Re-Placing the Arts in Elementary School Curricula: An Interdisciplinary, Collaborative Action Research Project

By Allen Trent, University of Wyoming, and Jorge-Ayn Riley, Denver Public Schools

ABSTRACT

This article describes a collaborative action research project aimed at deliberately "re-placing" art in the elementary curriculum through targeted planning, implementation, and assessment of an art integrated unit in an urban 4th grade classroom. Findings and implications should be relevant to elementary teachers, administrators, art specialists, and teacher educators. Our findings illustrate the power of art-integrated education to support student learning at high levels and in meaningful ways.

"Using art to learn things was helpful because you can express what you have learned" (4th grade student interview 5/9/08).

The arts, and their place in school curricula, have been debated for centuries (Keatinge, 1967). An expanding arts education literature base touts multiple benefits of arts education, including cognitive development (Eisner 2002), increased academic achievement (Critical Links, 2003), and the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for democratic citizenship (Leshnoff, 2003; Silvers, 2003). Despite these documented benefits, time and emphasis on the arts in schools has decreased (*Academic Atrophy: The Condition of the Liberal Arts in America's Public Schools,* 2004; Hetland, Winner, Veenema, Sheridan, & Perkins, 2007).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has had a detrimental impact on the arts in schools, largely because some policy makers believe focusing on literacy and numeracy, in isolation, will support students' meeting of standardized testing targets (Hetland et al., 2007). While these "detrimental impacts" have broadly impacted students throughout the U.S., the problem is exacerbated in poor and urban schools. Recent research has concluded that while most children are receiving less instruction in the arts and have fewer opportunities to engage arts and humanities curricula, socio-economically lower children receive less arts content than their wealthier peers, and when they do receive art infused curricula, poor children receive lower

quality forms of art integrated education (Mishook and Cornhaber, 2006).

Unfortunately, this inequity is all too common. Poor, diverse, and urban schools typically have less experienced teachers, and dedicated teachers choosing to teach in these schools are increasingly subjected to rigid guidelines and mandates from which their peers teaching in more affluent schools are exempt. For example, Jaeger, a California teacher, was forced to follow a prescriptive curriculum called Open Court, "a scripted reading program that tells teachers what to say and do at every moment" (Jaeger, 2006, p. 39). This mandate, noted Jaeger, left teachers unable to include "curriculum that more fully addressed the range of levels and the varied strengths and weaknesses of our students" (p. 39). She also observed,

It is important to note here that not all teachers in our district fell victim to the heavy-handed implementation of Open Court. Teachers in other schools told me they were allowed great flexibility in use of the materials and advised by their principals to focus on standards rather than on the scripted teacher's guide. Policing by consultants was minimal. How did these schools differ from Downer [Jaeger's school]? They were located in middle class neighborhoods with a greater percentage of white students. The district shackled teachers of poor

children with generally lower achievement to a curriculum that did not let them modify their teaching. Teachers in more affluent schools could enrich the curriculum to emphasize higher-level thinking and aesthetics. (p. 40)

Our project counters the disconcerting trends and realities described above. This project's aim was to bring quality, meaningful, teacher-planned arts integrated education to urban students. As co-teachers, we have decades of experience and believe professional teachers must have the autonomy to design learning experiences that relate to students' lives and interests. Our hope is that the project described in this article serves as another model of student-centered teaching and learning and shows that integrated, multimodal approaches are as applicable and effective in urban schools as they are in affluent suburban districts.

The inquiry described in this article was conducted in Jorge-Ayn Riley's, Denver Public School (DPS) fourth grade class at Park Hill ECE – 8 School. Park Hill Elementary is located in Northeast Denver, Colorado. The school population is diverse with the following ethnic/racial distribution: 39% African American, 39% Anglo, 15% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 2% Native American. 38% of the student population qualifies for free or reduced price lunch.

In 2007, the district provided all 4th grade teachers with new social studies

curricular materials organized under the theme "Privacy in a Democracy." These materials served as our curricular starting point. In this article, we provide an account of this project designed to "re-place" art in the elementary curriculum through an interdisciplinary, art integrated unit aligned with district standards in multiple content areas.

This action research project was designed to integrate visual art into the elementary curriculum in ways that supported high levels of student learning and engagement. Additionally, as teacher researchers, our aims included better understanding the planning and implementation of art integrated curricula so that we might improve our practice and share our resultant learning with education colleagues and stakeholders.

In this article, we discuss the theoretical beliefs that guide our work, outline the methodology used to collect data and documentation throughout the unit, share our collaborative lesson/unit planning framework, provide examples of lessons and student responses (written and artistic/visual), and summarize research findings and present implications and recommendations.

THEORETICAL BELIEFS

Co-equal Arts Integration

We join others in asserting the arts have tremendous potential to impact schooling, and thus people and society, in ways we have only imagined. We are familiar with the essentialist argument: art should be in curriculum for valuable, art specific essentialist learning only) vs. the instrumentalist argument: art can be used in curriculum to support learning in other school subject areas, as well as art learning (Critical Links, 2003). As practitioners with extensive teaching and administrative experience focused on public schooling (40+ years combined), we argue the instrumentalist approach can be implemented effectively in ways that support a "co-equal" integrative approach. In seeking a "co-equal" form of art integration, we target student outcomes (in our case district standards and benchmarks) in both art and other

content areas. This co-equal approach, we believe, is the only feasible way for the arts to permeate regular classroom curricula in today's standards driven educational contexts. Essentialist approaches, we fear, will lead to further marginalization (and ultimately an absence?) of the arts in schools.

Multimodality

Our art-integrated approach capitalizes on the "multimodal" nature of contemporary communication and representation. Multi-modality refers to the increasing combination of multiple modes of meaning – linguistic, visual, and auditory. Multimodality embraces a more complex view of the elements that constitute communication, as "it becomes necessary to treat 'reading' – and communicating in a broader perspective – as a process that extends beyond (alphabetic) writing, and includes images and other new modes" (Vincent, 2005, p. 2). This perspective aligns with multiple intelligence theories that claim individuals have a broad range of "intelligences" that encompass far more than linguistic proficiency and mathematical reasoning (Gardner, 1983).

Our obligation then, as educators, is to allow students to approach learning in ways that acclimate them to and capitalize on prior experiences with multimodal representations. In this project, students both encountered and created representations that combined multiple modes: traditional written text, constructed images, poetry, digital images, and media that combined these forms.

Constructivism

We believe in constructivist/constructionist teaching and learning. In other words, we believe children (and adults alike) construct their own understandings in unique, idiosyncratic ways and these individual understandings are deeper and more meaningful when engaged in collaboration with others (Arends, 2009). Therefore, our goals as teachers include providing students rich opportunities in which they can construct and acquire significant knowledge and skills that connect to their prior experiences and conceptual schema and that apply to

and enrich their lives. We contrast our approach with more traditional teaching approaches that view knowledge as static, teachers as transmitters of this knowledge, and students as receivers of this predetermined set of facts, skills and understandings.

The Roles for Schools in a Democracy

Multiple aims for schooling have been articulated and pursued. Our beliefs and practices honor much broader aims than those currently addressed in most public schools, and we believe that schools are the ideal place to achieve the goal of educating democratic citizens. Other scholars (e.g., Dean, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Mirón, 2003; Phillips, 2003; Silvers, 2003) believe in this potential and claim, as we do, that concepts embedded in arts education are congruent with, and overlap, the skills and dispositions needed to participate in a democracy. An Arts Education Partnership (2004) report also focuses on this link:

A fundamental purpose of schooling in America is to enable students to develop the values, understandings, and habits essential to a democracy and to apply them in their personal and public lives... studies suggest that arts engagement and processes nurture essential democratic values, habits, and actions. (AEP, 2004, p. 24)

Art and democracy share a dependency "on one extraordinary human gift, imagination [which is] their common link to civil society" (Barber, 1997). We imagine new understandings of the bonds between art, education, and democracy. Our teaching and research focus on these connections as they are manifested in schools. We believe that the learning that happens (or could happen) in arts integrated education may be among the most valuable of all, the acquisition of skills and dispositions necessary for democratic citizenship.

Our theoretical beliefs related to co-equal arts integration, multimodality, constructivist teaching and learning, and the role of schooling in a democracy come together in our teaching and in the student work products connected to this project. This study documents that our attempt to integrate visual art, mul-

timodal representations, and civic education supported student learning in all targeted art, academic, and social areas.

METHODOLOGY

This inquiry project utilized a collaborative action research approach. Mills describes action research as:

any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment, to gather information about the ways their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved. Action research is done *by* teachers *for* themselves. (Mills, 2007, p. 5)

The aims of action researchers include better understandings and improving practice, along with sharing accounts of the implementation/research process and findings with stakeholders who may benefit. Importantly, teacher action researchers are generating knowledge and theories grounded in actual practice: "In doing action research, teacher researchers have developed solutions to their own problems. Teachers – not outside 'experts' – are the authorities on what works in their classrooms" (Mills, 2007, p. 12).

The results of this type of research are practical. Action Research differs from other forms of research "as there is less concern for universality of the finding and more value placed on the relevance of the findings to the researcher and the local collaborators" (Center for Collaborative Action Research, para 5).

In this project, we benefitted from a collaborative action research approach, as both of us assumed dual roles of teacher/researcher. This enabled us to co-plan all teaching and research activities, allowing us to work as critical friends throughout the implementation and interpretation processes, asking each other questions, raising concerns, and highlighting important findings at all stages of the project.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided our inquiry/action research project. These questions served to focus our teaching, planning, data collection, and analysis: 1) What are the student specific impacts/outcomes of integrating visual art curricula with other academic content areas? 2) What approaches, strategies, and practices support the implementation of arts integrated curricula? And, 3) What does quality art integrated education (in elementary classrooms) look like?

Data Collection and Analysis

The unit was taught and data were gathered throughout the 2008 spring semester. Action researchers allow the research questions to point them to the most appropriate data sources (Mills, 2007). While this inquiry relied heavily on qualitative and descriptive forms of data, we also utilized quantitative data and descriptive statistics when these tools provided us with insights related to our research questions. Data collection tools employed in this action research project included pre/post assessment of student learning specific to unit objectives; field notes/researcher journals; collection/documentation of student work samples, curricular materials, and lesson plans; videotaped focus group interviews; and photos of classroom activities. Analysis included multiple reviews of all data sources. We discussed and analyzed all data sets and shaped our conclusions in an ongoing series of reflective discussions usually held after school. We evaluated student work using rubrics based on Denver Public School's benchmark criteria. These data were quantified to document and summarize individual student and overall class levels of proficiency at the completion of the arts integrated unit.

We analyzed all qualitative data sources guided by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) approach to data analysis. Activities included "open coding," or naming, organizing, and asking questions about the data set; "memo writing," identifying and writing about patterns or themes and specific analytic issues; and a "focused coding" process in which we elaborated promi-

nent themes and sub-themes, connected data, and, ultimately, formulated conclusions and theories grounded in and supported by data exemplars.

Throughout the inquiry, we focused on identifying themes, conclusions and understandings (what we call "findings") that directly informed/responded to our research questions. To corroborate our initial interpretations, we discussed our understandings with students via small focus group interviews and with each other in the reflective discussions after school. We used a collaborative data analysis process, informally sharing and solidifying our thoughts and findings over a period of months. We discuss findings later in this paper.

COLLABORATIVE LESSON/UNIT PLANNING

The integrated unit was planned to connect to the DPS 4th grade curricular unit "Privacy: Foundations of Democracy" (published by the Center for Civic Education, 1997). The class engaged in a variety of readings, research, and discussions of privacy related topics using DPS curricular materials. Additionally, we developed a series of arts integrated lessons aligned with DPS standards (Social Studies, Language Arts and Visual Art) to supplement and enrich students' learning.

Our approach included explicit attention to teaching and assessment of student learning specific to DPS curricular benchmarks and identified democratic skills and dispositions. As noted earlier, we acknowledge the importance of aligning formal district standards and benchmarks in ways that support "co-equal" arts integration, but we also have learning goals for our students that fall outside this formal, "explicit" curriculum, in this case, democratic skills and dispositions aligned with the First Amendment Schools' "Core Civic Habits" (http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/pdf_files/civic_habits.pdf). These "civic habits of heart, mind, voice and work" (p. 1) aptly describe many of the aims we have for students as they learn to be contributing members of a democratic society. A simple template was used to begin our planning for each lesson.

Lesson Objectives
- Define: rights to privacy; scope and limits of privacy
- Explain why privacy is not an absolute right
- Identify and interpret documents that grant/affirm privacy rights
- Create artistic representations related to rights of privacy

DPS CURRICULUM BENCHMARKS
Reading& Writing
1.1 Students actively process text during reading

1.2 Students answer explicit and implicit questions orally and in writing

1.16 Students use information from reading to increase vocabulary

2.1 Students demonstrate techniques for effective conversations and small group discussions

2.2 Students communicate effectively by sharing ideas; offering advice, opinion, and information; and reacting to contributions of others

2.10 Students write using a variety of sentence structures

4.4 Students predict and draw conclusions

Social Studies/Civics Standards K-4
1.1 Students identify a constitution as a framework for government

1.2 Students explain why the power of a government should be limited

1.3 Students give examples of rights protected by a constitution

1.4 Students explain responsibilities for self, other individuals, property, rule of law, and civic responsibility

2.3 Students recognize the need for rules and the consequences of breaking rules and laws

5.4 ...students create a graphic representation of a governmental concept

Visual Art
1.2 Students use brainstorming as a means to generate ideas for works of art

2.1 Students recognize and apply the elements of art and expressive qualities

3.1 Students draw using a variety of materials, tools, techniques, technologies and processes

3.6 Students construct a collage using a variety of materials, tools, and techniques

Democratic Skills and Dispositions (from First Amendment Schools' "Core Civic Habits")
- Students take responsibility for self and others
- Students demonstrate knowledge of democratic principles, human rights and social justice
- Students listen and observe deeply, and respond in a connected way
- Students agree and disagree honestly and respectfully

Instructional Strategies/Activities
- Students review Privacy Rights handout (includes text and graphics related to privacy rights, constitutional amendments...)
- Pairs discuss, then whole group discussion (Questions written on chart paper; meet in group area) Discussion Qs:
  - What are rights? (Powers or privileges granted by an agreement or law)
  - What rights do we have to privacy? (Constitution/Bill of Rights Amendments 3,4 & 5 – emphasize 4; UNICEF, United Nation's Children's Fund statement on children's right to privacy; Privacy Act of 1974)
  - Why is privacy not an absolute right in the United States?
  - What do we mean by the scope and limits of privacy?
- Explain that we are going to make representations using cut paper and will make our pieces in the style of Jacob Lawrence (previously studied Lawrence's work and concept of "series")
- Students determine what concept(s) related to privacy they will represent – privacy rights, 4th Amendment to the Constitution, UNICEF privacy rights for children; scope and/or limits of privacy...
- Students write this as a title on provided planning sheet
- Students sketch on planning paper to plan their cut paper pieces
- Students work on art pieces
- Students complete written artist statements to accompany work describing and interpreting their individual artwork
- Writing and artwork shared and displayed

Assessment
- Student art pieces, artist statements, and interactions will be assessed using Privacy Rights Rubric.
- Students will complete rubrics as self-assessment. Teachers will also evaluate student art, writing and interactions using same rubric. Rubric categories: Sentence Structure and Fluency; Grammar and Spelling; Collaboration; Artwork

Above is the beginning of the framework for a lesson titled "Privacy Rights"

We utilized a detailed lesson-planning format so our lesson plans and framework could be shared and used by other teachers across the district (and beyond). In doing so, we are hoping to promote the sharing of art integrated, standards aligned plans on a broader scale among teachers. Arts integrated planning takes time, so developing a bank of shared plans will allow teachers to widely benefit from each other's planning efforts. A number of excellent websites already serve as sources and/or starting points for arts integrated lessons and units (e.g., the Kennedy Center's Artsedge, http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/; Incredible Art Lessons, http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/lessons.html; or Arizona State's Artswork site, http://artswork.asu.edu/). We hope sharing our contextualized planning process

and framework proves valuable to other educators seeking to better integrate the arts with other core subject area curricula while simultaneously pursuing broader, more democratic outcomes for students. We intentionally used simple processes and inexpensive materials so that these lessons and the general template can be accessed and used by a wide range of teachers.

Student learning was evaluated through multiple assessment methodologies. First, students' prior knowledge was assessed before the unit and before each lesson via whole and small group discussions of predetermined prompts/questions aligned with desired learning outcomes. Students' work products for each lesson were evaluated via rubrics designed specifically for each assignment/project. These rubrics were used by students as self-assessment instruments and by the teachers for formal evaluation of student work. Stu-

dents were also evaluated informally in small and whole group interactions with peers and teachers. Additionally, unit aims were assessed through a series of focus group interviews with all students in the studied class.

Lesson Examples

The unit involved a series of lessons extending over an entire semester. In this article, we present summaries of four arts integrated lessons: *Defining and Interpreting Privacy; Privacy Rights; Poems about Privacy;* and *Critiquing Privacy Images.* All of these lessons were explicitly designed to meet multiple district social studies, visual art, and language arts standards and benchmarks. In addition to the formal district standards, we also targeted a series of democratic skills and dispositions including taking responsibility for self and others; demonstrating knowledge of democratic

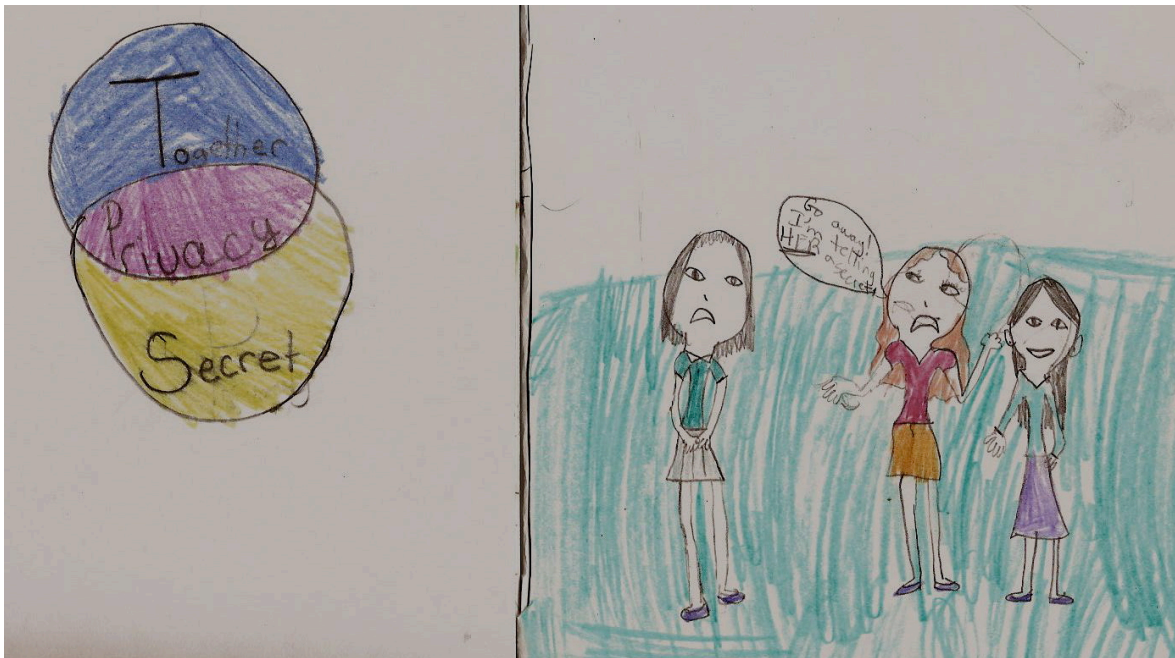Figure1. Excerpt from "Privacy Journal" (Student journal, 1/17/08)

Figure 2. Excerpt from "Privacy Journal" (Student journal, 1/17/08)

principles, human rights and social justice; practicing critical reflection; agreeing and disagreeing honestly and respectfully; and demonstrating integrity, persistence, and self-discipline.

Defining and interpreting privacy. In this lesson, we gathered baseline information on students' initial understandings of key unit concepts. We asked students to share their individual definitions and interpretations of privacy, engaged them in brainstorming and identification of examples and non-examples of privacy they encounter in their own lives, had students explain their perceptions about the importance of privacy, brainstormed ways people try to obtain/maintain privacy, and involved students in recording their ideas, narratives, and symbolic thinking related to "privacy in a democracy" concepts.

After opening whole group and paired student discussions around a set of key questions, students were paired randomly to review and discuss four short case scenarios that raised ethical dilemmas associated with privacy, including a scenario about privacy in desks, one on telephone conversations, another about searching book bags, and a situation about note writing. Stu-

dents then constructed simple journals and responded to a series of prompts that engaged them in multimodal writing, drawing, symbolizing and analysis connected to the unit's theme. Students shared ideas recorded in their journals within their table groups and then shared across the whole class during a gallery walk in which students could leisurely view and discuss each other's journal responses, drawings, writing, and brainstorming. Students later shared their journals and other unit learning with their parents (see figures 1 & 2 for sample journal pages). Student journals and interactions were assessed using a rubric we developed to evaluate targeted benchmarks.

Privacy rights lesson. In this lesson, students explored rights to privacy, learned about the scope and limits of privacy, and discussed why privacy is not an absolute right. Students identified and interpreted documents that grant/affirm privacy rights, including the Constitution/Bill of Rights Amendments 3,4, and 5; the United Nation's Children's Fund statement on children's right to privacy; and the Privacy Act of 1974. Students discussed and debated scenarios in which privacy rights issues were pertinent.

Key questions that guided this lesson included: What are rights? What rights do we have to privacy? Why is privacy not an absolute right in the United States? What do we mean by the scope and limits of privacy? And, how can we create representations (cut paper) that illustrate our understandings and ideas about privacy rights?

To document and display their understandings of privacy rights, students were asked to brainstorm and then select a theme or topic related to privacy to illustrate. Students planned their compositions using a simple planning sheet that asked them to first identify the topic or theme they planned to address in their artwork, and then to draft a sketch of their composition. Students then created artistic representations using cut and torn colored paper in a Jacob Lawrence like series (multiple pieces on a selected theme, individual, or topic). Finally, students wrote artists' statements to accompany their artwork.

Student art pieces, artist statements, and interactions were assessed using a Privacy Rights rubric to evaluate targeted benchmarks, skills and dispositions. Students completed this, and all other lesson rubrics as self-assessment. Students' artwork and statements documented their increas-

Figure 3. Fourth grader's cut paper artwork illustrating privacy rights concepts.
"My artwork is about someone trying to steal privacy from someone else. My message is that you don't
always have absolute privacy." (Student artwork and artist's statement, 2/22/08)

ing understandings of unit concepts related to rights generally, and privacy related rights specifically. Further, students' work products illustrated their ability to *apply* privacy and privacy rights related concepts. Examples of student representations and writing are provided in Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Critiquing privacy images. In this lesson, students engaged in oral and written art criticism activities using an assembled series of artwork, political cartoons, historical depictions/advertisements, and other popular/visual cultural images related to the privacy in a democracy theme. We researched a variety of artists and websites to build this image gallery. Artists working with privacy concepts include Wendy Richmond, Scorsone and Dreuding, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, and Michelle Teran. Students were introduced to an art criticism framework that focused

on description and interpretation, and then applied this framework in whole group discussions and then in writing to images they were provided randomly. The students presented their critiques orally, and then the critiques and images were bound into a collected volume. The following excerpt from a student's critique illustrates the student's application of both descriptive and interpretive frameworks: "This image makes me feel sad. It looks like someone is in jail because you can see the bars reflected off the lock. It seems like the lock is being used to isolate someone, to take away their right to privacy" (Student written critique, 3/13/08).

Poems about privacy. In this final lesson, the class discussed, reviewed, and synthesized multiple concepts addressed throughout the privacy in a democracy unit. Students utilized the writing process to create poems

that address privacy in a democracy unit topics and concepts. Students accompanied poems with illustrations. Having studied a variety of poetry forms, students selected poetry forms and topics connected to the unit and wrote and shared poems with the class. Students wrote free verse, limerick, rhyming, haiku, narrative, humorous, shape, and concrete poems. Poem topics included: types of privacy, secrecy, security, rights, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights (Third Amendment, Fourth Amendment, and Fifth Amendment), scope and limits of privacy, and absolute privacy. Sample poems (included below) documented students' understandings and synthesis of key unit concepts. Additionally, most students' poems connected unit learning to their personal lives and experiences.

Figure 4. Fourth grader's cut paper artwork illustrating privacy rights concepts.
"In my artwork, two soldiers are requesting to get into a man's house. The man refuses because his house is private property. My artwork refers to the Third Amendment to the Constitution which prohibits housing soldiers in private homes." (Student artwork and artist's statement, 2/22/08)

Samples from Fourth Grade Students' Privacy Poems:

THE SECRET TALK

> Shutting all the doors
> While telling each other secrets
> No one else can hear us, we're
> Whispering
> Gossiping
> Telling
> With a secret handshake
> We end our conversation
> (Student poem, 4/25/09)

CALLER ID

> Caller ID gives me privacy
> When someone calls,
> I can talk to them or ignore them
> I like this privacy
> I don't HAVE to answer the phone!
> (Student poem, 4/25/09)

THE THREE TYPES OF PRIVACY

> The three types of privacy happen to be
> Information privacy such as passwords, files, codes and more,
> So many secret things to adore!
> Next is behavior privacy
> Such as secret handshakes, whispering and closing the door
> Last but not least, observation privacy
> An example of this is not being seen
> When one wishes not to be seen
> (Student poem, 4/25/09)

ACTION RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research evidence (student work samples/data, field notes, teacher journals and debriefing, and focus group interviews) documents students' understandings of key unit concepts, district benchmarks, and targeted skills and dispositions in all targeted areas (social studies, art, language arts, and civic habits). As teachers, we derived deeper understandings that will guide future teaching, planning and collaboration. All participants agreed the unit was enjoyable, but this study also illustrates that both students and teacher researchers were engaged at high levels and learned a great deal through participation.

Conclusions "tell the reader what you learned" (Meyers & Rust, 2003). We identified 13 specific conclusions, called "findings," and discuss each below. These findings respond directly to our targeted research questions, and so these questions are used to organize our discussion of inquiry results. Implications and recommendations are discussed in the final section of this article.

Figure 5. Fourth grader's cut paper artwork illustrating privacy rights concepts.
"My artwork is about having information privacy. My artwork represents a person texting on the phone to another person. The phone represents a way to have privacy and not be interfered with." (Student artwork and artist's statement, 2/22/08)

Student Learning/Outcomes

Four of our research findings relate to the question: what are the student specific impacts/outcomes of integrating visual art curricula with other academic content areas? Student learning was assessed via multiple measures: formal rubric assessment of work products and interactions, pre and post assessment of students' mastery of major unit concepts, informal assessment via observations recorded in field notes, and focus group interview questions designed to assess student learning. Findings specific to student learning/outcomes include the following:

Finding #1 - Arts integrated lessons supported student learning across all targeted content areas and benchmarks. High percentages of students met and/or exceeded benchmark proficiency levels in Art, Social Studies, and Writing. While students had cursory levels of understanding about key unit concepts at the beginning of the unit, almost all of the students scored at or above the proficient level

on all summative assessments, including rubric evaluations of student work products. This outcome is significantly higher than student performance on other, non-arts integrated work evaluated throughout the academic year. Students were able to illustrate understandings specific to many targeted concepts. For example, all students (at the completion of the unit) were able to define privacy, explain privacy rights, articulate the scope and limits of privacy, differentiate between the different kinds/forms of privacy studied (information privacy, behavior privacy, and observation privacy), and create multimodal representations related to privacy. A student's writing about an art piece illustrates a solid understanding of many unit concepts: "My artwork is about the 4th Amendment to the Constitution. My message is that the 4th Amendment to the Constitution is a good thing because it prevents people from barging into your home... whether or not you are in or out of your home, a search warrant is needed" (Student artist statement, 2/22/08).

Finding #2 - Students enjoyed the art integrated approach, experienced high levels of engagement, and also displayed a strong sense of efficacy. We closed the focus group interviews by asking all groups, "What else would you like to share about the 'Privacy in a Democracy' unit?" Participants in all eight groups' responses included telling us how much they liked the unit lessons and activities. One student summarized the comments of many, saying, "I liked learning with art. It was fun, but it was also challenging. It was fun and challenging all at the same time" (Focus group interview, 5/9/08). Additionally, our field notes indicated a high level of engagement in all unit activities. Classroom management/discipline problems were non-existent. In fact, our only management problem was having enough time, as students wanted to continue to work on unit projects even after the allotted time had expired. Finally, students displayed a strong sense of efficacy in engaging unit concepts and assignments. Many students wrote
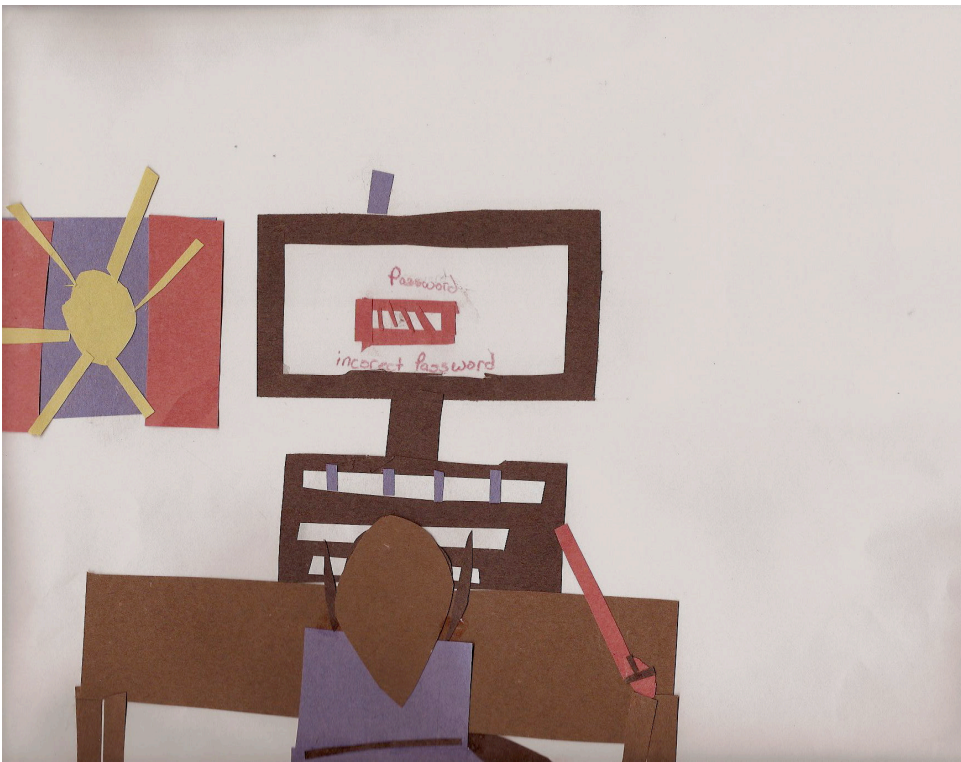
Figure 6. Fourth grader's cut paper artwork illustrating privacy rights concepts.

"My artwork is about a girl trying to figure out someone's password on the computer. Every time the girl tries to crack the password, it is always incorrect. As an artist, I am trying to show that a way you can protect your privacy on the computer is by having a password. This is shown in my artwork." (Student artwork and artist's statement, 2/22/08)

and talked about the challenges associated with visual expression of conceptual ideas but also wrote that they were pleased with the results of their efforts. One student said, "This project made us think in different ways. That was good. Sometimes it was hard, like when we were making the cut-paper artwork. It was like drawing with scissors, but when you finish, you're proud of it" (Focus group interview, 5/9/08).

Finding #3 - Student comments, writing, and work samples illustrated a solid commitment to human and legal rights and democratic skills and dispositions that were explored during the unit. Prior to the unit, most students weren't even aware of the existence of human and legal rights related to privacy (field notes from whole class discussion, 1/16/08), and yet they ended the unit of study committed to exercising and protecting these studied privileges: "I learned that be-

cause of the Fourth Amendment, I can say no to search of my house, and that I won't get in trouble" (Focus group interview, 5/9/09). A number of student art pieces illustrated citizens saying "no" to illegal search and seizure (Fourth Amendment) and "no" to demands to house soldiers in homes during peace time (Third Amendment). "Everyone," claimed a student, "has a right to some privacy, even kids" (Focus group interview, 5/9/08). Further, students discussed (in writings and in focus groups) the positive nature of the collaboration and sharing/debate that was a part of many lessons. A number of statements were similar to a student that remarked, "I'm glad we had the chance to help each other and talk about these ideas. It was good to hear how other people felt about things. It helped me understand the lessons better" (Focus group interview, 5/9/08). A student referencing the art projects said, "my artwork was better, because my classmates helped me think about

my designs" (Focus group interview, 5/9/08). Connected to this finding is our belief that aims outside the formal curriculum, in our case the acquisition of specific democratic skills and dispositions, can be achieved when they are identified and pursued alongside more traditional academic aims.

Finding #4 - Students demonstrated a high degree of transferability of unit learning. In other words, they readily related the concepts studied in the unit to their own lives and changed some practices/behaviors as a result. Students were articulate in describing how concepts related to privacy were present in their individual contexts. For example, this is the first year these 4th graders are allowed to have their own lockers, and so lockers and privacy were an ongoing topic of debate and discussion "My locker is a good way to keep things private. Even if there isn't a lock on it, people should respect my privacy"

Figure 7. Fourth grader's cut paper artwork illustrating privacy rights concepts.

"This artwork is about two kids. One is trying to keep her privacy by keeping her locker secret. The boy wants to see the girl's locker, but he can't because there is a lock on it... you need to respect others' privacy, unless they allow you to look in their locker." (Student artwork and artist's statement, 2/22/08).

(Student artist statement, 2/22/08). Students also understood and related to the many complex privacy issues associated with technology. Students had ongoing discussions about privacy issues associated with text messaging, computer passwords, and surveillance cameras. One student noted, "I like text messaging. Text messaging is a great way to communicate privately" (Student artist statement, 2/22/08), but another claimed, "people think text messaging is always private, but that's not always true. People can sometimes get your text messages or can even get your phone and see all your texts" (Focus group interview, 5/9/09). A number of students created artwork and poems that focused on computers and privacy. One student asserted, "you do not have absolute privacy on a computer, but when you use a password, it makes it much harder for people to invade your privacy" (Student artist statement, 2/22/08).

A student with multiple siblings claimed, "it's important for people to have privacy at times, but it is hard for me. Even if I am in my room, my brothers and sisters are always barging in!" (Focus group interview, 5/9/09). Another student discussed her family's attempts to gain privacy: "We keep privacy by having a fence and by closing the window shades" (Student artist statement, 2/22/08). Overwhelmingly, data showed that students increased their understandings of privacy concepts and, as a result, felt strongly about having and protecting privacy for themselves and others.

Art Integration: Teacher Learning

In addition to the documented student learning outlined above, as co-teachers/co-researchers in this project, we also claim new understandings that resulted from our facilitation/participation. Teacher learning was identified through the analysis of research journals/field notes, and via collaborative planning and reflective debriefing discussions. The six findings discussed below correspond with the research question: What approaches, strategies and practices, support the implementation of arts integrated curricula?

Finding #5 - The use of easily obtained materials and simple art making processes makes arts integration more feasible and also allows for a greater number of teachers to utilize these same or similar lesson plans. We intentionally used inexpensive materials and tools that can be accessed in most U.S. elementary schools – scissors, glue sticks, copy and construction paper, crayons, colored pencils and markers. As public school teachers we are accustomed to small (or non-existent) budgets and improvising with materials. Still, the use of a variety of basic art materials in this unit allowed students a wide range of opportunities to express their ideas creatively via a variety of modes. Many students commented on the positive nature of being able to display their understandings in visual, symbolic ways (Focus group interviews, 5/9/08).

Additionally, the use of inexpensive, accessible materials cuts down on the amount of preparation time needed and enables other teachers to use these lessons in their classrooms without spending huge amounts of time and money tracking down specialized supplies (Reflective discussions, 4/25/08 & 8/14/08). We were asked to share/present our integrated unit with all new teachers in the district. As a result, the district Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator informed us that teachers across the district are using these same lessons in their classrooms and further, that teachers are now utilizing our process and format and are adding to the bank of lesson/unit plans aligned with district standards (Field notes, 8/14/08 & 10/31/08).

Finding #6 - Systematic documentation served many purposes including: formative assessment, provision of research data and artifacts, and evidence of student learning. We copied, organized, and kept documentation of everything. Lesson plans, student journals, student art, student writing, photographs and scans of student art and in-class activities, videotapes of discussions and interviews, district curricular materials, and field notes/research journals were all organized in large binders that served as invaluable resources for teaching, assessment, and research. We each had similar notes on this topic: "collecting, copying and organizing all this stuff has been tremendously time consuming, but now that it's done, it's all so accessible. I shared our project with a colleague this week, and it was so easy to explain using the documentation we've put together" (Field notes/researcher journal, 5/13/09). This systematic documentation served as formative assessment, supported data analysis and validated student learning. Collaborative review and assessment of student work allowed us to modify lessons and assignments as the unit unfolded (Field notes/researcher journal, 3/13/09). Organized documentation facilitated the process of data analysis as we worked to respond to our guiding research questions (Reflective discussion & field

notes, 5/13/08). Finally, these multiple forms of documentation clearly illustrate students' learning, understandings and interpretations (Student artwork, photographs, critiques, poems, and focus group interviews).

Finding #7 - Arts integrated education can be facilitated by "regular" classroom teachers without extensive art skills or background. Both of us are trained as elementary teachers and principals, and neither of us has had much formal art training. What we do have is a common core belief in the power of the arts generally, and in this project visual art specifically, to enrich the curriculum, engage students, and support divergent, higher order thinking and problem solving (Field notes/researcher journal, 1/10/08 & 5/9/08). Thanks to the Internet, resources for art integration are plentiful and easily accessible. For example, simple Google searches yielded artists and images that address concepts related to privacy in a democracy (Field notes, 3/10/08). Information about the artists and electronic copies of images were readily downloaded into PowerPoint files that we were able to use with the students in multiple unit activities including the art criticism lessons. Also, for prominent artists like Jacob Lawrence, used in this unit to introduce the concepts of an artwork "series" and "art that makes political commentary," not only high quality images are available, but also lesson plans and activity ideas are also simply accessed for use or adaptation. One of us, at the conclusion of the unit, wrote, "I think we were able to achieve the 'co-equal' integration we were seeking in this unit. We documented student attainment of benchmarks in art and in the other targeted areas. While we were apprehensive at first about whether or not we could do justice to the 'art' parts of these lessons, in the end, we seemed to be able to find the information and resources we needed to support the students' learning across all content areas" (Field notes, 5/10/08).

Finding #8 - Collaboration between K-12 and teacher education faculty is a win-win situation

for all involved parties and is an underutilized practice. Both of us agree this collaboration served us as high quality professional development. We also agree that, in partnership, we were able to provide rich experiences and unique learning opportunities for the students. For Allen (teacher educator), the opportunity to spend extensive time co-teaching in an elementary classroom provided valuable, real world experiences that have directly impacted the curriculum and assessments used in his teacher education courses. Teacher educators typically spend too little time working in K-12 classrooms. K-12 teachers are the real experts in their classrooms, and acknowledging and learning from this expertise is priceless. We both laugh about the first time Allen presented a lesson in a collaborative planning session, planned for an hour and a half. "This," Jorge-Ayn (4th grade teacher) commented, "will take about three times that long to do with my kids!" (field notes, 1/10/09). For Jorge-Ayn, the opportunity to engage in a collaborative action research project proved valuable. As a current doctoral student, she benefited from working through all phases of the research process with someone who has engaged in the process for the last 15 years. Ironically, as valuable as we both viewed the collaborative process, collaborations of this sort are still the exception rather than the rule. We have each asked our colleagues if they have engaged in similar partnerships and usually find this has not been the case, even with veteran teachers and teacher educators. A comment from Allen's field notes/journal (4/25/08) corroborates this finding: "I realize each time I'm in the classroom how valuable the experience is. I observe and participate and always learn things that I take back to my teacher education classes. I am constantly reflecting on how our theoretical knowledge is translated into practice. I also realize that the practice of collaboration between teachers and teacher educators should be used much more extensively. For me, this is the ultimate professional development."

Finding #9 – Administrative support for integrated teaching

and learning is essential. The building principals were tremendously helpful throughout the process. Both the principal and assistant principal assisted us in brainstorming ideas, orchestrating the project, and sharing the results with parents and community members. Both agreed that this integrated approach bolstered student learning in multiple, meaningful ways. Both also advocated for our sharing of the project inside and outside the school so that others could hear about the powerful impact of arts integrated teaching and learning. Without this administrative backing, this project would have been difficult, if not impossible, to execute. We talked about administrative support throughout the project. Initially, we informed the principals of our intentions to make sure, they "were on board." As the project unfolded, administrators came into the classroom when they knew we were working on the project. They were excited to see the high levels of student engagement. Further, they created opportunities for us to share about the project with others. On multiple occasions, we were asked to summarize the unit and share student work examples with district administrators, parents of prospective students, and other adults visiting the building (field notes/research journal, 1/10/08; 2/22/08; 4/25/08).

Finding #10 - There are always some drawbacks and challenges associated with collaborative work. Our project was no exception. Despite our efforts to use simple materials, plan ahead, communicate and trade planning and research documents via e-mail, stay well-organized, etc. time is still a factor. Finding time for extensive collaborative planning and research activities is difficult (field notes/research journal 3/13/08). K-12 teachers teach significantly more hours per week than do teacher educators and are responsible for numerous formative and summative mandated assessments. Alternatively, teacher educators typically have a wide range of responsibilities in addition to teaching courses – advising graduate and undergraduate students, research and publication, service, and administra-

tive responsibilities all complicate the schedules of higher education faculty. We also must admit that planning and teaching innovative lessons and assessments takes longer than using lessons already designed in extant curricular materials. One of us noted (field notes/research journal, 4/23/08), "this unit is meeting or exceeding our expectations, but we're also exceeding the amount of time we anticipated it would take to put this together. Teaching like this is hard work." Still, as we were committed to the success of the project, we found the time needed (including some long evenings) and believe the resultant learning was worth the effort.

Additionally, K-12 teachers are constantly dealing with problems associated with curricular coverage. The typical U.S. school district curriculum is immense. Just covering and assessing curricular goals in multiple subject areas is a huge challenge. Many other countries address far fewer learning aims. Teaching strategies that allow students to construct their own conceptions of the world take quite a bit of time, a precious commodity in all educational settings.

Finally, the representation of understandings in visual, poetic, multimodal, and other non-traditional ways presents assessment challenges for teachers, and so it becomes necessary to develop unique evaluation instruments and processes. "We quickly realized that we'd have to create our own assessments for these lessons and projects. "The projects are idiosyncratic and integrate benchmarks from multiple content areas, and so creating rubrics aligned with learning aims will help us assess student work and will also help students understand our expectations" (field notes/researcher journal, 2/23/08). These and other challenges are real and should not be discounted, however, we believe the results warrant the effort to overcome the obstacles. Our belief is that as teachers do more integrated teaching and students engage more frequently in integrated learning experiences, these challenges will increasingly be minimized.

Art Integration in Practice

We ended this unit with a clearer picture of quality art integrated teaching and learning. The following findings respond to the final research question: What does quality art integrated education (in elementary classrooms) look like?

Finding #11 - Quality art integrated education is directly aligned with standards from multiple content areas and is assessed via multiple measures. In our current context, attending to district and state curricula/standards/benchmarks is not an option. We found the targeted district benchmarks helpful in guiding our planning and assessment. Data confirmed that attending to benchmarks in art and other targeted curricular areas allowed us to achieve the co-equal status we seek for our arts integrated teaching (field notes/research journal, 5/10/08). In fact, we were pleasantly surprised to see how many benchmarks were actually addressed and assessed in the context of these integrated lessons.

Students also demonstrated skills and understandings aligned with the democratic skills and dispositions we highlighted in the unit. While these "standards" fall outside the formal district/state objectives, we affirm their importance for students' growth as participatory, democratic citizens. Students' artwork, writing, statements, and interactions demonstrated their evolving knowledge of democratic principles and human rights and their abilities to practice skills such as listening, examining multiple perspectives, responding in connected ways, and agreeing and disagreeing in honest and respectful ways (Student artwork, 1/17/08 & 2/22/08; Student critiques and poems, 3/13/08 & 4/25/08; Field notes/research journals, 3/13/08 & 4/25/08, and Focus group interviews, 5/9/08).

We also appreciated the fact that we were able to provide a variety of activities that allowed us to assess students in multiple forms (writing in the form of critiques, artist statements, and poems; visual art projects; symbols; interviews; whole and small group dis-

cussions; and informal presentations). This practice provided a wider range of opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency specific to the unit aims (reflective discussion, 5/9/08).

Finding #12 - Quality art integrated education is interactive and deliberately includes multiple perspectives on studied topics. We found the interactive nature of this unit –- students in ongoing discussion and collaboration, collaborative teacher planning/teaching/research, student creation of representations in multiple forms, and deliberate presentation/exploration of multiple views on studied concepts and topics –- supported high levels of engagement for students and teachers alike. We were all excited when it was time for unit lessons. Participants in all lessons were eager to share, discuss and debate contrasting views.

Interpreting art images, case scenarios, and events and issues in students' lives related to the privacy unit theme provided ongoing opportunities to shape, present, analyze, and counter practical arguments. For example, in a critique/discussion of a privacy related image (Student discussion responses, 3/13/08), one student asserted, "There are people building a house to get privacy." Another, however, provided a different interpretation: "No, they are actually taking the house apart. There are little men building a fence around the people who do not know what is happening, but the fence is being built with wood they are pulling off the house. These men are taking away these people's privacy without asking." Another student refined and added to this interpretation: "Yeah, and they are doing it for security. It says 'security' on the fence." The first student then stated, "OK, I think you are right. They are taking the house apart for security." This exchange is one among many anecdotes we recorded that illustrated the students' willingness to hear others' arguments and allow these to influence their own opinions and ideas.

Finding #13 - Quality art integrated education includes connected opportunities for artmak-ing, criticism, and writing. The art integrated approach allowed for student creativity, but our framework also kept students focused on the unit's learning goals. Students were proud to share their various unit work products and appreciated the varied opportunities to represent their ideas about a topic in many different, multimodal forms. In doing so, they furthered their knowledge and skills in the individual content areas, and, more importantly, they made connections across these content areas to generate deeper, more complex understandings. For example, the student's poem included below documents the use of targeted social studies vocabulary (personal privacy, information privacy) and creative language. However, the poem also documents integrated understandings that apply these new lessons to personal preferences and experiences in the lines "Cell phone messages/Your stuff/Privacy, to get and keep privacy/That's what I want."

PRIVACY, THE WORD THAT SAYS IT ALL

> Privacy, the word that says it all
> Personal
> Room
> Information
> Very secret
> Addresses
> Cell phone messages
> Your stuff
> Privacy, to get and keep privacy
> That's what I want
> (Student poem, 4/25/08)

Our deliberate attempt to integrate objectives from multiple content areas involved allowing students space to be creative but within a framework that focused their learning on unit concepts. So when we asked students to create artistic representations, they were representations specific to targeted ideas and concepts. For us, this approach provided a nice balance between open-ended exploration and overly prescriptive assignments that do not allow for individual interpretation.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

A variety of implications and recommendations flow from the findings articulated above. Our results prompt us to call for **increased emphasis on integrated curricula** in both K-12 and teacher education. Standardization, including the prominence of standardized testing in mathematics and language arts in the U.S. (driven by NCLB mandates), has caused us to isolate subject areas in artificial ways. This tendency has hindered efforts to provide meaningful, interdisciplinary teaching and learning opportunities.

For integrated/interdisciplinary teaching and learning to claim a more prominent place in our educational institutions, **we believe that increased professional development will be required for educators at all levels.** Recently, professional development in school districts and education colleges has diminished the importance of interdisciplinarity, when previously (in the 1980s and 90s for example) integrated teaching and learning enjoyed a place of greater prominence. We call for a renewed focus on interdisciplinary educational experiences, specifically in the form of co-equal arts integration. As noted above, this change in the direction of professional development will require administrative support.

Clearly, our inclusion of multiple ways for students to create and display their knowledge in this integrated unit enabled them to construct deeper understandings and facilitated a larger percentage of students achieving proficient levels of performance. **We, therefore, recommend the regular practice of providing students multimodal forms with which to explore and demonstrate their knowledge, skills and dispositions.**

Finally, **we want to emphasize our advocacy for "re-placing" visual art in a central, connected, more prominent role in schools and classrooms. Quality art integrated education should be an educational right for all students, not just for the wealthy, White, or otherwise privileged.** We earlier referenced research that documents that poor children have fewer opportunities to engage the arts, and when these opportunities are available, these children receive lower quality forms

of art integrated education. This is a social justice issue, and the continuation of these inequitable practices is in stark contrast with democratic aims, NCLB's primary goal, and even defies the intent of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. Our research presented here and our experiences as educators spanning decades of practice confirm our core belief that ALL children can benefit in rich ways from engaging the arts and connecting related learning to their lives in and outside school. We call for increased high quality art integrated educational opportunities for all children, especially children in urban and socio-economically low schools. To do otherwise will continue to exacerbate already unacceptable educational disparities.

Our contemporary societal contexts are highly visual and multimodal and thus require constant processing and interpretation of visual information and stimuli. To deny students regular opportunities to both analyze and create representations in a variety of modes does them a disservice. Our collaborative efforts described in this article have bolstered our beliefs in the power of art integrated teaching and learning. We do not profess to have all the answers but instead provide our account as one step in our journey to better serve students by "re-placing" art centrally in the elementary school curriculum. We hope others join us in sharing and building a knowledge base supportive of co-equal arts integration.

Allen Trent is currently the Chairperson of the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Wyoming. As an elementary teacher, he taught 1st, 4th, and 6th grades in urban schools in Ohio. His teaching and research interests include the arts in education; integrated curricula; action research; and democratic, culturally responsive teaching. He has published work in a variety of professional journals, including *Equity and Excellence*; *Art Education*; *Teacher Education Quarterly*; *Qualitative Inquiry*; and *Democracy & Education*.

Jorge–Ayn Riley is currently teaching fourth grade in Denver Public Schools and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Colorado. She served as a principal for 16 years in the Denver, Colorado area before returning to the elementary classroom. Her research interests include student diversity and school success, art integrated education, and school university partnerships.

REFERENCES

Academic Atrophy: The Condition of the Liberal Arts in America's Public Schools. (2004). Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education.

Arends, R.I. (2009). *Learning to teach*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Arts and Education: New Opportunities for Research. (2004). Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.

Barber, B. (1997). Public schooling: Education for democracy. In J.I. Goodlad & T.J. McMannon (Eds.), *The public purpose of education and schooling*. San Francisco: Josey Bass.

Center for Collaborative Action Research. *Understanding action research*. Retrieved 10/9/09 from http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar/define.html.

Critical links: Learning in the arts and student academic and social development. (2003). R. Deasy (Ed). Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.

Dean, J. (2002). Aesthetic and ethics: The state of the art. *American Society for Ethics Newsletter, 22(2)*, 1-4.

Eisner, E. (2002). *The Arts and the creation of mind*. New York: Yale University Press.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldwork*. The Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Hetland, L., Winner, E., Veenema, S., Sheridan, K., Perkins, D.N. (2007). *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Arts Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Jaeger, E. (2006). Silencing teachers in an era of scripted reading. *Rethinking Schools*, 20(3), 39-41.

Keatinge, M.W. (1967). *The great didactic of John Amos Comenius*. New York: Russell and Russell.

Leshnoff, S. K. (2003). Teaching art, moral conduct, & John Dewey for today. *Art Education, November,* 33-39.

Meyers, E. & Rust, F. (2003). *Taking action with teacher research*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Mills, G.E. (2007). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Mirón, L. F. (2003). Cognitive transfer and art education: A critique. *Arts Education Policy Review, 104(3)*, 29-31.

Mishook, J. J. & Kornhaber, M. L. (2006). Arts integration in an era of accountability. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 107(4), 3-11.

Phillips, L. C. (2003). Nurturing empathy. *Art Education, July,* 45-50.

Silvers, A. (2003). Missing links: On studying the connection of arts education to the public good. *Arts Education Policy Review, 104(3)*, 21-23.

Vincent, J. (2005). Multimodal literacies in the school curriculum: an urgent matter of equity. (Retrieved - http://www.formatex.org/micte2005/29.pdf)