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A Case Study Investigating How Art Education Fosters Collaboration in an Urban Environment Through the Lens of Public Pedagogy

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Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Art Education

Masters Project in Art Education

A Case Study Investigating How Art Education Fosters Collaboration in an
Urban Environment Through the Lens of Public Pedagogy

by

Tracy Giblin Fox

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science in Education

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Dr. Shirley Hayes
Project Advisor

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Abstract:

This case study examines how one particular after-school arts program in an urban environment bridges the gap between a university campus and the community it serves, creating opportunities for collaboration via the arts. The study was conducted at a community center run by Buffalo State.

Over the course of the study, ten interviews were conducted with a variety of people connected to the Community Arts Center's (CAC) arts programs, including partners in the public arts initiative. The data was collected and analyzed over the course of eight weeks through the lens of Henry Giroux's public pedagogy, which focuses on educational processes outside of school walls. My goal was to learn more about how the arts program fostered collaboration, and how it functioned to provide free arts programming to neighborhood children. I collected data primarily through interviews, but also through observations, questionnaires, and documents. After collecting data, I spent a great deal of time reading through, coding, and grouping by the themes that emerged.

Among the findings were: the asset of a diverse community, the freedom of art outside of school, the success of Grant Street Global Voices, reciprocity between campus and community, and how to build strong partnerships. The findings represent a broad range of the possibilities that occur when looking at a community's offerings through an assets-based model rather than a deficit model. They showed that with the power of communication and the inclusion of people at a grass-roots level, arts programming can act as a springboard for growth in community services and in partnerships, creating a network of support.

Problem Statement:

I have not found much research on how a visual arts program in an urban environment can promote a sense of community through collaboration.

Tracy Gidlin Fox

Location:

After-School & Community Arts Programming in a Mid-Sized City

Connections - ROL:

Challenge of Poverty in Urban Environments; the Promise of After-School Programs; Public Pedagogy; What the Arts Can Do; Collaboration & Community



Central Question: How can an after-school visual arts program foster collaboration in an urban environment?

Sub-Questions:

- How can an after-school visual arts program foster collaboration in an urban community?
- How can after-school programming in visual arts promote a sense of community?
- What role does diversity play in an after-school program in an urban community?
- What are the rewards and challenges for maintaining the visual art programming?
- What role do the art teachers play in the after-school visual arts program?
- What role do the stakeholders play in the after-school visual arts program?
- What can I learn about the impact of the visual arts from studying this alternative site?

Research Findings:

- Embracing Diversity
- The Freedom of Art Outside of School
- The Success of Grant Street Global Voices
- Reciprocity: Service Learning
- How to Build Strong Partnerships

Chapter 1: Introduction

The assumption of being an individual is our greatest limitation.

-Pir Vilayat Khan

Background

As a starting point for this research project, I relate the story of my involvement with an alternative site for educational and community-related programming and express my passion for more egalitarian ways of viewing education, particularly through the arts. Last year, I began working as a volunteer at an after school art program. One day a week, another volunteer teacher and I set up class at the Community Academic Center (CAC), an organization founded by Buffalo State on the community's West Side. When I was first hired, I knew very little about the CAC, other than it housed the after-school visual arts program at which I would be a co-teacher. I knew we would be teaching art, and assumed it would be much like a classroom, only in a different building.

Over the course of my first few weeks, I saw a few glimpses into the scope of what the CAC was working towards. According to the CAC's mission statement, their goal is to provide "cradle-to-career" programming for all ages, supporting youth and families on the city's West Side through language courses, after-school programs, and more. The visual arts program is merely one component of what the CAC offers. The CAC recognizes that success of children is dependent on viable social and economic infrastructure, and also supports neighborhood revitalization efforts, working alongside local schools, small business owners, and city government, among others; it is staffed largely through volunteer efforts. At the core of the center's mission is collaboration with

community-based organizations in order to meet the needs of the families that inhabit the neighborhood, many of whom are refugees and new to the country.

The scope of the visual arts program was much broader than my original assumption. One of our first meetings was with the leaders of Young Audiences of Western New York, the CAC's major partner in running the Grant Street Global Voices (GSGV) public arts initiative. Buffalo State, through the CAC, had worked with Young Audiences of WNY to obtain a grant entitled "The Immigrant Experience: Yesterday and Today," designed to promote art experiences that would share the stories of the diverse community living on the city's West Side. No longer were we just teaching art within an isolated environment; now, we were part of a larger community effort. The mission of Young Audiences of Western New York is to make the arts part of young people's lives. While they work primarily with teaching artists schools, for this particular project, the local business community would also be major partners. With this collaboration in mind, our goal in the after-school visual art program became less of a typical classroom approach to teaching and more about allowing young people to experience art in a way that would share their own stories about their lives and their community.

The collaborations being made, and the connections formed by the CAC, go beyond the typical after-school program services that Miller (2003) describes as in-school programs created to help working parents by providing extra-curricular activities, youth development programs that combat problems like drugs and violence, and educational after-school programs that are designed specifically to support academics through tutoring. While there are some elements of each of these types of programs, the CAC is different. It is an alternative site, not a school; it is open to families and people of all

ages, not just young students. Students come from all over the neighborhood, to programming that differs by the day. Alongside the visual arts program are programs geared towards science, dance, ESL, and partnerships with small businesses and local organizations to help revitalize the neighborhood. The CAC approach to programming is beyond the “academic” title in their name; the academic support they provide is not in the vein of a typical tutoring center, but rather through the kinds of programs that encourage interaction with college students, and the kinds of programs that students may not receive a lot of time for in school, like art. Always, the focus remains on the community’s needs, and working with other organizations to help meet those needs.

For me, the CAC’s approach to art education was a refreshing change of pace. Prior to my experience there, I had been working in the public school system, in both suburban and urban districts, moving from a long-term substitute position to day-to-day subbing. The cuts in arts programs in recent years due to the struggling economy, tighter budgets, and an intense focus on improving test scores in math and reading have significantly limited access to the arts in schools, particularly in urban environments already facing economic disadvantages. The stress on the system is palpable; the teachers shoulder the blame of society as more and more schools feel the threat of failing test scores. Public schools are facing a great challenge: funds are being cut from their budgets, while demands are growing exponentially to provide better results. In this climate, the arts have been dismissed as non-essential. As an art educator, these conditions gave me great cause for concern; they also gave me a determination to look for alternative ways of connecting young people to the arts.

Since the 1970s, art education has been on a decline in America. While the laws of No Child Left Behind and, more recently, Race to the Top sought to provide motivation for schools to “lower the achievement gap” and to ensure quality education for all, the results of these programs has been an increase in standardized testing, with funding attached to school performance. The pressure to overcome the odds of high-stakes testing is particularly high for city schools in economically disadvantaged areas where the schools that need the most have been receiving little in the way of help or support. The stress on the system is visible in the teachers as well as the students, who face the daunting task of finding the correct answer, as they take test after test. Education appears to have become less about preparing young people for life as citizens, and more about passing tests.

I chose to become an art teacher because what I love most is working with people, especially when that work allows students to use their imaginations. The skills art teaches can include problem solving as well as working well with others, which are all needed in future careers. Art, by its very nature, allows not only for freedom of expression, but also can help people learn about the world—past, present, and future. When it comes to making art with students, one of my favorite things to see is the way students learn as they make and fix mistakes, explore the use of different materials, and experience the joy that can be found in creating something interesting. Making art is an active process, one that does not demand right or wrong answers, but is conducive to choices made and ideas expressed.

In this city, 30% of the people live in poverty, more than double the average of 14% of the United States as a whole (“New York State Poverty Report,” 2013, p. 75); the

problems faced by students and their families living in poverty are similar to those across many communities dealing with the effects of poverty: low birth weights that lead to developmental delays, inadequate health care, lack of food, exposure to environmental pollutants, family stress (and sometimes violence), and unsafe neighborhoods (Berliner, 2003). Each of these problems has an impact on school performance, and yet expectations are raised for schools to produce higher test scores, no matter what challenges the students are facing in their lives.

There is no simple solution for the problems created by severe economic inequality. What is needed is a multi-pronged approach that addresses the needs of the community both in and out of school. In schools, there are some things that can be done to support student learning. In Dewey's *The School and Society* (1899), he recommended that schools model themselves after workshops, where young people would experience hands-on learning closely tied to real life. These kinds of experiences, he argued, inherently build character, discipline, and foster the sense of curiosity that children have about their world. Instead, it seems as though since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>), education has become more restrictive for students, focused more on testing than on these kinds of hands-on learning experiences. Dewey believed that education would be the equalizer of society, making our democracy stronger (1899). Seemingly, if we allow education to continue on the path it is on today, the inequalities will only continue to grow.

Outside of school, after-school programs provide some hope, allowing learning in a context free from sitting still and listening to teachers explain concepts they are learning merely for tests. Paulo Friere referred to this lecture-style teaching in *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed as the “banking method.” He argued that instead of creating students ready to participate in democracy, the banking method was actually a “violently oppressive” method of keeping the status quo in place. In order to learn to adapt to an ever-changing world, and thereby be empowered, students need learning experiences in which they are solving problems, communicating, and learning alongside their teachers (Friere, 1970). Schools in poor urban communities are burdened not only with facing the needs of their students but also with competitive high-stakes testing mandated by the state. As a result, these schools do not have much freedom in curriculum, or in allowing students to explore ideas the way alternative sites like after-school programs might.

I believe the CAC offers a glimpse into how these out-of-school learning opportunities might be addressed in a way that is not only sensitive to the needs of the community, but also embraces the resources at hand in this section of the city. The proximity to a college, local arts organizations, as well as, a diverse community are only a few of the assets that the CAC brought together to create the programming it offers. The arts have played a major role in the initiative to tell the story of this community. My intent for this research was to learn more about the relationship between the arts and collaboration at the CAC, and how and why it works, so that other communities, organizations, and teachers might utilize similar strategies, eliminating isolation and finding strength in numbers.

Problem Statement

The problem I am focusing on is I have not found much research on how the arts can promote collaboration in an urban environment. In order to learn more about how this type of programming functions, I plan to focus on the partnerships taking place between

the CAC's visual arts program, Young Audiences of WNY, and other community groups. Furman (2004) argues that collaboration is a vital component of democracy. Due to the economic challenges faced in this particular community, it makes sense that organizations work together pooling resources, sharing ideas, and reaching out to the community via the arts.

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant for any educational program looking to reach out to their communities to collaborate with other groups, particularly any art-focused groups. Teachers, after-school program coordinators, arts organizations, and even local businesses can benefit from collaboration as they work together to meet the specific needs of their communities. My hope is to document how one particular organization reached out to assess the needs of its community, to work together through the arts with neighbors and other groups in order to meet those needs, and use the assets available to build relationships that would benefit all.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover how visual arts programming in an after-school setting fosters collaboration in an urban environment. I will be studying one particular after-school visual arts program. I would like to understand how the CAC is collaborating with their neighbors (including people, businesses, and organizations) to provide access to the arts, as it supports the needs of both the community's families, as well as their schools.

According to Miller (2001), after-school programs have shown great promise in acting as a support for schools; students who participate in after-school programs tend to

have higher test scores and a better attendance record, especially for students from low-income families. Whether the after-school program is focused on providing guided activities like art and athletics, youth development and preventing violence and drug abuse, or academic support, participation in an after-school programming seems to help students not only academically, but also with social skills and attitudes toward school (Miller, 2003). My hope is that this study will prove useful for other visual arts programs, whether in schools or in neighborhoods, that are looking to reach out to work with others and promote an atmosphere of community.

Research Questions:

- How can an after-school visual arts program foster collaboration in an urban community?
- How can after-school programming in visual arts promote a sense of community?
- What role does diversity play in an after-school program in an urban community?
- What are the rewards and challenges for maintaining the visual art programming?
- What role do the art teachers play in the after-school visual arts program?
- What role do the stakeholders play in the after-school visual arts program?
- What can I learn about the impact of the visual arts from studying this alternative site?

Definition of Terms:

Collaboration: In this case, collaboration is meant to describe the relationship between two or more groups or organizations working towards a common goal.

Alternative Site: An alternative site constitutes any physical location other than a school, which is a typical place to hold after-school programs.

Stakeholders: The stakeholders are any of the founding members, managers, and employees who run the day-to-day operations of the CAC.

Diversity: In this study, I use the word diversity to imply the presence of many different ethnic groups and nationalities, as opposed to one majority group and one minority.

Urban Community: An urban community is within the limits of a city, not rural or suburban. Community refers to a group of people living, working, and making decisions within a neighborhood, in this case, within a city.

School Art: According to A. Efland (1976), a highly controlled form of making art in which a child copies the teacher, with little (if any) room for artistic freedom.

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited by several factors. First, the time I have to observe how the CAC functions is limited to several weeks, as well as the times the programming is offered during the day. In addition, I am focusing on one specific program, in a specific urban environment, in one city, which definitely limits the scope of the study. My biases are also a limitation, such as my belief that while hard work is essential to success, sometimes the structures in place prevent people from “pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.” Others may disagree, but I believe that community support is necessary to help those who are starting at a disadvantage (like poverty) to succeed. I am also biased in my belief that the arts are an essential part of learning, as important as reading or math in helping children develop skills they will need to be successful in the future.

Conclusion

My hope in this study is to understand the collaborative processes in place at the CAC, particularly in relation to visual arts programming. I would like to learn more about

how the CAC has worked together with organizations in the community in order to support the needs of the students and their families, especially the role that public arts have played in this process. The demands being made on schools in poor urban areas now include meeting students' physical needs, managing budget cuts, and improving inadequate test scores; against the load of these demands, the future of art education is at stake. If an alternative program can be implemented to support both schools and the families of poor urban neighborhoods, I believe it would be beneficial to learn more about how it functions, including the strengths and weaknesses, in order that it might be either replicated or helpful to those other areas facing similar situations.

In Chapter 2, I will examine what has already been written about some of the topics mentioned above, such as challenges created by poverty, the promise of after school programs, what the arts can do, and collaboration. Each of these aspects is framed by theory, particularly Giroux's idea of public pedagogy (2004).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Challenges of Economic Inequality in Urban Communities

In the field of education, schools face challenges every day. Budgets must be met; teachers must motivate their students; principals must be strong leaders; students must navigate the system to become successful. Yet there are some schools in the United States that face far greater challenges than others, with far greater consequences when they fail. Some of the city schools where I taught were emblematic of schools facing the extreme challenges that poverty presents to the school systems. According to David Berliner, educational psychologist and Regents Professor Emeritus at Arizona State University (2012), “It is quite clear that America’s public school students achieve at high levels when they attend schools that are middle or upper class in composition” (p. 5). While there exists widespread media coverage in the United States regarding the shortfalls of the public education system, both Berliner (2012) and Helen Ladd, a professor of public policy and economics at Duke University, assert that the problem lies not in the what the schools are failing to do for their students, but rather that the students are being failed by a society that allows drastic economic inequality to exist (Berliner, 2012; Ladd, 2012).

According to Ladd (2012), “More than 1 in 5 children in the U.S. live in poverty, far more than the 1 in 25 in Finland, 1 in 7 in Canada and 1 in 9 in the Netherlands” (p. 208). Ladd criticizes school reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001, which aimed to decrease the achievement gap for students from less advantaged backgrounds by implementing standardized tests and placing a stronger focus on ELA and Math, and for failing to address the real problems facing the American school system

– those caused by economic inequality (2012). In Berliner’s 2009 *Poverty and Potential: Out of School Factors and School Success*, six out-of-school factors (OSFs) are listed as having a negative impact on student performance. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, he sites low birth weight, inadequate health insurance or access to medical care, hunger due to lack of enough food, environmental pollution, family stress, and dangerous neighborhoods, each as playing a role in preventing students from performing well in school. Berliner argues that teachers and schools can only do so much to help students learn while these OSFs exist (2009).

Unfortunately, to say the least, as educational psychologist Berliner (2012) points out, students who come from lower economic status families (LES) are not only doing less well on international tests than their more-advantaged peers, their schools are not getting as much funding as schools that have few students living in poverty. He posits that the schools with “embarrassingly low” test scores are those with the poorest students in America, where “over 75 percent of the student body is eligible for free and reduced lunch” (Berliner, 2012, para. 8). Poverty is no small concern, as Berliner points out, 20 percent of America’s children fall into this category. The schools with the highest rates of poverty in America are also the lowest-funded, defying logic and creating almost apartheid-like situations in which almost half of high school students receive less money in their local school districts than more economically-advantaged counterparts (Berliner, 2012, para. 8).

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2007), teacher educator and pedagogical theorist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison agrees that students living in poverty have not been given the same chance at success that more-advantaged students enjoy. Ladson-Billings

claims that the fault lies not with the students or the teachers, but with society's "neglect and denial of education to entire groups of students...It reminds us that we have consistently under-funded schools in poor communities where education is needed most" (p. 321). If students are starting out at a disadvantage, and given less funding, there is a far lower chance they will succeed in school. And yet, the demands on teachers and students to raise test scores continues, even with lower funding and an increasing level of economic inequality (Berliner, 2012).

Still, in the face of great challenges, there is hope. Acknowledging the inequalities that exist, particularly in education, is a first step toward progress. As Berliner (2012) puts it,

Ignoring the powerful and causal role of inequality and poverty on so many social outcomes that we value, particularly school achievement, is easily as shameful as having educators use poverty as an excuse to limit what they do to help the students and families that their schools serve (p. 8).

While OSFs may hold less-advantaged students back in school (especially when there is a strong focus on high-stakes standardized testing), educators have been looking at other ways to meet these students' needs. Berliner (2009) states that "U.S. students spend about 1,150 waking hours a year in school versus about 4,700 more waking hours per year with their families and in their neighborhoods. Further, Berliner pointed out that many schools have a one-size-fits-all orientation, not easily accommodating the myriad differences in talents and interests among youth" (p. 3). This imbalance opens the possibilities for out-of-school programming that could support learning and help students foster their own talents and interests.

These authors claim that schools in neighborhoods in economically challenged neighborhoods unfairly take the blame for students who are not performing well. They argue that the problem does not lie in the teachers, the students, or their families; rather, the problem lies in a society where economic inequality has drastically increased. These authors point out that students who live in economically challenged neighborhoods are dealing with forces stemming from poverty that have a major impact on their ability to learn in school.

In the following section, I address how the arts have been on a decline in schools over the last few decades. This decline has left little room in the school curriculum for time spent on the arts. With an increased focus on testing, schools are able to provide less and less time on the arts. In the following section, I examine causes of the decline, as well as opportunities for growth in arts programming outside of school.

The Decline in Arts Education

In the majority of public schools in the United States, the arts are widely considered “special” subjects, that students in the elementary school might have once a week for thirty to forty minutes. By the time they get to high school, the arts are electives. Susan Bodilly, Catherine Augustine, and Laura Zakaras, researchers for the RAND Corporation (2008), conducted a study on how to revitalize the arts for students through community-wide coordination. In their initial research, they found that most children “are given only a smattering of arts instruction, and some are given none at all” (2008, p. xii). In school districts that are already struggling to make ends meet, there is already great pressure from national requirements to focus on “core” subjects like math, science and

language arts. As one teacher I know put it, “Art and music are always the first to get cut” (personal communication, January, 2013).

According to Bodilly, Augustine, & Zakaras (2008), reduced budgets at the state and local level in the 1970s and 80s led to cuts in arts programming; more recently, “government-legislated accountability based on mathematics and reading test scores has shifted attention to these subjects, to the detriment of other elements of the curriculum” (p. iii). For example, in 1991, “two-thirds of public schools lacked licensed art and music teachers” (Hughes, 2011). The decline that began in the 1970s has continued on its path, with little sign of slowing.

According to a study by Dr. F. Robert Sabol (2010), Chair of the Department of Art and Design at Purdue University, the No Child Left Behind Legislation (NCLB) has had an impact on the access of quality arts education for all students. For example, as a result of NCLB, 62% of schools increased time for English by 46% and math by 37%. The report also stated that 44% of schools cut time from art, music, physical education, social studies, lunch, and recess at the elementary school level” (p. 24). According to Sabol, NCLB has lowered the priority of art education in the public school system:

Because visual arts learning is not examined on high stakes...art education is viewed by many as a discipline of lesser importance, not a priority, or as nonessential in the school curriculum As a result, art education programming and art educators continue to function at the periphery in public schools (p. 27).

Other impacts on the arts include decreased funding to purchase supplies (in a few cases, art programs were completely cut), increased workloads, and an increase in assessment in the arts (Bodilly et al., 2008).

As a result of the decline of arts in the field of education, some cultural organizations like museums have begun to offer more arts education programs to children, and, according to Bodilly, et al (2008), “two other types of providers have proliferated: out-of-school-time (OST) organizations (such as city departments of parks and recreation and YMCAs) and community-based organizations (such as Young Audiences, the nation-wide nonprofit founded to connect professional artists with students and teachers in schools)” (p. xii). Bodilly et al. noted, in addition to these out-of-school groups offering arts programming, a range of others have gotten involved in promoting the arts, from private organizations to higher education institutions, from state and local art agencies to city cultural affairs offices. “This proliferation of players has created a highly complex arts ecology” (Bodilly, et al., 2008, p. xiii).

As these authors above noted, non-school organizations have stepped up to attempt to fill the void left by a decline in arts education in schools over the past few decades. After-school programs, community-based organizations, and others have begun to offer arts programming for children, creating a complex new field of how art might be offered to the community. In the following section, I point out some research that establishes the value of after-school and summer programs that are tailored to the community’s needs.

The Promise of After-School Programs

According to Dr. James Zhang, Professor of Kinesiology at the University of Georgia, and Dr. Charles Byrd, Vice President of Ohio University (2006), after school programs began to emerge in America as the traditional family began to change; divorce rates began to rise and working parents were at home less to take care of their children.

Today, after school programs provide multidisciplinary activities for students, which in most cases have been found to improve student learning in school (Zhang & Byrd, 2006). With the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2001, the government began taking an active role in the implementation of after school programming as a means of closing the gap for under-achieving students, particularly in poor neighborhoods (Zhang & Byrd, 2006). Federal funding for after-school programs has increased exponentially over the years; as the following indicates, an importance has been placed on improving students' in-school performance through after-school programming.

Both Zhang & Byrd (2006) and Dr. Beth Miller, Director of Research at the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, (2001) identify the function of most after-school programs as providing multidisciplinary activities for children, including a focus on academics, creating a safe environment, and providing recreational activities. In general, funding for after-school programs is provided through various sources including philanthropic funds, government programs, grants, school districts, or tuition paid by parents (Miller, 2001). While much funding previously went towards after-school programs in attempts to curb problems like drugs and violence, Miller emphasizes that today the focus has shifted towards "youth development" programming, with the idea that young people are "resources to be developed, not problems to be solved" (p. 10). Miller's assertion that young people are resources, not problems, is in direct correlation with a wide range of research quoted in McCarthy's (2010) paper, which described the benefits of embracing an assets-based approach to an after-school program. McCarthy discovered that the assets-based approach to the after-school program helped create a flexible learning environment responsive to students' needs, with more meaningful

connections to students' lives (2010). In addition to this shift toward a positive view of the children they serve, after-school programs do not require any major changes in institutional structure or practice to benefit schools; they also receive broad public support (Miller, 2001).

The benefits of after-school programs are numerous. According to Zhang & Byrd (2006), regular attendance at after-school programs resulted in "improved in-school attendance, completion of academic work, discipline, and pro-social behaviors" (p. 5). Miller (2001) also extols the benefits of after-school programs, linking after-school program attendance not only with the factors listed by Zhang & Byrd, but also with "higher grades, more effective conflict resolution strategies, and lower involvement in risky behaviors" (p. 8). In addition, for students who are coming from cultures other than the majority at their schools, after-school programs have the capability to "link the values, attitudes, and norms of students' cultural communities with those of the school culture" (p. 8).

While after-school programs show great promise for providing much-needed support to children, families, and schools with a low economic status, Miller pointed out they are not without challenges of their own. According to Miller (2001), the major challenges facing after-school programs are sustainable funding, staffing, and "a knowledge base that creates the foundation for positive results" (p. 10). Even so, the promise of after-school programs is worth investigating, certainly not for replacing the work of schools, but definitely for acting as a support system for schools and families, and providing a space in which young people can learn in a way that allows more freedom than the school system. For my own research, I will be examining the role of one

organization that offers after-school programming in an urban community. I am interested in examining the ways in which this organization collaborates with other community groups and organizations to offer the types of after-school and summer programs it provides, especially as that programming relates to the visual arts. That after school programming provides community support is one tenant of the theory of public pedagogy to which I now turn.

Public Pedagogy

Learning does not just take place inside the walls of schools. As mentioned earlier, learning is shaped not only by school, but also by culture, politics, and everyday life (Giroux, 2004). Public pedagogy challenges the idea that schools are solely responsible for education, imploring educators and others to reconsider their understanding of what counts as pedagogy, including how and where the process of education occurs. The questions public pedagogy raises are meant to provide new ways of understanding educational practice, both in schools and in society. Culture plays a major role in non-school education. According to Giroux (2004), culture is an active changing force of power, ideologies, and values that produce “knowledge, goods, social practices, and context,” the substance of everyday life (p. 60). With culture always subjected to power struggles in society, Giroux argues that pedagogy must shift to focus on what is going on outside the classroom in order to empower students to take on issues of identity, democracy, and citizenship. Giroux’s theory of public pedagogy focuses on understanding how schools, culture, and politics shape peoples’ lives and perceptions of themselves and others. Giroux (2004) postulates that public pedagogy is a critical practice whose “role lies not only in changing how people think about themselves and

their relationship to others and the world, but also in energizing students and others to engage in those struggles that further possibilities for living in a more just society” (p. 63). In order for members of society and students to understand the society they live in, they must see how “overlapping sites of learning...exist within the organized social relations of everyday life,” from workplaces, to families, to communities, film, television, the arts, sports, and prison systems; for each, learning is the outcome (p. 62). To focus on the learning that takes place outside of school opens new possibilities for connections to culture, politics, and students’ interests that may make them more engaged citizens.

Giroux’s public pedagogy insists that we, as teachers, are cultural workers (2004). Cultural workers need to expand the pedagogy currently in schools to what is going on in everyday life outside of schools. Giroux claims that students are learning just as much from popular culture like television, movies, video games, and the media as they are in the classroom. Giroux argues that we must change our pedagogy to critique what students are learning outside of schools in order to make sure they are becoming better critical thinkers, and more responsible citizens. In summary, Giroux insists that professionals working in the public realm, like teachers, need to move beyond the typical classroom curriculum to fully prepare students for life outside of school. He believes that the learning taking place in the form of video games, movies, and television can and should be addressed in the classroom in a way that makes students better critical thinkers, instead of consumers. One of the main aspects my research will address is how arts education can be an avenue for expanding learning beyond the walls of the classroom setting. In the next section, I will address the value and the process of collaboration, as it relates to building community.

Collaboration and Community

As noted by Berliner (2009), Ladd (2012), and Ladson-Billings (2007), the challenges faced by schools in low-economic areas are emblematic of larger issues created by a society whose structure allows for great inequality. These challenges are complex, and cannot be dealt with by schools alone. As Giroux (2004) noted, education takes place in all areas of society, not just inside school walls. In order for the needs of communities to be addressed, collaboration is essential. One of the basic tenets of democracy is that people must work together in order to make decisions and live alongside one another. Gail C. Furman, Educational Psychologist at Washington State University, (2004) proposes the idea of an ethic of community in order to address the ongoing challenges of daily life in schools, which would also work outside of schools. Individuals' ethics codes are influenced by community standards including those of the leader or majority; therefore, in order to "expose the inequalities of the system" and hear the "voices of the marginalized," communities must engage in "social discourse (or dialogue)" (p. 219). This dialogue is essential to community-building from the ground up, in order to ensure voices are heard and problems are solved to the best of a people's ability. According to Furman (2004):

The term dialogue actually refers to a specific theoretical approach or paradigm for talking together that holds promise for building understandings and generating creative, synergistic responses to problems, particularly in settings characterized by differences in cultural perspectives and values." (p. 226)

Furman believes that dialogue and discussion are essential for collaboration. People need to be able to communicate openly with one another in order to work effectively together.

As Furman notes, within any group of people, there will be disagreements; the important thing is to hear out one another's' differences and to try to understand from where each side is coming. The notion of collaboration is all about turning away from top-down leadership in which one leader has all the answers, to a communal effort in which ideas come from all involved and are dealt with democratically (Furman, 2004). Furman noted that the benefits of a community ethic in schools include a "reduced sense of alienation for students, improved achievement, enhanced collegiality for educators, and the possibility for practices that are more democratic" (p. 221).

While Furman's ethic of community is applied to the school setting, it can also be applied directly to community organizations and members. One example is the Dallas Independent School District's response to summer school, which brought together "schools, cultural organizations, and others" to provide a summer-school type of program that replaced typical instruction styles with "teaching animated by music, visual arts, dance, and theater" (Hughes, 2011). The Dallas program was not easy to run: intense professional development had to be provided for "800 classroom teachers, fine arts instructors, teaching artists, school principals and others"; however, more than 7,000 children participated, and a "sizeable portion" of them did not have to attend summer school (p. 44). As mentioned earlier, in the program Revitalizing Arts Education Through Community Coordination (Bodilly, et al., 2008), several major cities developed solutions to the decrease in arts funding by relying on the collaboration of community organizations. While these cities provide a model of how their own programs work, other cities have a variety of strengths and weaknesses to deal with when creating programming for the arts.

Doug Borwick, the former president of the Board of the Association of Arts Administration Educators and current CEO of Outfitters4, Inc., believes in the transformative power of collaboration. In Borwick's *Building Communities, Not Audiences* (2012), he made the point that there is no one-size-fits-all solution that can meet a community's needs or utilize its assets most effectively. Instead, whole communities must be engaged to work together to explore best practices. This "social capital" (Borwick, 2012) is characterized by trust and building kinds of relationships that create a sense of belonging and togetherness, encouraging people to share knowledge and help one another (Borwick, 2012, loc. 558).

In order for all voices to be heard, particularly in areas with great economic inequality, collaboration is necessary to ensure voices are not marginalized. The strength of a community lies in communicating needs, in building relationships and working together democratically. In my research, I will be looking to see how one particular organization has reached out to others in the community to provide arts programming. While not as large as Dallas or New York City, the area in which I will be conducting research has a strong network of arts organizations, as well as community groups working to improve their neighborhoods. I will be looking to see what kind of role collaboration plays in both the success and in the challenges of arts programming. In the next section, I will address specifically how the arts can benefit both students and the communities in which they live.

What the Arts Can Do

While the arts have typically been one of the first programs cut from schools, and funding for arts organizations is becoming lower and lower, Borwick (2012) emphasizes

that: “Community-focused arts projects can serve as rallying points for neighborhood revitalization and civic engagement. The arts can provide safe distance for considering conflicting views and comparatively non-threatening points of entry for gaining appreciation of unfamiliar cultures” (loc. 1330 – Kindle edition). Art allows for discussion, which can help people understand different perspectives from their own. It can help bring people together by working alongside one another on projects that help neighbors get to know one another.

The skills that art teaches go beyond the techniques one learns from drawing, painting, sculpting, or the art form in question. According to Professor Olivia Gude, director of the Spiral Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago (2009), the primary value of teaching art lies in the sharing of ideas. Gude (2009) explains the value of art in promoting democratic values in that “the artistically engaged individual couples intense awareness with a strong sense of agency, a belief that he or she can shape the world” (p. 6). Gude supports the idea that art not only boosts confidence in one’s own ability to create new things and change the world, it also makes one more aware of the talents and ideas of others. Gude claims that art teaches others to understand the “meaning-making” and different perspectives others have to offer, yielding “profound realization of the uniqueness of each individual’s perceptions and the sobering recognition that we are a collective of individuals who see the world quite differently” (Gude, 2009, p. 9). Art teaches people that ambiguity and complexity are part of life, and can be full of “pleasure and possibility” instead of irritating uncertainty (Gude, 2009, p. 9).

Just like athletics, the arts can promote teamwork, discipline, and an appreciation of the rewards of hard work (Borwick, 2012). According to Gude (2009), the arts can help bring people together, through dialogue that helps people with different perspectives understand one another and discuss issues in a safe space. They can help neighbors get to know one another, and to believe in the possibility of making a difference by creating change in an ambiguous world (Gude, 2009). In my research, I will examine how the arts promote teamwork, communication, and help bring people together in this urban environment.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have pointed out how in urban communities facing the challenges of poverty, a great need exists for support for students, for schools, and for families who are working hard because they want the best for their children. As Berliner (2009) noted, The climate in the public school system is strained, taxed by mandated testing, by teacher evaluations tied to student outcomes, and by lack of addressing the many needs of students' out-of-school factors that hinder learning. All of these challenges are being faced with lower funding than is available in less economically challenged schools (Berliner, 2012; Ladd, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2007). School alone cannot meet the needs of these students and communities (Berliner, 2012). One mode of support comes in the form of after-school programs. When students regularly attend after-school programs, the range of benefits include better attendance, higher grades, better social skills, and a bridge between students' cultures and school norms (Zhang & Byrd, 2006; Miller, 2001). Learning takes place not just within school walls, but also through culture, politics, and everyday life (Giroux, 2004). Working together to promote learning is more beneficial

than leaving schools with sole responsibility, particularly when faced with the challenges of poverty (Berliner, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2007, Borwick, 2012). An ethic of community focuses on problem-solving, not through the efforts of one leader, but with the entire community taking responsibility for sharing ideas, thus ensuring all voices, including those in the minority, are heard (Furman, 2004). The arts are particularly well suited for building community, as they encourage the sharing of ideas from multiple perspectives, and the building of stronger neighborhoods. In summary this review of literature provides a background for the need for quality after-school and summer programming that can support the needs of communities in economically challenged areas. Collaboration between organizations, facilitated through the arts, may provide much-needed support to the families and schools of these communities.

The relationship between the arts and collaboration is what I intend to study in this research. I am interested in how the arts and collaboration seem to go hand in hand at the site where I will be conducting my research. Seemingly, its approach to supporting the community through the arts and other programming exemplifies how an organization in an urban environment faces the challenges of economic inequality by embracing the resources of the community. My research will explore how the arts, in particular, bring people together to create opportunities for collaboration and utilize the assets of the community. In the next section, I will describe my plan of research, including methodology, site of study, participants, ethical issues, and data management strategies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In setting up the plan for my study, I feel like I am at the AAA developing a TripTik for a journey I am about to take to a city where I have never been. I am the one making the map. I know where I want to go, and I know how I will be traveling, so to speak. I have a site at which to do my research, and I know I will be observing, interviewing, and collecting data. Like any traveler planning a journey, I am making lists of what needs to be done, gathering data to familiarize myself with where I am headed, and constantly checking to make sure I am not missing or forgetting anything. I must be careful and thorough, as my goal is to study the site in a manner that is both informative and respectful. I chose this path not only for convenience, but also because I believe in the value of providing arts education to all, as well as in the necessity of collaboration in both education and community life.

In this study, I will examine how the CAC has built collaborative relationships throughout the community via the arts. I intend to particularly focus on how an after-school visual arts program can foster collaboration in an urban community, how after-school programming in visual arts can promote a sense of community, the role diversity plays in an after-school program in an urban community, the rewards and challenges of maintaining the visual art programming, the role art teachers play in the after-school visual arts program, the role stakeholders play in the program, and what I can learn about the impact of the visual arts from studying this alternative site. The topics listed previously are essentially the research questions that will shape my study of how the CAC functions, particularly in relation their collaborative effort to provide arts education

to the community at large. In the next section, I will describe the information needed to complete my study, grounded in the review of literature from Chapter 2.

Information Needed

As mentioned in Chapter 2, this study is framed by the references of those whose research helped to shape my view of the particular situation I am studying at the CAC. First of all, the CAC is located in an urban environment. As we learned from Berliner (2009, 2012), Ladd (2012), and Ladson-Billings (2007), growing economic inequality in American society has led to increased inequality in the public school system, with schools in communities that need the most support receiving less funding than wealthier counterparts. As the economic inequality has risen, so has the decline of arts education in the public school system (Bodilly, Augustine, & Zakaras, 2008) due to budget cuts and a nation-wide emphasis on improving reading and math test scores, to the detriment of other subject areas. After-school programs have become increasingly popular over the years, not only as a means of child care, but also for the possibilities they hold to enhance the school day with added learning time and opportunities to participate in arts, sports, and other programming (Zhang & Byrd, 2006). Yet after-school programs are not without problems, such as lack of ongoing funding, high employee turnover rates, and a lack of a high-quality knowledge base for best practices (Miller, 2001). Collaboration among schools, community groups, and arts organizations may hold the key to providing arts access in urban environments. As Furman (2004) notes, the dialogue that is formed through collaboration can enhance democratic practices and reduce alienation, particularly in settings that feature different perspectives and values (p. 226).

This study will be an inquiry into how art education can be used to promote collaboration outside the typical school setting in an urban environment. As a qualitative case study, it will be an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p.40), with the bounded system of choice being the CAC and its relationship with other organizations. A qualitative study, the goal is to “understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). What makes this a case study rather than basic qualitative research is this selection of what Stake (2006, p. 1) explains is “a noun, a thing, an entity; it is seldom a verb, a participle, a functioning.” In other words, a case study is the study of one particular entity, with specific boundaries, excluding what is not being studied. I chose this particular approach for my research as I am studying a unique organization, the CAC and its affiliates, which I will describe in greater detail later in this chapter.

The processes and relationships established by the CAC are the focus of my study, which is grounded in Henry Giroux’s (2004) theory of public pedagogy. Public pedagogy focuses on understanding how schools, culture, and politics shape peoples’ lives and perceptions of themselves and others. Giroux argues that pedagogy must shift to focus on what is going on outside the classroom in order to empower students to take on issues of identity, democracy, and citizenship. In my study, this theory’s importance lies in issues playing out in the public school system – economic inequality and the decline of arts being taught in schools have created a need for arts programming outside of schools. The CAC is not a school, nor is it a typical after-school program. The next section I will be describing the site of study.

Site of Study

The CAC is in a neighborhood within the city limits, located several blocks south of the college by which it is sponsored. According to US Census Data (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3611000.html>) the city itself is shrinking with population levels on the decline; while this decline is slowing, the loss of economic resources has been a challenge, as evidenced by vacant storefronts and boarded up houses. The neighborhood is an old community formed by immigrants, once mostly Italian, now a mix of various groups including Southeast Asian, Somalian, and Puerto Rican immigrants, among others.

The CAC sits cozily between storefronts on a main city street, past the large houses broken into apartments that huddle close together among scattered tall, old trees. Most of the houses seem run down, but here and there a few proudly display colorful new paint, prim, if sparse, porch furniture, and gardens tucked into whatever corner they fit. On the corner of the street, a few doors north of the CAC, is a warm eclectic coffee shop where on rare weather-friendly days people sit and relax. Down the block in the other direction are more stores: a barbershop with peeling paint and sparse décor, home to an elderly barber who once kindly offered the art program our choice of the dusty magazines in his front window; and a flooring center, with a window bursting with colorful mural squares painted at the local high school. Across the street is a used bookstore, with a quaint name, a greenhouse attached, and a rocking horse parked outside. Nearby, a little garage-sized structure that only last year was a broken down hut, is now a tiny, cheerful takeout restaurant adorned in brightly colored paint.

Across the street and down one block from the CAC, a large scale mural was completed over the summer by a muralist who worked with the CAC, local schools, and college students to capture some of the spirit of the community. The mural features large images of children, musicians, and other people back-splashed with vibrant colors and patterns.

The CAC itself is a storefront-turned-classroom. The large windows in front are decorated with flags, sculptures, and other artwork made by students who have come in for the free programming. The door displays a large poster advertising the art programs offered, highlighting the work of the mural artist. Inside, it feels like a space with a mixed identity, part store, part classroom, part office. A turning stand with flyers advertises English language courses, community meetings, and more. An AmeriCorps volunteer typically works at a front desk, off to the right side, checking in students, answering phones, and providing assistance when needed. The walls are a soft lime green in the front part and yellow towards the middle, dividing the space and brightening the industrial lights and feel of the space. Children's artwork is matted and hung along the right wall gallery style, and to the left wall laminated photos from nature – landscapes, animals, and flowers galore, surround a medium-sized whiteboard. In between the walls in the main space of the “store” are six rectangular tables, pushed together to form one large table with about fourteen chairs pushed in around the edges. You can see, toward the back, an orange back wall, and two more desks where staff work, and the local college name displayed on a large sign. There are a few extra chairs and tables up against the left-side back wall, and two doors on either side of the hall between; one is a large single bathroom, the other, the basement storage area. On any given afternoon, the space

may be partially filled with refugees attending a language course, college professors and community members meeting to plan an event, or by young students working on art, dance, or storytelling projects.

The windows of the CAC display the name of the college, as well as programs offered for the community free of charge. People walking by may glance in the windows and see children's artwork on display or a poster advertising upcoming events. A few of the children who frequent the programs tend to walk right in once school is out to see what is going on. Flowerboxes adorn the windows, and a bell tinkles as the door opens. Inside, the bright orange, green, and yellow walls add warmth to what can be a chilly room, especially in the winter; the walls display artwork from years past, and a row of tables appears to be set up for a business meeting. Bookshelves full of children's books, organized by age and topic, line the walls all the way to the back of the building. There is one desk at the front, where either Sonjay¹ or Larissa might be working, greeting you as you walk in the door. In the back, the "office" area, complete with two desks and a kitchenette.

Every Thursday, the CAC hosts a Visual Arts program, free of charge and open to students who registered in advance as well as those who drop in to participate. As a graduate student last school year, I was one of two art teachers who volunteer to teach art for one afternoon per week at the CAC. Classes are smaller than a typical school size, usually ranging anywhere between three and ten students per class. Some parents drop off their children, others walk from their homes nearby or from the community center down the road. My co-teacher and I provided the project ideas, inspired by the community and

¹ Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to protect the identities of some participants involved in the study. Other participants gave permission to use their real names.

the children's requests, although student attendance and participation varied from week to week. At the CAC's after-school visual arts program, the setting is informal, and there are no grades. The students take home their art projects when they leave. While there are rules for behavior, the children only occasionally need reminders. As the art teachers, we were usually busy setting up, working on projects, helping, and cleaning up. There tended to be a lot of talking, laughing, and sometimes, even singing as we worked. After the school year ended, my term as an AmeriCorps volunteer ended as well, but my interest in the CAC's art programming remained.

My interest in studying this location stems not only from its convenience, being as it the place where I taught art for the duration of a school year, but also in its uniqueness. Prior to working at the CAC, I had only taught in a public school setting. After I began teaching at the after-school art program, I immediately became interested in how the program got started, how it functions, and especially in how it works in conjunction with other groups, teaching artists, and the city to survive and grow. Even my own teaching expanded from the Thursday art program to include teaching art to refugee children at a library program, as well as an art program at a laundromat in the neighborhood. I became increasingly interested in learning more about the site, especially the connections it has been forming to the community.

Participants

Two factions of the local college founded the CAC: the Center for Urban Development, and the Volunteer Coordination Center. The art program was created by two professors, both painters, who had worked in urban environments and wanted to create an art program that could be run by graduate students from the art education

department. After a donation from supporters of the college, the CAC moved from its former location inside a community center to its current location. My teaching partner and I were continuing the work started by several previous art education students who had taught at the CAC. The new building echoed other new changes to the CAC, including the addition to the arts programming in the form of a grant, co-authored by the college and the Young Audiences of Western New York, which would be used to bring teaching artists into the local public schools and the community to provide workshops in the arts highlighting the “immigrant experience” and culminating in a mural and street-wide art show featuring the work created at the workshops and our art program.

For my research purposes, I will be working with the adults who work at and help run the CAC programming, from the original organizers to the current staff, teaching artists, and teachers. These are the people who make the programming happen, who work to create the collaborations that exist, and who know the most about the role of the arts in the CAC’s mission. Since my focus is on how the arts promote collaboration at the CAC, the people who will best be able to describe these processes are those in charge of making them happen. I will not be interviewing or observing any of the children that attend the programming, as attendance is quite varied from week to week, and it would be difficult to attain consent. All participants will be participating voluntarily, and may opt out at any time (see Letter of Consent, Appendix A).

Research Methods

My role as the researcher was initially that of a participant-observer, which Merriam (2009) describes as a role in which “the researcher’s observer activities, which are known to the group, are subordinate to the researcher’s role as participant” (p. 124).

My role as an art teacher at the CAC played heavily into my choice to conduct my research there; however, when I began the research process, my role changed to observer as participant when I changed jobs. Instead of teaching at the CAC, I was there as a researcher, observing others' teaching and planning.

To begin, I drew on my experiences teaching at the CAC. Then, I began to observe after-school art classes. At these observations, I took detailed field notes, recording what happened at these classes, as well as my own thoughts and feelings about what was going on. The data I collected from these observations began to paint a picture of how the collaborative process and planning work at the CAC. Next, I interviewed teachers, staff, and teaching artists involved with various CAC programs. As needed, I clarified answers from interviews with follow-up questions via e-mail. In addition, in some cases, I checked my re-phrasing and analysis with the participants to make sure that my presentation of their words was accurate. Again, the participants were able to opt out at any time (see Appendix A for sample letter of consent).

At each step of the process, immediately after observations and interviews, I analyzed my collected data to search for key words, similarities, and anything striking that emerged. At the same time, I searched through documents including news articles, publications by the CAC and other groups, and public records for additional data, in an effort to triangulate the data I have found in observing and interviewing.

I documented my research primarily in the form of audio recorded interviews, with verbal consent from each participant. The audio recordings were for my own benefit, so that I could focus on conversations with the participants instead of constantly

writing. After each interview, I transcribed what was said to help familiarize myself with the data, and to have a record to be used for the findings of the research.

During the process of data collection, I tried to maintain self-awareness by recording not only the things I heard and saw, but also my thoughts and reflections about what I learned. Throughout the process, I tried to be diligent as possible in my search for understanding the processes taking place. I took ample notes. While I began to get an idea of emerging themes, the majority of analysis occurred after the field work was completed in order to allow important findings to emerge from the data itself to be able to provide evidence from various sources. In the next section, I discuss how the data collection process remained ethically sound, to protect the participants involved.

Ethical Issues

The risk involved in participating in this study was minimal. At most, the type of risk that could have occurred was, theoretically, mild stress, when discussing the challenges faced by the organization in terms of keeping the organization running, as well as the challenges faced by the community they serve. Participants had the opportunity to opt out at any time during the study, as noted previously. Participants received no form of tangible compensation, monetary or otherwise, for participating in this study. Some intrinsic reward may have resulted from participation in the study in the form of making others who read the study aware of the projects taking place, particularly some of the more positive developments. The only information I withheld was that I was specifically examining how art education promotes collaboration. I did not want to sway the participants' responses or influence them in any way that would skew the results. Instead, I gave participants who asked a more vague response, that I was studying how the

organization functions. At the end of the study, I informed the participants that my field work is complete, and thanked them for their participation. I also offered to send a completed copy of my work, so the participants could see what I discovered in my research.

The research conducted in this case study will be helpful to me as an art educator, as it provides me with practice in research, a Master's degree upon completion, and further understanding of my own work in this setting. However, the research will also be beneficial for others. First of all, the CAC will benefit from a summation of its practices, including how its efforts have increased arts access in the community. This information can be used to procure future grants, publicize current work, and promote further programming. In addition, the uniqueness of this site is part of the reason I chose to study it; it will be studied and described in such a way that other cities or locations with similar resources might use the research as a blueprint for beginning their own collaborative efforts, to provide access to the arts for others.

Data Management Plan and Analysis Strategies

The data I collected was organized in color-coded, tabbed file folders, organized at first by date in chronological order. After carefully reading and organizing each piece of data, I used the analysis to guide future interviews and documented my analysis in the form of lists of key words and phrases, which were later used to create categories. All documents, notes, and photos were organized in separate files, coded by key words, and labeled with the date collected. All digital files were printed and also stored in hard copy form, to keep all data in the same place and have a backup copy. To safeguard computer files, my computer is password-protected at login.

Analysis was done immediately after each form of data collection, and continuously throughout the course of the study as I compared each new piece of data to those formerly collected, allowing for concepts to emerge across the data. According to Merriam (2009), data analysis is one of the few components “of doing qualitative research in which there is a preferred way” (p. 171). The preferred method of constant comparison from the beginning not only means the work of analysis is spread out over the time you have instead of all lumped at the end, but also helps inform your next interviews and observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This constant comparison helped me find the most accurate results, as I was able to use the results of one interview to ask probing questions in the next. In the interviewing process, I checked with the participants to make sure my interpretation of their answers was accurate, in order to ensure that my research is as true to their responses as possible. The analysis of the data is what I will ultimately use to form and back up insights into this specific case.

Conclusion

My plan of study is like a road map to follow through the journey of conducting this case study. There may be detours along the way, but I know where I am headed, and how I will move from one place to the next. The CAC is a unique case, located in a diverse neighborhood that is in the process of revitalization. The arts play a role in this revitalization, and my goal is to study how this particular organization is working alongside others to provide access to the arts for the community. Using my knowledge as an art teacher at the CAC to get started, I conducted research into how the CAC is using the arts to promote collaboration by observing the after-school arts program, interviewing teachers, stakeholders, and teaching artists, as well as examining documents. Each of the

above methods provided data for the study that helped me understand the arts programming at the CAC from a variety of perspectives.

The data I collected was analyzed immediately after its collection, and constantly compared to new data that was collected along the way. All data collected was kept in file folders that were color-coded, dated, and labeled clearly in a way that both helped me stay organized and made finding information easier. Digital files were stored on my password protected computer, organized in color-coded folders by theme. I began interviewing on September 23, 2013, and completed my last interview on November 14, 2013. Over the course of this time, I interviewed ten participants, observed three after-school arts program sessions, and gathered a variety of documents.

This chapter is important to my research because it provides the essential considerations, the plan for my journey into the research process. No trip can be made without some plan of action, taking every aspect of the trip into consideration. Now that I have a detailed plan, I can begin to move forward. In the next chapter, I present my findings from these experiences.

Chapter 4: Findings

This case study, conducted at Buffalo State's Community Academic Center (CAC), produced a wealth of information in regards to how this particular community center is able to provide access to the arts in an urban community through collaborative efforts. The CAC is unique in its offerings; functioning as a sort of bridge between the campus and the community, the CAC is a hybrid. It is a tutoring center, a community center, and an after-school program. It offers services that the community has a need for – English language courses, connections to the local schools, homework help, and a variety of after-school arts classes, free to the public. Over the course of my study, (focused on the arts offerings) I found that the CAC, while relatively new to the community, has built a reputation as well as a foundation for the future around the assets of serving a diverse community, the freedom of art outside of school, the success of the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative, and overcoming challenges by building strong relationships between campus and community partners.

A Brief History of the CAC

In order to fully understand what the CAC does, I felt the need to explain its origins. The story of its beginnings helps explain its mission and function today.

According to Buffalo State's website, the Community Academic Center was created through a generous gift from an alumna of Buffalo State and her husband. As Dr. John Siskar, Director of the Center for Excellence in Urban and Rural Education (CEURE) explained, the decision to use that donation to create the CAC was rooted in Buffalo State's history of community engagement as a teachers' college. Siskar noted,

If you look at Buffalo State and its history of community engagement, it goes back many years...the whole notion of community engagement has become more and more the whole central focus of the campus, so the next natural progression was to become even more integrated with the community by offering services within the neighborhoods that the campus is connected with (personal communication, November 4, 2013).

This step, physically branching out into the community to offer services, meant re-imagining the role of a college campus in its own neighborhood. In 2011, the CAC's doors opened to the public. According to an article on Buffalo State's website, the mission of the CAC is "to coordinate and provide cradle-to-career educational support programming for youth and families on Buffalo's West Side" (<http://www.buffalostate.edu/cac/>). Dr. Gary Welborn, a professor of sociology and one of the directors of the CAC, described the reasoning behind this need for educational support as a recognition in the field of education, that schools alone cannot succeed in overcoming the out of school factors present in conditions of great economic inequality. As Welborn noted,

Something that was happening in education generally was sort of moving to a point of saying, 'Education can't be viewed as something that happens within the walls of the schools.' You know, the sort of notion of it takes a village, so that you need to have the community connected, and you know do this education. If you're going to really support youth in the right kind of way, you gotta think about poverty, and home life, and family structure and those kinds of things. (personal communication, October 17, 2013).

Welborn's statement is consistent with Giroux's (2004) public pedagogy, in asserting that education is not limited to the walls of a school, but extends to life in the community. The statement also reiterates Berliner's (2009) emphasis on the effect of out-of-school factors on student performance. Buffalo State's Volunteer and Service Learning Center (VSLC), and the Center for Excellence in Urban and Rural Education (CEURE) combined forces to govern the CAC, forming a committee to oversee operations, with Dr. Siskar in charge (Siskar). The CAC itself would be run by Meg Dee, a social worker with experience at Buffalo State's Research Foundation, and programming would be coordinated by Maureen McCarthy, an art education graduate who had experience running an after-school arts program in the neighborhood (personal communication with Dee, November 9, 2013; personal communication with McCarthy, October 3, 2013).

At the ribbon cutting in 2011, the former president of Buffalo State Dr. Aaron Podolefsky discussed how the CAC both supports Buffalo State's mission of educating students, and "prepares the next generation of college students" (Kaiser, 2011). With educational supports in place at the CAC, Buffalo State students are given the opportunity to serve in a capacity related to their field of study and gain real-world experience, while the people living in the community benefit from the services offered.

According to Welborn, the donor wanted "three things out of [the CAC]: She wanted it up and running quickly, she wanted sustainability, and she wanted something that was going to help the youth in the community in terms of educational and larger life choices." In order to get the programming up and running at the CAC quickly, the committee chose some programs that were already in existence, like an after-school art

program founded by Buffalo State art education professors Kathy Sherwood (pseudonym) and Anna Parsons (pseudonym), who happened to be looking for a new home for their program. According to Sherwood, “We wanted to do some sort of community art space programming, where we could have opportunities for the art education students to work” (Sherwood, personal communication, October 23, 2013). And after their current space changed ownership, they began looking for a new location. Sherwood noted, “We heard about the CAC through John Siskar, and we just thought, wow...It’s still in the same neighborhood, serving really the same population, but it’s Buffalo State affiliated. Thus, the visual arts programming at the CAC began.



Figure 1. The entrance to the CAC at 214 Grant St.

The story of the CAC’s beginning helps explain the reasons behind its creation, as well as providing a framework of its goals and structure. My hope is that it helps to enhance understanding of the findings listed in the next sections of this chapter.

Embracing a Diverse Population



Figure 2. Mural by artist Augustina Droze for the Grant Street Global Voices Project

Buffalo, NY is a mid-sized city, one that was recently identified by the U.S. Census Bureau as the second-poorest city per capita in the United States (www.census.gov). Over the past five years approximately 30% of the refugees resettled in New York State have come to Buffalo – more than have been resettled in New York City – & the majority live on Buffalo’s West Side (The WASH Project <http://thewashproject.org/about/>). In 2012, 3,529 refugees resettled in New York State; of those, 1,074 settled in Erie County, versus 238 in New York City (<http://otda.ny.gov/programs/bria/documents/population-report.pdf>). Many arrive here

from refugee camps in Burma, Thailand, Nepal, Kenya, Chad or Tanzania or where there have been limited opportunities for education (The WASH Project). According to a report by the Buffalo English Language Learners (BELL) network:

[O]ver the past decade the Buffalo Public Schools enrollment has declined by nearly 10,000, reflecting general population trends & growth of charter schools. However, there is one segment of the school population that has shown dramatic growth – English Language Learners (ELL). Over the decade the number of ELLs has grown by 61% and the ELL population has increased from 5.4% of the total district population in 2001-02 to over 11% this year...Helping this recent wave of refugees and immigrants thrive in their new home is a far greater task than the Buffalo Public Schools can meet. Certainly, there are multiple ways to address the myriad of issues facing children, adults, and families as they struggle to put down roots and become self-sustaining and contributing members of our neighborhoods and communities. (The WASH Project <http://thewashproject.org/about/>)

According to this report, Buffalo's refugee population is on the rise, reflecting a need for support beyond the scope of what local public schools are capable of handling. According to Jericho Road Community Health Center, one of the organizations in Buffalo serving the refugee population, "Refugees face barriers such as poverty, language, education, culture, trauma, and fear" (Jericho Road, <http://www.jrm-buffalo.org/About/Serve.aspx>). With such barriers in place, services are needed to help refugees through the process of settling in their new homes. The language barrier alone is a factor in how the CAC reaches the community. According to Siskar, part of the goal moving forward is improving communication "to reach into a community where there's over 70 different

languages being spoken.” Part of the mission of the CAC is serving the needs of these refugee families, many of whom reside only blocks from Buffalo State’s campus. When I spoke with the Director of the CAC, Meg Dee, she confirmed that serving the refugee population was an important part of the CAC’s mission:

TF: What are some of the goals of the CAC?

MD: Well, the goals of the CAC are to provide enriched educational opportunities to children and families living on the West Side. Certainly one of those measurable goals is to increase high school graduation, which in the City of Buffalo is quite low, as I’m sure you’re very aware. We work a lot with the refugee population, so we provide a variety of services for English Language Learners. And I think that’s certainly a population that’s very important for us to serve, either through the school, and with the school, or just providing services, providing connections in the neighborhood to families that come to the center. In a PowerPoint presentation created by Dr. Siskar outlining the CAC’s efforts, the description of the CAC’s mission echoes this support of West Side families, particularly refugees:

The center's mission is to coordinate and anchor cradle-to-career educational support programming for youth on Buffalo's West Side. Recognizing that the success of children is directly related to a viable social and economic infrastructure, the center also supports micro-enterprise development and partners with neighborhood revitalization efforts. With a special emphasis on the needs of refugee families, the center serves as a "hub" for work being done at various satellite locations in partnership with a variety of community-based organizations.

In its support of the immigrant and refugee population, the CAC is continuing a tradition that reflects some of the earliest community art centers in the United States. These community art centers, focused on education, first emerged in settlement houses around the 1900s to help new immigrant populations acquire “marketable skills”; since then, this dedication to public service has expanded to urban settings (Hoffman, 2010). While a variety of resettlement groups in Buffalo offer services to support incoming refugees, the need is growing. According to a recent news article, Buffalo has surpassed New York City as the largest recipient of immigrants in New York State (Reilly, 2012) due to the low cost of living and possibility for employment. The West Side stands to benefit from this new population, as “there is now growing evidence of the economic and social contributions refugees make to their host cities: rejuvenating communities, expanding markets, importing new skills, creating transnational linkages” (Jacobsen, 2006).

While the refugee population is a part of the neighborhood the CAC serves, the students who attend the programming come from a variety of backgrounds. Elaine Smith (pseudonym), an art education professor who began working with college students at the CAC’s summer program, created a service-learning course this past semester to give her students the experience of teaching at the CAC’s after-school program. For Smith, working with a diverse population is part of what drives her practice as an educator; the diversity of the students is what drew her to the site as the following comments reflect:

TF: So what is about the CAC’s art program that made you interested in continuing to work with them this year?

ES: Yeah definitely, I will continue to work with them, especially you know, the diverse community and kids from different backgrounds. Actually I was surprised there were even mainstream(ed) kids; it's not just about refugee kids. Mainstream kids are there, and also depends on race, ethnicity, and class. Class is middle class to kind of the lower economic class, that's what I assume, and um, you know for me, my personal vision and personal service is for always a minority, diverse setting. That's (where) I always have more passion and, you know, enthusiasm (Smith, personal communication, September 29, 2013).

Smith is not alone in her enthusiasm for working with the diverse populations on the West Side. Artist Augustina Droze, who was commissioned by Young Audiences of WNY to design a mural for the West Side neighborhood as part of a public arts initiative (see photo at the beginning of this section), knew little about the people living on the West Side, and felt she needed to get to know the people in the community better before proceeding.

TF: What was it about the whole project that made you interested in saying, "Yes, I'll do this?"

AD: I liked this project because it really got me into the community and learning about a part of Buffalo that I didn't know much about. And instead of just being a drop-in artist where I just plop a piece of art onto the wall, which is what does happen quite often with a lot of public art, this project really had a lot of ties with the community and a lot of investment with the community, trying to understand where everybody was coming from. (personal communication, October 31, 2013).

In her interview with me, Droze spoke highly of the people she met while working on the mural, including prominent members of the various refugee communities, and children she met while doing workshops in two local schools. She mentioned how much she enjoyed learning about Somali culture, and attending a Kareni New Year festival . “So I got to learn a little more about that community. I didn’t know anything about it...but now I do.”

While reaching a neighborhood where 70+ different languages are spoken can be a challenge for communication. One of the major concerns of the project, Droze mentioned, was getting photo releases. She mentioned that her team had to be very careful, making sure to translate information in the best way possible to ensure accurate communication, since their face could be very publicly displayed in the city. There’s a reason why they left that country. So if for some reason it got publicized, and they didn’t know the nature of the project, that could be very bad for them. So that was a scary thing.” She added,

I have such a respect for them, I’m in awe of them...[It was an] honor that I had to meet them. It was really special. And I hope that I continue to find a way to work within that community, because it’s a really special community. It’s not just that – Buffalo is special for that. I don’t think that happens everywhere. You don’t have such a confluence of so many nationalities, so many refugees in one area like the way Buffalo does...And I hope that more people find a way to work with that community, or in other communities that are in that state of transition or in need. I think it’s such a positive thing. I think it just really changes your perspective.

The positive experience Droze had while working with the community is something that inspired novice teacher Alicia Jones (pseudonym), who taught at the CAC's summer program, to volunteer as an art teacher at this location. Jones stated,

“I was really intrigued with working with the refugee population, and getting that um kind of aspect of working with ESL students as well. It seemed like you know, a fun exciting challenge to me, to open my mind to diverse cultures” (personal communication, September 21, 2013).

The experience of working with a diverse population is something that art educator Sherwood feels is important for upcoming teachers to do. Sherwood mentioned the value of getting to know people from cultures other than your own, mentioning,

A lot of our students come from a particular kind of background. Nothing wrong with that. But a lot of them are only used to being around people with a particular kind of background. And if you're going to be a teacher, I think you're obligated to get beyond that, to learn about others. Once you're actually out with people, my core belief is that once you have a relationship with someone, there's no more bias or prejudice anymore, because you get to know them as a human being.

Working with people from different backgrounds is part of life. AmeriCorps volunteer Zoe Fabian is one of the CAC's staff members who works behind the scenes planning programs. She pointed out some of the benefits of having a diverse group of people coming to the programs – first, for the CAC itself, having people come for something like a language class and seeing that art programs are offered as well helps increase enrollment. In addition, there are families who send their students to the CAC's

after-school art program so they can interact with a diverse group of other students.

Fabian sees the diversity of the community as something to be embraced:

[The West Side is] a community primarily made up of immigrants and refugees from all over the world. We have a lot of businesses in the area that are diverse and some of the store owners of these businesses have kids or family, and they bring their children to our programs. We have the ELL programs which serve our English-language learners, whether that be Buffalo Beginnings which is for the really “just stepped off the plane” refugees who have usually younger children who (aren’t) in school yet so we kind of help support them until they can get into school...We also have a group of home-schooled children...They take advantage of the fact that our programs are a little bit more diverse and take advantage of the opportunity that these afterschool programs have (personal communication, September 21, 2013).

The diversity of the West Side, due in large part to the presence of an influx of immigrants and refugees to Buffalo’s West Side neighborhood, has shaped the programming at the CAC and its’ mission is to support families in the community. For the people who come to work at the CAC, whether as volunteers, artists, professors, or novice teachers, the experience of working with this uniquely diverse neighborhood has created new relationships and the incomparable understanding that can arise from opportunities to learn from one another.

The Freedom of After-School Art

While the CAC offers many services, my focus is on the arts. One of the consistent programs in rotation since the CAC opened its doors is the after-school arts

program. The after-school arts program, including the summer program (offered over the summer of 2013), has some similarities to a school art class: art teachers teach it, although in this case the teachers are college students; lessons are planned; and students learn how to do a variety of art-making. Yet, there are also some key differences as noted by the participants in this study: It is a much more informal environment, with a smaller group of students that allows for more freedom, and more fun.

When asked why art was so consistently part of the CAC's programming, the Director of the CAC, Meg Dee, replied, "Well, I think art is important because it's a vehicle. First of all, it's an enrichment activity and it's often something that...it's always cut. – And I think it's particularly children in poverty that do not have access to it. And it's a way for children to learn about themselves, do introspection, look at and see self-assessment of their own creativity. It's a way to tell stories. It's a way to share about themselves. It's a way to learn about each other, and it's fun!"

One of the teachers at the CAC's summer program, Alicia Jones (pseudonym), an undergraduate art education student at Buffalo State, worked as an AmeriCorps volunteer; for her, this experience was a departure from the classroom experiences she'd had at her student teaching placements. There were challenges, she noted, in the length of the art classes, as well as in the uncertainty of who would show up each day to the drop in program. There was also a lot more freedom in the structure than a school art class might have.

TF: How would you say your program is different from a typical art class?

AJ: Well, it's definitely different because we had two-hour sessions so it's a lot longer. I think it's a little harder to keep kids, especially with the younger classes of kids, attention for that long, so that was something, and...it was a little bit more casual than a class, so we weren't so strict. We just, we let kids you know, really express themselves, and they could talk however much they wanted, or... not, but, it was definitely different because we didn't have kids attending every day, they could just come whenever they wanted so ...that was a challenge and at the same time it was kind of great.

TF: How were your lessons different than what you would plan in a school classroom?

AJ : We usually would have a teacher example but it wasn't step by step, you know you have to do it the way I'm doing. We gave the students the freedom to have as much of the time as they wanted to do, and then to expand on their ideas more and go the extra step.

In one lesson I observed at the summer program, taught by Alicia and two other undergraduate students, the children created story paintings based on artist Faith Ringgold's book *Tar Beach*. Instead of re-creating scenes from the book with the student flying over the city, like I have seen in several classrooms, the summer program kids were shown one of the teacher's examples illustrating a road trip he had taken one summer. After discussing the idea that students could make a painting about their own lives, and reiterating that they did not have to copy the teacher's example, the students got to work. Each ended up with something completely different. While they worked, they seemed absorbed in the task at hand. And when given an opportunity to share what they had made with one another, quite a few stood up to show what they had made.

The students at the summer program were new teachers finishing up their undergraduate degrees who worked with the guidance of an art education professor from

Buffalo State, Elaine Smith. Professor Smith was at the summer program mainly as a guide for the novice teachers, to “kind of give them different ideas and theoretical assumptions and underlying things” as she put it. Smith encouraged the students to develop the lessons they had planned in a way that would give the children coming to the program a venue to express what she calls their “authentic voice” – something she felt was missing from a lot of school art classes. Smith, in her visits to local schools, had seen many art projects that looked exactly alike, carbon copies of one another – “I even said to my students, I felt so sad. How could I send our student teachers to these classrooms to learn from the very thing (they were) not to do? So in this kind of informal setting [at the CAC], we can give [the students] more voice, more freedom. So that even, you know, we don’t have to push them to finish the work.”

The “school art style” described by Efland (1976) is one unique to schools, in which students copy teacher work, so that everything looks the same. While current trends in art education emphasize a more constructivist style of teaching, with art based on students’ own experiences (Simpson, 1996), many art classes, whether conscious of the impact or not, still utilize the school art style.

For the CAC, having college students teaching at the center helps fulfill Buffalo State’s mission of educating their students and providing opportunities for college students to learn through experiences in their disciplines; it also helps fulfill the mission of providing academic support – both through programming, and the experience of having (hopefully) positive interactions between college students and neighborhood youth. According to Fabian,

I would say that the goals of art program are for both the youth and the students that are teaching the classes to learn from [each other]. The youth are given the opportunity to learn from college students, so not only are they being taught a subject or being taught skills; (they) are being taught and exposed to college students, which they aren't necessarily exposed to in everyday life. It's very different to talk to them as opposed to an adult. I mean it's different talking to a teacher and getting an understanding that they are also students (who) can put you on more of an even playing field, and seeing students enjoying what they're going to school for can also help teach the youth in the area about college and hopefully make them want to go.

Having college students as teachers seems to make for a more relaxed atmosphere, one that allows for more student empowerment. Aside from making choices about their art projects, the structure of the after-school arts program offers students a non-school place to learn and to have fun. According to the CAC's Programming Coordinator, Maureen McCarthy (a former AmeriCorps volunteer and art teacher):

Outside the school, it opens up, I think, a lot in terms of how things are presented, (and) the relationships you have with students. It takes the teacher a little off that pedestal...It provides an opportunity I think for (lessons that are) more informal, less intimidating in some ways, more exploratory, less scripted...It is not school, and I think you can use that to your advantage. I think a lot of times children kind of shut down automatically because of the power structures that are embedded within those walls.

The informal structure of the CAC after-school arts program is one factor that sets it apart from a typical school art class. The program itself is free, and by student choice; the children who come are there because they like making art. From the observations I made at the after-school arts programs, some examples of the less-formal nature are apparent in the way the students call the teachers by their first names (sometimes Miss plus a first name), how they are able to choose where they sit, and often what they make. And the only rules are to be respectful to one another and to the CAC.

To Sherwood, one of the founders of the original after-school program (the one at the CAC gave a new home to), the freedom of this type of after-school art class is not only beneficial for the students attending the program, but also for the novice teachers planning and teaching the lessons. Sherwood explained, normally teachers planning lessons have to consider the learning objectives of the grade level or district, the state standards, the Common Core standards, etc; each of these places some level of restriction on lesson ideas. Yet at the after-school art program, she noted,

I love the fact that my preservice teachers have an opportunity to really think about something really engaging and exciting and fun. And you can actually say the word fun and use the word fun, but yet still meaningful, but without the worry of, “I would love for them to do this, but I’m not sure how I would assess this.” I’m not sure how I would make a concrete assessment. Because the reality of making (art) is that there are often intangibles and it doesn’t fit into a neat little assessment box. So these kinds of programs are fantastic for that reason.

This scenario lies in contrast to the assessment of student progress in a K-12 art classroom that is affected by standardized testing (Hoffman Davis, 2010). Rather than

worrying about assessments, grades, or tests, at the after-school arts programs, the students can simply make choices in terms of what they want their artwork to be about.

Once when I observed, students sat around a large group of tables pushed together in the middle of the room. The novice teachers passed out paper, watercolor paint, and brushes, and after some technical difficulties, started playing some jazz and classical music. Never was any direction given on *what* to paint, aside from the advice of painting along to the classical music playing through the computer speakers. Once, the lead teacher asked a student if she could show his work to the class. (He had been painting a colorful, abstract design along to the music, and she seemed to quite like it.) When he shook his head no, she simply said, “That’s okay, it’s private.” and moved on.

Because of this lack of direction in what and how to make their artwork, while there was some mess (particularly when one student decided to mix all the colors in the watercolor tray together). While this freedom prevented Efland’s (1976) School Style art from happening, some demonstration of how to use the materials may have been helpful for the students, like the one who mixed all the colors, who may not have used watercolors before. The benefit was that there was a plethora of all different kinds of work – one student painted a rainbow, another a sunset. A few students began copying one another by making large paintings of eyes, still another painted scenes of Paris inside a rose. There was no theme; the students were free to paint whatever they could imagine. For the older students in particular, the work just flowed, one painting after another. The younger students copied one another, a little less sure, a little (or a lot) more experimental. The art teachers could hardly keep up with the pace of handing out new paper, and eventually ran out of the thick watercolor paper they had been using. An

AmeriCorps volunteer got some construction paper from the store room, and the paintings continued. While a few students focused on perfecting one painting, most made painting after painting, in a feverish flurry of creative expression. They worked as if this were a rare event and at any moment might vanish. A sense of purpose filled the room.

At the end of class, after a brief showing of paintings, once the room was mostly cleaned up, T1 asked, “Can I ask, have you guys ever painted like this before, to music?” There was a mixed chorus of yes and no. She followed up, “Did you like it?” Unanimous shouts of “YES!” filled the air.

The freedom of expression, the informal atmosphere, and elements of fun combined in the after-school arts program to create an environment where students can come to learn about and make art, which as noted by Sabol (2010), has been increasingly limited in certain instances. While the freedom of the lesson I observed seemed to be fun for the students, the lack of formality did not mean there was a lack of educational value. According to Dr. Rena Upitis (2011), Professor of Arts Education in Kingston, Ontario, “there is a time and a place for learning through the arts – that is, using the arts as entry points to explore other subject areas...or using artistic means to approach themes” (p. 3). Both Upitis (2011) and Dewey (1899) agree that active learning, by doing, is important for a child’s education. As Upitis (2011) stated, “these active modes should be interwoven with positive social encounters” (p. 2). Particularly at the CAC, where students may be English Language Learners, this hands-on, “fun” approach to learning about art brings in elements of art history and art-making in a way that makes participation possible for all students, fluent English speakers or not.

The Success of the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative

The after-school arts program is one of the direct programs offered by the CAC, but it is not the only connection to the arts. Over the past year, the CAC was a major partner in the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative. When asked to discuss what kinds of things have been successful at the CAC thus far, an overwhelming majority of the participants responded in some way about the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative. To many of the participants, this project was not only a major success in the positive response from the community, but also in the partnerships it created, the attention it garnered for the neighborhood and participating organizations, and the springboard it formed for moving forward with new projects in the future.

The story of Grant Street Global Voices.

The Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative began in the winter of 2012, when the CAC, in conjunction with Young Audiences of Western New York, received an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for \$75,000. According to the NEA website, these Our Town grants are given to communities throughout the country who are “leveraging the arts and engaging design to make their communities more livable with enhanced quality of life, increased creative activity, a distinct sense of place, and vibrant local economies that together capitalize on their existing assets”, a process the NEA refers to as “creative place-making” (“Our Town”, n.d. <http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town>).

Creating new partnerships.

For the CAC, the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative was made possible by a partnership formed with Young Audiences of WNY, an organization dedicated to providing access to quality arts programming to children through work with

teaching artists. In order to qualify for the grant, the CAC needed a cultural partner. Cynnie Gaasch, director of Young Audiences of Western New York, mentioned the serendipity of how their partnership with the CAC came about:

CG: Actually I just ran into Gary Welborn from Buffalo State, who's my neighbor and I started chatting with him and he said, "Hey, I'm to go to this meeting to discuss an NEA grant for the Community Academic Center, maybe you'd be interested in coming." You know, and that's what happened.

TF: What was it that made you interested in working with the Community Academic Center and Buffalo State?

CG: Well, I personally and the organization have an interest in the West Side. We also had been thinking, maybe not immediate term but at some point, we wanted to build a partnership with one of the colleges or universities. So it seemed like the perfect opportunity in terms of our goals aligning. (Gaasch, personal communication, October 23, 2013).

Once Young Audiences was on board, Meg Dee (the Director of the CAC) wrote the grant, and while Dee, Gaasch, and a few others were pleasantly surprised they received it, they gratefully began to move forward. The grant proposal outlined a partnership between the Buffalo State, the CAC, Young Audiences (who brought on muralist Augustina Droze to create the centerpiece mural), local schools, various businesses on Grant Street, the City of Buffalo, and various other community organizations that supported the initiative with matching financial donations.

According to McCarthy, the initiative has been a success largely due to the support provided by each partner. She noted, "Grant Street Global Voices has been an

incredible achievement...And structure and financial support for the great work we've been doing that allowed us to push ourselves that much more, because we had strong partners and funding to support what we were doing. It strengthened our connections with [the local schools], with Young Audiences as well, and increased our capacity to reach youth in a really meaningful way to connect them to the community through the arts”

The Public Arts Initiative focused on including the community in the arts process, in a very grassroots kind of way. The centerpiece of the initiative would be a four-story mural, created by Droze, highlighting “The Immigrant Experience, Yesterday and Today,” an homage to the cultural diversity of the West Side, and its rich history of being a home to immigrants and refugees. Before the mural was created, over 60 workshops took places, taught by both Augustina Droze and another teaching artist, in two local public schools, and at various sites with participating community organizations. At the public schools, Droze worked with the students to create art that brought the students’ stories to the forefront, including a mini-mural project featuring small mono-chromatic panels created by high school students about the things they love or miss about their home. Students also created “personal patterns” that Droze used in her mural design as part of the background patterns (see Figure 1 on p. 43). Droze included students in the mural process not only by using their designs, but also by guiding students in the process of helping her paint parts of the mural. When it came time for painting the rest of the mural, Droze enlisted the help of Buffalo State students, who earned credit in a summer course for learning about public artworks. Student artworks from the workshops that were not featured in the mural were displayed in participating businesses’ windows along Grant Street.



Figure 3. Student artwork displayed in a storefront on Grant St.

The showcasing of the student artwork not only gave the students' voice a much wider audience than would have seen their artwork had it been displayed inside the schools in which it was made. It also gave the business owners a free, colorful display for their windows. At least one of the business owners was thrilled with the artwork; according to Cynn timer Gaasch, "One storeowner has started to talk to me about having a rotating display of student work in his space. So yeah, I think it's been a really good response."

Through the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative, new partnerships were created between the Community Academic Center, Young Audiences of Western New York, local schools, and businesses. These new partners helped expand the reach of the arts initiative to the community, making it more inclusive and giving the community a sense of ownership in the project.

Positive response from the community.

Part of the reason the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative has been considered such a success is due to the overwhelmingly positive response from the people in the community. Both the mural and the children's artwork were very much so in the public eye. According to the participants, the response from the public has been nothing but positive. As Dr. Welborn put it, "I think the response has been about as good as anyone could have anticipated." While artist Augustina Droze was installing the mural, people walking by had encouraging words to share. Droze was pleased with their responses, noting, "Everybody was great; everybody said it's so beautiful and it's just positive piece and really helps to transform the street. And I think it does."

According to Maureen McCarthy, the mural and the other artwork on display have made the West Side a destination, garnering positive attention for the community:

Especially with the mural, the reception has been incredibly warm, and it does seem to be becoming a destination of sorts, which is really great to see. And you can tell the scope of the project, not just the mural, but into the streets, with the art installation - understanding that this is work that happened by children and community members as well. People are surprised by that, how extensive the collaboration has been.

One person who came to see the mural after its completion had a special personal connection – he was one of the trumpet players featured. In the photograph, from the historical archives, he was a young boy. According to Droze,

I thought it was really cool, the guy, the Puerto Rican trumpet player, he came all the way here to see it...Everybody that I talked to on the street when I was working on it, when we were installing it, were really positive.

This display of art for the community, and by members of the community, was very popular with the members of the community – particularly the mural, which is prominently displayed on a four-story building. The mural features members of the community past and present, from prominent current residents, to photographs from the historical archives. This celebration and inclusion of the people that lived there made for a project that has been widely embraced. According to Siskar, the excitement over the mural has come not just in admiration of the mural itself, but as an impetus for further projects. In regards to the community, Siskar noted,

They love it as a symbol of the West Side, the image itself is powerful, but the notion of Global Voices as a way to use the arts to reflect the strengths of the West Side, economically, uh...residentially, if you will, and as a vibrant [multi-] cultural community, continues to grow.

The positive impact has meant an increased amount of publicity for the West Side and interest in the kinds of programs taking place at the Community Academic Center. Since the center is relatively new to the community, Grant Street Global Voices has helped raise awareness that the CAC exists, and is invested in the community. Meg Dee explained,

Well, I think the success...the challenges the first year were really getting people to know about us, and who we were. I think some of the challenges have been to offer things that the neighborhood and families and their children are interested in

and need, you know, our first year, enrollment was kind of low. But that's picked up a bit.

The attendance at the after-school arts program tends to fluctuate – over the course of both last year and this year, according to attendance records, the numbers start out higher, with around twelve students at the beginning of each school year. In both cases, it begins to fluctuate and shrink later on in the year. One of the goals at the CAC seems to be finding ways to spread the word about their programming so that these numbers stay more consistent, and hopefully grow. This has been addressed through programs, like the Summer Program, to keep a presence at the CAC going beyond the school year, and also through publicity like Grant Street Global Voices.

Springboard for future projects.

In addition to the positive response from the community, Grant Street Global Voices has helped the CAC increase its range of partnerships, as new groups have approached them to work on future public arts projects. Dr. Siskar explained,

I've been contacted by at least three groups who want to do arts-based projects on the West Side that celebrate or extend the Global Voices concept...That may result in artwork that is as...impressive in scale and scope as the mural project has been, and business folks are lining up to work with us on those as well.

Cynn timer Gaasch, Director of Young Audiences of WNY, also discussed the benefits of Grant Street Global Voices for Young Audiences:

TF: What do you think was the biggest success of the project?

CG: Well, for Young Audiences I think it really lifted our profile. You know, cause we mostly do work in schools, so the general public has no idea who we are, often. So this is a much more public opportunity and it gave us a way to work in the community that's very different from how we usually work. So the public aspect of it, and it that really involved collaboration was really nice to do with someone who was not a school or an after-school program.

The Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative has been a success. From the new partnerships formed between the CAC, Young Audiences of WNY, local businesses and schools, to the positive response from the community, to the increased publicity, the initiative has provided a range of benefits.

Reciprocity

The CAC was created as a sort of bridge from the campus to the urban neighborhood it inhabits. A gift from an alumna set up the possibility for having a presence in the community that could provide services in a neighborhood that struggles with a high rate of poverty and has an increasing influx of refugees attempting to settle in the community. The campus is able to provide services to the community at the CAC through direct programs and networking with other community groups and schools, while the site itself helps give college students real world experience. The Volunteer and Service Learning Center helped set up both AmeriCorps positions and Service Learning Courses, through which Buffalo State students can learn outside the classroom and get to know people in the community. It works as a win-win in which both the campus' and community's needs are being addressed.

According to Programming Coordinator Maureen McCarthy, the service learning program is a way of utilizing strengths in a way that allows for students from Buffalo State to gain experience, and allows for the direct programs the CAC offers for free to continue existing. As McCarthy noted,

Well, like the other content specialty programs, it's really this mutually beneficial, reciprocal, learning environment, where Buffalo State students and neighborhood youths are able to come together and learn from one another. And all of those individuals bring some very specific skills, and perspectives, and experiences that [are] important to share. So it's a space for the art educators, like we were just saying, to build that confidence; work, in perhaps, a less intimidating setting for your first time by yourself; to have that support of the department at Buffalo State and the people in the space to bring to life the things you're learning in the classroom. And with the goal in mind for the students to have access to that experience that they may not have otherwise, [with the] limited amount of time that children have access to the arts is not as much as anyone would like. So, we make it up for them in that way.

Due to the decreasing amount of time allowed in school for the arts, an out-of school learning experience like the after-school arts program at the CAC helps meet that need. Having art education students from Buffalo State teach those classes helps Buffalo State prepare its students for teaching by providing the opportunity for this hands-on experience.

Service Learning: Reciprocity

Part of the success in the CAC's ability to sustain itself thus far has been in staffing the direct programs, like the after-school arts program, with volunteers. Some of these volunteers have come in the form of AmeriCorps VISTAs, who work full days at the CAC creating programming and running day-to-day operations. When I was hired as an art teacher at the CAC's after-school program, it was as an AmeriCorps volunteer, with a required 300 hours of service over the course of the school year. I was paid in the form of a fund to be put toward my school expenses, which paid for a semester of my masters program. I worked with another AmeriCorps volunteer who held the same position, and was also an art education graduate student, to teach classes every week. When the funding for these two positions ended, the CAC remained flexible and looked for alternate means of running the art program. The Programming Coordinator approached two professors who seemed interested in the work going on at the CAC, to see if they would be interested in hosting service learning courses, where undergraduate students would come to the CAC each week and teach lessons.

Professor Kathy Sherwood, an art education professor whose art program was the basis for the CAC's after-school art program, accepted readily:

KS: I really wanted to get undergraduates involved again. Maureen [McCarthy, Programming Coordinator at the CAC] approached Dr. Smith and [me], she wanted to support us in getting students over there. So we discussed it and we decided that having it be attached to an actual official service learning course would make it easier to structure

that. So now for [this service learning course], as part of their 20 hours of fieldwork that they have to do for New York State requirements, it's an option. I can't make it mandatory, because some of them have jobs and things that conflict with the time. But the majority of them are doing it.

A few of the students participating in the service learning courses teaching this year's art program answered a questionnaire I left with their professor about their experiences teaching at the CAC (see Appendix D). I sent out ten questionnaires. Out of the three responses I received, all three had positive remarks about the experience they attained from teaching at the CAC. For many novice teachers, this is one of their first experiences teaching, and according to Professor Sherwood,

It's lovely, because it's sort of their first experience going out and actually teaching a lesson that they've developed...and then to experience of all the unique challenges that come with a drop-in program, versus, and when they're writing lesson plans in their initial methods course, they're doing it in an ideal situation, and they're going out and for the most part visiting classrooms in a K-12 school, so I like the fact that it causes them to have those other problems to solve, and you don't know necessarily the number or the ages, but it pushes them to think of something meaningful.

This experience enables novice teachers to gain first-hand experience teaching, and as novice teacher 3 responded, "You can never have too much experience teaching children" (personal communication, November 12, 2013).

In regards to what went well, all three novice teachers mentioned something about the students who came to the art program. Student teacher 1 answered, "The kids were

really respectful to the teachers so that was nice and made us [the teachers] more comfortable teaching them”). Novice teacher 2 stated, “The interest of the student(s) – very engaged. Also well-behaved.” Novice teacher 3 enjoyed “giving the students the free reign to explore their creativity.”

The only negative response about the experience came from novice teacher 2, who happened to teach on a day where there were more novice teacher volunteers than children to teach. The only complaint the novice teacher had was that on this particular day, “I realized that sometimes it’s a challenge to have too many people helping, and not enough students to help.” Aside from this one challenge, the rest of the responses reflected the positive feelings the novice teachers seemed to have in this service-learning class.

In terms of preparation for future careers, Sherwood reiterated the value of service-learning courses like this:

I think it’s helpful on every level. I think it helps them professionally, because you have to be brave in many ways. It’s kind of easy to sit in a classroom. Read a book and talk about it. Not that all that stuff’s not important, but then to actually go out and actually interact with people, and problem-solve with people, and work through communication issues with people, it’s invaluable.

Welborn reiterated the idea that authentic work experience in the field can be highly beneficial for college students. He noted, “Good service learning is about addressing real community needs, not just making up needs, and [about] having programs that have

students involved in [addressing] needs that are also addressing student learning outcomes, academic objectives.”

For the CAC, having service learning courses attached to programming has been a win-win; the CAC gets to run programs that help meet the needs of community members free of charge, and the college students are able to obtain work experience in a setting that reinforces what they are learning about in their field. Meg Dee, Director of the CAC, emphasized the “rich experiences” that the college students can have working at the CAC:

TF: The volunteer and service learning component brings a lot of Buffalo State students into the CAC. What do you think are some of the things the Buffalo State students are getting out of that experience?

MD: I think exposure to different cultures, different ways of life, just, I think, for some people working with younger people...just being able to have that experience, with just a variety of children from all walks of life and all experiences and I think that is so rich, and you know, you just can't get that everywhere.

Students' perceptions of the benefits of service learning courses varied, from getting to know people in the community better, to the value of real-world teaching experience. Novice teacher 2, in a questionnaire response, wrote:

I would recommend service learning courses to other students because it gets you involved in the community and really increases your awareness [of] who really makes up Buffalo. There are many more refugees than I thought (especially after helping out with the English Language Learners who I helped with painting and mixing colors).

Novice teacher 3 also seemed to enjoy the experience, claiming that service learning course was a “great way to gain teaching experience!” Each of the novice teachers whether in person during observations or via questionnaire, expressed that they had had positive experiences and said they would recommend taking a service learning course to other students.

While the student response to service learning in this case has been unanimously positive and has kept the CAC’s art program running, part of the challenge is finding professors willing to take on the work of service learning courses. To Sherwood, the benefits for the students outweigh the extra work she puts into planning the course.

TG: What is it about these outside of class experiences that you think is important?

KS: That’s an excellent question. Because it really is more work! (Laughs). That’s the one thing. It really is more work than just teaching a class and having that one component...Often times [it] is challenging, and certainly more work, and sometimes there’s not the same kind of recognition you would get if you were doing some kind of traditional academic publishing or other kind of things. However, the richness of what takes place when you have those kind of experiences, [for instance]... I’ve seen really people’s opinion about certain populations transformed.

The challenge with having service learning courses’ students teach at programs like those offered at the CAC is that there are only a small number of professors currently teaching these courses – and more are needed to take on the extra work of setting up these out-of-the-classroom experiences. Professor Sherwood is optimistic that this number will grow, particularly, as both she, Dr. Siskar, Dr. Welborn, and Maureen McCarthy noted, Buffalo State is applying for the Carnegie certification of Community

Engagement, to further their mission as a school dedicated to the community. As Sherwood said,

There's absolutely room to grow, and with Buffalo State applying to become a Carnegie School of Community Engagement, that will only help the cause and hopefully continue. Because a lot of professors are interested in it, but it's not campus-wide by any means. There's just sort of a pocket of people, it's a growing pocket, but it isn't the entire campus. So I think that if we got that, that would make the entire campus more aware. And I think, from talking to other professors, a lot of times it's really just making, they sometimes, if they're not used to doing it, they just see extra work. So it's really a matter of convincing them that the extra work is worth it.

She remained adamant that the benefits for Buffalo students outweigh any challenge put forth by the extra work, particularly for education students, in a time when entering the field of education is increasingly demanding.

It gives them a chance to see that there are alternative types of jobs, careers, teaching-related things if they wanted to go that route. There are community-based art programs that they can be involved in. In this competitive job market, I think it's good for them to see all the kinds of things that are out there.

As I mentioned in the introduction, previous to teaching at the CAC's after-school art program, I had been working as a substitute teacher in various capacities. While I was vaguely aware of a few community arts providers in the city, I did not fully consider the option of working at one until Maureen McCarthy, the CAC's Programming Director,

came to one of my classes in the graduate program at Buffalo State, looking for volunteer art teachers.

The experience I obtained while working as an art teacher at the CAC was, as the novice art teachers described in their questionnaires, all positive. As a new teacher myself, it gave me the experience of planning a curriculum based on a theme. It also provided me with the valuable experience of collaborating with others. I taught every class alongside my teaching partner, Zoe Fabian, which meant weekly planning meetings and coming up with ideas together. To complete our volunteer hours, Zoe and I also taught art classes at a local library as part of a weekly program offered by one of the refugee resettlement agencies. For a few weeks, we even taught art at a local Laundromat as part of a project aimed at bringing the arts to a community in a space where there is a lot of time spent waiting – the laundromat. I loved every part of it – the planning even felt like fun. I met so many wonderful, dedicated people; it was exciting to work alongside them. And the students we taught were creative, enthusiastic, and sweet. For novice teachers, this experience, free from the stress of assessment and evaluation, can be so rewarding. I am so glad I made the choice to participate, and hope that service learning continues to expand on campus.

The CAC's system of supporting direct programs, like the after-school arts program, with novice teachers from Buffalo State's service learning courses and AmeriCorps volunteers creates a reciprocal relationship in which the community benefits from the free programs offered, and Buffalo State benefits from the opportunities provided for their students to learn in a real world setting with hands on experience.

Building Strong Partnerships

The success and sustainability of the programs I studied largely depend on partnerships between the campus, community organizations, local businesses, and governing structures. These partnerships form the collaborative core of what keeps the CAC (particularly, as I studied, its art programming) going. At the heart of these partnerships is an ongoing process of open and ongoing communication, recognizing each partner's (and individual person's) strengths, and building trust by ensuring that the needs of each side are, in some way, being met. In order to form partnerships, outreach is integral; awareness of what resources are available comes most from attending meetings, and getting to know people from different organizations who can help make connections.

How to be a good partner: Enthusiasm and open communication.

In order to have some level of success and sustainability in any relationship, it seems important that the partners work well together and have some awareness of one another's needs. In several interviews, participants mentioned the importance of having people involved who care, who are vested in the success of an outcome and willing to work to make it happen.

Cynnie Gaasch, director of Young Audiences of Western New York, suggested that perhaps one of the more essential components of a good partnership is the enthusiasm of the people involved in the project.

TF: What kind of things need to be in place in a community like on the West Side for projects like GSGV to be a success?

CG: You need the support and I would say that's it anywhere, you know, if you're going to school where you don't have at least one teacher or a principal who is really

enthusiastic about it you're not going to be successful. So you need to have people who want to a part of it and partner and become involved what you doing, for sure. I think that's a good question. I think the partners are probably the key thing.

If you have people who are interested and engaged in the project at hand, it tends to improve the working relationships between groups. Partnerships are like any relationship, they require open communication, actions that build trust, a healthy amount of respect, and having one another's needs met. Dr. Welborn emphasized the importance of communication and trust in his interview, stopping at one point to note:

So, ... just to underline, this notion of addressing real community needs, you know, you have to have this discussion going on, on an ongoing basis and build trust, build respect, in order for that to really be able to work well.

Welborn himself lives on the West Side, and had spent years working alongside various community groups. He recognized the importance of not just going out and starting up programs based on the college's assumptions about the neighborhood, but realizing that to have programs that worked, you need feedback from the people you are serving. He talked about the CAC's first year as a time spent starting programs, but also listening to the kinds of things people had to say, and being surprised by the overwhelming response:

[At the CAC, we] really looked at the first year as a time to listen to the community, so we got some programs started, but tried to find ways to open the doors so people would come in and tell us what they thought should and could be happening there. You know, so it just, I don't know, it was like a gusher.

In its two years open, the CAC has added programs, like dance, digital storytelling, and other services for English Language Learners, extending as necessary through partnerships with other community groups with similar goals. Having these additional programs, and working with partners to provide a variety of services can also increase the attendance as people who are coming for one reason learn about the other options that are out there. Sometimes, publicity can happen just through word of mouth. As Professor Sherwood explained,

What seems to me to really be a plus at the CAC is they have all different kinds of other programming. Those seem to be good opportunities to get the word out. So if a family is coming for help with English, or a family is coming for help with finances, or any other types of programming that are going on there, they also then can hear about what else is going on here. Oh, you have young kids, oh we have this. It's nice to have something that offers multiple types of programming. And that also has partnerships with multiple groups like the CAC has...because then those other groups again can spread the word.

As the CAC is looking serve the community on a long-term basis, it is important to help spread the word about programs on this individual, word-of-mouth level. In a neighborhood with over 70 languages spoken, the value of this kind of publicity, shared through partnering groups, is extremely helpful.

Working in partnerships with others can be a challenge; here needs to be open communication, needs on both sides must be met, and a lot of meetings need to occur to keep everyone on the same page. Yet, aside from sharing resources and being able to better meet the needs of the people coming for the services provided, there is a benefit

emerging from all this collaboration. National organizations that provide funding for grants are beginning to offer grants to organizations who collaborate to make their neighborhoods a better place. According to Gaasch:

I think it's exciting that nonprofits, foundations like the NEA and other organizations are interested in funding the development of communities through creative placemaking, which is art. Making art happen locally is a great opportunity, and one of their priorities in [the NEA grant] guidelines is that it be a collaboration so that it brings different constituencies within the community together. So they're seeing that it's a priority. Each of the groups becomes stronger working together, so I do think it's a valuable thing to do.

For organizations like the CAC and Young Audiences who have experienced success through collaboration, this news is exciting, providing opportunities for further funding to sustain their programs.

Conclusion: Summary of Findings

Over the course of this study, I learned a great deal about the CAC, and how its partnerships with the campus, community organizations, and local businesses are shaping the neighborhood. The diversity of the West Side, due in a large part to the presence of an influx of immigrants and refugees to Buffalo's West Side neighborhood, helped inspire the programming at the CAC, whose mission is to support families in the community. For the people who come to work at the CAC, whether as volunteers, artists, professors, or novice teachers, the experience of working with this uniquely diverse neighborhood has

created new relationships and the incomparable understanding that can arise from opportunities to learn from one another.

While the CAC offers many services, my focus is on the arts. One of the consistent programs in rotation since the CAC opened its doors is the after-school arts program. The after-school arts program, including the summer program (offered over the summer of 2013), has some similarities to a school art class: the classes are taught and planned by teachers (albeit novice teachers), and students learn how to do a variety of art-making. Yet there are also some key differences. As noted by the participants in this study, it is a much more informal environment, with a smaller group of students, allowing for more freedom, and more fun.

Over the past year, the CAC was a major partner in the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative. To many of the participants, this project was not only a major success in the positive response from the community, but also in the partnerships it created, the attention it garnered for the neighborhood and participating organizations, and the springboard it formed for moving forward with new projects in the future. The CAC was created as a sort of bridge from the campus to the urban neighborhood it inhabits. The campus is able to provide services to the community at the CAC through direct programs and networking with other community groups and schools, while the site itself helps give college students real world experience. Service learning courses and AmeriCorps volunteer positions allow Buffalo State students to learn outside the classroom and get to know people in the community. It works as a win-win in which both the campus' and community's needs are being addressed.

The success and sustainability of the programs I studied largely depend on partnerships between the campus, community organizations, local businesses, and governing structures. These partnerships form the collaborative core of what keeps the CAC (particularly, as I studied, its art programming) going. At the heart of these partnerships is an ongoing process of open and ongoing communication, recognizing each partner's (and individual person's) strengths, and building trust by ensuring that the needs of each side are, in some way, being met.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

Over the course of this study, I learned a great deal about the CAC, particularly in regards to how it works. As an after-school art teacher, I was immersed in teaching. I knew very little about how the site functioned beyond the vague idea that somehow the campus was involved in its governance, and that additional services were offered to the community. My experiences working with the after-school art program made me interested in learning more. Throughout my education as an art teacher, the majority of our focus was on teaching in schools. Yet here was a non-school environment in a unique situation of bridging the campus with the community, a place where college students could get real-world experience in a community. For me, it was such a positive experience. I was intrigued by how the CAC was able to provide these free services and classes. As a graduate student, I used this curiosity to fuel this study, interviewing students teaching classes, directors of programming from both the CAC and various community groups, and members of the governing board in control of the CAC. I learned just how little I knew, and a lot about the people and groups invested in this project. The findings I came up with reflect the collaborative work that enables the CAC to exist. While there are a variety of programs offered through the CAC, my focus as an art educator was on those related to the arts. In the following section, I will describe what I learned over the course of this study, as several categories emerged from the findings.

What I Learned From This Study

Over the course of the study, I learned a variety of ways the CAC operates to provide services to the community. As an art educator, my interest primarily resided in

the arts programming offered at the CAC, through the after-school arts program and the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative. After a series of interviews, observations, and questionnaires, the biggest concepts that emerged from the data are outlined below. Overall, they paint a picture of a campus-community partnership focused on utilizing the assets of the community to make the neighborhood a better place to live, work, and learn.

The value of service learning.

The CAC's system of supporting direct programs, like the after-school arts program, with novice teachers from Buffalo State's service learning courses and AmeriCorps volunteers creates a reciprocal relationship in which the community benefits from the free programs offered, and Buffalo State benefits from the opportunities provided for their students to learn in a real world setting with hands on experience.

What I learned over the course of this study began with my own experience as an AmeriCorps volunteer art teacher. The experiences I had as an art teacher at the CAC not only helped me widen the horizons of the work experience on my resume, but also gave me the valuable experiences of collaborating with others to teach lessons in a variety of settings from the CAC, to a library program and a laundromat. I was able to work with a teaching partner to plan lessons around a central theme, and to really enjoy the process of teaching without the concern of assessment or how to best evaluate the students' work. To clarify, this is not to say that assessment did not happen; during my time teaching at the CAC, my teaching partner and I were constantly informally assessing the students' responses to the art lessons, as well as reflecting upon the results of each lesson at our weekly meetings. I believe that currently, there is a trend toward over-assessment in

public education; being able to focus more on content and hands-on activities than formal assessment was a welcome change.

From what I saw over the course of this study, and what I heard during interviews with the participants involved, service learning courses have been valuable for both the CAC's arts programming, and for the students who participate. This reciprocal relationship is a win-win situation, in which the CAC is able to provide programming free to the public, and the students who work there gain work experience in a hands-on environment. The novice teachers who taught at the after-school arts program this past semester seemed to enjoy the service learning courses they were part of; each had something positive to say about their teaching experience.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, some of the challenges of running after-school programming include a lack of funding and a high turnover rate of employees (Miller, 2001). With the relationship between Buffalo State and the CAC, the service learning courses help lower the cost of running programs. The novice teachers were teaching as volunteers, not paid employees. This meant, however, that there were different students teaching each week (with a few repeats). This could be seen as a high turnover rate, as the students will inevitably complete their coursework and move on. However, it could also be argued that having service learners teach the after-school arts program provided a schedule of teachers, for a full semester. If the professors involved choose to continue the service learning courses, there will be art education students present to continue to teach the after-school arts program.

As professor Sherman mentioned, the challenge is finding professors willing to take on the extra work. Buffalo State, however, has a mission of community engagement,

and is looking to expand its community engagement through the Carnegie classification of community engagement, as mentioned earlier. So there is an incentive to expand service learning classes across campus.

At the heart of service learning is the spirit of collaboration, setting up students with community partners for which they can do meaningful work. The novice teachers worked with other novice teachers and their professors to plan the lessons they taught. So, being novice teachers, the professors were present to guide them through the planning process and ensure the lessons being taught were high quality, and the novice teachers, working together, were able to teach with a partner instead of on their own.

Service learning courses seem to offer a mutually beneficial solution to the challenges faced by after-school programming. The novice teachers are able to gain experience in a setting that enhances what they are learning in the classroom; for many, this is their first teaching experience, in a setting with more flexibility than a typical classroom in a school. With the support of a professor, the novice teachers can plan and teach lessons of their choice at the CAC. For its part, the CAC is able to run programming in a way that allows local children to meet college students, and saves on the cost of running programs. The collaboration between the campus and the CAC, and among the college students and their professors, helps ensure that the students and teachers are learning from one another.

Building networks, for the greater good.

One of the major themes that emerged from the data was the importance of building networks. Whether trying to begin or expand community programming or figure out how to best meet the needs of the people being served, it seems that the road to

success is paved with partnerships, support, and communication. As Dr. Siskar noted, the biggest problem he saw was that people were unaware of the services that existed in the community. In order to go about solving this dilemma, a network-building initiative is in the works. To support this initiative, the CAC, among other partners, is re-applying for Promise Neighborhood grant, which would provide funding for this network to be established, and communication structures to be put into place so that wraparound services could be provided to support families on the West Side.

Even with the organizations that currently exist to aid those in need, there is still a great need for support in this neighborhood, particularly because we live in one of the poorest cities in America. As Dr. Siskar put it,

If you look at those programs, every one of those programs, ... you can find a child whose life has been changed. However, when you look across the system, the city, the school system, the neighborhood, and in this case, the West Side neighborhood, no one has created a program where we don't have the horrible headlines we have about graduation rates, about kids not passing exams, about gangs etc., and violence, and all the other things these kids are dealing with on a daily basis.

The “things these kids are dealing with” that Siskar mentioned fall directly in line with Berliner’s (2009) assertion that out-of-school factors, caused by great economic inequality, effect students’ lives far greater than schools can address on their own. The idea of the West Side Promise Neighborhood is to provide wraparound services to help address needs on a variety of fronts, with each of the participating organizations working

as part of a team to combat the negative factors playing into the lives of families within the community.

Although the grant proposal was rejected the first time they applied, Siskar feels confident in their next attempt, noting that over “60 different groups that have signed up” with “13 different task forces” each headed by a community member who is “already way too busy – who do not volunteer for things” – these are people who are already working more hours than their full time jobs require, but who believe strongly enough in the project that they are willing to move forward and begin working, even without the federal grant money. These partnerships strengthen the ability of making an impact, creating strength in numbers. Dr. Siskar explained,

In an age of limited resources, where resources are becoming more and more limited, the question has to be how can we work together with the resources we have, to do this systemic change that individually, we have not been able to do so far?

The services are there, and in many cases groups exist that could help one another. Grant Street Global Voices helped pave the way for these partnerships to happen. Grant Street Global Voices helped spread publicity about the CAC and Young Audiences, and demonstrated each partner’s ability to collaborate with a multitude of groups from the city government to local businesses and schools. The grant from the NEA was proof that the funding is there, and that there is an interest on the part of national organizations who provide funding for this type of collaborative work. As Cynn timer Gaasch noted,

It is a great opportunity and one of their priorities in their guidelines that it be a collaboration, so that brings different constituencies within the community

together, so they're seeing that it's a priority...Each of the groups become stronger I think working together; so I do think it's a valuable thing to do.

With a growing field of partners, the CAC's network is expanding, leading the way for further programming. There are people motivated and willing to work together to do good things in service of the community.

An assets-based approach to community collaboration.

From the findings that emerged in this study, one other over-reaching theme developed. At first, it was not so apparent, but over time, after interviewing ten people involved with various aspects of the CAC, Young Audiences, and the Grant Street Global Voices project, I realized that the people involved, particularly on the planning level, were approaching their jobs and the community they served with an eye toward the positive. The challenges of an increasing poverty level, decreased funding available across the board, and negative headlines are problems being faced with realism, and also with creativity. The focus for all stakeholders seemed to reflect looking realistically at the assets available, and then working together to have the greatest impact.

In Maureen McCarthy's 2010 master's thesis, she postulated that the after-school art program she was studying at the time was successful in large part due to an assets-based approach to the students – allowing the students' strengths and perspectives to shine through, rather than focusing on the deficits. McCarthy wrote,

If the motivation of an after-school art program is grounded in belief that art will save children ultimately from themselves and their cultures, the children and their communities may be alienated. Instead, utilizing an "assets model" framework allows children's perspectives and strengths to take precedence.

The data reflects that the CAC and their partners' approach to the West Side community is similar to the assets-based approach referred to by McCarthy. The Grant Street Global Voices project is one example of allowing the perspectives and strengths of the communities on the West Side to take precedence. For instance, the artwork featured in the project told the stories of the individuals, past and present whose presence has shaped the neighborhood. Additionally, featuring student artwork in business storefronts allowed for the students to share their stories with the local community.

The collaboration between various groups – Buffalo State, Young Audiences, local schools, businesses, and government officials, among others – is another example of utilizing strengths and pooling assets to reach a common goal. These partnerships would not have worked so well had it not been for the recognition and use of each of their strengths.

The assets-based approach to the community goes beyond what the individual student or person has to offer, and looks at the community as a whole: What are the strengths of the community? How can one bring people together, in a grass-roots sort of way? An assets-based approach does not alienate people or their cultures, but rather embraces and respects what they have to offer. As Meg Dee, Director of the CAC, noted about honoring strengths and empathy.

What is so, so important is to, and it's a social work principle, ...to meet families and children where they're at; and you know, this is who they are. And please don't just make them fit into a box. Look and honor and respect their strengths, and what they bring, and build on those, rather than make people fit into, you

know, one perspective....It just reinforces, ...the importance of empathy, too, for people who've had unimaginable experiences.

The feeling among the stakeholders in this community is one of honoring and respecting the strengths of people who make up a community and not just a matter of what it takes to be successful; it is basic human decency.

Why is this study important for the field of art education?

Over the course of this study, I witnessed the benefits of an art curriculum that allowed students more freedom, a public arts project that not only helped tell the story of a diverse, culturally rich community but also led to new partnerships and increased interest in the West Side, and of a campus working with its own community to form a reciprocal relationship where both sides' needs are met.

I believe that other community organizations and after-school arts programs can learn from the collaborative efforts in place at the CAC to maintain their programming. With so many cuts to arts programming, providing free arts programming can be a challenge. The CAC's search and acquisition of grants has helped alleviate some costs. In addition, the service learning program has allowed for college students who are in the field of art education to teach classes, which gave these students experience, as well as maintained the after-school arts program. While these students are novice teachers, under the guidance of their professors they reported enjoying their experiences on the questionnaires.

From the data in this study, one of the most important implications for art classes in schooling is the amazing results of taking the learning outside of the classroom and connecting to the community. Witnessing the engagement of the students who were

making art from their own experiences showed how important it is to connect classroom learning to students' lives, as suggested by Efland (1976) and Gude (2009). Making artwork to a community-wide level connects classroom learning to the real world. During observations, I witnessed the freedom students at the after-school program were offered while working on their projects, from as many pieces of paper as they wanted to paint, to their choice in what they wanted to make. Several of the participants interviewed mentioned that what sets the after-school arts program apart from a regular art class is this freedom of expression for the students. The fact that this is not a school art classroom meant that there was room to explore ideas, without worrying about assessment.

While this freedom did have benefits, as mentioned above, the art classes were not a complete free-for-all. In my experience teaching at the CAC, as well as from what I gathered interviewing the professors and observing the novice teachers, each lesson was carefully planned beforehand, with materials prepared for each week. The lack of formal assessment, such as tests, quizzes, or grades for art projects, is freeing for the planning process; yet the informal assessments remain. Novice teachers still seemed to be monitoring the art lesson, noting students' participation levels, asking questions, and reflecting upon the how the teaching experience went after class was over. In terms of learning about art, however, in some cases there could have been a more structured approach to demonstrating how to use some of the art supplies, or introducing connections to art history. For many teachers, particularly those who are new to the field, part of the challenge of teaching is finding ways to effectively help students learn content in a way that is hopefully exciting and engaging. Through the Grant Street Global Voices Project, teaching artists like Augustina Droze helped bring the spirit of the community to

life through workshops that culminated in a large-scale mural. It would be interesting to see how further collaborations could bring professors, art teachers in schools, novice teachers and teaching artists together to learn from one another and provide further access to the arts.

The public display of student art in storefronts is a simple way of taking the art room beyond the walls of the school. This was a win-win situation for the businesses who participated and the students involved. Businesses enjoyed a free, eye-catching display, and students showcased their ideas and experiences. This event of showing their work, not just on a school bulletin board or in a district art show, to people in the community takes their art-making to a new place, with the knowledge that their personal expression will be seen by others out in the world.

Finally, collaboration through the arts has been an integral component of the arts programming at the CAC. By bringing in groups ranging from Buffalo State, to Young Audiences, to local businesses and schools, to the city government, the arts programming has grown and expanded beyond the art classroom into the surrounding community. In the field of art education, very often art teachers work as the only art teacher in a building, or one of a few. Opportunities for collaboration seem limited. Yet, as I learned over the course of this study, opportunities for collaboration exist, as long as there are willing partners. Sometimes it means looking outside school walls, working with businesses, or arts organizations, or community members. Either way, as noted by Furman (2004), Hughes (2011), Bodilly et al. (2008), and Borwick (2012), collaboration can help create a more democratic environment, reduce feelings alienation, and ensure

that the voices of all involved are heard. In the case of this study, collaboration can help create arts programs that offer a wider range of possibilities than working on one's own.

Recommendations

For people looking to do a similar study, I would recommend doing several things differently. To do full justice to future studies, I recommend more time to observe and interview people involved with the CAC's arts programs. The richness of this and other community agencies that serve the neighborhood could be studied at far greater length than I had time for during this study. Further research related to similar community arts providers both locally and abroad would also be helpful to compare and contrast with the arts programming at the CAC. At the end of my fieldwork, what I wished for most was more time.

Another aspect of this case study I would do differently is that I would interview students who were involved with both the after-school arts program and the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative. While the focus of my study had more to do with the administrative processes of the planning, outreach, and partnerships that enable the programming to take place, it would have been interesting to learn about the opinions of the students who participated in the programming offered. The challenge in this case with interviewing students under the age of eighteen is that I would have needed permission from their parents. With language barriers and a drop-in program with different students from week to week, I decided to forego the option of interviewing students.

Additionally, I would have interviewed more people involved with the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative such as business owners, community members, the local public schools, or people who were featured in the mural. Again, with

the time I had, I had to set boundaries on where my research would start and end, and stay focused on what was most important to the study. Still, it would have rounded out the study a little more nicely to have these missing perspectives.

I would compare the CAC's after-school arts program and public arts initiative with other community groups and arts-focused after-school programs. With the limited time, this was not an option. But after reading through Darlene Garcia-Torres' 2013 master's thesis about the sustainability of another local community arts organization, I realized how interesting and beneficial it might be to compare how they operate and the kinds of programs they offer beyond the K-12 classroom.

Finally, each of the contributors to the CAC's arts programming – the art education professors teaching service-learning courses, the art education students teaching the classes, the Grant Street Global Voices project supporters like Young Audiences of Western New York, the teaching artists, the local businesses, the students, the CAC staff for assisting in the programming – all had to work together collaboratively in order for the programs to work.

Conclusion

This case study on how an after-school arts program fosters collaboration in an urban environment provides insight into how Buffalo State's Community Academic Center has worked with arts organizations, local businesses and schools, as well as college students and faculty members to provide access to the arts in a unique, diverse community. Hopefully this study provides a useful model for other organizations and groups on how to utilize open communication and a focus on assets and strengths of community to work with new partners, and successfully collaborate with others to

provide programming in the arts. For the field of art education, the study provides successes that can stretch the learning that takes place in classrooms beyond the school walls, incorporate students' own ideas and life experiences, and bring their art to the community.

The findings of this study show that the Community Academic Center's work brings people together to provide access to the arts in the form of after-school arts programs and a public arts initiative that took art to the streets. These arts programs could not have existed without successful collaboration between the various groups involved. Their focus on embracing diversity, listening to the needs of the community, and building trust with the people they work with has led to new partnerships, and a goal of providing wraparound services for those in need through further collaborations between a wider network of groups. The utilization of service learning and a spirit of volunteerism have sustained the Community Academic Center's programming, in addition to making sure that Buffalo State is following through with its mission of educating its future teachers by providing them with rich, real-world experiences.

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Appendix A: Letter to Director

April 23, 2013

Dear Director:

As a graduate student at Buffalo State College, I am conducting a research project in order to learn more about how the Grant St. Global Voices Public Arts Initiative (GSGV) has utilized collaboration to promote the arts. This study is to understand the methods and strategies used by the GSGV initiative to work together with other organizations and people to provide arts programming for the community.

I will collect information from staff, volunteers, and teaching artists through observations of the CAC environment, informal interviews with audio recording, conversations, questionnaires, and photographs of student work.

Your participation will be helpful to my research project and is completely voluntary. There are minimal risks involved, but no more than in the daily routine of work for the CAC. All information will be confidential and used for educational research purposes only. Fictitious names will be used to protect your identity as well as the school itself.

If you choose to participate you may withdraw at any time during the study. No penalty will result if you do not participate, however, I would certainly appreciate your participation in this research study furthering my education and others knowledge on this subject matter. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at (716) 913-8512 or email me at giblta66@mail.buffalostate.edu

Please complete the bottom of this form. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy Giblin

-
- I agree upon these terms and **I will be participating** in the study described above.

*Please check your preferences below.

I give my consent to:

Video Recording of Observations/Interviews

Audio Recording of Interviews

Photography of the Interview Site

-OR-

- I do not agree upon these terms and **I will not be participating** in the study described above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

**If you are unable to reach a member of the research team and have general questions, or have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact

Gina Game, IRB Administrator, SUNY Research Foundation/Buffalo State at (716) 878-6700 or gameg@rf.buffalostate.edu.

Appendix B: Letter to Administrator

April 29, 2013

Dear Administrator:

As a graduate student at Buffalo State College, I am conducting a research project in order to learn more about how the Grant St. Global Voices Public Arts Initiative (GSGV) has encouraged collaboration through the arts. This study is to understand the methods and strategies used by the GSGV initiative to work together with other organizations and people to provide arts programming for the community. As a volunteer art teacher at the Community Academic Center's Visual Arts Program, my experience had inspired the course of my research; I believe learning more about this particular organization's process of collaboration through the arts would greatly benefit my study. I have discussed my research project with Maureen McCarthy, who has agreed to be a participant. I hope you will agree to these terms also.

I will collect information from staff, volunteers, and teaching artists through observations of the CAC environment, informal interviews with audio recording, conversations, questionnaires, and photographs of student work.

Your participation will be helpful to my research project and is completely voluntary. There are minimal risks involved, but no more than in the daily routine of work for the CAC. All information will be confidential and used for educational research purposes only. Fictitious names will be used to protect your identity as well as the school itself.

If you choose to participate you may withdraw at any time during the study. No penalty will result if you do not participate, however, I would certainly appreciate your participation in this research study furthering my education and others knowledge on this subject matter. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at (716) 913-8512 or email me at giblta66@mail.buffalostate.edu

Please complete the bottom of this form. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy Giblin

-
- _____ **I approve the study** described above and will move forward on approving the researcher to conduct it within my organization
 - OR-
 - _____ **I do not approve the study** described above and will not move forward on approving the researcher to conduct it within my school.

Administrator

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**If you are unable to reach a member of the research team and have general questions, or have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What is your role in participating in the Grant Street Global Voices Public Arts Initiative? What was the project you worked on?
2. How did you become involved with this project?
3. What were some of the goals of your project (to clarify or follow up: within the community and in terms of the arts)?
4. What is it about this particular initiative that made you interested in being a part of it?
5. Describe the role the arts played in the development of your project.
6. What was an AHA moment or a success of your project? What was a challenge?
7. What do you believe happens when a community embraces the arts?
8. What have you learned from your experiences?
9. What was the community's response to this project? Follow Up: How has this project impacted the community? How has it impacted you?
10. What do you think the future holds for this public arts initiative?

Appendix D: Questionnaire

AED Course Service-Learning Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation. Please do not put your name on the paper. Your answers are confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of helping Tracy Fox with her research. If you are interested in learning more about the study, you may contact her at tagiblin@gmail.com

1. How many lessons did you teach at the Community Academic Center (CAC)?
2. Describe the lesson you taught (Did you have a teaching partner? How did that work? What was the lesson about?).
3. What were your impressions of the CAC before you went there?
4. How did your professor help you prepare for this experience?
5. What were some of the challenges of teaching your lesson?
6. What do you think went well?
7. In your experience, how is an art class at the CAC's after-school program different from an art class in a school setting?
8. What did you learn from this experience?
9. Would you recommend service-learning courses to other students? Why/Why not?

Thank you for your time!

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