

*Critical perspectives on arts integration in learning: for whom and why?*

Suzanne Windsor-Liscombe, University of British Columbia, Canada

The Asian Conference on Education 2014  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

In the current educational marketplace, the range of school options has made parents key players in their children's elementary school education. Unlike previous decades, where students typically attended their neighbourhood schools, today's parents are more likely to transport their children greater distances to their school of choice. This paper draws on a case study that investigated parental perceptions of an arts-integrated (generally known as fine arts) public elementary school in British Columbia, Canada. The arts-integrated curriculum attracted a growing number of families who resided outside of the school's catchment area. Data collected through interviews with both parents and educators detail among other things, parents' expectations and understandings of such schools, and the complex reasons why they enrol their children. The study also supports research which suggests that schools of choice are generally accessed by the middle-class families seeking advantage for their children. To whom does an arts-integrated pedagogy appeal, and why? The study reveals that the main value of arts-integrated schools may be as enablers of student success in behaviour, socialization and academic terms. But, arts-integrated schools can also be spaces of self-fulfillment for parents who, through choice of school and active participation there, feel that they have played a more profound role in their child's education.

Keywords: space, school choice, arts integration, middle class, parents, educators, neo-liberalism

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

### **Critical perspectives on arts integration in learning: for whom and why?**

*Once upon a time there was a public elementary school, sitting on the brink of closure. Situated in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, it had once accommodated more than 240 students. Now its population sat at 90. But it was not to suffer the fate of many small elementary schools whose student populations disappear. It did not become a book deposit or storage facility. Nor did it become a rentable space for community groups. Instead, it came to life as an arts-integrated school. Purporting to offer a new pedagogic approach, its classrooms quickly became full once again. This has motivated my investigation into the value of the visual and performing arts in education, ultimately questioning to whom they appeal, and why?*

### **A little history**

In 2002 the British Columbia Ministry of Education passed Bill 34 which placed the onus on school districts to create their own revenue. The Ministry would now provide funding, based on a per-pupil basis, and thus school districts now found it necessary to become entrepreneurial, corporate entities (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 7). Within public education there are limited means to do this, the main two being the recruitment of international students, and the other, that of program option, or choice schools: those that draw students into school districts through the provision of a specific learning focus. Mosaic Elementary School<sup>1</sup> is one such school. Now an arts-integrated elementary school, its population has risen dramatically due to the number of students enrolled from outside of the school's catchment area. My interest is in the motivations of those parents residing outside of the catchment area, who are prepared to transport their children longer distances in order to attend Mosaic. The research focusses on Mosaic's appeal to parents, but in order to provide a fuller context, includes interviews with educators who were or who have been active in the development of Mosaic's arts-integrated pedagogy over time.

### **Framing the space of a school and its community**

The community of any school has a unique cultural ecosystem (Charland, 2011, p. 1), differing players all being key to its success. Therefore, to provide a full picture on this space of learning, my 2013-2014 research (case study) includes interviews with 13 outside-catchment Mosaic parents (2 male, 11 female), 5 teachers (all female), 2 school administrators (female), 1 district administrator (male), and 1 non-teaching staff member (male).

The overarching theoretical framework for this case study is Henri Lefebvre's theorization of space (1991), supported by Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) theorizing on the fields of position-taking, and that is the heteronomous and autonomous fields (p. 30). In my interpretation, the heteronomous field is the general populace, whereas the autonomous field is the specialist -- the supporter of art for art's sake. Hence it parallels the integration of the visual and performing arts (herewith VPA) into a

---

<sup>1</sup> Mosaic is a pseudonym. Pseudonyms have been used throughout this paper with regard to parent and educator names, and school names. This is in compliance with the ethical parameters as directed by the school district in which this research took place.

school's curriculum (heteronomous), and also acknowledges the VPA as discrete subjects (autonomous). Lefebvre's theory of space is a particularly appropriate framing of Mosaic if one likens it to the metaphor of an abstract canvas upon which the spaces change and are changed. It is evocative of Lefebvre's (1991) discussion on Picasso's radical approach to painting:

What we have therefore, all at once, are: the objective end points of reference; a space at once homogeneous and broken; a space exerting fascination by means of its structure; a dialectical process initiated on the basis of antagonisms (paradigms) which does not go so far as to fracture the picture's unity; in an absolute visualization of things that supersedes that incipient dialectical framework. (p. 301)

Like an abstract canvas, Mosaic and its spaces of learning have altered since its transition to an arts-integrated school in 2005.

### **The spaces of learning**

In a school community there are many spaces of learning, or of just trying to BE. As a teacher at Mosaic, I have held differing perspectives on the student population. I have questioned why so many arrive from outside the school's catchment area. What is the appeal? Is it a belief in the arts as enablers of other attributes, or is it the value of the VPA as discrete subjects? Or, is it the supposition that any new type of learning space will better educate?

### **Arts-integrated pedagogy**

Arts-integrated pedagogy is not a particularly new concept, the most important Canadian example being the Langley Fine Arts School (Gaskell, 1985). Yet, it is one that is gaining more notice both nationally and internationally as parents seek alternate learning choices for their children. But such pedagogy is difficult to implement depending on the skills that each teacher possesses, ranging from simple arts add-ons, to the full integration of the arts throughout the curriculum (Bresler, 1995, para 18). If the arts in education have suffered from the larger demands of science and technology, strategic timetabling which places them at the centre of the curriculum guarantees they will not be relegated to a 7:30 am time slot, in effect becoming extra-curricular. "Moving the arts from the periphery to the core of instruction tremendously increases the chances that the arts will endure when potentially debilitating events occur" (Noblit et al, 2009, p. 76). That the arts can enable a range of life skills including confidence, poise, improved social skills, discipline and self-motivation, is attractive to many parents. (Colley, 2010; Brouillette, 2010; Alter, Hays & O'Hara, 2009; Winner & Hetland, 2008; Brewer, 2002).

### **Neo-liberalism and the middle class**

As the welfare state recedes and neo-liberalism's privatization or marketplace thinking emerges, so our public education systems have had to change. As noted earlier, within British Columbia, public school districts have had to corporatize (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 3). But Simon Marginson (2007) reminds us that within the field of education, neo-liberalism offers only a sense of disequilibrium.

“Neoliberalism has little warmth or generosity about it; it is considerably less attractive than the notion of equality of educational opportunity (p. 207). Likewise Harvey (2005) exemplifies the anxiety that today’s parents must feel as they worry about whether or not they have invested significantly enough in their own human capital for the sake of their children’s education, and consequently, their future careers. “Individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one’s own human capital through education.” (p. 65)

Not surprisingly, then, the educational marketplace as one product of neo-liberalism has arguably created a re-birth of class and opportunity, most typically attributed to the middle class. Mosaic, with its arts-integrated focus, is a school of choice. As such, it has been a new educational product for parents to investigate, and this could be one of its appeals. Or it might be an assurance that it will be particularly inclusive of a particular group through social networking. Choice schools can also signify higher socio-economic neighbourhoods as exemplified by Cucchiara (2008), or Bosetti and Pyyrt (2007) who speak to the importance of upscale neighbourhoods in relation to school choice, referencing this as “selection by mortgage” (p. 100). Preservation of a particular culture, such as in Levine-Rasky (2008), whose research documents parental attitudes and understandings at one Canadian school after an immigrant population began to reside in or near its school catchment area, may also figure into the decision to re-locate children to a school of choice – even if it requires travelling considerable distances. Levine-Rasky’s research also discusses the hidden agendas of some middle class parents to assure that their social group remains intact. While it may foster inclusion, it also potentially creates a new space – that of exclusion (p. 483). Hidden agendas are also discussed by Reay and colleagues (2007) in their interesting research into some middle class families who choose their neighbourhood school and not a choice school, in the belief that their middle-classness will assure higher academic achievement and opportunities. This she defines as a “value added gain” (p. 1046).

Whatever the case may be, the middle class, in their continual pursuit of the ideal learning space for their children, potentially justify Lefebvre’s (1991) perspective on the middle class and the space that they have carved out for themselves:

[This is] the space where the middle classes have taken up residence and expanded...a social world in which they have their own specially labelled, guaranteed place. The truth is, however, that this space manipulates them, along with their unclear aspirations and their all-too-clear needs. (p. 309)

If a guaranteed space provides the middle class with a certain comfort level it nevertheless perpetuates parental anxiety about children’s perceived needs. Perhaps this is why a school of choice, such as an arts-integrated school, is an attractive option for many middle class families. But if it alleviates one type of anxiety, it nevertheless continues to cause a dilemma.

While much of the research on school transition tends to be focussed on the elementary-to-secondary years (for example, Oria, Cardini & Ball, 2007; Williams, Jamieson & Hollingworth, 2008), the middle class also suffer the dilemma of transferring their child from one elementary school to another: despite their belief that the new school will provide advantages and further opportunities in the future.

Known as “concerted cultivation” (Davies & Aurini, 2009, p. 57, citing Laureau, 2002, 2003), such parents structure a particular lifestyle for their children, which promotes specific areas of learning and personal interests. An excellent example of this is Williams, Jamieson and Hollingworth’s (2008) research into families who directed their boys into specific disciplines and interests so as to ensure that they did not become like the local “ragamuffins” (p. 483).

Wilkins (2010) neatly encapsulates this middle-class dilemma in his summative table (p. 179).

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Community</b>
Individual	Collective
Self-regarding	Community-regarding
Consumer	Citizen
Commercial	Political
Monocultural	Multicultural
Social selection	Social mixing

Here, choice could be interpreted as a selfish act of promotion and elitism. Wilkins sees school choice as a contributor to the undermining of “public welfarism and a democratic citizenry” (p. 172). Maybe this is why throughout his and other researchers’ papers (eg., Oria, Cardini & Ball, 2007; Cucchiara, 2103), there are parents trying to resolve their inner conflicts or private dilemmas about school choice. Bosetti and Pyryt (2007) also reference “collective” in their discussion on parent dilemmas, which they define as “parentocracy” (p. 105); “the needs, values and preferences of parents as consumers take precedence over impersonal and impartial values of the collective good” (p. 105).

A first-hand example of the dilemma of school choice is found in a conversation I had with Grace, a Mosaic parent, who had transferred her daughter to the school because she felt it would offer a more enriched curriculum. “[It was] traumatic for her. She was only eight or nine so we pulled her against her will and put her in here...it was very traumatic for her.”

It is clear from the research that the dilemma or anxiety that neo-liberalism has wrought upon this generation of parents as they search for the best educational site of learning for their children, is real. And, we can no longer assume that the neighbourhood school is going to be a parent’s first choice.

### **Mosaic then and now**

How did Mosaic’s student population grow so rapidly? Through the arrival of students from outside of its catchment area. The dramatic rise in student population—from 90 to 240—would naturally dictate more teaching and non-teaching staff and facilities. More remarkable is the number of ministry-designated<sup>2</sup> students attending Mosaic. In 2005 there were 4, and at the time that this research was completed, there

---

<sup>2</sup>Ministry-designated students is the term used to identify any child with a particular learning need, including gifted, autistic, learning disabled, intellectually disabled, blind, deaf, chronic health impairment, behavioural, and physically dependent.

were 31, for a ratio of approximately 1:8 students designated. This rise in ministry designations is dramatic. Clearly, for parents of designated children, arts-integrated schools have a particular appeal, and one wonders what the inherent value of the Arts is for them.

As Hannah, the Principal tasked with opening Mosaic as an arts-integrated school stated, Mosaic “is a place for everybody and anybody.” Therefore the number of ministry-designated students should not be considered paramount to the discussion here, although it does affect programming. Of more importance to this paper is the fact that it has impacted on teaching staff and how they regard the school, its pedagogic approach, and its student population.

### **A dramatic beginning**

Before Mosaic opened its new doors and offered up a new pedagogy and curriculum design, there were the teachers. And, in the beginning, there were difficulties as teachers already at Mosaic competed against those Arts-trained teachers coming newly into the school. It was a dramatic beginning, and as misunderstandings arose between teachers, and between teachers and administrators, one could say that it was a bumpy start.

More recently, and as my interviews disclose, an ongoing concern to the Mosaic staff, has been the integrity required to fully maintain and practice an arts-integrated pedagogy. “Are we doing what we say we are doing?” (Angela, Mosaic administrator, retired). However, the point most often raised in these teacher interviews centres on student behaviour. This is exemplified by comments made by Emma, a teacher research participant.

I was starting to notice, and you know, I don’t spend much time looking at the enrolment. We have a lot of special needs kids, a lot of behaviour kids, a lot of that kind of thing going on. “Oh, they like art, we’ll put them there they will be ok,” and I was thinking, “these are the kind of kids who shouldn’t be at the school.”

Her observations support the general staff feeling that the main parental appeal has been a perception that schools offering an arts-based curriculum can resolve negative behaviours in ways that other schools cannot. But further into the conversation, Emma discusses why this perspective is problematic.

Well it’s one thing if you say, “My child struggles with behaviour,” but they’re maybe gifted musically. I see that as something completely different than what we’re talking about. Because what I was seeing was, well, “My kid can’t hack it at this school so I’ll try the fine arts school where they spend more time doing drama and music”...It was really scaring me when I was here and I saw that happening and I thought, “What are we becoming a behavioural school?”

Because many of the children enrolling from outside of the catchment or school district, have struggled with behavioural challenges, Mosaic teachers have queried whether the school is not so much about the Arts, as about the Arts as enablers. This is further supported by remarks from Don, who now-retired, was involved with Mosaic from the outset.

The first year we were designated a fine arts school, in my class I had three new students...one who definitely belonged, but was definitely off the wall...The second year...in all the years that I taught, 35 years 28 of those years in grade seven, rarely do you get many new grade seven students, and that year 10 came in. Of the 10 you could not get a more diverse set of students...every single one of them had some sort of exceptional—they weren't exceptional—some specific needs that they thought a fine arts school would be able to address.

### **Appealing to parents: social and cultural capital**

Within my set of parent interviews, and whether it was conscious or not, is the evidence that social and cultural capital have been decisive factors in some parents' decisions to relocate to Mosaic. My interview with Kate, an out-of-catchment parent, is one such example. At the outset when asked why she had made the decision to enrol her son at Mosaic, she stated, "Had I not come here, I would have gone somewhere else. I had brochures for St. George's<sup>3</sup>, etcetera." Yet as the conversation progressed, she began to criticize the manner in which the school demographics had changed over the years. "I see this school as very, very competitive...[with] additional money in people's pockets in this catchment." The contradictory nature of this interview underscores Lefebvre's (1991) assertion about the "unclear aspirations" of the middle class (p. 309). Whatever the case, Kate was firm in her response to my question as to whether or not she had conferred with her son before transferring him to Mosaic; "He knew we were in a Ford and needed to upgrade to a Cadillac."

Unlike Kate who had further condemned her child's previous school because its student population was too transient, with "too many rentals," Nancy had moved her family to Mosaic because she had been concerned about their children's previous school, where status seemed to be the overall measure of acceptance. "At Laurel Elementary there was a lot of emphasis on fitting in. Because that is how the parents are – worried about how their house looks, what kind of car they drive, the clothes they wear."

Mosaic had a different type of appeal for Nancy; believing that an arts school would offer equality across all families, as well as a new approach to learning, she enrolled her child at Mosaic. Yet other families from Nancy's school transferred to Mosaic, and she did not express any concern about this. In this new setting, she may have felt that she was part of the same group. Whatever the case, social and cultural capital have been at play in drawing certain families to the school. Altogether it has created an inclusive and active parent community. Yet these parents all possess similar backgrounds, being white, middle-class, well-educated professionals. In summation, they could be described as "educated workers between the ages of 35 and 44 who have entered 'prime earning growth years'" (Cucchiara, 2008, p. 167, citing Levy, 2003). Social networking has been an important factor in Mosaic's increasing student population. At the outset Mosaic was advertised in a local newspaper, but this was a short-term measure. Over the years, the better means of communicating has been among parents. As Grace, another Mosaic parent replied when asked how she had heard about the school, "It was just parents talking to parents." Here we see an

---

<sup>3</sup> An elite fee-paying boy's school

excellent example of the productivity of social networking, but it also opens up another field of inquiry, and that is, who has been excluded?

### **Addressing parent need**

If these parents fit the typical profiles of those who access school of choice, there was in fact another appeal to Mosaic: self-fulfillment. While interviewing Hannah, Mosaic's now-retired Principal, I asked her "What was the one question that you remember parents asking you the most—what question came up most often?" Her reply was, "They wanted to know if they could be a part of the school, if there was something they could do to be a part of their child's learning." Mosaic does offer many opportunities for parents to become involved since its process-based curriculum nevertheless results in regular performances as well as fund-raising endeavours. This has created a unique space for parents, as discussed by Brittany, a parent who has found personal fulfilment at Mosaic.

I really enjoyed being involved in that [school production]. I would like to help in all the classes and have more involvement in it...I like being around it and I think it's really neat. Not just for my kids but for myself. It's a place where I can come.

Brittany furthered her statement in a more general comment about the school.

Not all schools have rooms to help. This school has more opportunity for parents to do more if they want to, the art show is amazing, the dance things, and there are just so many interesting things for parents to do.

Parent involvement is an important component to the success of any elementary school. However, the interplay between parents and teachers requires balance. Some teachers were somewhat perplexed as to the level of parent involvement, seeing it as excessive. As Annie, an upper intermediate teacher stated,

The parents are needy. I think too a lot of these kids are from wealthy families and the mothers are around because they don't work, they're always around. You have these parents who have the time and the money. I think there's definitely a sense of need here, for instance some of the teachers have put up with a whole lot worse than I do, have allowed parents to come in and teach once a week...I've never seen teachers who put up with it and I don't get it.

This particular issue really comes down to whether one is a teacher, or whether one is a parent. But it is clear from both teacher and parent statements, that the school has been fulfilling the personal needs of parents, and this can certainly be considered one of Mosaic's appeals.

### **The appeal of place and space**

Also attractive to parents were matters of place and space. Interestingly, this was not part of any interview question, yet Candace, a parent whose children had previously been in a private school, was attracted to Mosaic in part due to its small size. "The kids, they get to know all the other kids in the school. They may not know them really well. But they know where they belong." She also added that there were "lots of opportunities to get involved because it is a small school." Likewise, Lily, another Mosaic parent, shared her distaste for her child's catchment-area school, describing it



as “a sort of insane asylum. It’s so bizarre, it’s so white and clinical!” Her husband Jim, added to this by stating that the Mosaic environment “doesn’t seem as oppressive.”

### **The appeal of an arts-integrated pedagogy**

In this place—this space of learning, parents were attracted to the arts-integrated pedagogy and the reasons are as interesting as they are diverse. For example every parent interviewed believed that Mosaic would not use textbooks or worksheets in their instruction. These parents were tired of more typical strategies of knowledge acquisition and their assumption was that if the arts were part of the curriculum, the structure of learning would differ. Candace offered this comment when discussing her child’s previous school. “I just thought, this isn’t working anymore. Too workbook-oriented, no creative thinking, no problem-solving. You know what, I think we’re done here!”

Some or all of these parents also believed that Mosaic would offer a flexible curriculum, flexible assessment, with VPA accessible throughout the day. But one cannot negate the appeal of creativity, and for some parents, creativity was paramount as they believed it to be the key to a successful education: the foundation upon which all future learning success would rest. The Arts were in fact, the architect of the concept of the ‘whole child’. Lydia, another Mosaic parent, believes that, “creativity is a foundation. That’s where you generate ideas and problem-solve and all those skills, and so creativity; they can just grasp anything, tackle anything. It’s a foundation.” Likewise, Jim believes that the arts are organic, an intrinsic part of our being. “It’s like living in the moment. It’s like living through the moment as opposed to this is something sacred [instead] this is what we are just going to do.”

Living in the moment. Living through the moment. Jim’s point that the arts should be a natural part of our lives, is somewhat akin to Bresler’s (1995) discussion on levels of arts integration most commonly practiced by teachers: the most basic being described as an “add on” (para 18), and therefore not organic so much as a curriculum enhancer.

### **A means to an end?**

For some parents a different pedagogy might not be enough, and here I introduce the concept of Mosaic as a means to an end. This is not surprising. Some parents will enrol their children at whatever choice school is available in their district. As such it becomes a means to an end, as in Wendy’s case, who had been unhappy with her children’s previous school, but whose daughter is a natural athlete. “If there was a soccer school of choice, I would perhaps enrol my kids, and that’s what I’m looking at for high school for Mathilda.”

An equally interesting interpretation of Mosaic as a means to an end comes from Isla, who, while discussing a colleague’s decision to enrol at a prestigious university for his undergraduate degree, likened it to elementary school. “In a way, it’s [elementary school] kind of the same, right? Does going [to an Ivy League university] for your undergrad really mean anything and is that what you will become in life?”

Isla had enrolled her son at Mosaic because it had sounded interesting and she thought he might enjoy it. Here she equates an undergraduate degree with elementary school—neither being as highly valued as future education. Mosaic was a means to an end—a new place of learning, but whether or not one should downplay the importance of a child’s elementary school years, is debatable.

### **The whole child**

Without question Mosaic’s greatest appeal to parents fell within the arena of what I call the whole child. If discussions on pedagogy frequently included the phrases, “no textbooks” or “hands-on learning”, then “confidence” is the word most commonly used to support the benefits of an arts-integrated pedagogy. Parents have placed great faith in the power of the Arts to provide advantages in terms of socialization, empathy, and public presentations. In short, life skills that address the development of the whole child appear to be very important to Mosaic parents. Linked to a non-traditional pedagogic approach, parents believe that the most important product that Mosaic can offer is a well-rounded education that prepares their children for secondary and higher education.

It is not just the growth and creativity but also the growth and confidence that you can create something...I think Jessica has more confidence in her ability to create...I think it [creativity] helps with academics too because it really opens your thinking which then translates into how you approach things—confidence, again, confidence. (Grace, parent)

In this same part of the conversation, Grace also discussed how an arts-integrated education affected social relationships positively.

...I think the social and the academic, you know the projects they were working on, all got integrated together which is lovely. They [students] have a deeper relationship...the socialization doesn’t just happen on the playground at recess, it happens through the process of the Arts.

### **To whom do arts-integrated schools appeal, and why?**

In summing up the key points of these interviews, it is interesting to note that within the set of teacher interviews are levels of dissatisfaction, and yet Mosaic parents were generally happy with the school. This seems to be a strange contradiction, but teachers discussed concerns about programming, levels of teacher commitment, the debate around Arts credentialed versus non-Arts-credentialed teachers, and matters of trust among staff. Diane, who had played an active role in Mosaic’s beginning years spoke to some of these matters.

I still find this collective group of people [to be] people who might fit in at another school because they don’t seem to be worried about that level of commitment that I brought so it frustrates me as an individual.

She further expanded on her frustrations when querying some teachers’ personal motivations for transferring to Mosaic.

There were people who were recently hired who say, “I don’t do this, I don’t teach that”...I’m curious about their understanding and what are you doing differently, why would you plan on this? [teaching at Mosaic]. I wouldn’t go to a French immersion school unless I was committed to learning French I

wouldn't go to the BC Provincial School for the Deaf unless I was committed to learning signing.

Some teachers were at Mosaic based on its proximity to their home, while others had wanted a new challenge. On the matter of credentials, Diane, who is not Arts-trained stated that it was "more about the person and personality and their teaching style than their teaching credentials," while Nina, an Arts specialist, disagreed, arguing that "there has to be that core understanding of skill and foundation to be able to build skills for the students themselves."

Whatever teacher attitudes, understandings and concerns about Mosaic continue to persist, they have not been transferred to the parents, who are generally positive about their children's learning experiences. Mosaic's student population continues to grow, hindered only by a lack of classroom space. Apart from those issues discussed in this paper – academic, social and behavioural issues; a means to an end; the pursuit of academic advantage – in the end, it is very interesting to capture the variable factors such as transportation systems, and proximity as well as the cultural politics determining parental choice. And, this has implications across diverse geo-political entities.

### **Conclusion: the appeal of arts-integrated pedagogy**

What is the appeal of an arts-integrated pedagogy, and who should benefit from it? All children should, and yet they don't. Arts-integrated public elementary schools sit apart from the neighbouring school, potentially perceived as better sites of learning, and yet this is not necessarily the case. It depends on the individual child. Yet parents seek out such schools of choice, sometimes in an effort to ensure their child's future educational advantages, and sometimes hoping it will be a place of nurture or even structure.

The Arts provide for many enriching opportunities for children kindergarten through to secondary school. This paper has sought to discuss the results of some parental (and teacher) perceptions of arts-integrated learning. What appeals to parents? Art for art's sake is under-addressed in both parent and teacher interviews, and yet there is a place for the discrete arts as well. If not, then the VPA could disappear as valued, individual subjects.

If the arts are not studied for their own content and ways of knowing, if they are always studied as humanities disciplines or as supports to other disciplines the specific knowledge and skills associated with artistic modes of thought will not be present in a student's education. (Brewer, 2002, p. 33)

If the Arts in education can in fact positively change children's academic, social and behavioural patterns, then indeed, why are the arts not at the centre of all of our schools – public and private? Indeed, should they not be organic, and intrinsic to our learning?

I have not found an answer to that question. The research continues...

## References

- Alter, F., Hays, T., & O'Hara, R. (2009). The challenge of implementing primary arts education. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 34(4), 22-30.
- Bosetti, L., & Pyryt, M.C. (2007). Parental motivation in school choice: seeking the competitive edge. *Journal of School Choice*, 1(4), 89-108.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press
- Bresler, L. (1995). The subservient, coequal affective and social integration styles and their implications for the arts. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 96(5), 31-37.
- Brewer, T. M. (2002). Integrated curriculum: what benefit? *Arts Education Policy Review*, 103(4), 31-36.
- Brouillette, L. (2010). How the arts help children to create healthy social scripts: exploring the perceptions of elementary teachers. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 111, 16-24. doi: 10.1080/10632910903228116.
- Charland, W. (2011). Arts integration as school culture change: a cultural ecosystem approach to faculty Development, *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 12(8), 1-17. Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org>
- Crozier, G., Reay, D., James, D., Jamieson, F., Beedell, P., Hollingworth, S., & Williams, K. (2008). White middle-class parents, identities, educational choice and the urban comprehensive school: dilemmas, ambivalence and moral ambiguity. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29(30), 261-272. doi:10.1080/01425690801966295.
- Cucchiara, M. (2008). Re-branding urban schools: urban revitalization, social status, and marketing public schools to the upper middle class. *Journal of Education Policy*, 23(2), 165-179.
- Cucchiara, M. (2013). Are we doing damage? Choosing an urban public school in an era of parental anxiety. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 44(1), 75-93. doi:10.1111/aeq.12004.
- Davies, S., & Aurini, J. (2009). School choice as concerted cultivation: the case of Canada. In M. Forsey, S. Davies & G. Wolford. (Eds.), *The Globalization of School Choice?* (pp. 55-67). Didcot, UK: Symposium Books.
- Fallon, G., & Paquette, J. (2009). Introducing a market element into the funding mechanism of public education in British Columbia: a critical policy analysis of the School Amendment Act, 2002. *McGill Journal of Education*, 44(2), 143-162.
- Gaskell, J. (1995). *Secondary schools in Canada. The national report of the exemplary schools project*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Education Association.

- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. (Donald Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA. (Original work published 1974)
- Levine-Rasky, C. (2008). Middle-classness and whiteness in parents' response to multiculturalism: a study of one school. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 31(2), 459-490.
- Marginson, S. (2006). Engaging democratic education in the neoliberal age. *Educational Theory*, 56(2), 205-219.
- Noblit, G.W., Dickson Corbett, H., Wilson, B.L., & McKinney, M.B. (2009). *and sustaining arts-based school reform the A+ schools program*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Oria, A., Cardini, A., & Ball, S. (2007). Urban education, the middle classes and their dilemmas of school choice. *Journal of Education Policy*, 22(1), 91-105. doi:10.1080/02680930601065791.
- Reay, D., & Ball, S.J. (1997). "Spoilt for choice": The working classes and educational markets. *Oxford Review of Education*, 23(1), 89-101.
- Reay, D., Hollingworth, S., Williams, K., Crozier, G., Jamieson, F., James, D., & Beedell, P. (2007). 'A darker shade of pale?' whiteness, the middle classes and multi-ethnic inner city schooling. *Sociology*, 41(6), 1042-1060. doi:10.1177/0038038507082314
- Williams, K., Jamieson, F., & Hollingworth, S. (2008). "He was a bit of a delicate thing": white middle-class boys, gender, school choice and parental anxiety. *Gender and Education*, 20(4), 399-408. doi:10.1080/09540250802190230.
- Wilkins, A. (2010). Citizens and/or consumers: mutations in the construction of concepts and practices of school choice. *Journal of Education Policy* 25(2), 171-189.
- Winner, E., & Hetland, L. (2008). Art for our sake. school arts classes matter more than ever – but not for the reasons you think. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109 (5), 29-31.

Contact emails

[Suzanne.windsor-liscombe@sd41.bc.ca](mailto:Suzanne.windsor-liscombe@sd41.bc.ca)

[Suzgwl@gmail.com](mailto:Suzgwl@gmail.com)