatable forms, moving in a particular example from ritual to theatre and back, and considering the differences between social and aesthetic

drama. The author maintains that the ancients created art through dreams and trances, whereas western thinkers often split ritual from entertainment, privileging ritual first, and entertainment as trivial. Schechner problematized such distinctions, but sees the arts as a mediator of sorts: “Art is cooked and life is raw” (p. 30). In other words, one begets the other. And, as it applies to my work and to arts-based research generally, we are able to inquire with and through the arts. We may find less triviality when the arts are taken up as forms of research, and not seen merely as entertainment.

Irwin (2004) and her colleagues have coined the term *a/r/tography* to describe what it is that artist-teacher-researchers attempt to do while inquiring into classrooms and the arts:

> A/r/tography is a living practice of art, research, and teaching: A living métissage; a life-writing, a life-creating experience … through attention to memory, identity, reflection, meditation, storytelling, interpretation, and representation, the artists/writers/teachers who share their living practices with us … are searching for new ways to understand their practices. (p. 34)

As I conduct research, I find myself sometimes fumbling with the artist-researcher-teacher connections, at times feeling at peace with all the terms, and at other times feeling the identities separate, apart, different. Additionally, I am between worlds of school as teacher and student and researcher. The negotiation of these shifting identities is challenging, but I am buoyed by the hope that my own teaching practices will be enhanced from the knowledge I carry away from

the study. I may not have been an a/r/tographer per se, perhaps not in the way that Irwin and her colleagues are, but I find the arts a place to enter in, to interpret, to represent, and ultimately, to continue.

The journey toward a methodology that adequately guides my study is informed by all the literature reviewed above. Although many authors have been represented, there was no one piece of writing that I felt fully encapsulated my experiences while at Central Arts School. I suppose this is why I feel my research study must be rendered, to stand as part of the rest, yet to be significant as a research study that inquires in an embodied way into elementary classrooms and the arts.

Chapter Three. Conceptualizing and Designing the Research Study

A Methodological Journey

I have participated in research studies in elementary schools using ethnographical tools in the past (Hobday-Kusch, 2001; Hobday-Kusch & McVittie, 2002). My prior studies on humour in elementary classrooms involved ethnographic observations, followed by conversations with the research participants. Watching and participating in research sites, then following up with further conversations was meaningful because it was possible to pose questions based upon ideas collected during observations and to gain a more insightful understanding of the situation that was observed. We, the researcher and the research participants, were able to consider the significance of our interpretations, and later to contextualize this significance. We could speak from shared experience.

While I maintained the use of tools from educational ethnography as part of the methodological structures in this work, multi-method qualitative approaches (Geelan, 2003) are also present. From the time in which I completed my master's degree (2002), to the point in which I commenced the research study for my doctoral dissertation (2006), qualitative research practices in education have expanded significantly (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008). New scholars that I have come to know along the way have been inspirational. In addition to meeting arts-based researchers at the University of Alberta, I have been influenced by narrative scholars as well. The intricacies inherent in studying, then representing children's experiences prompted me to consider, in addition to

classroom ethnographers, the research paths of art-based and narrative inquirers. I wondered how might classroom ethnography, arts-based research, and narrative scholarship might combine to become part of my continuing methodological journey.

Epistemological Understandings

My ways of knowing begin in constructivist thought. Guba and Lincoln (2004) suggest that constructivist thinkers allow findings to be created as research proceeds. There is "interaction between and among investigator and respondents" (p. 27) that shapes both the research paths and outcomes. Through the processes, previously held notions may be challenged, and "multiple knowledges" (p. 31) exist. In all, the aim of inquiry is to understand and reconstruct the experiences of both the research participants and the researcher.

Moving into an arts-based epistemological stance, I contend that under the influences of constructivism, I am further using the arts themselves to question, form and understand research experiences. One of my research questions asks: "What might I (as researcher) say about the arts experiences of children that resonate with the ways in which I have experienced the arts in my own life (Greene, 1995)?" I am using my own (arts) life to consider further inquiry, yet in so doing, I am also re-framing that life, to position it next to my research experiences, and to consider how these could be connected. I do not assume objectivity, omniscience, or all-knowing. Instead, I re-create my life next to the lives of those whom I meet as research participants and as part of the research experience itself. Through our concerns for the arts, and through creating art

together, we are able to consider ourselves. And, as Greene (1998) says: “I know the challenges are always new. The questions still gather, and I relish my sense of incompleteness. I can only live…with a consciousness of possibility, of what might be” (p. 256).

The ways in which I create meaning through the arts: in this work, my use of scripted descriptions, images, and multiple, shifting realties open new and different pathways to unraveling the complexities of lives in school. The pathways of the arts reveal themselves to me through my own attempts as an artist. Through a variety of arts possibilities, such as writing, playing musical instruments and creating visual artwork, I seek to understand, and to be understood. When I enter into a research situation with the arts as fore-structure, I see the opportunities to explore beyond traditional research approaches. That being said, I wish also to acknowledge my influences from a variety of research studies and practices.

Ethnographical Studies

Ethnographical studies are characterized by concerns for understanding everyday lives from participants’ perspectives (Berg, 1995). They involve firsthand fieldwork/study, and from observations, elicit descriptions and interpretations of socio-cultural behaviours, beliefs and attitudes. Merriam (1998) recognizes educational ethnographical studies as those which attend to “the history of a neighbourhood, socioeconomic factors, the community’s racial and ethnic makeup, the attitudes of parents, residents, and school officials toward education” (p. 15). For me, it was of great concern that my research at Central

Arts School would respect the cultures therein. I wished for the work I did at Central Arts to reflect school lives as experienced by the students. As I will go on to describe in detail, I lived alongside my research community for the better part of two school years. In that time I observed and interpreted the lives of the school community, with special emphasis on the lives of the students.

Educational ethnographer Jeffrey (2004) says, " Teachers, learners, families and communities mediate, appropriate, subvert, and challenge … curriculum engagement … to make educational experiences more meaningful" (p. 1). I wanted to be sensitive to the possibility that school cultures were fluid, shifting and changing, in attempts to accommodate, and perhaps to control, various curricular endeavours. I hoped that an educational study that employed ethnographical tools might closely render stories of school life. I believe that the commitment that many educational ethnographers (Hobday-Kusch, 2001; Jeffrey, 2004; Vogt, 2001; Walters, 2004) make to researcher engagement, the ways in which they extend themselves to live alongside their research participants, and to become part of these worlds, offers excellent opportunities to observe and understand the depths of (school) cultures. Following extended researcher engagement, most ethnographers, as Van Maanen (1988) observes, are ready to tell tales of their experiences.

Van Maanen (1988) differentiates between realist, confessional, and impressionist ethnographical "tales" (p. 101). In the case of my research at Central Arts, I became most interested in those tales that are impressionistic in nature. The term "impressionist tales" can be connected with art history, and the

world of impressionist painting: “what a painter sees, given an apparent position in time and space” (p. 101). Putting idealized landscapes and formal portraits aside, impressionist artists attempted to evoke an open, participatory sense. Impressionist painting is realized through the placing of contrasting colour fragments side by side, creating a lively surface that requires the mixing of colour in the eye of the viewer (Wilson, 1990). Accordingly, an impressionist ethnographic tale means to leave not an exact rendering of a situation, but rather an impression of that which has occurred in the field of research study. Van Maanen writes, “the form of impressionist tale is dramatic recall” (p. 103). Events are relayed in the way the researcher saw, heard, and felt them, in attempt to draw the audience into an unfamiliar story world. Thus “fragmented knowledge” (p. 103) is probable, as the tale unfolds and keeps the audience alongside the researcher while she or he (re)considers the field.

Arts-Based Research Practices

Arts-based research practices can be used in both gathering and representing data, and in so doing, they offer “layered exploration[s]” (Conrad, 2004, p. 11). Barone and Eisner (1997) describe arts-based educational inquiry as having seven features: the creation of a virtual reality, the presence of ambiguity, the use of expressive language, the use of contextualized vernacular language, the promotion of empathy, the personal signature of the researcher/writer, and the presence of aesthetic form. According to Irwin and Springgay (2008), arts-based research can also be characterized by contiguity, living inquiry, metaphor and metonymy, openings, reverberations, and excess. Prosser (1998) extols the

possibilities of images in research, and Saldaña (2005) explores the use of ethnodrama in educational inquiry.

As part of the study, the Central Arts students, their teachers, and I participated in mask-making, puppetry, and improvised theatre projects. I suggested some of these projects to teachers early on in our time together, as potentially useful extensions to existing curriculum at Central Arts. The teachers and students were happy to participate, and as Mr. L said: “I wanted to do that anyway!” (Mr. L, personal communication, November 13, 2005). The distance (Conquergood, 1985) between researcher and participants was reduced as a result of these projects, and the participatory nature of fieldwork (Denzin, 2003) intensified.

Schechner (2003) speaks of performance theory, of how theatre develops from rituals and how these rituals in turn inspire theatre. My research work in the school draws upon this notion. For example, in the early part of my study, I wondered about the voices of the children (Griffin, 2007), these important and sometimes undervalued things spoken in schools, and how these might be brought forward using puppets. As early childhood storytelling and theatre rituals go, we began a series of classroom puppet plays. I noticed that throughout the children’s participation in puppet theatre, they revealed pieces of their lives -- their experiences, their desires -- through their puppets. The puppets were able to go off on brave, ambitious adventures that the children, in their actual worlds, would not be permitted to risk. The risk-taking experiences of puppets prompted questions: do the puppets become conduits for alternative paths children wish to

explore? Were the puppet theatre rituals inspiring children's actions and/or vice versa? When the children are themselves, are they also not themselves (Schechner, 2003), because they are acting and speaking through puppets? Does puppet theatre in the classroom have the potential to offer an "alternative performative way of knowing" (Conrad, 2004, p. 11), a way for the puppet masters to express ideas through puppets that might otherwise be left unsaid, ideas otherwise impossible for "real" children to think or do? How might my stories of these arts-based research activities be met in the rendering of scripts, or as narratives of these experiences?

A Nod to Narrative Inquiry

Although my study is not designed to be "narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xiii), I have borrowed from narrative scholarship in the ways in which I have storied my field notes (Murphy, 2004) and considered my participants' accounts as their stories to live by (Huber, 2000). I appreciate the emphasis on profound attention and care that many narrative authors, such as Long (2008) hold dear. The opportunity to consider field texts as scripts, and field journals as stories, has allowed me to produce a descriptive account of my experiences at Central Arts School. I owe a nod to the narrative inquirers for allowing me further openings to see the world.

Gergen (2004) writes that narrative research and writing is jointly constructed as part of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. It is possible that through the interplay of myself and the students of Central Arts School, our stories have become entwined. The reflexive and recursive form of

story can create ebb and flow in research. We learn about each other, and those stories become part of the research. As the research continues to unfold, we learn more about each other, which causes the stories to develop in different ways.

Narrative inquiry and narrative writing are opportunities to see the lives of researchers and participants as compositions (Clandinin et al., 2006), fluid and shifting as stories come to pass. Composition is also an idea in arts-based research: arts-based compositions may be textual, visual, and metaphorical (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Compositions created as part of living within the research community are found in ethnographical study (Berg, 1995) as well. This leads me to suggest that a narrative thread is a way in which to connect multiple research methods. In my work at Central Arts School, there are elements of all three research methods: ethnographical, arts-based, and narrative. These are most easily recognized in the ways in which I lived alongside the research community, scripted various field texts, and continually observed lives in school, lives engaged by and through artistic encounter.

Central Arts Observations: Living Alongside

I followed a series of steps in order to live alongside my research participants. The first part of my research, involving ethnographic observation, became feasible once ethical consent was obtained from the University of Alberta, Central Arts School and its larger school district, as explained earlier. With consent in place, I initially chose to envision my role as a participant-observer. As Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) explain, this distinction falls into the continuum of roles one can undertake as an observer in qualitative research. Somewhere

between “complete participant” and “complete observer,” the “participant observer” holds a diminished degree of involvement in the situation that is being observed. At times, I placed myself unobtrusively in classrooms, in hallways and on the playground to collect observations of students who had consented to being observed. Although I attempted to “blend in” with the school crowd, I was a researcher in these circumstances. At appropriate times, I discussed this role with those involved in the study. At all times, I was honest with the students and staff of Central Arts School about my position as a university researcher.

I became an active participant when I worked with the classroom teacher to facilitate events in the classroom, such as arts lessons and field trips. Sometimes I was a helper to the students, and sometimes I was their guest-teacher. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) speak of living alongside in a research community, that is, being truthful about one’s position as a researcher but also allowing relationships to develop while in the research space. While in Central Arts, I was a volunteer teacher / school visitor. Having an authentic role (Geelan, 2003) within the school context, that of the classroom volunteer, for example, not only made me less obtrusive to the students and staff of Central Arts, but also allowed me to contribute to the happenings of the school while I was there. Research occurred as a part of these contributions, these interactions with the students and staff.

In my experience, the context that observations provide is useful. A researcher can frame questions in attempt to learn more about what he or she has

seen during the observation phase. Through subsequent conversations, the researcher and researched may move together toward shared meanings.

Conversations with Research Participants

My role of participant-observer during ethnographical observations led me to the questions I wished to ask in informal conversations with the students and others at Central Arts School (see Appendix N) These conversations were casual, so as to be less intimidating for the research participants. I am careful to use the term *conversation*, and not *interview* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Formal interviews were not used in this study, as I believed the children were too young to sustain prolonged interest. The spontaneous talks were opportunities for participants to express their ideas about arts-infused education. I asked questions of the staff members at Central Arts as well. Questions arose from our mutual experiences at Central Arts, from the arts activities and places that we came to know together. My presence within the classroom as researcher, as volunteer, offered both insight and context for our discussions.

I felt that the staff and students were generally at ease with me throughout the time I spent at Central Arts School. We engaged in conversations, and while I did not consider everything that was said to be data, per se, the conversations become places in which to consider possibilities for the study, and opportunities to ask further questions or clarifications. The conversations I had with staff, students and others at Central Arts School were short and informal, but quite frequent. The students and I spoke during group work, at recesses, and often during arts classes. I spoke with staff less often than I did with the students, but I

still felt their words held significance for the research study. I have referred to staff conversations throughout this document as “personal communications.” I have tried to let the students’ words, in as much as it is possible, to appear as direct quotations and later as scripted descriptions.

Using Scripts and Images

I have included images from the classroom and school in this work. I have also taken the words and experiences of my research participants and arranged them in scripted descriptions (Chapter Six) to reflect the ways in which I understood the research experience, and foreground the meanings I realized from it. The scripted descriptions are fictionalized accounts of classroom happenings. In some of the scripts characters have been created for dramatic effect -- they are not limited to the research participants, alone. I chose to use narrative scriptwriting techniques exclusively in Chapter Six, and these should not be confused with excerpts from actual conversations with research participants. I used the verbatim language of participants in Chapters Four and Five.

In collecting images of students and their artwork, I proceeded with great caution. I obtained specialized permission from all involved (Appendix O, P). Grauer and Garcia (2003) consider the effect of cameras in elementary classrooms, and conclude, for the purposes of their study, that inconvenience to research participants is minimal. I felt that the cameras I used were not a nuisance, and if anything, may have sparked further artistic curiosity amongst the students of Central Arts School. As I will go on to describe in future chapters, the students sometimes directed the camera to the pictures they wanted taken, they presented

for the lens, and they were eager to see and hear audio and videotapes of their (artistic) educational pursuits.

Ethics and Further Considerations

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) describe the mainstay of ethical research as that which "protects from physical or psychological harm, discomfort, or danger that may arise due to research procedures" (p. 35). In the Central Arts situation, as I explored mainly the perspectives of children, additional ethical questions arise.

Children were "participants" in my research, but they may not have understood all that this status entails. Even though I explained the research verbally to the students, and drew up assent and consent forms for the students and their parents to sign, there may have been a limited degree of understanding related to approval and subsequent research interpretations. I believe that the risks attached to my presence as a classroom visitor were low. Students at Central Arts were accustomed to regular visitors: school staff, counselors, psychologists, parent volunteers, and so on. As a result, my presence in the classroom was not unduly disruptive. For the purposes of this study, programs were not being evaluated, and teachers were not being observed, documented, or assessed. I deeply appreciated that the school district permitted me to complete this study, and I especially acknowledge the roles of the teachers and school principal in allowing me to proceed.

Deception was not used in the study: participants were informed of my "university researcher" title, and they knew that their anonymity would be guarded by pseudonyms and ethical research practices. I was somewhat

challenged by two of the students in the class who did not return their consent forms, but I determined along with their classroom teacher that these children could still participate in our activities together. I would simply avoid collecting any information from them that might otherwise go toward the research study.

I shared interim research texts with participants. I asked special permission to use images of their artwork (Appendix O, P) and the words from our conversations. I personally transcribed all audio and videotape data, so as to continue to keep the confidentiality of those concerned. Participants were protected, and research progressed only as long as this remained the case. Noddings (1992) speaks of an ethic of care, and encourages those working within schools and communities of children to proceed always with care and respectful attitudes as primary focus. I believe an ethic of care guided my work within Central Arts School.

Reinharz (1992) writes of ethnographical research ethical dilemmas in terms of “trust …, closeness/distance, ... and the dilemma of the complete observer and complete participant roles” (p. 65). I think that her first caution, about trust, was mediated through my extended presence within the school. I expected to maintain the trust of Central Arts staff and student populations through extended researcher engagement. I found that I moved between observer and participant roles quite fluidly in the early days at Central Arts School. I did not feel an ethical dilemma here, and I was not surprised when my “teacher sense” came to the fore and early on I began actively participating with the

classroom teachers, co-constructing lessons and activities, and supervising groups of students.

I assumed the stance of "reflective practitioner" (Taylor, 1996, p. 25) in the work I did at Central Arts School. In reflective practice, there is a discovery of self, and a recognition of how one interacts with others. Reflective practitioners "interrogate the character of their own truths" (p. 28) and such reflection "informs the very event itself" (p. 30). Taylor states, "There is an attractiveness in reflective practitioner design because it honours the intuitive and emergent processes that inform artistic meaning-making" (pp. 27-28). Perhaps already extant, or even residual trust within and between artists in a community of learners allowed us to believe in one another easily, quickly. The early development of trust established strong connections between myself, the staff, and the students of Central Arts School. We were confident that our work could be meaningful, and was worth doing. Reflective practice provided a place for us to discover then "interrogate" (p. 28) our own truths, and to realize realities as multiple and shifting. As Taylor noted: "Truths evolve and transform over time" (p. 37). As the research continued, so did the relationships between the researcher and the researched. Reflective practitioner sensitivities allowed us to question those changing dynamics, and to re-consider ourselves in light of new connections.

Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2000) encourage qualitative researchers to consider carefully their social responsibilities in research situations. Researchers must consider how their data could be used for policy development and be aware

to what extent the research offers alternatives to common-sense or dominant discourse. The voices of the researched need to be connected to the "set of historic, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated" (p. 126). Once my research is complete, the results will be released to the school district that surrounds Central Arts Elementary School. Curricular policy may be re-considered in light of this research. The stories of the children may become influential.

Research Design

Timeframe of the Study

I began my work at Central Arts School in pilot study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993) mode. However as mentioned earlier, I launched quickly into teaching alongside the classroom teacher (Mr. L, grade one teacher), meeting weekly with the students, and developing arts lessons and activities together. As it unfolded, weekly visits to Mr. L and the grade one students extended from November 2005 through April 2006 (six months), before I was ready to propose a formal dissertation study and further research arrangements. By the time I had successfully proposed my dissertation, and returned for further study, it was December 2006. I stayed through June 2007, beginning with Mrs. D (grade one/two combined classroom teacher), who was later replaced by another teacher, Miss A (grade one/two combined classroom teacher). The total time of my study with the children was 12 months, which spanned two school years. Over the course of the study, most of my research participants progressed from their first into their second grades of school. As I wrote the results of the study, I visited the

students again, this time in June of 2008. It was a chance to see them as third-graders, an opportunity for us to continue our connections, and also a chance to see the growth that can occur in primary school over a three-year timeframe.

Focus of the Study

The focus of my study was related to my research questions, most especially: How do children come to understand themselves and their worlds through their experiences with the arts? While living alongside them, I was moved by the things that the children found interesting and seemed to want to know. I was also excited to explore arts-based research methods such as puppetry and mask-making and improvised drama. As the study progressed, I became able to address my other research questions, such as those of children's conversations and place-making. Through journal entries and scripted descriptions, I was also able to re-examine my own life and teaching practices, in light of that which I had seen in the field.

Research Tools

I used field notes, audio, and videotape recordings, along with photographs of the children, and samples of their artwork for the purposes of research. I also benefited from extended researcher engagement (Saldaña, 2003) during the two school years spent in study. Reflection and review over time helped the evolving research design, as I was able to accommodate a variety of information-gathering and information- generating possibilities. Time in the field helped me to better understand the possibilities of arts-based research, including the incorporation of puppets, masks and improvised drama.

Beginning the Study

On the first day of my pilot study, I met with Mr. L to offer consent forms for the children's parents or caregivers, as described earlier. He introduced me to his students and I explained the purpose of my study in what I believed to be age-appropriate terms. Although excited to begin, we decided that we would wait for about a week for the children to return their consent forms. In that way, the most possible signatures would have been collected and I would have the opportunity to observe as many of the children as possible.

Upon returning the following week, I was pleased to collect forms from 20 of the 22 children in the grade one (pilot study) classroom. All of these parents/caregivers had consented to their children's participation in the study. I began first as a watcher, and by the middle of the first day, as an active classroom helper. It was sometimes a challenge to skip from desk to desk and then back to scribble occasional notes in my journal about my observations, but ultimately I was glad to have an authentic role in the classroom, and I did not mind the busy-ness. I also felt more useful to the students and teachers while in "helper" mode. I think it made everyone feel more at ease. Eventually, I would expand my authentic role within the school to include guest-teaching lessons to the children, and leading us in puppetry, mask-making, and improvised drama sessions.

The pilot study ended in the spring of 2006. I returned to the university to draft a formal proposal of my research for the doctoral study that would comprise my dissertation. The study involved a return to Central Arts School, in order to

continue on with the same group of children from the pilot study. When I returned in January 2007, however, the students were in their fifth month of grade two.

This time I worked with classroom teachers Mrs. D (January-March, 2007) and Miss A (April-June, 2007). As before, I left the children and their teacher(s) with consent forms to be signed, prior to the commencement of my study. There were 21 students in the combined-grade one and two classroom: 16 in grade two, and five in grade one. Most of the children had been in Mr. L's grade one class the previous year, and they remembered me. I gave consent forms to everyone equally, and for this study, 16 out of 21 forms were returned -- all in the positive -- for study continuance. The unreturned forms were not pursued, as Mrs. D cautioned that some of her students' families were living in varying states of transition, and that there might be several comings and goings over the next few months. I would have to be prepared for some attrition, and possibly some additions in my study. Mrs. D felt that the return of 16 forms was excellent, and that I could count myself lucky that so many had come back. She had expected less, she told me (Mrs. D, personal communication, January 16, 2007). I was pleased because, among the forms that had been returned, some of the most significant research participants had signed on for another year of study. These significant research participants (Ryan, Brent, Susan, Mara, Sandy, etc.) will be properly introduced in subsequent chapters of this document.

As mentioned before, I began as a note-taker in the back of the classroom, and moved quickly to classroom helper. I had requested the use of camera and video for this study, and I was now trying to negotiate the use of all of the

collection-tools in a busy classroom. In as much as I could understand, the children were able to participate in their classroom learning, while contributing to the study during our impromptu conversations on film and tape. I checked routinely with classroom teachers to ensure that I was not becoming a distraction or a nuisance in the classroom. They assured me that I was not. The students posed for occasional pictures, and eventually watched back their own films and words. The processes of collecting research materials were steered largely through the cooperation of classroom teachers and students. I directed my cameras and research notes where they indicated that I should go.

Study Interpretation

In the remainder of this dissertation I will describe the significant events that occurred during my research at Central Arts School. I have blended reporting and analysis as interpretation, narrative writing, scripts, and images in subsequent chapters. I re-visit several particular research moments in this work, such as the puppets, mask-making and necklace-building occurrences. Each time I re-visit a research moment, I do so in a different mode, so as to offer slightly different perspective. The use of children's actual conversations, scripted descriptions, and images has allowed me to look more deeply at key research moments, and allows readers a variety of entry points within which to interface with the findings. I was influenced in this writing-decision by the work of Saldaña (2005, 2008), and Ely (1996), as I saw their writing as inventive interplay of research analysis and reporting, open to multiple interpretations. I was impressed by Saldaña's use of script-as-findings, and Ely's encouragement to find a sense of completeness in

many understandings of the same event. Further, I believe that the research occurrences I chose to represent more than once in this dissertation were some of the same moments that had deepest resonance for my research participants during the time I was in the field. I would suggest that my participants will consider our puppets, mask-making, and hallway moments as significant highlights. I hope to have described and interpreted these moments well.

The combination of description and interpretation resulted from the ways in which I conducted myself in the research field. I did not set out to keep separate the forces of analysis and reporting, but instead allowed the two to merge and influence each another. I did not wait until the end of the study to begin deeply considering the field notes I took and the images I was collecting. Rather, I looked at the field texts and images carefully each week as I emerged from the school. I transcribed taped conversations and video data immediately following their collection. I kept daily journal notes and often referred back to my research questions. In effect, I answered the questions each time I left the field -- answering somewhat differently each time, but always reckoning with the big themes: experience, arts, elementary school, place and conversation. At the end of two years at Central Arts School, I looked through all of my field notes to see if there were additional themes. In so doing, I was able to provide some implications for arts-infused education, along with recommendations for future practice.

Ely (1996) cautions against qualitative researchers overburdening themselves with data, and encourages the writing of research findings prior to “final analysis” (p. 169). In writing the potential results of the study before the

study is complete, researchers may have a chance to see their research methods evolve, have the methods be shaped by ongoing findings in the field (Saldaña, 2003). The processes of study, research, and writing are recursive (Ely, 1996), each propelling the other. As I spent more time in Central Arts School, I was able to conceptualize the writing of scripted descriptions (see Chapter Six), and also to consider carefully the images that would most approximate my research experience (see Chapter Seven). The journals I kept throughout my time in the field pushed the research forward. I was able to deeply consider my personal, practical experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) through such writing.

In Chapter Four I deal with my research question on student self-understanding. I suggest that much of this understanding is reflected in the conversations of children. In Chapter Five, I look at how children create meaning, and a sense of place through school and the arts. The remaining chapters are explorations in the lived meaning of curriculum (Aoki, 1993), and of my own journeys as teacher and learner of the arts. In all, I blend observation, description, discussion, and sometimes, suggestions for future educational initiatives. I stand as an advocate for the arts in classrooms and schools.

Chapter Four. Creating Conversations

Overview of the Research Site

Central Arts School was originally built in a mid-Western Canadian city over 50 years ago. The current Central Arts School community is comprised of long-time homeowners, along with ethnically and economically diverse new residents. Apartments, rooming houses and government-subsidized housing are all familiar territory to the children who attend the school. A staff member described the school and its surrounding community as “hit and miss” (Miss K, personal communication, November 13, 2005). Sometimes broken windows and graffiti in the neighbourhood suggest a sense of apathy in parts of the community, but other places in and around Central Arts School are well maintained and shine with the pride of ownership.

Since 2003, Central Arts School has attempted to become arts-infused in its curricular programming. Initially, the parent council raised the idea of focusing on “fine arts” in their school. With the additions of arts-minded school-based administration and some new staff members who transferred to the school the following fall, the arts initiative began to take shape. A letter-writing campaign to the community announced that the school was “Sowing Seeds of the Future,” and that these would be, in effect, met though a variety of school arts programs. The term “fine arts” was replaced by “arts education,” and grant proposals followed to support school arts initiatives, and to connect the staff and students with professional and community artists. After a time of professional development, which included reading and reflection, along with arts workshops, the staff

approached its larger district for recognition as a site of excellence in elementary arts education. Their capacities as a school included the willingness to support the provincial arts curriculum with integrity, to infuse the arts into other subject areas as appropriate, and to make use of community resources that would support the school's focus on the arts. With its larger school district in support, Central Arts School developed, and more arts-minded elementary school teachers found teaching placements there. Teachers in the school who were less comfortable with the arts as focus either made arrangements to improve their artistic/professional development or to leave. Some students moved on as well, but many more became excited about the idea of arts-infused programming. The school has steadily increased its numbers since the inception of "arts-infusion" (Mrs. G, personal communication, May 26, 2008).

Attention to arts-infused programming is what drew me to the school as a potential research site. On my first visit to Central Arts School in June 2005, I met Mr. L, the new grade one teacher. We had a brief conversation and exchanged happy plans of our impending summer holidays. It seems simplistic to say that the two of us quickly developed trust, but I have found over the years with my colleagues, elementary schoolteachers, that this is often how it happens -- trust is quickly and commonly shared -- and how wonderful this is for us. After explaining my research intent in the arts, Mr. L welcomed me to begin a study, the pilot study for my dissertation research, in his classroom.

There are approximately 300 students from Kindergarten through Grade Eight at Central Arts School. The classrooms appear, at first, as many other

classrooms might appear in a mid-Western Canadian school. Upon closer inspection though, certain details are apparent that differentiate this school from those in neighbouring communities. A focus on the arts is reflected in the classrooms, through displays of students' artwork, copies of art by the masters, and special spaces consisting of visual art supplies, musical instruments, drama costumes, and stage properties. While much of the school day will consist of "regular" school subjects such as English language arts and mathematics, Central Arts School may be called "arts-infused" because of the attention regularly given to the arts. The arts-rich environment and an arts-focused approach to instruction are played out further in the students' representation of knowledge through the arts. Education is by, in, and through the arts. Staff and students have expectations that the arts will occur every day for them at school.

The spoken words that I quote in this chapter and the next are excerpted from actual dialogue among the students, staff, and myself. This is an important distinction from Chapter Six, where I have approximated and altered dialogue to appear as scripted descriptions. In Chapters Four and Five, the conversations appear, as much as possible, exactly as they were spoken.

The Grade One Students

Mr. L introduced me to his grade one class in October 2005, at the beginning of my pilot study. Of the 21 students enrolled in the class, 13 were boys and eight were girls. All of the students seemed interested by my presence, especially Brent, who immediately ran up to me to ask for help with his work, and then later to show me the results of his drawing. Brent learned my name quickly,

and he used it often during our first meeting to call my attention. Gaining attention seemed to be important to many of the other students as well. They called me to see their lockers, their desks, and their school projects. They were quick to welcome me to their classroom, and I was grateful.

A typical day in the grade one classroom began with the bell ringing at nine o'clock, and students making their way in from the playground. Upon entering the classroom, the students could hear music playing softly from the stereo, and as they hung up their backpacks in brightly decorated lockers, the children glanced at the agenda on the whiteboard that held their schedule for the day. In addition to the curricular subjects that one might expect in a mid-Western Canadian classroom such as language arts, mathematics, health education, social studies, and science, the typical day in a grade one classroom at Central Arts School is punctuated by special offerings. At ten o'clock for example, the students would attend "Creative Movement" class. At one o'clock they would have a special "Bookmaking" session. Throughout the day, the arts were infused into regular subject areas, as students were encouraged to sing their mathematical understandings, draw their reactions to the books they read, and dance their warm-ups in physical education. As a regular part of lesson presentation, the grade one teacher could take on dramatic roles. For example, during the reading of a story about a cat, it would not be surprising to hear the grade one teacher affecting cat purrs, stroking imaginary whiskers, or even donning a cat costume. Incident by incident, we might find examples of the arts in any mid-Western Canadian school. But taken together every day and with great attention, these

examples work to create an arts-infused educational experience. Teachers and students at Central Arts School are set apart by their profound attention and encouragement toward the arts. Learning occurs through the arts, and the arts themselves are carefully taught. Representation of learning via the arts is venerated. In essence, there is a concerted effort to make the arts part of children's lives, every day.

Conversations During Arts Experiences

I met with the students once each week in their classroom, and conversations prompted by arts experiences intrigued me. One day as children folded simple paper cranes, part of an origami project, I wandered around the room to listen to their conversations. Intent on task, Brent and Sandy were folding paper and chatting. As they worked, unprompted by adults, they shared mathematical facts with one another:

> Brent: 1 plus 1 equals 2, you know. (*folding paper in half*)
>
> Sandy: Yup! And 5 plus 5 equals 10. (*holds up paper crane*)
>
> (Notes to file, November 8, 2005)

Why did mathematical conversation arise from paper folding? And why did the students feel compelled to share these aloud with one another, instead of folding paper silently?

On a different occasion, as students engaged in decoupage, a glue and painting activity, I worked alongside and listened to them discussing their family members:

> Amy: My sister never eats lunch. She's getting very skinny.

Alison: Wow! You know, my sister never brushes her teeth. (*laughs, looks away*)

James: My dad spoils me.

(Notes to file, December 13, 2005)

I was curious. Why did these seemingly spontaneous grade one art conversations deal with family? Would conversations be the same in the library or at recess? Do young students ordinarily speak deeply and personally about their families with one another? Or is it possible that the actions involved in cutting, pasting, drawing, painting, moving, singing, acting and expressing prompt different, perhaps freer, conversations? How do arts experiences function as opportunities for understanding, as places where elementary school students can work through their ideas of themselves and their lives?

I continued to be curious about the conversations that students engage in when they are involved with the arts. I began to question students about their feelings during arts activities. Although many of the children could say that they enjoyed arts activities, they could not always say precisely why. As time went on, and as trust continued to develop in the classroom and with the research processes, I was encouraged by the classroom teacher and students to bring forth arts activities of my own for the class to consider. Together, we created self-portrait hand puppets. These representations of ourselves became a foray into arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 1997), as we used the arts as methods of communication and discovery.

Puppet Play

We made our puppets with cellu-clay, fabric, yarn and acrylic paint. My mother, a retired primary schoolteacher entered the classroom with me at this point to assist. The students were taught how to mix the cellu-clay powder with water, and to shape the heads of the puppets to include features such as noses, eyes, lips, and ears. As the puppet heads dried, we made clothes for the puppets, white t-shirts, which the children later painted. The addition of yarn in varying colours made puppet hair, and the puppet features were further painted to allow for the children's respective eyes and skin colours. In all, the puppets looked very much as we did. I have included a picture of my own self-portrait puppet in Chapter Seven.

Through the processes of puppet design and creation I gleaned incidental information from the students, such as how many siblings they had, where their parents worked, their pets' names, etc., and I was curious to hear more about what the puppets might tell me of their "masters." I compiled a short list of questions (Appendix Q) to ask the puppets, but before we sat down to speak with each other, the children engaged in free play. The students who wished for this time to interact with their puppets could take their creations and show them around the grade one classroom. A number of events occurred as a result of this free play, including the spontaneous naming of several puppets. Alison called hers "Lemon" and Andrea called hers "Flowerbelle." Brent and a number of other boys took their own shoes off and made vehicles for their puppets, driving them all over the room. Still other children met in small groups to talk to each other, manipulate

their puppets, and act out various scenarios. Wanting to learn more about what was happening in these scenarios, I pulled a chair close to some of the groups to ask questions:

Jody: How old are your puppets?

(Answers varied slightly when I asked this question but most puppets became exactly the same ages as the students who held them.)

Jody: Do your puppets have names?

Nancy: Nancy.

Edgar: Edgar.

Sidney: I don't know yet.

Jody: Where will your puppets go after they leave this classroom?

General Responses: Outside! They will play and swim, and go to the park.

Edgar: My sister has a princess puppet, so my puppet will be her servant.

Sidney: My puppet will be a princess.

Nancy: Mine will be a queen.

Jody: What do your puppets like to do?

General Responses: Play, colour, learn ...

(Notes to file March 21, 2006)

I noticed that these students had strongly identified themselves with their puppets. They had the same names and ages as their puppets. The puppets liked to participate in similar activities with their masters, such as playing, swimming. When I sat down with yet another group, Carl immediately began speaking through his puppet:

Carl: I'm having a great day today! *(speaking through his puppet)*

Jody: That's great! I'm glad to hear it! *(also speaking through the puppet)*

Carl: I had lasagna for lunch. *(puppet speaking)*

Peter: I had baby carrots. *(speaking as himself; puppet is set aside)*

Jody: Where will your puppet go after we finish speaking?

Peter: On Mr. L's desk!

James: Mine will go in the bookcase.

Carl: I would like to go in the "Clue" box. *(speaking as puppet)*

James: I'm going to hide in the garbage! *(speaking as puppet)*

(Notes to file March 21, 2006)

Throughout the conversation detailed above, puppet-speak was offered in a distorted voice. Carl spoke in a low voice for his puppet, and James chose a high voice. When they were not speaking through their puppets, the children used their own natural voices for our discussions. Expressive voices for puppets were further explored in the puppet shows that followed our puppet conversations.

Puppet Show

Somewhere within the school, Mr. L found a large puppet theatre. Excited, the students moved to display their puppets, using the theatre to stage impromptu puppet shows. Since we had not provided the grade ones with any scripts, nor had we encouraged them to write any, their improvised scenes with the puppets were unrehearsed, and new to us all. As the children hurried to the puppet theatre to perform, sometimes alone and sometimes in small groups, I documented their improvisations. One group of student-puppets taught a lesson on how to grow

plants, another read a book to the class. I began to notice themes emerging from these puppet performances, specifically; all the shows had something to do with the children's lives in school. Students were learning about plants in science, and those lessons inspired a puppet show about plants. In English language arts classes, the students had been reading aloud from books. We were treated to a puppet read-aloud as part of a puppet show. Classroom discussions of nature, magic and mystery all showed up in the improvised puppet theatre. Students were performing stories of their classroom lives to attentive peer audiences, who also happened to be contributors in these lives. An excerpt from a puppet show follows:

> James: *(approaches the puppet theatre, ducks behind and then stands up to announce)* This one's called ...
>
> Ryan: Wait, wait ... *(pulls James down behind the theatre to offer last-minute instructions. Approximately 30 seconds pass.)*
>
> James: *(from behind the theatre)* This show is called "The Magic Book That Makes People Go into Different Places."
>
> Mr. L: *(from audience)* Oooh!
>
> James: Once upon a time there was this guy. He readed [sic] a book, and then his neighbour came along *(both puppets appear on stage).* Hmm, hmm, hummm *(singsong voice).* Oh yeah, and he was walking an animal. And then, when he looked around, he had stopped reading his book and he was in the jungle!

Ryan : RAAAAAAAAAAAAHR! *(loud animal sound effect. Ryan pounces on James's puppet with his puppet.)*

James: Ow! *(high-pitched puppet voice)* Why are you doing this to me?

Ryan: *(in his own voice)* It's not me, it's the stupid book!

James: Bring it back! Bring that book back!

Ryan: *(still in his own voice)* But I don't know how to read.

James: Oh, gee.

Ryan: *(in narrator voice)* Then along came an eagle ...

James: Get out of my house! *(in puppet-speak)*

(The show ends abruptly. Grade one crowd applauds.)

(Notes to file March 28, 2006)

The intersections of children as themselves, children as narrators, and children in varying puppet characters provoked questions. How and why do the puppets slip in and out of their characters? Was Ryan's public admission of his inability to read revealed more easily through the puppet show? How might the ideas of performance and self be further connected?

The blurred spaces between acting and actual, the "me" and the "not me" (Schechner, 2003) are worthy of closer examination. Children were themselves and not themselves as they expressed ideas through their self-portrait puppets. In some ways, I think the self-portraits were opportunities to reflect on identity through the arts. Emme (2005) makes a case for this kind of work, for allowing children's self-designed puppets to stand as important representations of their identities and cultures; after all: "an art program that embraces the world and

invites children to show what they are learning, what they know, and what they feel will be rich" (p. 25). Arts-infused education seems full of potentials when it comes to student self-expressions and the unraveling of complex ideas. Arts-infused educational activity offers forums for expressions of feelings and ideas that more traditional curricula may not. The interplay of acting and actual in the puppet show described above allowed students to enter into alternative frames of self, and perhaps grapple with personal difficulties and/or insecurities. Designing puppets as ourselves opens doors to multiple realities, especially when these are considered further onstage, with and before others. The moving in between worlds of real and not real, the multiplicities (Aoki, 1993) of this idea is further met when children are encouraged to discuss their creations with one another, and with their teachers. As I moved forward in the study, I began to think of ways to offer this possibility of further discussion to the students of Central Arts.

The puppet project, which was for me an initial foray into arts-based research, enabled me to conceptualize future study in Central Arts School. I felt that I was in a position to inquire more deeply into the questions of arts-infused elementary education. Specifically I was ready to ask: How do children come to understand themselves and their worlds through their experiences with the arts (Dewey, 1934, 1938)? What is the lived meaning of curriculum (Aoki, 1993) in arts-infused educational settings?

The Grade Two Students

Following their grade one year, I re-entered the classroom with most of the same group of children, midway through grade two. I met their new teacher,

Mrs. D, who was eager to support and continue the research study. The students remembered me well, and remembered especially our work with puppets in the previous school year. I was pleased with their cooperative attitudes, and grateful to Ryan, when, expectant and excited, he proclaimed, “We’re ready to be in your book [doctoral dissertation]” (Notes to file, January 7, 2007). I felt that I had received their green light to continue.

Sky Bears

Sky Bears (traditional rhyme)

It snowed last night,

Oh, it snowed last night.

The sky bears had a PILLOW FIGHT!

They tore up all the clouds in sight,

And tossed down all the feathers white.

Oh, it snowed last night, it snowed last night. (Pilant & Kay, 2007)

An integrated arts lesson inspired by this poetry offered a unique opportunity for me to collect the conversations of grade two students. After a choral reading and singing the “Sky Bears” piece with Mrs. D, the children sketched bear pictures. Later, these were transferred onto large blue sheets of paper and painted white. Afterward, details were added to the bears with crayons and markers, and then the bears were painted again.

Nick worked beside Kurt on the classroom floor. Nick painted several bears of differing sizes. Amidst a steady hubbub of conversations all around, Nick

directed Kurt's attention to a smaller bear on his paper. "That's you, Kurt," said Nick, indicating the small bear. "I'm the big one!" I thought it interesting that Nick would personalize his art project in such a way. As I drew nearer to hear more of their conversation, I learned that Nick's larger bear was quite fierce. Although willing to be protective of his smaller friend, Big Bear Nick was also prepared to "ATTACK ALL THE OTHER BEARS!!!" At a disapproving headshake from their teacher, the boys dropped their conversation volume, and switched topics.

The new conversation between the boys involved Tamagotchis (electronic pets). Issues were raised in terms of how many pets each child had, how much they cost, and which ones they wanted to acquire. Nick said: "My Tamagotchi is going to get a boyfriend." Kurt laughed, in seeming disbelief.

"Don't worry," said Nick. My Tamagotchi is a girl. It's OK for her to get a boyfriend." This example of hetero-normative behaviour (Davis et al., 2000) amongst seven-year-olds was intriguing. Equally interesting was that Edgar, overhearing and interrupting, said to Nick:

"Stop lying about Tamagotchis!" (Notes to file, January 23, 2007). What did Edgar mean by this accusation? Why was he so moved by the conversation? And why was a conversation about electronic pets occurring during the "Sky Bears" painting activity at all?

Davis et al. (2000) speak of "sedimented subjectivities" (p. 193), that is, the complex ways in which our cultural objects and conversations contribute to the layering of human identity. When I re-consider the content of the Tamagotchi

conversation, and the ways in which the boys were streaming their electronic pets' encounters with opposite-gender partners, I also see the lessons that the children may have been attempting to impart. The boys were attempting to teach each other about the lives they believed their electronic pets were meant to have. Although at times there can be mis-educative experiences (Dewey, 1938), the lesson on hetero-normative behaviour is an example of what can happen, on any given day, during an otherwise-planned school experience. Sometimes in freer times, arts times, freer conversations emerge.

Occasionally such freedom can lead to problems. In the case of the Tamagotchi-conversation, students began censoring each other, and effectively censoring themselves through a pre-supposed set of hetero-normative rules. These rules would have boy electronic pets romantically linked to girl electronic pets, and not with same-gender partners. In listening to this conversation, I faced a dilemma: should I intervene? What if I pushed the conversation about Tamagotchis and their romantic interests into some other unfolding? I chose not to comment, fearing that so doing may drive the conversation underground, and the students soon moved on to something else. I was left thinking though: that which had started as a simple artistic rendering of bears had evolved to a conversation of such significance, that it had temporarily trumped the original intent of the lesson. How could children's (unplanned, unprompted by teachers) conversations become a consideration in future lesson planning?

100th Day

By February, the children had been in grade two for one hundred days. One of the ways in which Mrs. D planned to celebrate this event, was with a math-art lesson that involved counting strings of flavoured cereal, and creating necklaces out of 100 pieces of cereal, each. Although this seems something of a common project in early elementary classrooms, the conversations that occurred during the project at Central Arts School that day were significant. I worked with a small group of children in the school hallway, to make cereal necklaces with them.

In addition to their conversations about the tastiness of the cereal, and how difficult it was to string together one hundred, separate pieces, the activity provided other opportunities to create conversations. Ryan used his cereal-art time to command the attentions of his crowd:

> Ryan: Did you see that guy? *(indicating a grade six student passing by in the hallway)* I just gave him some skin. Do you know what giving skin means?
>
> Jody: I'm not sure. *(Ryan shows us a hand-slapping gesture)*
>
> [*In addition to creating necklaces, throughout our time in the hall, Ryan acts as social host, communicating with the older students, offering them bits of cereal, and telling them that they are being recorded on audiotape. I remember last year when Mr. L referred to Ryan as "the social host" of the classroom. That story continues.*]

Passing-by Grade Six Student: Can I get some of that? *(indicating the cereal boxes)*

Ryan: Sure! *(giving away some cereal)*

Student: Thanks, Ryan … you're my hero. *(Ryan grins)*

(Notes to file February 27, 2007)

The hallway offered students a chance to create conversations that were different from the conversations within the classroom. Because we could never be too sure of the people we would see passing by, spontaneous conversations became more wide-ranging. Further, some of the subject matter contained within a hallway conversation, not to mention the noise volume, might not have been sanctioned within the classroom. In the case of Ryan engaging a grade six student, lessons are being learned about social order. In this instance, the grade two Ryan became a "hero" through his interactions with the grade six student.

Ryan found his place in the hallway as social host to the groups passing through. He was engaged in his art work, but also using that time to interact with others. I noticed that throughout my research at Central Arts Schools, the hallways were often used as places to further lessons and projects; they were rarely empty of students throughout the school day. Creative use of classrooms and school spaces may be a way of bringing together diverse student populations, and I wondered it the students of Central Arts would grow more connected as a part of their spreading out into hallways and engaging in conversations.

Caribou Song

In March 2007, students of Central Arts School were invited to watch the musical *Caribou Song* produced by an Aboriginal traveling theatre company. Prior to the performance, students created caribou headdresses with their classroom teacher. Following the show, I led conversations with small groups of children.

My first conversation group included Ryan, Susan and Sandy. They were enthusiastic about *Caribou Song*, and seemed to relish the opportunity to discuss it further:

Jody: What did you think of *Caribou Song*?

Ryan: It was pretty neat.

Jody: What, specifically, did you like about it?

Ryan: I liked the one person who had the caribou skull on.

Jody: What about you, Sandy?

Sandy: I liked the part when all the caribou were running, and when the smoke was coming.

Jody: At the end of the show, the actors asked if you had any questions.

Ryan: Yes, yes. But they didn't pick me.

Sandy: Me, neither!

Jody: Well, what would you have asked if they had asked you? What did you want to know?

Ryan: How did you make that caribou skull?

Sandy: How did the smoke come out?

(Jody engages in a discussion with the students in attempt to honour these questions.)

Jody: Did you notice that all the actors were Cree? Do you think that's important?

BOTH: YES!!!!

Jody: Why?

Ryan: So they could teach us the language.

Jody: Have any of you been in performances?

Ryan: I set up a play in my backyard.

Jody: Really? Tell me more about that. Who was in it?

Ryan: Me. I was the only one in it.

Sandy: You could have invited somebody over!

Ryan: Yeah.

Jody: How old were you when you did the backyard play?

Ryan: Seven, still.

(Notes to file March 20, 2007)

Throughout our conversation, I noticed Ryan's tendency to dominate the discussion. All the children claimed to enjoy the play, however Sandy and Susan did not have many opportunities to inject their opinions, even though I thought I had offered conversation to the group, openly. I wondered whether the other students were accepting of Ryan's pre-dominance in discussion groups, or whether that might be a cause for concern amongst some of them. The potential Ryan has to influence discussions is not lost on me, nor on his classroom teachers.

Both Mr. L and Mrs. D sometimes worry about their abilities to "control" Ryan (Notes to file, November 15, 2006; January 23, 2007). Oyler (1996) speaks of sharing authority in early childhood classrooms, advocating for this practice, and in so doing: "what counts as worthwhile learning activity often changes" (p. 31). I began to wonder whether that is what we do with our conversations and learning in the classroom when Ryan gets to have his say. Does Ryan get to say too much?

Near the end of one of our discussions, Ryan grabbed my tape-recorder. I think that he wanted to be sure that we were getting his voice clearly on tape.

Jody: What can the school do to help kids who want to be actors?

Ryan: I know! They can get in more actors to show plays.

Susan: Or you know what would be cool? If we made a play -- like, our class!

Ryan: Yeah, yeah, yeah! *(some talk as to what kind of play, who would be in it, etc.)*

Jody: What can parents do to help kids who want to be actors?

Susan: They can make masks and suits, and we can wear them when we make a play, and …

Ryan: *(interrupting Susan)* When we're done talking, can we listen to this tape?

Jody: Sure.

Ryan: *(grabbing the recorder)* I'm in Powwow! I'm in Powwow! I'm in Powwow!

(Ryan dances a circle around us -- I think he means that he participates in Aboriginal dance experiences -- in powwow dances.)

(Notes to file March 20, 2007)

Ryan was an attention-getter and a class clown (Hobday-Kusch, 2001). He wanted to make sure that his voice was on record, and that I had taken proper notice of him in class, and throughout our discussions. Ryan reveled in the preservation of his ideas on audio-tape, and later, in visual image. Projects such as play-making and theatre enticed him. As a social actor, there was no equal in the Central Arts primary classrooms. Although he was sometimes a lot of work, Ryan inspired me as a researcher. He made me consider how I could continue to pursue arts activities as opportunities to gather material, and this was what lead us to the creation of mask-making in the grade two class.

The Mask Project

In an attempt to bridge social studies, drama, and visual art, we embarked upon a mask-making project with the grade two students and their classroom teacher. Our unit of study, as suggested in local curriculum guide documents, was entitled “Heritage Project.” We made our masks out of paper, feathers, beads, acrylic paint, fabric and glue. Prior to the construction of masks, Miss A sent the students home with a questionnaire for their parents and relatives (Appendix R). The children would speak with their loved ones, and then later present this information at school.

Masks were inspired through the conversations the children had at home with their parents and relatives. Students seemed to enjoy the experience of

interviewing their families, and said the following about their conversations and resulting mask projects:

> Edgar: Mine is Grandma. It is a colourful mask because she wears a lot of colours.
>
> Brent: I showed Grandma, too! My triangles are us face-painting … something for families to do. Also I have a karate-Ninja-tiger because it's fun for families to visit the zoo!
>
> Ryan: Well, I interviewed many family members for my project. The stars are for the sleepovers that our family has. The feathers are 'cause of the hunting my family likes to do. Did you know that wishing stars sometimes work? And my grandma really does have whiskers! *(indicates the extra dots he has added to his mask)*
>
> (Notes to file, May 22, 2007)

Once the masks were complete, we encouraged the children into small group dramatic performances, so that they could show their masks and what they had learned through the project to the rest of their classmates. Although it was expected that these somewhat improvised short plays would be about the children's families, in most cases, the children did not present as such. For example, Nick and Donald showed us a version of *The Three Bears* while wearing their family masks -- none of which had bears painted on them. Mara and Brent portrayed aliens and tigers. Other groups played out unusual, imaginative scenes that they had only the briefest of moments to concoct. When the improvised

mask-plays were done, Brent could be heard loudly proclaiming: “That was the funnest [sic] drama, ever!” (Notes to file, May 29, 2007).

Following the plays, which were videotaped, I showed children in small groups the results of their work. I asked the children questions such as: “What did you think of this activity?” And “How did your plays include your families?” Although the children claimed to enjoy the activity, they could not say why they had changed from their family identity-constructions that had originally inspired the masks when they went to showcase their art projects in the semi-improvised dramas. The more that I wondered about this, the less I began to problematize the changes. Even though the plays were different from the ideas that the children initially said they had placed on their masks, the plays were still very much about their identities. The plays were of stories that inspired the children in their day-to-day lives -- the creatures and people that informed them, and the things they wanted to experience (or not experience) in the future. Essentially, the mask project became a show of interconnectedness, the layered nature of identity, in both form and intent. The masks were representations of the many aspects of student lives, most especially, a recognition of the interpersonal nature of selves (Bruner, 1990), as may be extant in an early childhood classroom.

Reflecting, Considering

Throughout this chapter, I have addressed the ways in which children might come to understand themselves and others in arts-infused educational settings. I have focused specifically on conversations that occurred in school, and

the conversations that I attended to most often were those inspired by school arts projects.

My teaching background and experience allowed me to work with the classroom teachers of Central Arts Schools, and to participate in curriculum projects through the arts. Among these, I felt that the most significant conversation-exchanges occurred during our puppetry and mask-making projects. Layers of personal and group identity were exposed through the creation of puppets and masks and in subsequent theatre-work. Ideas shared by grade one and two children included stories of classroom lives and lives beyond the classroom.

Many of the children were sharing stories of themselves -- sometimes in attempts to connect with the larger group. These interpersonal interconnections (Bruner, 1990; Davis et al., 2000) provoke the question of whether the arts-infused programming of Central Arts School offers opportunities for children to reckon with their notions of self than traditional approaches to elementary school programming might offer. A further question is whether such self-understanding might be considered a positive outcome of arts-infused educational methods.

Chapter Five. Creating Places

A Sense of Place at Central Arts School

A "sense of place" (Hay, 1988) may be built up through involvement and can transform ordinary, sometimes impersonal spaces into areas within which we feel connection. In light of the school-wide commitment to arts education, I am curious about whether the students of Central Arts might attach special meanings to their school places. I observed children shaping and transforming their school encounters through the arts, and in so doing I suspected they might be experiencing enhanced senses of place. Following are what I believe to be examples of the ways in which students made their places at Central Arts School. Through arts-infused educational activities, I suggest that unique elementary school places were created.

The Puppet Project: Places for Fun and Adventure

Throughout the research process, I was permitted by classroom teachers to bring forward arts projects of my own that might complement the classroom curriculum. During a grade one curricular study entitled "All About Me," I proposed the construction of self-portrait hand puppets. Amidst the joy and excitement of creating puppets and theatre, the students also revealed ways in which they were experiencing a sense of place. The students staged improvised "shows" with their puppets, at one point turning tissue boxes into cars, and their classroom into a speedway. I asked the students about their puppets, about what the puppets might like to do and to experience. The children were quick to personalize their puppets, and to see them as life-like characters with feelings and

desires. The puppets wanted to go outside to the park to play and later, they wanted to go home with the children, and to have fun. Some of the puppets wanted to be part of a magic book that James, a grade one student, invented. The book would “take people places” (Notes to file, March 21, 2005). Places frequented by the puppets in the classroom, and places the puppets wished to visit outside the school were perceived as enjoyable and exciting.

I wondered: could the self-portrait puppets be seen as extensions of the children’s own selves (Bruner, 1990)? When I asked the students to speak of the places their puppets wished to go, might they also have been telling me the places that the children themselves found most desirable? The puppets drove cars. They were travellers. It is likely that the children wished these possibilities for themselves, as well. Places of fun and adventure appealed, and would have taken the children and their puppets beyond the walls of their classroom. A sense of place, as it pertains to adventure and excitement, can be found outside of school confines. It is possible however, that through imaginative arts encounters, an enhanced sense of place can be experienced within the school itself -- as virtual places are created through arts-infused education.

Mozart Moment: Surreptitious Places

During its regular school day, the school included a “Mozart Moment.” Generally, this “moment” involved the playing a musical recording over the public address system into all the classrooms, immediately following lunch-break. The children were expected to remain silent as the music played, and to listen

intently. After the music ended, they were permitted to raise comments, based upon what they had heard.

I observed that when the Mozart Moment happened in the classroom, it was rarely received with passive listening. While the children seemed to enjoy the music, they also tapped along, flashed signals with their hands to communicate, and moved their lips silently to one another. I noticed this alternative communication-place beginning in the grade one classroom. Gestures and lip movements were refined as students entered their grade two year. At this point, a host of communication strategies were being used to create a place for alternative classroom discourse (Mills, 1995). Because the children remained silent, they were honouring superficially the school's request that the music be heard. However, they were not only listening to the music, but using this daily routine to check in with one another, and as such, they were creating a place of surreptitious communication for themselves. This place of communication may be quite different from what was originally intended by the adults who proposed the idea of the Mozart Moment.

Although the intended learning outcomes of the Mozart moment may have been a deeper understanding and appreciation of music, the checking-in and perception-checking that children were also doing in this place was significant. In a classroom's "silent" listening time, there exists a richness of communication possibilities. The Mozart Moment afforded a place to communicate, however covertly, and as the students took advantage of this, I believe that it strengthened their relationships with one another. They could explore their friendships

somewhat secretly, and create communication-worlds that permitted entry to those who might understand the codes.

Who might become involved in a surreptitious place of communication, and how might one make senses of the discourse within? Were all of the students privy to these exchanges? It seemed as though most of the grade one and two students used the Mozart Moments to glance around and catch the eyes of others. Interestingly however, the classroom teachers and I were not invited into the children's surreptitious communication. These communications were meant to transgress authority (or presumed authority). If students saw me looking at their hand gestures or silent word-shaping, they would halt the process and sometimes grin at me. When I smiled back it may have been interpreted as a cue for children to resume their covert actions. However, once "caught," I found that students rarely returned to their silent communication attempts. Their surreptitious acts had been interrupted by an adult, and by temporarily stopping, they could protect some of the secrets of their communications.

Classroom Stages and Studios: Making Places

As learners and teachers of the arts in elementary schools, we are at times compelled to turn ordinary classroom spaces into art studios, music halls, and dance theatres. In the Central Arts grade two classroom, there was a section of carpet that the children would sometimes gather upon for storytelling, lessons, and other experiences. The carpet also became a place for staging dramatic pieces. It seemed unimportant to students that the area rug be elevated, or shaped as a traditional stage might have been. For the grade two children, it seemed enough to

have a space to present their theatre pieces. A twelve-foot carpet square demarcated for their audiences the space between acting and observing.

Similarly, the hallways outside the classroom could be quickly transformed into places for the arts. With nothing more than a drop-sheet and a tin can of paintbrushes, we would find ourselves in an art studio, ready to create. I considered these place-making moments throughout the course of this research study, and was impressed by how willingly the children would adapt to their surroundings, and recognize within them spaces for creativity, and many times, joy. The child can become an actor, an artist, a singer, or a dancer, based simply on the recognition of a place (Ashcroft, 2001). The place subsequently becomes imbued with meaning and significance because of the creative happenings that occur there.

I asked the children to speak with me about their school arts places. Most indicated that arts could occur in a variety of places in and around the school, and that they were not limited to stages and art rooms in order to be creative. “I am an artist -- at home, at, school, and everywhere,” said Mara (Notes to file, April 23, 2007). Mara did not feel limited by her physical venue. She was able to be creative in many places. As the artist she felt she was becoming, for Mara classroom stages became places to further explore her talents.

The Researcher’s Place

Although I always felt welcomed in the classrooms of Central Arts School, it is important to note the negotiations of proximity, collaboration, and friendship (Wolf, 1996) in my research. As I described earlier (see Chapter

Three), I moved quickly from passive note taking in the back corners of the classroom, to assisting students with their work, and planning lessons with classroom teachers. Students and staff shared their thoughts with me; they were open with me. In as much as my physical places in the classroom changed throughout the course of the research, so too did my levels of involvement and understanding. As I became more involved in classroom life, I drew closer allegiances with the classroom teachers and students. I did not write about their lives objectively, but was empathetic, feeling personally involved in the school situation. I was not there to evaluate teaching practices, or to assess programs. I was there to try to understand the perspectives of children.

We, the classroom teachers, students, and I, never lost sight of the fact that I meant to write about children's experiences in an arts-infused school. However, sometimes I think that we forgot that I was first a researcher in the classroom context, and after that a teacher-artist-collaborator-assistant-friend. The roles seemed to shift and merge continuously. While some might see that as a frailty of the research, perhaps say that I had muddied the waters of objectivity, I believe that fluidity of roles within the school led to a deeper, embodied (Davidson, 2004) understanding of the situation. As I moved through the roles, as I alternatively placed myself and became placed by others in a variety of learning contexts, I had the opportunity to participate in the proceedings from different viewpoints. I believe that my "researcher's place" was enhanced, not hampered by such fluidity. When it came time to exit the field, to leave the place, I felt again the pull of the friendships I had made while at Central Arts School. I felt regret at leaving.

Sideways Places

Some of our finest conversations happen in places of sideways-looking (Murphy, 2004). You can look sideways at a person when he or she is standing or sitting close by. Murphy (2004) reveals that much can be learned in speaking with someone who is beside, but not directly in front of you. This is particularly the case in adult-child relations, when there is often an imbalance of power. I was inspired by Murphy's comments on this subject, and determined to see how it made sense in my own work. Instead of placing myself directly in front of someone, I would often stand or sit beside him or her to talk. When, for example, I pulled a small chair up to a student's desk and sat beside the child to help with addition or subtraction in math class, we would look sideways at each other. The subtleties of these sideways communications allowed us to indicate by gesture, sigh, and sometimes few words as we worked though problems. However, the sideways places could also be places of deep expression. For example, when we painted side by side, details of the children's lives emerged. The freedom to say things was increased because there was no need to overcome the nervousness of looking directly into the other person's eyes while speaking. Conversation is expected, and it is made freer by the loosely-draped drop-cloths and get-messy paint shirts. In addition to places of artistic freedoms, sideways places can be further avenues for working through personal issues. From a sideways place comes this conversation excerpt:

> Jody: *(after wandering the room then sitting beside Susan, grade two student, after noticing her dejected stance)* How are you doing today?

Susan: OK, I guess.

Jody: Just OK?

Susan: Well, kinda OK. But mostly everyone is better than me. *(gestures to the groups of grade one and two student painters around us)*

Jody: *(looking concerned)* That's the feeling you have, hey? Do you want to talk about that some more?

(Notes to file, April 23, 2007)

From our sideways place, I picked up a paintbrush and began to work with Susan. She spoke of her feelings of inadequacy as an artist and as a student in the classroom, generally. She had been unhappy for quite some time, she told me. In conversations with the classroom teacher that followed, I found that school staff had attempted to help Susan repeatedly, but she would not always open up to them. I thought about our experience of sideways looking, sideways places. Had the staff considered speaking with Susan in this way?

It was not my place as a researcher to become de facto student counsellor, but as a feeling, thinking person, I could not ignore the possibility that children might share sometimes deeply personal thoughts with a trusted adult who cared to listen. Throughout the study at Central Arts School I made it my place to ethically preserve the confidence and the confidentiality of all those within. However, sometimes protecting the children meant telling school officials the things that I heard. Such was the case with Susan's sadness. Hers became a story that I felt I needed to forward to the greater school authorities. It became something of a dilemma (Wolf, 1996) when I considered that Susan may not have been pleased

with me for doing so. I worried about losing her trust. But I also knew, as the adult in the situation, I had to do what I thought was best for the child. I had to share a little of what had happened in our sideways place.

Considering Our Places

Seeing ourselves in videotapes and photographs, we may consider and appreciate a little more of our places (Tuan, 2004). The students that I worked with at Central Arts School seemed to enjoy seeing themselves, and they often asked to watch back the videotapes we made, and to hear their words on my voice recorder. Ryan, in particular, was keen to hear himself, chanting: “Let’s hear the tape! Let’s hear the tape!” (Notes to file, March 20, 2007). I indulged these requests when I could, and later, I would offer the students opportunities to see and hear themselves as a way of following up research activities, and considering arts-infused educational experiences.

After the grade two students completed masks for their heritage project, and performed semi-improvised plays, I invited all of them, in small groups, to sit with me in the hallway and to watch videotapes of their work. Most of the children claimed that they enjoyed the experience of watching themselves on video, except for Sandy, who said that he felt “a little embarrassed” (Notes to file, June 19, 2007). When asked, the students could not say precisely why they enjoyed seeing and hearing themselves. I believe that in addition to being a welcome diversion in an otherwise “ordinary” school day, watching the videotapes in the hallway together was a chance for the children to observe their own and others’ behaviours, to draw knowledge and amusement from these

observations, and to understand more deeply the outcomes of their creative processes. Watching the videos gave students a chance to regard their places -- to see themselves in a particular state, in a moment of time, and then to reconsider this later, post-performance. They could plan for how their actions might have been different or perhaps even repeated at another time. Students discover their places in classrooms when they are given moments for reflection. When the reflection options also include artistic elements (such as in the case of the masks and improvised theatre), children are allowed even further opportunities to learn. The arts provide an entry point at which to glimpse our places in the classroom. The arts are a way to feel connected, and accessible. The arts give us a chance to change places, to imagine situations as though they could be something else (Greene, 1995).

Altered and Alternative Places

Sometimes our places of teaching and learning are changed as a result of school-extension activities, such as field trips. In one such event, I accompanied the grade two children on a nature hike in the nearby grasslands. While our day was punctuated by plant and wildlife sightings, it was also highlighted by grade two senses of wonder and possibility. “The mystic forest,” proclaimed Edgar as we entered a new part of the nature trail (Notes to file, May 8, 2007). What sense of place was he creating as we hiked along? Another child, Kyle, was keenly interested in my camera, and pointed out things along the way. “Picture that!” he would tell me occasionally (meaning “Take a picture of that!”). I obliged each time, and by the end of the hike I had collected many snapshots based on Kyle’s

recommendations. Looking back over the photographs later, I saw how he wanted the special places of the field trip to be remembered. Mainly, I sensed that Kyle wished a sense of the tangible to be brought to this experience. He wanted a record of the field trip places that seemed important, and he understood the camera lens as a reasonable and important way of achieving such a record.

When we returned to the school following the field trip, the classroom teacher asked students to capture their memories of the day by way of a painting project. As I worked with the children in our quickly constructed hallway-studio, I noticed some seven-year-old friends who had grouped themselves together. On one canvas Nick had painted himself in the forest. His friend Kurt was stationed beside Nick in the hallway. Kurt lifted red paint to a different canvas, and his wrist made a sharp turn toward Nick's painting at the last moment. Red paint dripped from Kurt's brush onto Nick's painting of himself in the forest. "Now you're on FIRE!" announced Kurt. Whether this had been an intentional spattering of red paint, or accidental, I was unsure. I found it significant, however, that the boys could so readily see and place themselves in their art. Their art became a place to construct action, in this case a fire. I wondered if there would be other times to observe these moments of placing lives and action within art projects. It would not be long before I witnessed a similar happening.

Dinosaur Art: Places Beyond Representation

During their study on dinosaurs, the grade two students created dioramas to depict the possible habitats of the prehistoric creatures. As I moved around the classroom, and discussed with children the ways in which their chosen dinosaurs

might have lived, I noticed two students speaking with each other about their artwork. One of the children remarked to the other that there appeared to be a great deal of dinosaur eggs within his diorama. “There would have been more,” said the second child, “but they hatched!” (Notes to file, May 15, 2007).

The child who knew his dinosaur eggs had gone on to other lives had created through his artwork, places beyond representation. While on surface, the dinosaur dioramas were meant to be representational -- showing dinosaur lives -- the student who imagined dinosaur eggs hatching, and then moving out of the art frame, had acquired ideas in addition to the ones about potential prehistoric habitats. He had created a place through his art -- and specifically in this case, this place had extended beyond representation. We could no longer see his hatchling dinosaurs; we could only imagine when they might have gone, imagine the lives they were having. For the child, this artistic encounter had blurred the lines between imaginary and actual.

It is important to recognize times in which the children have thought so deeply about their artwork that they can see it beyond the actual. They know their work as art, but see it also real, and fluid -- not only bound by frame and artistic materials. Such occurrences opened up pathways for children’s learning. Arts-infused education may have moved students further than what otherwise could have occurred simply from learning about dinosaurs in the pages of books, or through computerized learning sites. The artistic actions involved in creating the dinosaur habitats breathed actual life into the curriculum, creating new places for ideas and conversations to enter in.

Places to Mentor Each Other

Eisner (2002) queried whether the arts in education provided places for students to be come “mutual mentors” (p. 216) to each other. The idea of mentoring, from the Greek meaning both “steadfast” and “enduring” (Weinburger, 1992, p. 9) is often reserved for older people, adults, not children. Mullen (2005) describes mentoring as that which can be “assistance, guidance, teaching, learning, readiness, compensation, support” (pp. 17-18). I noted a number of places in which mentoring between students occurred at Central Arts School. Often, during visual arts lesson, students would paint, draw, sculpt or craft side by each. This unique placement, as opposed to individual desks set in rows, permitted, and indeed encouraged, the sharing of ideas. Students could see each other as they worked, and they learned from watching. Even if no words were spoken, it was not unusual, for example, to notice a student pick up a colour from a box of crayons that someone else had just finished using.

The students would inspire artistic choices in drama, too. When students improvised theatre in groups, they encouraged the actors and the audience to appreciate their efforts through signaling for applause, laughter, etc.. Students would smile at one another during improvised theatre, as a possible source of morale-boosting. At least one student, Ryan, could often be heard telling people during drama classes: “This is fun! We’re doing fun stuff!” (Notes to file, April 30, 2007). The place of mentorship in an arts-infused elementary school is made open by the opportunities teachers give to their students to develop their creative processes in partners and groups. Students are encouraged to converse and

collaborate over the arts. They begin to appreciate themselves as artists, and must work together cohesively to ensure that creative input from all is considered. Students who function as strong mutual mentors to each other, students such as Sandy, are able to share their own ideas, but also able to listen carefully to the ideas of others. They offer support to one another.

Placing Ourselves in Dramatic Contexts

Through drama classes, the grade two students enjoyed numerous opportunities to engage in play-making. On one occasion, Miss A, the grade two teacher, offered the students a chance to retell the folktale "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" via dramatic play. Although the children were not provided with costumes, staging directions, or stage properties, they quickly organized themselves into dramatic form, and demonstrated the ways in which through voice and action they could become Papa, Mama, and Baby Bear, along with main character Goldilocks. Miss A encouraged the children to work in groups of four so that everyone could enjoy a story character role (Notes to file May 1, 2007).

I observed the children in their bear-roles attempt to amble closer to the earth, while Goldilocks stood straight and tall. Voices for bears ranged from deep and low (Papa), to squeaky and high (Baby). The children were at once themselves, but not themselves (Schechner, 2003) as they changed their demeanors and stances to reenact the folktale. They knew that they were in the classroom as students, but they were now also actors and that altered the reality of our situation somewhat. For example, while it may not have been permissible on

an ordinary school day for a student in his or her desk to roar: “Who has been eating MY porridge?” in angry tones, it was certainly permissible for Ryan, as Papa Bear on the improvised classroom stage, to dramatically render this line. He was Ryan, but not Ryan as in that moment, as he was also Papa Bear. He could safely roar as Papa Bear but might have been chastised if he had roared as Ryan. The me/not me (Schechner, 2003) became something of an advantage to Ryan as he found his place in dramatic context. He could experience an opportunity to command the attention of a crowd in a legitimate, appreciated way.

The grade one and two students also participated in finding a sense of place during the folktale reenactments as an audience. They were the appreciators of drama, and consumers of stories. They were students and theatrical observers at the same time. The children seemed to enjoy this audience-place a great deal, as their attention rarely left the student-actors, and they talked about their short plays long after they had ended.

The Mask Project: Home and School Places Connect

The grade two students completed a social studies project on cultural heritage and identity that culminated in a mask-making project. Students researched family histories with family members, using questions that their teacher had created (Appendix R). Then each child constructed a mask that represented himself or herself, in context with the information gathered from his or her family.

I worked with the children to create these masks and also subsequently when they brought the masks to life during improvised dramatic theatre. As the

children staged their plays, a number of noteworthy place-moments occurred. One group of students brought their family members to the zoo as part of their play. Another group went to a video arcade. In almost all of the scenes, and certainly in some of the most memorable, the places of home and school were connected. The following transcribed excerpt from the mask-theatre suggests the flavour of these play-moments:

> *The Two Bears* (portion of an improvised grade two mask-theatre experience)
>
> BROTHER BEAR 1: *(facing the audience in "narrator" style)* This play is partly made up from our bedtime stories. OK, starting now! This porridge is too hot, this chair is too soft, and this bed is messy!
>
> BROTHER BEAR 2: What are you doing, eating my porridge, and trying my stuff?
>
> BROTHER BEAR 1: Yikes! I didn't know it was all yours!
>
> BROTHER BEAR 2: Didn't you learn anything in school?
>
> BROTHER BEAR 1: Bears go to school?
>
> (Notes to file, May 22, 2007)

The students prefaced their play with an acknowledgement to family lives, and then went on to mention learning in school. In so doing, they connected the places of home and school -- the places in which they spent most of their time. Home and school connections appeared commonly in the improvised grade two dramatic work at Central Arts School. In a different group of players, another home and school theme emerged:

A Cat, a Bird and a Princess (portion of an improvised grade two mask-theatre experience)

PRINCESS: Come little bird, come play with me.

LITTLE BIRD: Okay. *(they frolic and dance until knocking at the door is heard)*

PRINCESS: Who's there?

CAT: *(from behind the door)* Pizza!

LITTLE BIRD: Don't answer! *(door bursts open and the cat chases the bird until both collapse)*

CAT: You're dead!

LITTLE BIRD: Am not! Tweet, tweet! *(jumps up and flutters off-stage)*

CAT: I'm leaving this place! I'm going back to school!

(Notes to file, May 29, 2007)

In this example, the play begins in a home setting, with the princess and bird playing together and enjoying themselves until they are interrupted by a knock at the door. When the cat enters and a chase ensues, the cat eventually capitulates, and announces that she is returning to school.

Home and school connections are essential parts of early childhood educational experience (Barbour, Barbour, & Scully, 2005). An arts-infused classroom allows children to make these links artistically, in the context of their daily curriculum. The opportunities present in arts-infused classrooms make it possible to represent, through the arts, bridges between home and school. Students are encouraged to reconsider themselves when they take art pieces from school to

home and share these with family. When students bring ideas from home to school and share these, as in the example of the heritage project questionnaire, they reconsider themselves alongside the experiences of others.

In some of the children's masks, I could see the influences of relatives and friends. In the plays inspired by masks, I could see school influences as well, and I noted these overlaps. In early childhood education, when families are closely linked with schools, it is possible that deeper resonances for life and learning may be achieved (Barbour et al., 2005). It was evident that for these children, the overlapping of these places was creatively and thoughtfully revealed.

An Artist's Place

As I look to stories of the arts in my own life, I consider the ways in which a sense of place has been offered to me through the arts. In some ways, my place has been met at the seats of the various musical instruments that I have played over the years. I am a piano player, and a folk harp player, both by passion and by profession. I have studied, performed and taught these instruments. As such, the instruments have offered me a sense of security. At times, professional musicianship was a source of income for me. At other times, when I play just for myself -- to unwind, to relax -- the piano and harp offer me a sense of peace. Occasionally, I play music at public events. At those times, my place can become somewhat invisible. People will forget that there is a live musician sitting there, with real ears. They are lulled -- perhaps by the droning voices around them, or maybe by the sweet strings of a celestial instrument. Sometimes lips become loose. It is at these times that my invisible place can become subversive. I

overhear conversations that I may not be meant to hear. While I am rendered invisible at the seat of my instrument, I am also enhanced -- as a secret collector of other peoples' stories. I am a surreptitious story-gatherer.

I see the themes that emerge in the description of myself as a musician. One theme is that of the arts, particularly music, which has been an important and defining part of my life. The theme of the arts and place can be considered alongside the stories of place at Central Arts School. I am surreptitious in my music-place -- as the children felt they were, when they flashed hand signals during their "Mozart moment." I can also create a place of fun, playing instruments for relaxation and enjoyment. The children's arts places in my study were often places of fun.

I wonder about the other ideas that may be contained within a musician's vignette. It is something of a tension to read back over these words, and to see myself as an eavesdropper of sorts. And yet, this is how much of my research findings have been collected -- as the ethnographer listening, recording, and sometimes interacting. I think I have been something of a spy, at times. What stories do I choose to tell? What stories do I leave out?

As classroom researcher, I assume a role of certain privilege (McIntosh, 1998). I make choices about the stories to tell, and I craft them in such a way so as to appear scholarly, or to add to a knowledge base. In unpacking this privilege a bit more, I am able to see that the stories I have shared from Central Arts School have showed learners and teachers in mostly positive terms. Whether this has been a conscious, arts-advocacy-based decision, optimism, or an actual reflection

of circumstance gives me pause for thought. I think more about my own experiences in the arts, particularly those of my early years, and I am mindful of my responsibility.

Reflecting, Considering

Throughout this chapter, I paid attention to the language of children within arts-infused settings, specifically as that language lends itself to the construction of a sense of place in school. It is possible that a special significance is attached to place when meaning, memory, and identity-formation are enhanced within arts-infused school settings, as the children experience, in embodied ways, the arts they are creating, and the feelings that emanate from the creative process.

I have noted how a sense of place within an arts-infused classroom might be affected by the structuring and re-structuring of physical spaces, for example, hallways as art studios, or classroom carpets as theatres. An arts-infused classroom place provides alternatives for instruction, but at times also requires children and their teachers to transform their places.

Leaving the classroom walls entirely on field trips, children experience alternative places. Field trips offer children the chance to form relationships in non-traditional school settings. During field trips from Central Arts School, children may capture the sense of place they feel through photographs, and/or by debriefing field trips through the arts. An enhanced sense of place or connection to place may be experienced when the arts are offered as further pathways to understanding.

I considered the researcher's place in this chapter. I suggested that the roles of artist, teacher, research, collaborator and friend alternatively place and free the researcher to gather different experiences. I believe the fluidity of researcher-roles made for more meaningful study.

Children may be nurtured in places of the arts when they are encouraged to show something of themselves in artistic activity. I observed that through dramatic contexts, children can sometimes place themselves into alternative realities. Art projects that concern themselves with identity have the potential to create relationships when the expression of children's artwork is shared with a larger group. Students may mentor one another. In the stories generated by grade one and two self-portrait puppets and masks, home and school connections were made. Child-puppeteers and actors told stories of their home lives, and recognized the connections that could be made from the stories there to the stories that might also be well received when expressed at school.

It is evident to me that discussions of place, and children's senses of place may be enhanced through arts-infused programming. Children come to understand themselves and their worlds through their experiences with the arts, when they are presented with meaningful opportunities for expression. Reviewing these experiences by way of videotapes and photographs offers further opportunities to consider experiences. Children create meaning from arts experiences, and find a sense of place, art, and self when they are allowed to explore their worlds in open, accepting ways. Imagination is nurtured, and new understandings are generated. Children may place themselves as artists, and are

further able to compose complex identities for themselves. To consider these identities more deeply, I will, in the next chapters, move to series of scripts and images that explore the lived experiences of children at Central Arts School.

Chapter Six. Scripting Significant Research Moments

Scripted Descriptions

In previous chapters, I have attempted to offer as closely as possible, a literal translation of that which occurred during my research experience. What follows in the next two chapters is a more artful approach to the research findings. Borrowing from performative methods (Conrad, 2004; Mienczakowski, 2001), including ethnodrama (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001; Saldaña, 2005/2008), and reader's theatre (Roulston, Legette, DeLoach , & Buckhalter, 2008), in this chapter I have scripted some of the research moments that I found to be most significant. Saldaña (2008) describes ethnodrama as the "creation of evocative monologue and dialogue" (p. 221). He sees dramatizing the data as an opportunity to present research in new and potentially insightful ways. In addition to offering readers another way of seeing my research, the scripted descriptions bring an accessible, life-like view of the students who were my participants. These students are involved in very serious pursuits of learning, and the arts do not belie them. The opportunity to synthesize multiple perspectives and to represent them through scripted descriptions reveals meanings in a form consistent with arts-based research approaches.

Mienczakowski (2001), a forerunner in performative research methods, states, "Ethnodrama and ethnographic performances … seek to give the text back to the readers and informants in the recognition that we are all co-performers in each other's lives" (p. 468). The negotiation and construction of meaning between participants and audiences occurs as part of the writing, reading, and dramatizing

of research data. Verbatim data, along with fictionalization, are incorporated, in an attempt to be "reconstructive and reflexive" (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001, p. 221).

Roulston et al. (2008) speak of the "living experience" (p. 211) that is reader's theatre. As performative method, the authors have experienced success with reader's theatre presentations at scholarly conferences, and in journals. Sometimes combined with music, or often left as scripted text alone, reader's theatre can be interactive, participatory, and ultimately accessible.

I have employed a change of voice for the scripts in this chapter, as compared to the ways in which I presented classroom conversations in previous chapters. The scripts in this chapter may be considered partially fictionalized because, although some of the words may have been spoken by myself and research participants, some words were not. All of the scripted words have been arranged to approximate dramatic dialogue. The scripts offer flavours of research moments, but they are not meant to stand as actual transcripts of our conversations. The use of "fictionalization" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 66) in narrative writing allows us to shift original stories of experience, and to tell and re-tell these stories with alternative voices, events, and consequences. We are invited to imagine the world as if it could be other (Samson, 2005). Following each scripted description, I have offered a more traditional, contextualized rendering of that which I attempted to convey by the dramatic writing. In all, I am trying to present a collage of different experiences, experiences that are reflective

of my time in the field, and most hopefully, of the artistic personalities who were my research participants.

Ryan: Sociable Artist and Class Clown

(SETTING: Elementary school hallway, 11:15AM, Tuesday February 27, 2007. The grade two students have been together in school for 100 days. Students RYAN and SUSAN are discussing this event while creating necklaces made of breakfast cereal, necklaces containing one hundred pieces of cereal, each.)

RYAN: It's our one hundred day party! We've been in grade two for 100 days! Hey! *(loudly)* You, over there! *(indicating a group of GRADE SIX STUDENTS walking through the other end of the hallway)* You should come to our party!

SUSAN: Ryan, shut up! *(holds up a box of cereal)* Just make your cereal necklace. And quit eating all the cereal.

RYAN: Yum, yum, yum. I love cereal. I could eat cereal for one hundred days. *(pulls out a handful of cereal from the box and shoves it in his mouth. Calls over to GRADE SIX STUDENTS, while chewing)* Do you guys want some cereal?

SUSAN: *(stridently)* Mrs. D, Mrs. D! Ryan's eating all the cereal. And, he's talking with his mouth full.

MRS. D: *(appearing from the doorway of the grade two classroom)* Ryan, what did we say about eating all the art supplies? Our class has an agreement about that.

RYAN: Sorry, Mrs. D. *(conciliatorily, but still speaking with some cereal in his mouth)* I was just eating the extra stuff. *(grins)*

MRS. D: OK, Ryan. As long as it was "extra." *(MRS. D disappears back into the grade two classroom)*

SUSAN: *(shaking her head)* Ryan, you're a tricker. You are trying to trick us and say that the cereal is extra. But we don't know that it is -- yet. And it's gross -- talking with your mouth full.

RYAN: *(grinning, holding up a handful of cereal)* Want some?

SUSAN: Yuck! Not after you touched it. *(turning away)* I'm just going to keep working on my necklace. *(SUSAN picks up cereal pieces and continues to place them on a long string in a consistent pattern of colour and shapes. Meanwhile, the GRADE SIX STUDENTS from the other end of the hall to whom RYAN had beckoned earlier approach where RYAN and SUSAN are sitting.)*

GRADE SIX STUDENT: *(pointing at the cereal box)* Hey, Ryan. Can I get some of that?

RYAN: Sure thing! *(pours cereal into the hand of the waiting GRADE SIX STUDENT)* How's that?

GRADE SIX STUDENT: *(eats cereal, smiles)* Awesome, Ryan. You're my hero.

RYAN: *(laughing)* Any time. *(GRADE SIX STUDENT moves on, down the hallway)*

SUSAN: *(shaking her head)* Ryan, you'd better not be running us out of cereal. Or else I'm going to tell on you again.

RYAN: Don't worry. If we use all this, I can just get some more. *(indicating another group of grade two cereal-necklace-artists)* James and Sandy will give me some.

SUSAN: *(doubtfully)* But don't they need that cereal for their own necklaces?

RYAN: *(confidentially)* Doesn't matter. They'll give it to me if I ask.

SUSAN: Really?

RYAN: *(laughing, mocking)* Yup! I'm a heeeeeeeeeero! *(SUSAN smiles and chuckles along with RYAN)*

(END SCENE)

For as long as I knew Ryan, he was a "class clown" (Hobday-Kusch, 2001; Hobday-Kusch & McVittie, 2002). Ryan influenced the curriculum of the classroom through humour, and his resulting popularity amongst other students caused him to stand out consistently. One of Ryan's classroom teachers, Mr. L, referred to Ryan as "the social host" of the classroom (Notes to file, January 24, 2006). Through his humour and off-beat charm, Ryan remained as social host for the duration of the two years I spent at Central Arts School. Sometimes a liability to his peers, often a distraction to his teachers, but always resourceful and entertaining, Ryan kept the tone light during most school moments, and he had many friends to support his antics. Even initial detractors such as Susan (portrayed above), could not be upset with the comedic Ryan for long. Ryan's

artistic strengths were not necessarily in the music, visual, dance, drama or literary options that might be expected in an arts-infused school. His art was that of the class clown. He was a clever translator of school experiences. It did not seem to matter if students were older, younger, or his own age: everyone at Central Arts School knew Ryan by name. He was fun and conciliatory -- in the classroom, hallway and playground. Ryan epitomized the class clown.

His identity seemed uniquely tied to his clownish antics, and Ryan did not appear to lose energy or passion for his role in the time I remained at Central Arts School. I wondered, from time to time, if Ryan had options available to him other than that of the class clown. As he spends years together with essentially the same group of students, it may become necessary for Ryan's teachers and peers to afford him alternatives. To develop himself fully, Ryan may need to break with his school humour routines, and to focus upon things other than getting a laugh. Meanwhile, in being the humour-purveyor that he was, Ryan could have been opening doors for his peers. Ryan helped by taking the pressure off finding someone to laugh at -- he became a conduit through which classroom humour passed. Ryan relieved tension, and created places of levity and joy. He was a sociable artist.

Brent and Sandy: Illustration Appreciation

> *(SETTING: Elementary school hallway, 1:00PM, Tuesday April 23, 2007. The grade two students have been silent reading in the period following lunch. Some students have been allowed to read aloud with JODY, the*

teacher-researcher, in the hallway. Students BRENT and SANDY have selected dinosaur books for this purpose.)

JODY: Car-no-taur-us *(BRENT is challenging the teacher-researcher to pronounce the most difficult dinosaur names from his book. JODY is appearing to struggle, having to 'sound out' the difficult words.)*

SANDY: *(gently interrupting, indicating to the illustrations in his book)* This guy is a raptor, and he's eating the triceratop's tail, and the triceratops is ramming, hoping that the raptor will stop. And these are the eggs from a different, tinier dinosaur.

JODY: Oh. There are lots of dinosaurs on the same page.

SANDY: No. This could not all happen on the same page. It looks like the illustrator wanted to show lots of dinosaurs, and he just made them up to be together. But it couldn't really happen like that.

JODY: Oh. They can't all get along?

SANDY: I don't know. I don't think so.

JODY: Is this sort of an imaginary situation in the book?

SANDY: Well, these guys are friends *(indicating to some smaller dinosaurs on his page).* But these guys fight. *(indicating the raptor and triceratops)*

BRENT: Sandy? That guy and that guy can squish and squish. *(pointing to the dinosaurs on the page who seem to be the most fierce)*

SANDY: I know. *(At this point, SANDY'S MOM enters the hall. JODY greets her, but SANDY'S MOM encourages the group to return to their conversation.)*

JODY: Can you talk about this herd of dinosaurs that we see in the background?

SANDY: Those are raptors and other dinosaurs, coming toward, well running toward something … but I don't know what.

JODY: If you could be in this picture yourself, would you?

SANDY: Uh, yeah.

JODY: Really? *(raising eyebrows in surprise)* Where would you be?

SANDY: There. *(points to a space near the edge of the page)*

JODY: Kind of in the background?

SANDY: Yeah. So nobody could see me. Like that raptor guy. 'Cause that guy would eat me!

JODY: How big would you be?

SANDY: That big. *(holds two fingers up, very close together)*

BRENT: You'd be the smallest?

SANDY: Yeah. I'd be an ant.

BRENT: I don't know if raptors can see ants. But if they can, they'll eat them.

(Gulps in imitation of a raptor eating an ant) Is it my turn to talk now?

JODY: It is your turn. What do you see in your picture book?

BRENT: Six eggs. *(counting them aloud)* And four more. And when they hatch, it means that there will be ten babies. But I think their mother died.

JODY: She did? Oh, that's right. You mentioned this to me before … that you think you see the father-dinosaur guarding the nest.

BRENT: 'Cause their mother died. 'Cause, um ... she did. *(BRENT appears to be sad as he considers his idea)*

JODY: I noticed that you both have volcanoes in your books. What are the possibilities there?

BRENT: Well, the eggs are gonna hatch. But the babies might die … because of the volcano.

JODY: If you could be in this picture, would you?

BRENT: No thanks!

JODY: Not much safety in there, hey?

BRENT: No.

JODY: Anything else you want to say? *(Both boys point out a few more details of their art. They like the colours of the skies and the green of the vegetation.*

SANDY turns another page and pulls a paper from the book upon which he has drawn his own pictures of dinosaurs.)

SANDY: See? I drew these after I read the book.

JODY: Wow! *(admiring the pictures)* You did a fine job.

BRENT: Yeah! Those are really good, Sandy.

JODY: Well, I have to say that this was an interesting book talk. You seem to enjoy the pictures of dinosaurs in your books quite a lot. You've even made some of your own!

BRENT: Yep. *(SANDY nods vigorously)*

JODY: Maybe that will continue to inspire you in your art. Let's take the books back into the classroom. We'll go now. *(the three leave the hallway)*

(END SCENE)

Throughout the time I spent as researcher in Central Arts School, I noticed the profound interest children held for the illustrations in their reading books. During times of book selection such as library book exchange, there was always great excitement for the cover and interior illustrations of the stories chosen. Illustrations inspired conversations, and these in turn, prompted further artistic endeavour. Students would draw images based on that which they had seen and read, sometime extending an illustration from a book, sometimes offering an alternative rendering. The grade one and two students that I spent time with seemed to appreciate at least as much from the illustrations in their books as they did from the printed words. I considered whether such learning, and in turn, sharing with others, was unique to an arts-infused school. I decided, that based on my own experiences in other elementary schools, children's admiration for illustrations in books, and the discussion that the illustrations prompt, is not unusual. It is noteworthy however, that an arts-infused school may offer more freedom for student discussion of book art.

Miss A, the classroom teacher, allowed her students every day to take their books into the hall for “silent” reading. She encouraged the hallway as a place to discuss books, and the art that they contained. The students, in turn, learned from their talks with one another of appreciation, literature, and art. Students functioned as “mutual mentors” (Eisner, 2002, p. 216) during these times, inspiring each other with their words, and, in the case of Sandy depicted above, sharing their own artwork. It is my contention that an arts-infused elementary school may offer more opportunities for students to be mutual mentors to each other, as the freedoms of conversation which are extended provide chances to develop such relationships. The teaching practices of arts-infused education tend to be conducive to classroom discussions (Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). In all, the students of Central Arts School could be seen as mentoring each other in the ways they appreciated each other’s work, and in the ways they spoke together.

Mara: Everybody’s Artist

> *(SETTING: Elementary school classroom, 1:45PM, Tuesday April 23, 2007. The grade two students have been creating dioramas out of shoe boxes, paint and plasticine to depict the lives of prehistoric creatures. Student MARA has been assisting the other grade students with their painting and sculpting, complying with their requests that she do so. She has also been trying to create her own diorama. MARA is regarded by the other students as “the best artist in the class.” Researcher JODY approaches MARA’S student-desk to inquire as to her recent activities.)*

JODY: *(smiling, walking up to MARA'S desk)* Hi, Mara! Could you tell me what you've been doing?

MARA: Well … I don't get your question.

JODY: OK. *(re-phrasing, and indicating to the top of MARA'S desk)* What's going on in your diorama-box here?

MARA: Well, most of the dinosaurs are watching their eggs.

JODY: *(bending down, leaning closer)* Mm-hmm.

MARA: One egg is hatching. A baby long-neck is coming out. There are not many trees. Two dinosaurs and seven eggs.

JODY: *(continuing to inspect the artwork, pointing to a specific area)* What gave you the idea to put in this volcano?

MARA: Ryan did. He asked the teacher if there were volcanoes during dinosaur-times.

JODY: He asked the question?

MARA: Yes. Then he said: "Can we make a volcano?" And the teacher said: "You can paint one." So I did. I painted one for him, and one for me.

JODY: And that's what you both decided to do?

MARA: Yep.

JODY: Interesting idea. You know, I've noticed that you sometimes help Ryan and others with art. We talked about that last week, too. Remember?

MARA: *(dropping her head, shyly)* Yep.

JODY: Remember what we talked about?

MARA: You said that I don't have to help the kids if I don't want to. But if I help them, I shouldn't help them too much. To only put my finger on Ryan's work if he asks, and suggest what to draw. Or show him. But don't always do his art for him.

JODY: Yeah. Try to teach him a little. But don't help him **too** much.

MARA: *(uneasily)* Yep.

JODY: But I guess he kind helps you too, doesn't he?

MARA: *(dubiously)* He does?

JODY: Well, yes. Because if he has a good idea like the volcano, and you think about using that idea, that's a kind of a trade, isn't it?

MARA: Well, I guess it is. But it's still my art.

JODY: Maybe you should tell him that, sometime. Maybe also tell him that his ideas inspire you. And that your good art sense is a help to him.

MARA: Yeah. *(looking somewhat uncomfortable)* Can I get back to my diorama now?

JODY: Of course! Thanks for talking with me, Mara. *(standing up, backing away from MARA'S desk).*

(END SCENE)

Through classroom observations and, later, discussions with Mara's teachers, I had come to understand her position in the classroom as "the best [visual] artist" (Notes to file, April 23, 2007). Mara's peers often called upon her to help them with their artwork, and Mara seemed to derive a lot of pleasure in offering this assistance. Her skills in visual art were considerable. Mara identified

herself as an artist, and she told me once: “I can be an artist anywhere!” (Notes to file, April 23, 2007).

Although pleased with her artistic skill, the teachers discouraged Mara from attempting to complete other students’ art assignments. They worried that such attention might keep Mara from focusing on her own work, and might also provide the other students with a way of circumventing artistic integrity. That is, other students might claim Mara’s work as their own. Because visual art was often conducted in group situations in grade one and two classrooms, collaboratively, it was sometimes hard to recognize whose art was whose.

The classroom teachers did not wish for Mara to be unrecognized in her efforts, nor did they wish other students to claim credit for Mara’s work. And yet, every time the teachers or I gave Mara ideas about how to collaborate effectively without taking over the others’ work in art or being used, she was somewhat resistant. I am unsure if she resisted because so much of her identity and social standing was derived from being “the best artist,” or because her true artistic nature was one to see the projects through to their ends. Mara was confident in her own abilities. She could hold an artistic vision of how something could look, and it may have been difficult to give creative control over to others, once the vision had begun to form. Mara may have been “everybody’s artist,” but in being such, she also negotiated ways to remain true to herself.

Susan: Reluctant Artist

(SETTING: Elementary school boot room, 2:40PM, Tuesday April 23, 2007. The grade two students have been drawing and painting dinosaurs.

Student SUSAN is crying softly in the corner. Researcher JODY approaches.)

JODY: *(sitting on the floor next to SUSAN where she has been painting)* Hey, what's going on? You look sad.

SUSAN: *(crying)* I am. 'Cause I can't do it. I just can't do it.

JODY: Do what? What can't you do?

SUSAN: Dinosaur heads and arms. Or legs. Or whatever they are!

(SUSAN slams down her paintbrush in frustration)

JODY: OK. *(soothingly)* Sometimes artists have tough moments.

SUSAN: I'm not a good artist, and this is too hard!

JODY: *(still attempting to soothe)* Why do you think it's hard?

SUSAN: 'Cause I'm bad at it.

JODY: Who told you that?

SUSAN: *(after a short pause)* No one.

JODY: No one? I don't think you're bad at art, Susan. I really don't. And I remember back last year when you were in Mr. L's class, and we made those puppets. Remember those puppets?

SUSAN: *(grudgingly)* Yeah.

JODY: Did you think it was hard then?

SUSAN: No.

JODY: No. *(pushing the conversation)* So what changed?

SUSAN: *(unresponsive)*

JODY: What's changed?

SUSAN: *(still visibly upset)* My mom says I'm an artist, but I'm really not.

JODY: Your mom says what?

SUSAN: *(repeats)* My mom says I'm an artist, but I'm really not.

JODY: Your mom says that you're an artist, but you don't always feel like you're an artist. And yet we know that artists are all different kinds of people. There are painters, people who like to work with pastels, people who like to work with clay, and people who like to dance. I think your mom might be right that you are an artist. And I think you might have lost your way a little bit just now. I don't know why you did. But you might be able to get back to where you were. Because I remember when you were in grade one. And you always did art. And you never cried. Do you remember that?

SUSAN: Yeah.

JODY: Yeah. I hope that you start feeling good about art again. What do you think it will take?

SUSAN: *(shrugs)* I don't know.

(END SCENE)

Susan did not quickly find her way back to being a happy-go-lucky seven-year-old and visual artist after our conversations, as I had hoped she might. I guess that in addition to being physically messy, classroom arts situations can be emotionally messy, too. Susan experienced an overwhelming lack of confidence as artist, and the discussions she held with her mother and classroom teachers

seemed to bear this out. Somehow, Susan had been convinced, and/or she had convinced herself that she was not an artist. I am not sure when this occurred, or how, and I am also not sure of the definitions she held for "artist." I do think that her self-esteem had been damaged, and that as a caring adult in the situation, it was necessary to consider the reasons for this. In discussions with the classroom teacher following my observations in the classroom, I learned that Susan had been experiencing an unsettled home situation, and that she was often emotionally overwrought in school. Arts-infused education may have helped Susan. Through arts-infused educational initiatives, Susan was exposed to theatre, dance, music, visual and literary arts. Perhaps through some of these avenues of expression, even if not through visual art, Susan could possibly reckon with her lack of self-confidence, and change her idea of being "not an artist." Unfortunately, I left Central Arts School before I could witness such a transformation.

Sandy: Thoughtful Artist

> *(SETTING: Prairie field, 20 kilometres away from the elementary school, 2:15PM, Tuesday May 8, 2007. The grade two students are on a field trip to support their understanding of nearby flora and fauna. They have made "binoculars" out of empty paper rolls, which they have brought with them on the field trip, to help them see. Student SANDY along with other grade two students, notably KYLE, are lying down in the prairie grass, as suggested by their field trip group leader, FT.)*
>
> FT: *(smiling, speaking softly)* If you are very quiet, you will hear the sounds of the grass.

SANDY: We will be quiet. We will hear.

KYLE: Look, look! *(pointing skyward)* I see a plane! I see vapour trails!

FT: *(patiently)* Can you hear the plane, Kyle?

SANDY: If you are quiet, you might hear.

KYLE: *(lies back as if to listen, then sits up again, abruptly)* This grass isn't soft. It itches me. I don't want to lie down. *(pauses)* And I can't hear the plane.

SANDY: I can hear the plane. It is far away, but when I close my eyes, I can hear it. I can see it, too -- even though my eyes are closed.

KYLE: You see it in your imagination, Sandy?

SANDY: Yes. It's in my mind. But I can show you after how it looks if you give me a piece of paper and a pencil. I can draw it for you after.

KYLE: Thanks, Sandy. *(and then suddenly, shrilly)* Hey! Hey! I think I found a tick on my leg!

FT: *(calmly)* Just flick it off, Kyle. Don't worry about it.

SANDY: *(leaning over to check Sandy's leg)* That's not a tick, Kyle. That's just a piece of dirt.

KYLE: Oh. I thought it was a tick. Ticks can bite, you know. They can suck your blood.

FT: Kyle, if you see a tick, you just flick it off right away. You don't worry about it. If it's on you and you can't get it off, an adult will help you. So don't worry about ticks. Now, please just lie back, and listen to the quiet of the grass. Let's try for five minutes of no talking.

KYLE: Oh. This is going to be really hard. *(lies back in the grass. Silence descends for a few moments. Then KYLE, restless, picks up his paper binoculars and peers through them. He sits up. He peers into the trees, through the lenses. KYLE jumps up and shouts.)* I think I saw a bear! A bear in the trees!

FT: There are no bears around here, Kyle. This is not bear country.

SANDY: Don't worry about bears, Kyle. Not even "The Three Bears." *(chuckles)* Remember when we acted that story out?

KYLE: Yeah. That was fun. I liked being in your acting group.

SANDY: Yeah. That was fun. I liked working with you, too, Kyle. You are my friend. *(both boys lie back in the grass. Insects whir, birds chirp, and the wind blows through the field. SANDY looks at KYLE and smiles. KYLE smiles back. It is silent, but for nature.)*

(END SCENE)

After the field trip ended, the students created reminiscences of the day through drawing, painting, and conversations with their teachers and classmates. Sandy told me that his favourite part of the day had been the quiet time he had spent in the prairie grass. The art that Sandy created to represent his experience was carefully, painstakingly created, blade by blade of grass, with a silver jet roaring overhead, and vapour trails streaming from behind. As he completed his drawing, Sandy added a dedication to the field trip / airplane picture: "For Kyle." I was pleased, but not surprised by the gesture. Sandy is a thoughtful artist.

Sandy was a quiet, gentle thinker in the classroom, and a patient friend in an arts-infused elementary school environment that could grow quite intense at times. Sandy would often prop his arm up on his desk, lean in, and tilt his head to the side as his teachers spoke, carefully considering the words they said. When it came time to do deskwork in math and spelling, Sandy accomplished tasks quickly, effectively and diligently. During times of painting, drawing, sculpting and creativity, Sandy sometimes took longer than the other students to complete his work, but the results always stood out for his care and attention to detail. I thought that Sandy was a wonderful role model for the rest of the class, and that his centeredness, and calm good nature was an influence on the adults in the school, too. In the often high-intensity world of creative collectivity, it is important to balance ourselves with quiet, and with thoughtful, caring individuals such as Sandy. They are to be considered no less creative for their thoughtfulness. They bring the best out in many of the other artists around them.

Gallas (2004) suggests that even from the time that children are very young, they offer many clues for the people they will become. Through his imaginative play and descriptive conversations, Sandy distinguished himself as an artist and a thinker. He opened pathways for expression and quiet contemplation in the grade one and two classrooms of Central Arts School. I expected that Sandy's exquisite care and concern for others would serve the group well, through all of their school days.

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to render scripted descriptions that resemble the children who were research participants in my research study.

Those who stood out to me in conversations and day to day experiences included the class clowns, the deeply engaged artists, and those who might otherwise have been labeled as reluctant or non-artists. The times in which I interacted with the students were the most profound moments of my study. I remember our conversations, the essences of what was said, and how these words moved me as an artist-teacher-researcher. In re-considering these moments, I see themes of identity, place, and arts-infused learning. I considered my research questions to be well-met through the writing of these scripted descriptions, because the scripts offer embodied senses of lives and learning at Central Arts School.

Chapter Seven. Images of Arts-Infused Learning

> *There was not only one photo in a negative … there were multitudes. A moment was not a single moment at all, but rather an infinite number of different moments, depending on who was seeing things and how.*

This quotation from *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* (Edwards, 2005, pp. 214-215) suggests that many possibilities are present in a photograph: many moments are contained within a single image. In the beginning of this chapter, I will explore the significance I perceive in the photographs from my experiences at Central Arts School. I took dozens of photos during the time I spent as researcher in the school; however, I have whittled those selections down to just a handful to share in this document. I believe the images chosen best support the highlights of my research experience. In addition to offering readers of this work another space to enter in, the images add depth to the understanding of my research questions. They are not single moments, but infinite numbers of different moments, depending on who is looking.

Each section begins with the image itself, followed by an excerpt from a field note from the day the image was captured. I have taken all the images that I have presented in this document. I used an inexpensive, non-digital camera, and the photos have not been enhanced through special technology. The writing that follows is an exploration of the image, along with suggestions of how arts-infused educational experiences may have occurred. I hope that the images and field notes may provide opportunities for entering more deeply into the lives and learning experiences of children.

The Mask

Figure 1. The mask.

> The theatrical mask, as created by grade two student David, is mysterious and engaging. This mask is playful, and also personal, as when he created it, David accepted suggestions from his family and friends in the choices of colour and materials. David's mother likes the colour blue, so David used blue feathers and paint. His friend Ryan likes videogame characters, so David allowed for those in the "antennae-eyes." (Notes to file, June 12, 2007)

When David wears the mask and creates improvised dramatic theatre with his peers, he is himself, but also not himself (Schechner, 2003), as David's face is obscured by the mask, and he is able to create alternative realities and situations through imaginative play. Because the mask is derived from a blending of

different ideas: family, friends, and experimentation with drama, colour, and texture, David is able to be many different characters when he wears the mask.

When he removes the mask, David returns to being a student in the grade two classroom, and he becomes part of an audience in which the students are enjoying mask-theatre. The mask-theatre experience, as it occurred in the research study at Central Arts School, is worthy of further investigation. In addition to being an opportunity to gather research material through the arts, masks and theatre are ways in which to be in arts-infused learning.

I had the opportunity to view David, and I noted the ways in which he used the mask in his learning experiences. Because the mask was initially constructed during social studies class as a project to be representative of his heritage, David's affective domain (Iozzi, 1989) was tapped. David had to ask questions of his family in order to learn things about himself. The family questionnaire that David took home was part of a school assignment that preceded the mask-making. The resulting words from David's family conversations yielded important truths as he learned of his personal heritage. The learning which came from making choices based on the options offered to him allowed David to extend himself further, and to feel connected with both the school assignment and with the things his family found important for him to know. David was further moved by the joy that sprang from creating improvised dramatic scenes wearing masks with his peers. I watched David transform from himself, into a videogame character and then later into a dog, all while wearing this same mask. It was as though he could be anything (Gallas, 1998). His gleeful laughter rang through the

classroom as he cavorted and posed in his mask, during an arts-infused social studies lesson.

David was transformed (Greene, 1995) by this arts experience. He seemed to come to an understanding of the wholeness of his being; as such he was truly experiencing knowing (Irwin, 2005). David was energized by the ways in which he created and later staged his art piece. I think that he felt a personal connection to what might have otherwise been just another social studies lesson. From his behaviour, it was apparent that David felt empowered by his own artistry and creativity, through the processes of making masks and improvising in theatre.

How do children understand themselves and their worlds through their experiences with the arts? This research question is addressed through the consideration of the mask image. The creation of the mask specifically and the arts generally becomes a chance to consider ourselves and to represent these understandings. Family conversations, videogames, fun with friends and colours are all parts of the mask. David was able to feel personally connected to curriculum when he created art, and later, when he explored relationships through drama activities. The arts in the above examples provide venues for self-discovery; they can also teach us about the people with whom we share classrooms, schools, and lives. David found a sense of kinship, both when he interviewed his family and when he used his mask alongside his friends in masks, and made theatre together. He understood their worlds as somewhat similar or at least compatible. He understood elements of his own family in conjunction with the other families of the classroom. For these children, experiences with the arts

in elementary school are chances to consider what they know and to bring others together in sometimes unusual but often non-threatening ways, to think along with them. Thus there is creative connection. The students at Central Arts School, by virtue of their arts-infused programming, experienced many opportunities for creative connection.

Stringing Together

Figure 2. Stringing together.

An image of delicious (and ultimately wearable!) breakfast cereal necklaces. The necklaces enhance mathematical concepts such as counting, because they are created out of precisely 100 pieces of cereal each. After each series of nine cereal pieces, the tenth in each line is punctuated by an especially tasty morsel of cereal. When the necklaces are

> complete, it is possible to count each by tens, marking all the way along by the yummiest bits. Students enjoy making the necklaces, because as they string together the cereal bits in small groups, they nibble, giggle, and share stories with each other while their jewellery unfolds. Stringing necklaces alongside one another is a chance to build community. In the end, the necklaces are used for adornment and decoration. The students present them -- to the camera, and to each other. (Notes to file, February 27, 2007)

Although a somewhat typical project in many schools, the necklaces represented here inspired another important moment of thought in arts-infused education. While the art of jewellery-making engages the children through the creation of something attractive, and learning to count by tens in mathematics is enhanced through the hands-on manipulation of objects student-learning is further affected in these arts-infused moments through the conversations they hold with one another while stringing necklaces together.

Stringing together cereal necklaces are reminiscent of the gatherings that occur during creation of folk art around the world. Children may replicate some of these folk art moments in their school art work, according to Kindler (1995). I imagine jewellery artists anywhere, collecting over their bead trays, and speaking of their lives while creating new works of art. The grade two students experience a similar happening during their creations of 100-piece cereal necklaces.

My research question: “What is the lived meaning of curriculum in arts-infused settings?” is reflected in this image of stringing together cereal necklaces.

Life in an arts-infused classroom means that one can expect the extension of learning in all subject areas to be met through artistic endeavours. Art class is not something saved for Friday afternoons, or meted out as a reward for good behaviour. The arts are expected, necessary, and part of the routine in arts-infused classrooms. In the case of cereal necklaces, math class is enhanced through the artistic pursuit of jewellery creations. Though the children enjoyed the cereal art activity, they did not seem surprised to have it offered to them. Students of arts-infused classrooms grow to expect the arts every day, in all subject areas.

It may be asked whether the students of Central Arts School could somehow take for granted their arts experiences, or appreciate them less, for the frequency with which they occurred. I never witnessed reduced appreciation for the art activities and experiences during the time I was at the school, even seemingly ordinary ones, such as building cereal necklaces. On the contrary, the students seemed to hunger for their daily exposure to the arts, which was supported by strong attendance at the school for all students, and an increase in overall school population (Mrs. G, personal communication, June 5, 2008). The students expect the appearance of the arts, and they celebrate it when it happens. It is possible that arts-infused education caused greater school attachment to Central Arts School. Further studies may be conducted to consider this idea.

Fellowship, and a sense of community may be enhanced in arts-infused classrooms and schools. Students come together to create art, and in the case of this image, necklaces. They share resources and represent their understandings to each other. The necklaces are symbols of all that may be contained in a group art-

making experience, including beauty, creativity, and even sustenance. The lived meaning of curriculum in an arts-infused elementary classroom then becomes an exposure to bigger ways of seeing (Berger, 1972) through the arts. Recognition of the arts as viable social undertakings and appreciated endeavours is meaningful to these children, no matter how young they are. In this example, it is possible to notice how the children present their creations proudly to the camera. These students are creating artwork together along the greater continuum of lives as artists. Even though it may be "just cereal" through their teacher's and photographer's interest, they are made to feel their art has worth, and they are buoyed by creative potential.

In the Field

Figure 3. In the field.

> Outdoors, we are free. We notice our worlds, and we point interesting phenomena out to others. Sometimes the chance to take a field trip is actually a trip to the field. Once there, we can be together and apart. We travel a path. (Notes to file, May 8, 2007)

In an attempt to extend learning opportunities and also to inspire artistic thought, the students of Central Arts School leave the building several times each year, and take field trips. The trips can include visits to galleries, theatres, studios and museums. The trips have also included visits to natural spaces, such as grasslands and ponds. I accompanied the students of Central Arts School on several field trips. In the image of this particular field trip, the group is travelling over prairie grasslands, and appreciating the geographical region just outside the city in which their school is located.

A field trip becomes an experience enhanced through arts-infused study when students are encouraged to listen to and learn from the sights and sounds of nature, and then to transform these into images, plays, stories, movement and/or songs. Prior to the grassland field trip, the students learned through images of the plant and animal life they might expect to see. During the field trip, there were moments of pause and (mostly) silent reflection, to consider nature, all around. Such moments affected the senses of the students and had a profound effect on the creations that occurred once students returned to the school. Following the trip, arts-infused journal entries and paintings of the day were rich with description and colour, proof that the field trip experience had been well appreciated. The trip to the grasslands was an important learning time because of the ways in which the

students could recall, reproduce, and fondly remember their time in the field. My research question “How do children reveal a sense of place and self through artistic endeavours?” is met in the image of the field trip. A sense of place (Hay, 1988) may be found beyond the walls of the school. It can be evocative to leave the school-place for a while, and to experience a different place. Upon return, students feel appreciation for what was learned along the way.

In arts-infused classrooms, a sense of place also may be found within the artwork that the children create as a part of their “regular” school days. Students travel to places through both actual and imaginative encounters (Gallas, 1998). Both types of encounters occurred with great regularity in arts-infused education at Central Arts School. When the students returned from an actual place, the field trip to the grasslands in this example, and continued to extend their experience through arts activities, their senses of place were enhanced. Through the arts, the students could see, hear, feel, describe their time in places, and make deeper meaning from these experiences. Their artwork reflected their memories and appreciation for all they learned.

Arts-infused educational initiatives connect place, art, and self in school and out. At Central Arts, for example, students are routinely linked to other community artists including, but not limited to, staff, family members and neighbours from around the school. Looking closely at the image, it is possible to see taller figures walking among the smaller, as volunteers on the school field trip. In addition to visiting and sharing their skills, the supportive adults who welcome the children’s art, witness their displays, and encourage their efforts

through attendance at school events (Mrs. G, personal communication, June 5, 2008) enhance students' senses of themselves as artists. The students experience a sense of themselves as artists when artists visit them.

As an artist, researcher, and teacher who spent time with the students of Central Arts School both in the field and otherwise, I always felt welcome. The research field was open to me from the first day of study, and it became a place to which I developed attachment. Tuan (2004) says that we can feel "nurtured" (p. 3) in a place if we are allowed to pause, to rest, to deeply consider there. I wondered if Central Arts School was a place where we might all feel nurtured, especially owing to the school's commitment to the arts. In school (and on field trips), we were connected by the arts. The arts informed our understanding of how to be, and we expected the arts to be around us every day we attended the school.

Puppet Player

Figure 4. Puppet player.

> This is me, in the early days of my research at Central Arts School. I am represented as a puppet so that I can enter into conversations with research participants, who, with my encouragement, also made puppets to represent themselves. My puppet has wild hair and colourful clothing. She is of movement and circles, and she directs activity. I made her this way so that we might enter into places of creativity and learning together. (Notes to file, July 16, 2008)

Part of what I understand to be arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 1997) includes not only study and representation through the arts, but the collection of research material by way of the arts. While my research was guided by specifically determined questions, I chose to use puppets and masks as part of

collecting research ideas with the students of Central Arts School. I hoped that through the processes of creation, and later, through active use of masks and puppets, that much would be revealed about the ways in which the students came to understand themselves and others. I thought it would be appropriate to act in arts-infused ways alongside the children in the classroom, rather than to only engage in discussions with children about the arts. I did not wish to abstractedly interview children to learn how they lived in arts-infused educational settings. I wanted to live alongside them, and to have their stories come through the arts activities in which we participated together. In addition to seeming more authentic as a research form for discovering through the arts, the chance to make things together was at times, just pure fun. Can you see my puppet in the image smiling?

As an arts teacher, I consider what it means to be surrounded by the arts. The feelings invoked by image, sound, action and movement affect our senses and release our imaginations (Greene, 1995). Being fully connected in the arts often involves releasing the imaginations of others, as well -- offering alternative ways of seeing (Berger, 1972), opening pathways to interpretations. Artists are puppet players at times, developing their art to suit audiences, working for audiences who support their activities. Sometimes artists are resistant puppet players, producing art that is in keeping with their individual visions, and self-sustaining. In my time as an arts teacher, I have seen artists be touted when their perspectives can match, enhance, or challenge the visions and perceptions of others.

My final research question asked, “What might I say about the arts experiences of children that resonates with the ways in which I have experienced

the arts in my own life"? In dealing with this question, I had to do some memory-work, in order to bring back the arts as I experienced them in childhood. I remembered creating puppet theatre with my mother, who was also an elementary school teacher. At one point in the study, my mother joined me again. She became, for want of a better description, my research assistant, helping the students and me to make puppets out of cellu-clay, paint and fabric scraps. My mother accompanied me for a few weeks at Central Arts School, and I think this offered the students a deeper glimpse of who I was as their classroom counterpart. Working with my mother again also reminded me of the times I had spent engaged in the arts as a child. Overwhelmingly, I felt a deep appreciation for my childhood arts experiences. I appreciated my private music lessons, theatre work, pottery instruction, and public school art classes -- and I wished there could have been more! I felt encouraged that, at least for the students of Central Arts School, there were more opportunities to engage with the arts. The students expected the arts as a regular part of every school day at Central Arts.

In all the research work I completed at Central Arts, I considered my role as a teacher and as an artist. The students who were my research participants reminded me of my own students, and they reminded me of myself. Consequently, I brought forward stories from my own life when I considered the experiences of the students at Central Arts. I suppose that I am puppet player of sorts, a manipulator of these stories. That is, I have told the stories I feel comfortable in sharing. This research allowed me to reflect upon my own practice, and it made me think more deeply of the work I do in elementary

schools. I hope that I, as puppet player and otherwise, have honoured the artists with whom I have worked. These include the writers, students, teachers, family members and others who have been part of this study.

Teaching and Learning the Arts

Figure 5. Teaching and learning the arts.

> As an arts teacher, I am both inspired and humbled by the willingness of my students to enter into arts situations. Most seem to love arts education -- there is no fear. For others, I try to keep things as low-pressure as possible, offering choices and options, not always insisting upon a public "show" of the work (although some students live for these moments!). For myself, I try to remember what a risk it can be, to even open your mouth in class … never mind the step out on stage, or display on a bulletin board … to be judged, cheered, criticized. (Notes to file January 23, 2007)

As a teacher of the arts, I have the opportunity to work in a field that I particularly enjoy, and feel affinity for. I am passionate about the arts for their openness, inspirations and possibilities. When I observe how quickly most children can enter in to arts situations, I feel happiness and respect for their efforts. Children are not usually overcome by the enormity in artistic undertaking, but rush in with wonderful abandon. They can be anything (Gallas, 1998) -- artists all -- and I often feel fortunate to be alongside them.

Occasionally I am reminded, by students such as Susan, that not everyone finds a comfort level in all arts activities. I wonder if, as a teacher of the arts, there are certain pressures that I subject my students to -- to feel, to achieve, to excel -- at the risk of damaging their own self esteems in the process. Oyler (1996) writes of the necessity that exists as teachers to share authority at times in classrooms. I would like to think that by opening choices to students, in terms of how their artwork might be displayed, or before which audiences (if any) they would like to present their work, that a sharing of authority might also lead to a strengthening of artistic confidence. I wonder if Susan would have cried, “Mostly everyone is better than me!” if she had not have been overly concerned about the audience that needed to see her painting. What if she could dictate the audience to whom her artwork was presented? Or where in the school she created art? Similarly, would Sandy have felt “embarrassed” if the only one seeing his mask-theatre video was himself? And yet, as teachers managing the demands of busy primary school classrooms, we rarely get to consider issues of artistic performance and privacy for our students. We forget sometimes, the risks that are involved in their

artistic educational experiences. Only with reflection, and the chance to consider our students' experiences alongside our own, do we remember the risks involved in artwork, and in student-life, generally. When we begin to connect these experiences, we are in a better position to decide which arts-infused educational activities are truly worthwhile. When we consider our students' lives next to our own, we are, all at once, teaching and learning together.

In considering the image of the Sky Bears (Figure 5), I am reminded of the ways in which we teach and learn in the arts. While the grade two artist who created the painting was not necessarily intending it to be a metaphorical piece, a deeper unraveling of the image -- its line, shape, and variety -- are parts of the stories we experience in elementary arts education. The definition of the black lines surrounding the bears and clouds can stand as the structure within a lesson. The shape of the piece reveals what has been learned. And the freewheeling fancy of the bears floating through space approximates our chances to alternately resist, and to delight in learning. Can you see the bears in the image smiling?

Eisner (2002) refers to imagination as "that form of thinking that engenders images of the possible" (p. 5). Certainly imagination resounds in teaching and learning the arts. Imagination is at the forefront when it is suggested to children that they can bring Sky Bears to life with paint on paper. In addition to extending an already imaginative poetry experience, students are imbued with a sense of power as they create, and in this case animate, otherwise non-human creatures. Learning occurs in multiple perspectives, as students and teachers can all become artists, creators, possibility-makers. Imagination brings forward

images of the possible, according to Eisner, and perhaps the seemingly impossible too, as in this example of animating the Sky Bears. Art-making, even at its most unassuming, can be a life-affirming, life-generating force in elementary schools.

Connecting Experiences

Figure 6. Connecting experiences.

> I don't remember having abundant access to the arts in elementary school as a student, although I remember appreciating the arts always. Somewhere along the way, I was inspired to become an arts education teacher. Now that I am also a researcher of the arts, I have found the fluidity of the arts-infused methods at Central Arts allowing students to gain many entry points for reflection and expression, while still focusing on learning. Overall, I think that this is a humane way to be in school. (Notes to file, February 20, 2007)

Even though we are all together in the same classroom, we experience life in unique ways. Aoki (1993) speaks of “multiplicity” (p. 255), and I believe those thoughts are here with the grade one and two students. We cannot assume that any arts project holds messages that will speak to all of us. However, we can gain entry from a variety of places through the arts, and those entry points can be opportunities to reckon with issues of confidence, reflection, and expression. The student-created paper bag statues from the grade one and two classroom of Central Arts School in this image represent the ways in which we can be in arts-infused curricula. Although created from essentially the same set of art supplies, there are opportunities for difference in creative design. The statues are not moribund. We moved them near the window to take their picture. We moved them other places in the classroom to further pursue artistic possibility. If you look closely, you will see that the students have positioned the statues so that they can touch one another. The statues are a way of connecting experiences … beginning with a similar design, and adapting, personalizing beyond.

Irwin (2005) states, “Being in environments rich with artistic activity…I am thrust into the wholeness of my being. I am no longer objectifying knowledge, rather I am experiencing knowing” (p. 1). Overwhelmingly, I found joy and optimism amongst the students and teachers of Central Arts School. They are experiencing knowing, and through the arts, they are representing their knowledge. The students participate in rich educational endeavours each day they attend the school.

We hold hope that the arts can assist us in transforming how we represent our worlds, and in turn, our learning. Greene (1995) says of the arts:

> [They] can awaken us to alternative possibilities of existing, of being human, of relating to others…the arts may overcome … and help us break with the mechanical and the routine … [and give us a] sense that things ought to be, can be otherwise. (p. 214)

I am forever moved by the stories that emanate from arts experiences. I continue to be moved by the stories of my students, their families, and the diverse groups that we are.

Chapter Eight. Concluding Discussion

Implications and Suggestions

"Life doesn't imitate art, life is art." (Lennon, 1986, p. 23)

Throughout this study, emphasis has been placed on the everyday words and actions of children in an arts-infused elementary school. The findings stem from the conversations of the students themselves. It is, therefore, the primary point of this study to suggest the importance of listening to children when they speak, and to consider their words and actions as part of the course for future instructional endeavours.

Many conversations unfolded with the students of Central Arts School during times when the children were experiencing the arts. I contend that the processes involved in drawing, painting, moving, sculpting, singing, acting, planning for artistic endeavour, and so on, allow openings among people, and that people, even those as young as six and seven years old, can feel deeply these opportunities to connect with one another. The students of Central Arts School talked of their families, their hopes, their frailties, and their lives, all while working on arts projects. The arts in elementary school are venues for self-discovery. They must be present in schools not only for their own sake and for extending the learning of other curricula, but because they offer freedom to children to consider their lives and often to reflect upon these significances. The arts are pathways to greater self-awareness in elementary schools.

Teachers in elementary schools can facilitate students' arts experiences and further self-discoveries by allowing for conversations in arts classes. These

conversations do not have to be formal or teacher-led. The talking must just be allowed to occur. During arts activities in school, students' conversations can be rich. These are good times for students to speak with one another. If the teacher is in the arts space alongside the children, she or he may also speak at these times, sharing ideas and asking questions. Talking during arts classes can provide important opportunities to get to know more about one another.

Because I have listened carefully to the conversations children have when they participate in the arts, and because I have observed the ways in which students create senses of themselves, I feel it is important to point out these significances, and to suggest that much more happens within the context of the arts class, over and above the products of the arts activities. Perhaps this is something that teachers intuitively know, but I suggest that we might consider specifically the learning that comes from these times -- where it emanates from and where it goes. The implications for teaching in the future might include offering even more opportunities in the arts to our students.

Arts-infused education promotes the connecting of different curricula. This is how paper-folding and mathematical fact-recitation sprang forth as part of the same lesson, as they did in one example I observed (see Chapter Three). It is also how cultural identity through mask-making can yield important truths about ourselves (see Chapters Four and Seven). The suggestion then becomes not simply to offer the arts in isolation (although I think that could happen, too), but to infuse the arts wherever possible through other subject areas. Additional

learning opportunities through arts-infused education may be considerable. Interconnecting curricula can lead to deeper learning experiences.

As mentioned earlier, elementary school students in arts classrooms sometimes function in the role that Eisner (2002) refers to as “mutual mentors” (p. 216). The power of this mentorship cannot be overlooked. In addition to feeding back to each other their perceptions of the artwork itself, students also counsel each other on matters of family, friendship, and life in school. It is important to be aware that these discussions are occurring, perhaps with greater frequency, in arts classes, and also to be aware of the potential of these conversations, both positive and negative, when considering the complexities of students’ experiences in school. Recognizing the many forms of learning that result from arts and arts-infused classes may alter the planning for future educational pursuits. If students function as mutual mentors, we must also be willing to consider how such activity is ultimately helpful, and if it is, how we might provide opportunities for it to continue and flourish.

Possibilities for Future Research

My research study at Central Arts School did not go beyond the level of school experiences to examine how the arts occur in children’s lives. A follow-up to this study might include an exploration of how the students of Central Arts School experience the arts in their lives beyond the classroom, including extra-curricular arts experiences and daily arts experiences in their homes. Further, as I concentrated on the in-school experiences of children and the arts, I did not have many opportunities to speak with the adults in these students’ lives -- with their

families or with other staff members, except incidentally. Another study might include a more balanced examination of all the individuals involved in the education of children: the students themselves, staff, families and community members. All could be insightful as to the ways in which the arts are experienced in childhood.

Because of the times when I was available to conduct research, and because most of the students' dance and music experiences were instructed by specialist teachers from whom I did not request permission to observe, this study did not closely examine music and dance education. Most of the arts experiences that I collected included visual art and drama, as these were taught primarily by the classroom generalist teachers whom I was permitted to watch. Another research study might provide a more balanced view of all the arts in arts education: music, visual art, drama, and dance. Another study might go into the rooms of the specialist teachers, to see how arts education is experienced there.

Finally, if I were to continue this study, or if another were to take it up, it would be interesting to follow the same group of students longitudinally, as they progress through all of their grades in elementary school. I saw them only in their first and second grades. I wonder what possibilities arts-infused education has in store as the children go on to higher grades and to more arts experiences. I wonder about the conversations and the senses of self that may be revealed through the arts as the students grow and develop. A longitudinal study (Saldaña, 2003) would be an opportunity to glean further information about the ways in which these children experience arts-infused education.

Revisiting

> *Look at this landscape carefully to be sure of recognizing it … and if you happen to pass by here … wait a little …. Then if a child comes to you, if he laughs … if he doesn't answer your questions, you'll know who he is.*
>
> (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 85)

My study followed a group of primary school children through their first and second grades. The study was an opportunity to ask how this group of students experienced the arts, if they found a sense of place, art, and self, and also how I, as an arts education teacher, saw my own experiences with the arts resonating alongside the students'. I found that the conversations students had during arts experiences captured my attention. For an elementary school teacher, it is sometimes difficult to pick up on all the conversation that occurs in classrooms. As a teacher-researcher and observer, I was in a better position to hear what was said, to watch how actions occurred, and to follow up these events with questions of my own. Even so, at times I was not permitted complete access to child-worlds. I was kept deliberately out of some communication attempts, held at bay.

In order to fully develop my experience at Central Arts, I explored arts-based research through the forms of puppetry and mask-making. I have reported some of the research findings through scripted descriptions and photographic images. My efforts were met with the students' interest, and the resulting experiences allowed for different ways in which to represent and view the work. I have presented images of the puppets and masks and discussed the ways in which

I believed the students were discovering themselves, their places, and their identities through the arts.

In all, I learned perhaps the most about my own journeys as an artist and teacher. Through journal entries and written reflections, I was able to question the reasons for which I became and continue to be an arts teacher. As a result of the time I spent at Central Arts School, I was able to live alongside students, as I do in my professional life, yet as a researcher I was looking just a little more closely, and that became an opportunity to appreciate the position I have as an arts teacher. I considered the ways in which the arts have made a difference in schools, and finally I have presented the reasons why I believe that research in arts-infused elementary schools must continue.

Epilogue

To the Readers of this Work …

In writing *Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary School*, I have attempted to convey some truths that I have learned. First, I believe we must listen to what it is that children are saying when they speak. This notion is simple and compelling. Too often we, as teachers, focus on completing lessons, assessing learning outcomes, and planning for future learning and teaching. All the while, crucial lessons of life are happening directly under our noses, during children's conversations with each other! I have concerned myself with the lived curriculum of the arts-infused classroom and found that lessons are continuously being taught by children to children. Students are mentors to one another. To practice the pedagogy of listening to our students when they engage in conversations is a simple but potentially revolutionary idea in education. Who knows where attention to such knowledge, children's knowledge, might take us?

Children's conversations lead to children's self-discovery. Such discovery can be profoundly meaningful. As arts times are often freer times in classrooms, discovering ourselves can happen with greater frequency in arts-infused education. For this reason, it is important to remember that much more than artistic products may come of arts experiences. The experience of reckoning with one's identity, and in some cases helping others to establish their identities too, means that the arts in education have a great deal of potential. The arts are meaning-makers for both self and others. We do not have to end with a perfectly polished script, a beautiful dance sequence, an in-tune song, or a finely crafted

pottery bowl to know that something meaningful has been achieved during an arts experience. Sometimes the conversations that arise during the doing of the arts are the greatest accomplishments of all.

Deep learning experiences have been realized through the interconnectedness of curricula, especially when curricula may be connected via the arts. The impact of Central Arts School on the children as learners is yet to be completely understood, but as the school enters its sixth year of being "art-infused," there will soon be a group of elementary school graduates who have moved through nearly all of their school years in the daily company of the arts. Hopefully, there will be continued listening to the stories of the Central Arts schoolchildren and learning community, for all that they are and all that they might still be. What has been the impact of arts-infused education? Do students feel more able to cope in a rapidly expanding world and more confident of their places within it?

My experiences as an artist, teacher, and researcher have led me to believe that the arts provide necessary ways forward for learning. The arts allow us to imagine a world in which we, and others, may be. Children's experiences in arts-infused elementary school cause us to reach those imaginative places in supported, frequently occurring intervals. In writing this work, I hope to have left a record of why I have been and will continue to be enthusiastic about elementary school arts education. I am thankful for the many opportunities that the arts have offered me, and I feel fortunate to be able to offer those experiences to others.

And now, having completed the writing of this study, I appreciate again what my former student (Levi) wrote -- that it can be great to get away from your desk.

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Appendix A. Letter to Principals Introducing Proposed Study

Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Date

Dear Principal,

Proposal for Research Study: Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

As you may remember from our meeting this past June, I am pursuing graduate studies in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. My interest areas are in arts-infused curriculum and in children's understandings of arts places within elementary schools. I am interested in observing students in their school environments, and considering how these students experience place (identity, belonging, attachment) within arts-infused contexts. Central Arts School is described as "_____" and I believe that it will be an ideal site for my research study. I would like to conduct a pilot study during the month of October, with the possibility of later extending the study throughout the school year.

I would like to come to your school one day each week and work within a primary classroom there. I will observe students, and record through notes and audio-taped recordings their reactions to place and arts-infusion. I may enter into conversations with students and their teacher while I am in their classroom. As you suggested, I have consulted with the primary teacher of Central Arts School. I believe that there is significant interest on the part of the teacher for this study.

Thank you for your consideration of this research request and attached proposal. For questions or clarification, I may be reached at the contact information listed above.

Sincerely,

Jody Hobday-Kusch

Appendix B. Letter to School Division Deputy Directors Introducing Proposed Study

Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Date

Dear Deputy Director,

Proposal for Research Study: Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

As you may be aware, I am pursuing graduate studies in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. My interest areas are arts-infusion and children's understandings of arts places in elementary schools. I am interested in observing students in their everyday school environments, and considering how these students experience place (identity, belonging, attachment) within arts-infused contexts. Central Arts School is described as "_____" and I believe that it will be an ideal site for my research study. I would like to conduct a pilot study during the months of September and October, with the possibility of later extending the study throughout the school year.

I would like to visit Central Arts School one day each week for the period of eight weeks and work within a primary classroom there. I will observe students, and record through notes and audio-taped recordings their reactions to place and arts-infused curriculum. I may enter into conversations with students and their teacher while I am in their classroom. I have already consulted with the primary teacher and with the school principal for their willingness to allow my access to the classroom and school. I believe that there is significant interest from the concerned parties for this study.

Thank you for your consideration of this research request and attached proposal. For questions or clarification, I may be reached at the contact information listed above.

Sincerely,

Jody Hobday-Kusch

Appendix C. Letter to Teachers Introducing Proposed Study

Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Date

Dear Teacher,

Proposal for Research Study: Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

As you may remember from our meeting this past June, I am pursuing graduate studies in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. My interest areas are in arts infused curriculum and in children's understandings of arts places within elementary schools. I am interested in observing students in their school environments, and considering how these students experience place (identity, belonging, attachment) within arts-infused contexts. I would like to conduct a pilot study in your classroom during the month of October, with the possibility of later extending the study throughout the school year.

I would like to observe students within your classroom once each week, and record through notes and audio-taped recordings their reactions to place and arts-infusion. Occasionally, I may enter into conversations with you and your students while I am in the classroom. These conversations will be informal, and not take the form of interviews.

Thank you for your consideration of this research request and attached proposal. For questions or clarification, I may be reached at the contact information listed above.

Sincerely,

Jody Hobday-Kusch

Appendix D. Letter to Parents/Caregivers Introducing Proposed Study

Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Date

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Proposal for Research Study: Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

I am pursuing a doctoral degree in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. My research specializations include arts-infused curriculum and children's understandings of arts places within elementary schools. I am interested in observing students in their school environments, and considering how students experience place (identity, belonging, attachment) within arts-infused contexts. I would like to conduct an educational research study in your child's classroom beginning in October, with the possibility of extending the study throughout the school year. The school division, school principal, and your child's teacher have approved this study.

I would like to observe students once each week in their classroom, and to record through my own notes and audio-taped recordings their reactions to arts-infused curriculum. Occasionally, I may enter into conversations with your child while I am in the classroom. These conversations will be informal, and not take the form of interviews.

Thank you for your consideration of this research request. **If possible, please sign and return the enclosed consent form to me at Central Arts School.** For questions or clarification I may be reached at the contact information listed above.

Sincerely,

Jody Hobday-Kusch, M.Ed.
Doctor of Education Provisional Candidate
University of Alberta

Appendix E. Letter Requesting Consent of Classroom Teachers

Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Dear teacher,

Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

Description of the Research

The purpose of this research is to study arts-infused curriculum and children's understandings of arts places within elementary schools through observations and conversations. There are no foreseen harms associated with this study. Possible benefits of the study include an increased awareness of arts-infused programming, and opportunities to reflect upon experiences.

In order to protect the interests of the participants, we will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The researcher will observe in your classroom once each week beginning in October, 2005.
2. The researcher may enter into conversations with you and your students while in the classroom.
3. The researcher will be non-obtrusive, and act as a classroom volunteer/helper as deemed appropriate by you, the classroom teacher.
4. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms and by the ethical conduct of the researcher.
5. The data collected via notes and audio-taped voice recordings from observations and conversations will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of five years following completion of the research. They will then be destroyed.
6. Neither you nor any of the children in the class will be photographed or videotaped.
7. The researcher will acknowledge that you can withdraw at any time during the study without penalty. If you withdraw, the data collected from observations and conversations will not be used.
8. The researcher will advise you of any new information that will have a bearing on your decision to continue in the study.
9. The results of the study may be used for the researcher's doctoral thesis in education. The study might also be published as an article in a scholarly journal, or presented at a conference. The confidentiality and anonymity of

you and your school will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. The use of all research data will be handled in compliance with University of Alberta ethical standards.

10. You may contact Jody Hobday-Kusch (researcher) at jodyh@ualberta.ca, or Dr. Miriam Cooley (research supervisor) at gcooley@ualberta.ca. The acting chair of the Department of Elementary Education is Dr. Amanda Montgomery (amanda.montgomery@ualberta.ca).
11. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

Agreement

I, _____ agree to participate in the above study. I am aware of the nature of the study, and understand what is expected of me. I also understand that I am free to withdraw at any time throughout the study.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

I, _____, do not agree to participate in the research study at this time.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix F. Letter Requesting Consent of Parents/Caregivers

Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Dear Parent/caregiver,

Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

Description of the Research

The purpose of this research is to study arts-infused curriculum and children's understandings of arts places within elementary schools through observations and conversations. There are no foreseen harms associated with this study. Possible benefits of the study include an increased awareness of arts-infused programming, and opportunities to reflect upon experiences.

In order to protect the interests of the participants, we will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The researcher will visit your child's classroom once each week beginning in October, 2005.
2. The researcher may enter into conversations with your child while in the classroom.
3. The researcher will be non-obtrusive, and act as a classroom volunteer/helper as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher.
4. Your child's anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms and by the ethical conduct of the researcher.
5. The data collected via notes and audio-taped voice recordings from observations and conversations will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of five years following completion of the research.
6. Your child will not be photographed or videotaped.
7. The researcher will acknowledge that you and your child can withdraw at any time during the study without penalty. If you withdraw, the data collected from observations and conversations will not be used.
8. The researcher will advise you of any new information that will have a bearing on your decision to continue in the study.
9. The results of the study may be used for the researcher's doctoral thesis in education. The study might also be published as an article in a scholarly journal, or presented at a conference. The confidentiality and anonymity of your child and your child's school will be protected through the use of

pseudonyms. The use of all research data will be handled in compliance with University of Alberta ethical standards.

10. You may contact Jody Hobday-Kusch (researcher) at jodyh@ualberta.ca, or Dr. Miriam Cooley (research supervisor) at gcooley@ualberta.ca. The acting chair of the Department of Elementary Education is Dr. Amanda Montgomery (amanda.montgomery@ualberta.ca).
11. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

Agreement

I, _____ have read the above guidelines, and agree to have my child participate in the study. I am aware of the nature of the study, and understand what is expected of me. I also understand that my child and I are free to withdraw at any time throughout the study.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

I, _____, do not agree to have my child participate in the research study at this time.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix G. Letter Requesting Assent of Child Participants

Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Date

Dear _____,

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta, working on a Doctor of Education degree. I am interested in what children understand about arts-infused schools. I would like to come to your classroom to see the things you do in school. I would like to talk with you about the arts and your school place. I am asking your permission to participate in this study.

When I finish the study, I will write about it in a long paper called a "dissertation." I will not use your real name in the study, so you can help me make one up for you. Participation in this study is your choice, and you are free to change your mind if you decide later that you don't want to continue. If you are willing to participate in the study, please sign your name and date.

_____ _____
Child's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix H. Transcript/Data Release Form

Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

Researcher: Jody Hobday-Kusch
Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

I, _____ have read my transcripts and agree to release them. I have had the opportunity to read the transcripts and to clarify, add or delete information so it will accurately represent my own words. The procedure and its possible risks have been explained to me by _____, and I understand them. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I also understand that although the data from this study may be published, and/or presented at seminars and/or conference, my identity will be kept completely anonymous if I wish, and my words and comments are confidential. If any direct words or quotations are used in the final monograph, a pseudonym will be used to represent me.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta.For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix I. Confidentiality Agreement for Research Assistant

Qualitative Case Study of Arts-Infusion in a Primary Classroom

I, _____ , research assistant, have agreed to assist in artwork (making puppets and modeling puppetry techniques) in the above named research project.

I agree to keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format with anyone other than Jody Hobday-Kusch.

_____ _____

research assistant (signature) (date)

_____ _____

Jody Hobday-Kusch (researcher) (date)

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

Appendix J. Letter to Teachers Describing Formal Dissertation Study

Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary Education

Dear Teacher,

As you may remember from our recent meeting, I am pursuing graduate studies in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. My interest areas are in arts-infused curricula and in children's experiences of the arts within elementary schools. I am interested in visiting students in their school environments, and participating in arts activities while I am there. I would like to conduct a research study in your classroom beginning this month, with the possibility of later extending the study throughout the school year.

I would like to observe students within your classroom once each week, and record through notes and audio-taped recordings their experiences with the arts. Occasionally, I may enter into conversations with you and your students while I am in the classroom. These conversations will be informal, and not take the form of interviews. At times, I might also like to photograph and/or videotape students and their artwork. All of my research requests and methods will first be approved by the University of Alberta, Elementary Ethics Review Board, your school district, school principal, and the parents/caregivers of your students. I will draw up the required consent letters and forms for parents/caregivers, and other school officials, and look after the distribution of these. Participant confidentiality will be safeguarded, and anonymity maintained via the use of pseudonyms, and where applicable, the (digital) obscuring of photographs, audio and videotapes. I will show parents/caregivers any images of their children's art, and/or (digitally) obscured images of the children that I wish to publish, and request their permission to do so via the use of image/data release forms. Additionally, if you or your artwork appears in any of the images, I will request your permission to do so via the use of image/data release forms, once you have seen the images.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. For questions or clarification, I may be reached at the contact information listed above.

Sincerely,

Jody Hobday-Kusch, M.Ed.
Doctor of Education Candidate
University of Alberta

Appendix K. Letter to Parents/Caregivers Describing Formal Dissertation Study

Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary Education

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

You may remember me from last school year when I was a researcher with the grade one class at Central Arts School. I am pursuing graduate studies in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. My interest areas are in arts-infused curricula and in children's experiences of the arts within elementary schools. I am interested in visiting students in their school environments, and participating in arts activities while I am there. I would like to conduct a research study in your child's classroom beginning this month, with the possibility of later extending the study throughout the school year.

I would like to observe students within their classroom once each week, and record through notes and audio-taped recordings their experiences with the arts. Occasionally, I may enter into conversations with your child while I am in the classroom. These conversations will be informal, and not take the form of interviews. At times, I might also like to photograph and/or videotape students and their artwork. When photographing, efforts will be made to avoid taking identifiable pictures of students. When this is not possible digital processes will be used to obscure the identity of children. All of my research requests and methods are approved by the University of Alberta, Elementary Ethics Review Board, your school district, school principal, and the classroom teacher. Participant confidentiality will be safeguarded, and anonymity maintained via the use of pseudonyms, and where applicable, the (digital) obscuring of photographs, audio and videotapes. I will show you any images of your child's art, and/or (digitally) obscured images of your child that I wish to publish, and request your permission to do so via the use of image/data release forms.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Can you please complete and return the enclosed consent form to indicate whether or not you give permission for your child to participate? For questions or clarification I may be reached at the contact information listed above.

Sincerely,

Jody Hobday-Kusch, M.Ed.
Doctor of Education Candidate
University of Alberta

Appendix L. Letter to Teachers Requesting Consent to Participate

Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary Education

Researcher
Jody Hobday-Kusch
Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Description of the Research

The purpose of this research is to study arts-infused curriculum and children's experiences within elementary schools. There are no foreseen harms associated with this study. Possible benefits of the study include an increased awareness of arts-infused programming, and opportunities to reflect upon experiences.

In order to protect the interests of the participants, we will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The researcher will observe in your classroom once each week beginning in January, 2007.
2. The researcher may enter into conversations with you and your students while in the classroom.
3. The researcher will be non-obtrusive, and sometimes act as a classroom volunteer /helper as deemed appropriate by you, the classroom teacher.
4. Students and their artwork may be photographed and/or audio and videotaped. Efforts will be made to avoid taking identifiable pictures of students, otherwise digital processes will be used to obscure the identity of the children. The (digitally/obscured) images may be included in the researcher's doctoral dissertation and be used in academic publications and presentations. Image/data release forms will be offered for signatures prior to the publication of any images.
5. If you or your artwork appears in any of the images, your permission will also be asked via the use of image/data release forms.
6. Participant confidentiality will be safeguarded, and anonymity maintained via the use of pseudonyms, and where applicable, the digital obscuring of photographs, audio and videotapes.
7. Any data collected via researcher-notes, photographs, audio and video-taped recordings will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of five years following completion of the research. It will then be destroyed.

8. The researcher will acknowledge that you can withdraw at any time during the study without penalty. If you withdraw, the data collected from observations, conversations, and arts activities will not be used.
9. The researcher will advise you of any new information that will have a bearing on your decision to continue in the study.
10. The results of the study may be used for the researcher's doctoral thesis in education. The study might also be published as an article in a scholarly journal, or presented at a conference. The confidentiality and anonymity of you, your students, and your school will be protected through the use of pseudonyms, and where applicable, the digital obscuring of photographs, audio, and video recordings. The use of all research data will be handled in compliance with University of Alberta ethical standards.
11. You may contact Jody Hobday-Kusch (researcher) at jodyh@ualberta.ca, or Dr. Miriam Cooley (research supervisor) at gcooley@ualberta.ca. The Chair of the Department of Elementary Education is Dr. Dianne Oberg (doberg@ualberta.ca).
12. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta.For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

Agreement

I, _____, agree to participate in the above study. I am aware of the nature of the study, and understand what is expected of me. I also understand that I am free to withdraw at any time throughout the study.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

I, _____, do not agree to participate in the research study at this time.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix M. Letter to Parents/Caregivers Requesting Consent to Participate

Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary Education

Researcher
Jody Hobday-Kusch
Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

Description of the Research

The purpose of this research is to study arts-infused curriculum and children's experiences within elementary schools. There are no foreseen harms associated with this study. Possible benefits of the study include an increased awareness of arts-infused programming, and opportunities to reflect upon experiences.

In order to protect the interests of the participants, we will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The researcher will observe in your child's classroom once each week beginning in January 2007.
2. The researcher may enter into conversations with your child while in the classroom.
3. The researcher will be non-obtrusive, and sometimes act as a classroom volunteer/helper as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher.
4. Students and their artwork may be photographed and/or audio and videotaped. Efforts will be made to avoid taking identifiable pictures of students, otherwise digital processes will be used to obscure the identity of the children. The (digitally/obscured) images may be included in the researcher's doctoral dissertation and be used in academic publications and presentations. Image/data release forms will be offered for signatures prior to the publication of any images.
5. Participant confidentiality will be safeguarded, and anonymity maintained via the use of pseudonyms, and where applicable, the digital obscuring of photographs, audio and videotapes.
6. Any data collected via researcher-notes, photographs, audio and video-taped recordings will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of five years following completion of the research. It will then be destroyed.
7. The researcher will acknowledge that you and your child can withdraw at any time during the study without penalty. If you or your child withdraws, the data collected from observations, conversations, and arts activities will not be used.

8. The researcher will advise you of any new information that will have a bearing on your decision to continue in the study.
9. The results of the study may be used for the researcher's doctoral thesis in education. The study might also be published as an article in a scholarly journal, or presented at a conference. The confidentiality and anonymity of your child and his/her school will be protected through the use of pseudonyms, and where applicable, the digital obscuring of photographs, audio, and video recordings. The use of all research data will be handled in compliance with University of Alberta ethical standards.
10. You may contact Jody Hobday-Kusch (researcher) at jodyh@ualberta.ca, or Dr. Miriam Cooley (research supervisor) at gcooley@ualberta.ca. The Chair of the Department of Elementary Education is Dr. Dianne Oberg (doberg@ualberta.ca).
11. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

Agreement

I, _____, have read the above guidelines, and agree to have my child participate in the study. I am aware of the nature of the study, and understand what is expected of me. I also understand that I am free to withdraw at any time throughout the study.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

I, _____, do not agree to have my child participate in the research study at this time.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix N. Sample Conversation Guide for Children, Teaching Staff and Parents/Caregivers during Pilot Study

For child (student):

- Can you tell me about your picture, song, dance, etc.?
- How do you feel about the art project you are working on / just completed??
- Are there other things in school that you are learning which you might like to talk about?
- Do you think that the art works, projects, productions (whatever the child mentioned above) that you are making/doing and the other things you are learning connected? How so?
- What can you tell me about the places for arts in and around this school? Where are these places? Can you show me?

For adult (teaching staff, caregivers):

- How did you come to know of arts-infused curricula?
- How are you experiencing arts-infused curricula now?
- Do you think that "Central Arts" is becoming an "arts place"? If so, how?
- I am interested in identity, belonging and attachment in schools. Could you talk about experiences you or your students (children) have had with identity, belonging, and attachment in arts-infused places/curricular initiatives?
- Where might your understandings of arts-infused primary classrooms lead you next?

Appendix O. Image/Data Release Form for Parents/Caregivers

Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary Education

Researcher
Jody Hobday-Kusch
Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

I, _____ have seen the (digitally) obscured image(s) of _____ (my child) and his/her artwork collected by the above-named researcher and agree to release them. I understand that the images may appear in the researcher's dissertation, and/or in subsequent scholarly articles and presentations. I have had the opportunity to consider the image(s) and to clarify, add, or delete information so it will appropriately represent my child. The procedure and its possible risks have been explained to me by _____, and I understand them. I understand that my child's participation is completely voluntary, and that my child may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I also understand that although the data from this study may be published, and/or presented at seminars and/or conferences, my child's identity will be kept completely anonymous if I wish.

_____ _____
Parent/Caregiver's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix P. Image/Data Release Form for Classroom Teachers

Children's Experiences in Arts-Infused Elementary Education

Researcher
Jody Hobday-Kusch
Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5
email: jodyh@ualberta.ca

I, _____ have seen the (digitally) obscured image(s) of myself and my artwork collected by the above-named researcher and agree to release them. I understand that the images may appear in the researcher's dissertation, and/or in subsequent scholarly articles and presentations. I have had the opportunity to consider the image(s) and to clarify, add, or delete information so it will appropriately represent me. The procedure and its possible risks have been explained to me by _____, and I understand them. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I also understand that although the data from this study may be published, and/or presented at seminars and/or conferences, my identity will be kept completely anonymous if I wish.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

A copy of this consent form is provided for your records.

Appendix Q. Questions Asked to Puppets and Their Masters

1. Can you tell me how you were made?
2. What was the best part?
3. What was the worst?
4. What do you think your puppet might be interested in? Why?
5. What parts of school would your puppet like to visit?
6. What parts of the world would your puppet like to see?
7. Who would your puppet like to meet/talk to?
8. How is your puppet like you? Different?
9. How does your puppet feel about school? Art? Music?
10. What would your puppet like to learn about?

Appendix R. Heritage Project Questions Created by Teacher (Miss A) and Asked by Students to Their Parents/Caregivers/Family Members

1. What is your name?
2. On what date were you born?
3. Where were you born?
4. What country did your parents come from?
5. Tell me about your earliest memory.
6. Where did you go to school? What was it like?
7. What did you do for fun?
8. What chores did you do at home?
9. What was your community like?
10. Tell me about the most interesting thing that has happened during your life.
11. Ask your own questions, too!