

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly— Arts Partnerships in Canadian Elementary Schools

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Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles on arts partnerships.

Partnerships are hot. New, “innovative” partnerships between schools and arts organizations are, to many observers, very exciting and worthy of funding.¹ But are they in fact taking arts education in the right direction?

Although partnerships have evident benefits, I have been concerned for a number of years about the unconditional acceptance of partnerships in arts education in Canada, especially in elementary schools. I am aware that engaging in any form of criticism of these arts partnerships leaves one open to accusations of “feelings of fear” (Elster 2001, 16)—fear, presumably, of change and reform. Nevertheless, I must ask several questions: Have we overlooked the need for a thoughtful and open examination of important educational issues surrounding arts education? In the rush to change and reform, are we losing sight of the purpose of arts education?

In this article I will address issues germane to arts partnerships in Canadian elementary schools. These issues have been largely avoided in public discussion, whether in the arts education literature, in reports by the media, or

national venues such as the six annual National Symposia on Arts Education (1997–2002). Rather than being thoughtfully critical of new initiatives, investors, foundations, arts organizations, the media, and administrative educational decisionmakers have celebrated and funded “new” ideas and ad hoc solutions to arts education problems with little consideration or acknowledgment of their long-term consequences or implications. In my view, as this article will show, this uncritical acceptance leads arts education in some dangerous directions.

Background

Before the vogue for arts partnerships, the situation was different. Historically, the arts have been taught in schools by specialist teachers, classroom teachers, or a combination of both, with the assistance of arts coordinators. Specialist arts teachers are hired because they have knowledge, skills, and understanding in one or more of the arts, as well as sound pedagogical knowledge, whereas classroom teachers may be responsible for all subject areas, including the arts. In addition to benefiting from school-based arts programs, children, especially those in the larger urban centers, had occasional opportunities to visit exhibitions and performances and view in-school performances by artists, as funding allowed.

The latter programs, however, “remained largely uncoordinated, unfocused and without tangible outcomes” (Elster 2001, 2).

Recently, a new partnership idea for arts education has been implemented in an attempt to revitalize sagging arts programs in elementary schools. This change has involved a very specific kind of partnership with outside organizations only, and it has coincided with the virtual elimination of arts coordinator positions in the schools and the “return” of many arts specialists to classroom teaching assignments.

Meaningful partnerships should involve working together for the mutual benefit of all partners. In the case of arts partnerships today, the participants are school districts, administrations, classroom teachers, students, and parents in partnerships with artists, arts organizations, and conservatories. “Arts partnerships” refer to “artists-in-the-schools” programs, not to the more traditional partnerships (such as those among qualified arts educators and teachers in the schools, for example), which remain virtually unacknowledged, even where they continue to flourish.

As previously stated, artists-in-the-schools programs are not a new idea. What is new is the source and degree of funding and the ambitious scope of

artists-in-the-schools programs at a time when specialist teachers in the arts are less available to mediate learning in the arts, a task which many general classroom teachers feel is beyond their ability. Indeed, specialist arts teachers and arts education associations seem largely peripheral to the partnership discussions. A closer examination of these initiatives is long overdue. I will be examining the issues surrounding these arts partnerships under the headings—with thanks to classic jazz music lover Clint Eastwood—of the good, the bad, and the ugly.² I will address the following questions:

- How are arts partnerships in elementary schools good?
- For whom are these arts partnerships good?
- How are arts partnerships bad?
- What is the purpose of arts education in the schools?
- Are arts partnerships the best way to meet the arts education needs of students?
- How are arts partnerships ugly?
- Who benefits from arts partnerships?

Arts partnerships as they currently exist are not sufficient to produce quality arts education. Although there are some good results from arts partnerships as they are currently being conceived and implemented, there is too great a potential for bad and ugly outcomes. If Canadian arts education in the elementary schools is to thrive in the coming decades, arts organizations will need to engage in real partnerships with arts educators and arts education associations that support continuous and sequential arts programs and generate attendant arts education policies.

The Good

How are arts partnerships good? In some instances, they can be. Artists-in-the-schools tend to bring novelty and generate excitement in schools. Artists working in elementary school settings certainly share their passion and expertise with students and teachers and, often, with the greater community. The community spin-offs are particularly important in smaller, rural communi-

ties. Artistic events for students and teachers involve performances, visits to exhibitions, and artists' working with children and teachers in the schools.³ They range from a single visit to artists-in-residence programs. When a program has an evaluation component, the responses of participants (including students, parents, teachers, and administrators) are frequently very positive: "Enthusiastic response from two schools demonstrates that artist-in-residence programs are a real inspiration for more than just the students" (Lane 1999, 1). Of course, visiting artists are largely unencumbered by classroom discipline, student evaluation, report cards, supervision, and other activities that are part of a teacher's responsibilities, so they can devote all their energy to the delivery of their services and concentrate on what they do best—produce art.

Why are arts organizations and artists so interested in the schools? One of the reasons is that the arts community has long been dissatisfied with the results of arts education (when and where it has existed) in terms of unsatisfactory attendance and a general lack of support for the arts (see Council for Business and the Arts in Canada, 1990).⁴ This dissatisfaction may have contributed to the funding of a major study on arts literacy in Canada (McIntosh, Hanley, Van Gyn, and Verriour 1993) by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canada Council, the first research project jointly funded by these two organizations. So compelling has been the case made by arts organizations for the need for public education in the arts that provincial and national arts organizations and institutions now must have education functions to receive government funding.

The virtual elimination of arts coordinators across schools in Canada and of qualified specialist arts teachers in many provinces—a situation exacerbated by the reluctance of many general classroom teachers to teach the arts—has further encouraged arts organizations to seize the opportunity to rescue the arts.

What happens when general classroom teachers are responsible for arts education? Although, as is typically the case, there is little Canadian evidence, an extensive, qualitative study in the United States by Stake, Bresler, and Mabry (1991) indicated that classroom teachers "do not find it easy to think of the arts as fundamental to education" (301). In that study, the two purposes most frequently stated for arts education were the provision of informal cultural knowledge and a change of pace (302). General classroom teachers were not concerned with cognitive skills in the arts or the enhancement and mental and verbal imagery. Indeed, as the study noted, "the popular philosophy of school art is *laissez-faire*" (305).

What do Canadians expect of arts education? Do they, specifically, expect anything more than *laissez-faire* arts education? Given the lack of research, we're not sure. There is fairly widespread lip service paid to the need for arts education. Pressed by parents who have heard about the research supporting the contributions of the arts to academic achievement, not to mention creativity and well-being, many school administrators feel compelled to be seen as supporting the arts. General classroom teachers, with good reason, are not seen as good enough. Accordingly, in times of fiscal restraint, even those administrators truly supportive of the arts—who, one might expect, should know better—have argued that something in the arts (artists-in-the-schools) is better than nothing (what they perceive to exist when schools opt to, or are compelled to, function, without specialist arts teachers or even teachers who have competency in the arts).

In this context, what is good about arts partnerships? In addition to the excitement generated and student and teacher learning, it is good that the spotlight on arts partnerships has brought about renewed interest in arts education in some quarters. Some partnerships have picked up on the isolation of many specialist arts teachers and of their disciplines in the schools as well as reform agendas seeking to bring the arts into the core curriculum. Two national

examples will illustrate the scope of activity: Learning Through the Arts and ArtsSmarts

LTTA

Learning Through the Arts (LTTA), formed in 1994 as a partnership between the Royal Conservatory of Music (Toronto) and the Toronto Dominion Bank, was piloted in Toronto from 1995 to 1999. As of July 2002, LTTA was reaching 10,700 students (Royal Conservatory of Music 2002). LTTA claims to be "the first curriculum-based arts program in the world to be implemented nation-wide" (Learning Through the Arts, 2001). It has also expanded into teacher education, offering "certification training linked to actual field experience, for artists to work as facilitators in the public school system" (Toronto Dominion Financial Group 2001). LTTA views itself as a school transformation initiative and has thus become involved in school reform. One promotional brochure for Learning Through the Arts calls it "a comprehensive design framework for public school improvement" and outlines its features in the following ways:

- At the core of the program is a research-based instructional model. LTTA teachers learn to use participatory music and art activities to present the core curriculum.

- LTTA offers schools a comprehensive implementation program which includes extensive professional development, in class-facilitation, curriculum integration models, student assessment tools, program evaluation, and management expertise.

- LTTA is a school-wide initiative. Every teacher and student participates. Each year teachers take five half days of professional development. They gain practical experience with new instructional methods through nine in-class workshops given in partnership with trained artist-mentors.

- LTTA provides innovative models for integrating different strands of the curriculum. This allows students to understand the connection between different areas of knowledge, and helps teachers implement today's more comprehensive curriculum.

- LTTA evaluation tools allow teachers to better understand their students' unique talents and strengths.

- LTTA Showcases engage parents in their children's learning, and provide an opportunity for all to experience pride of achievement. (Royal Conservatory 2002)

A longitudinal, large-scale assessment to determine the success of the project has prudently been undertaken

- to provide opportunities for young people to actively participate in the arts
- to enhance appreciation of the importance of culture and the arts

- to enable schools/community organizations to explore ways to integrate arts activities in non-arts subject areas, aligned with provincial curriculum where possible. (Cameron 2001, 4)⁵

Enthusiastic publicity about these two initiatives claims that "Canada is a

This is the core of the problem: It seems that arts partnership initiatives are for everybody but arts specialists, who have been displaced.

(Upitis, Smithrim, Patteson, and Meban, 2001; Upitis and Smithrim, 2002). LTTA is currently beginning to establish international sites.

ArtSmarts

A parallel to LTTA can be found in ArtsSmarts, a partnership of the Calgary Arts Partners in Education Society (CAPES) in Calgary and the J. W. McConnell Foundation of Montréal. ArtsSmarts links young people, artists or arts organizations, schools, and communities; it is active across Canada and promotes "the value and potential of 'arts-infused' education" (Cameron 2001, 1). It is a "consciously subversive program" (*Artspots: Education and the arts*, n.d.). ArtsSmarts provides grants to support projects that incorporate active student arts experiences infused in the curriculum. These experiences are developed in conjunction with artists employed for the project. The objectives of ArtsSmarts are as follows:

- to build long-term, local partnerships that link young people, artists or arts organizations, schools and the broader community

world leader in education and the arts"⁶ (*Artspots: Education and the arts*, n.d.). This is an admirable and positive sentiment, no doubt, but what criteria and evidence justify this claim?

In general, these arts partnership initiatives sound wonderful. They are evidently innovative, well funded, and highly acclaimed. The planners have worked with the schools to address substantive educational concerns. So, everything sounds "good" for arts education. What could there possibly be to question? The students are happy; their parents are content; teachers don't need to worry about planning for the arts and are developing skills; administrators beam (the arts are being covered and valuable public relations is being generated); and artists are employed. Given the general contentment, why bother with teachers who have specialized knowledge, skills, and understanding in the arts?

This is the core of the problem. It seems that these arts partnership initiatives are for everybody but arts specialists, who have been displaced. But are these partnerships really the best approach for the long-term growth of children and programs in the schools? Who is thinking about the long-term

impact of the initiatives and whose purposes are being served? Recall that I framed the discussion in this section in terms of the question "good for whose purpose"? Perhaps all is not as wonderful as appearances suggest, but the question cannot be fully answered yet.

The Bad

Arts partnerships as they currently exist clearly are not worthless, but could they, in some ways, be dangerous? The answer revolves around how arts education programs should be conceived. An examination of a number of issues will make the case that, indeed, arts partnerships could be (and some are) dangerous. My points of concern are the following.

The drop-in basis of artists-in-the-schools programs. Meaningful learning in any discipline occurs over time. Exposure to the arts is just that—exposure. Exposure does not promote meaningful learning. Exposure to the arts may generate excitement and be entertaining, but it does not nurture the development of skills, knowledge, and understanding. If learning in the arts is to foster the rich outcomes for elementary students proposed in provincial curricula, learning experiences must extend beyond occasional visits; they must be continuous and sequential.⁷ Indeed, the need for a comprehensive, sequential curriculum was the motivating force behind the Coalition for Music Education in Canada and the Canadian Music Educators Association's collaboration in producing *Achieving Musical Understanding—Concepts and Skills for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8* (2000), which states that comprehensive and sequential learning are best facilitated by qualified teachers in the pertinent disciplines. The partnerships described earlier, however, do not provide for continuous learning over time. Although the LTTA in particular has attempted to overcome the time issue, the partnership projects still consist of limited exposure for students and teachers. The projects are largely supported by funding external to provincial education budgets. What happens when the funding runs out? The lack of program continuity is and will remain dangerous to arts education.

The performance/exhibition focus. When artists are in the schools, the performance or exhibition of art (what artists know best) is the preferred outcome. In such performances, the "star" of the show is the visiting artist, and the children fill the role of chorus or audience. A small ensemble of professional musicians sometimes enhances the sound, and a professional setting and lighting contributes to the polished outcome. Such performances are enjoyable, but many music teachers could produce equally wonderful results (on much smaller budgets), and the students could be the stars. True, a music teacher would probably not have the same degree of cooperation from classroom teachers as an artist normally gets, nor the time to develop and rehearse the project during school nor publicity and access to expensive lighting and musicians. Nevertheless, the educational benefits of performances directed by teachers and starring students could be better integrated into a regular arts program.

On Vancouver Island, there is another good example of performance-driven outcomes that typically result from arts partnerships (excluding the LTTA). ArtStarts funds a Performer-in-Residence program providing a musician who visits a school six or seven times.⁸ In between her visits, classroom teachers rehearse the music. The final product is a concert and CD. Everyone is evidently content. The drop-in basis of this kind of visit, a favorite in schools that have no music programs, is evident. Parents who have been demanding a music program are temporarily mollified, and administrators can say they have addressed a need perhaps identified in their accreditation process (even though some will admit that they are merely putting a finger in the dike).

One last consideration is important as well. Even if one grants that there is value to observing performances or exhibitions, should performances and exhibitions be the sole, or sometimes even most important, learning outcomes of arts programs? It is misleading to continue to lead the public to believe that they are when provincial curriculum documents say otherwise. There is

much more to arts education than just performances and exhibitions.

An implied devaluation of teaching. Most people have heard the benighted aphorism, "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." Those who echo it declare a shameless scorn for teaching. One story quoted a CEO as remarking: "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to be a teacher, eh?" Applied to the arts, the aphorism becomes: "Those who can do art, do it. Those who can't, teach art." These words summarize the belief that teachers have lesser knowledge than practitioners in a discipline and (by implication) are therefore less worthy purveyors of the discipline, certainly in the arts. Perhaps this attitude is one reason why teachers of "core" subjects (who seem less burdened with feelings of inadequacy) value the input of visiting artists so highly when they are sometimes dismissive or less appreciative of arts teachers who are colleagues.

Denigrating Teaching

Although the attribution of artistic inadequacy may regrettably be true of some arts teachers,⁹ it is not true of many others, who are naturally either infuriated or hurt by the remark. Many are artists who have chosen to teach.¹⁰ Their choice may have led them to be less productive in their discipline (that is, they may produce less art). It may have led them eventually to adopt a somewhat greater emphasis on socialization and enculturation (Jorgensen 1997) than their colleagues who are free of contractual restraints and professional responsibilities, but that has been their choice. Artists, for their part, have chosen to develop their art form. They have chosen not to teach in the schools, for whatever reason, and have avoided teacher education programs.¹¹ Indeed, teacher education programs in the arts are afforded lower status than their fine arts counterparts.¹²

This denigration of teaching and teacher preparation raises a question: Is teaching something anybody can do? Some claim that we are all teachers, and this is true, to some degree. Still, not everyone wants to teach in the elemen-

tary schools or is prepared to undergo the education necessary to do it successfully. Indeed, the expertise of teachers is increasingly being identified and acknowledged. The Association for Curriculum and Supervision 2002 produced a "Statement on Teacher Quality" that reinforced the importance of pedagogy, "the professional knowledge necessary to produce student learning," and the skills needed "to design learning experiences that inspire and interest children." The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (2002) has drafted a series of core principles about teaching the arts that address subject knowledge, child development, diversity of learners, instructional strategies, the learning environment, communication, planning integrated instruction, assessment, self-reflection and professional development, and community involvement (6).¹³ It is clear that content knowledge and common wisdom are not enough for someone to be a teacher. Indeed, over the past decades, learning from earlier tactical errors, arts organizations have begun to acknowledge teacher expertise as they seek a place in the school curriculum. This acceptance is welcome. The importance of teaching is now being acknowledged insofar as artists work with classroom teachers, relying on the latter's expertise in teaching to address the curriculum.

This belated conversion to understanding the importance of skilled teachers, however, does not seem to extend to appreciating arts educators, who, for the most part, are not included in the discussion. Most of the partnerships described in the publicity about programs are partnerships between artists and classroom teachers, not between artists and arts teachers. A number of questions immediately arise. Can arts teachers be "replaced" by artists? Does this replacement happen in other subjects? Why aren't teachers who can teach the arts hired—as qualified teachers are to teach other subjects?¹⁴ Why do artists want to teach in the schools (even if they do not value teacher education)? Although there seems to be some recent recognition

that artists need pedagogy if they are to work with children, more than lip service must be paid to the need for professional expertise, and a big change in attitudes is needed if the pernicious slighting of teaching is to be halted.

The failure to achieve curriculum outcomes in the arts. Every province mandates learning outcomes in each of the arts. When schools rely on artists-in-the-schools visits, provincial arts outcomes are only partially and haphazardly addressed. What happens to all aspects of arts learning when there is no continuity across the years or development within the scholastic year? Although the larger partnerships have focused on integration and making the arts "core," the examples of integration that I have read to date do not reassure me. In LTTA and ArtsSmarts, the arts seem to be used as decorations or enhancers for other disciplines. Learning the arts is not the goal; rather, learning through the arts is the stated focus. This is indeed a strange outcome for artists and arts organizations to espouse.

For real integration to be a possibility for students, there must be meaningful learning in all subjects, not just one. Where is the meaningful learning in the arts in these arts partnerships? I will provide two examples of music curriculum to illustrate what I mean.¹⁵ In these cases, the music outcomes do not deal with skill development in music.

Two Examples

The first example is a grade 1 class on the characteristics and needs of living things (Royal Conservatory of Music 2002). The subject is science. In science, the students are to "explore the movement and behavior of living things." In music, students "will explore the sounds of a variety of living things." The children go on a neighborhood walk, list the sounds they heard, make a story, and create a soundscape. Well, that is the obvious approach. More interesting (and less stereotypical) could be the integrating idea that living things communicate. One form of communication for humans is music. How do people communicate musically?

Grade 1 children could address this issue in terms of family and community.

The second example comes from a fifth grade class exploring sound (sound familiar?) (Royal Conservatory of Music 2000). The subjects are math and science. The students begin by exploring sounds around them, then classify and graph them. The students then measure intervals and vibration. These are all admirable activities with learning outcomes in math and science. The content is appropriate for fifth grade students. Some questions could be asked, in this case, about the music learning. What relation does this mathematical and scientific knowledge have to music, except in a theoretical way? Are students helped to make any connections to music? Sound is admittedly fundamental to music, but is this kind of activity the only one that can be "integrated"? This topic is reminiscent of making music instruments year after year as a way of "doing" music without ever having to "make" music—a safe activity for classroom teachers with little music background. Music is being used to help science and mathematics learning—a worthy purpose—but where is the meaningful music learning? Where is the true integration? The use of the arts to help children learn other subjects and feel better about themselves and schooling is meritorious. Nevertheless, the neglect of learning in the arts is reprehensible, and the more pernicious since the outcome is being fostered by artists.

I have argued that partnerships, as they are currently conceived, are dangerous because of the drop-in basis of artists-in-the-schools programs, the performance/exhibition focus of work undertaken, the implied devaluation of teaching in the arts, and the failure to achieve the broad spectrum of mandated curriculum outcomes in the arts. Although arts partnerships may meet some student needs, they do not, for the most part, address the goals of arts education as mandated in provincial curricula. Arts partnerships can be pernicious to the degree that artists-in-the-schools programs foster exposure to the arts rather than continuous programs, promote performances and exhibitions

instead of the broader outcomes mandated in provincial curriculum documents, focus on learning through the arts rather than in the arts, and devalue teaching. Could there possibly be worse?

The Ugly

Can arts partnerships be ugly? I will argue that arts partnerships have largely excluded arts educators and arts education associations from the dialogue and that resources that could be going to

Beneath the rhetoric, arts partnerships are more about the employment of artists than the education of children and youth.

comprehensive, developmental arts education and on-going arts education research in the elementary schools are being targeted elsewhere. Arts partnerships have also been shaping arts education policy and vision. Who is benefiting from arts partnerships? The ugly side of partnerships is evident in

- the depreciation of arts educators,
- the exclusion of national, and to some degree provincial arts education associations, from the dialogue and policy making,
- unilateral funding for arts education,
- the focus of current research in arts education, and
- economic benefits for artists—the tacit agenda.

One of the principles of sound decisionmaking is to involve the stakeholders. Surely two of the obvious stakeholders in arts education are arts teachers and arts education associations. Yet, as will be evident, both groups have been largely watching from the sidelines.

The depreciation of arts educators. Although those involved in arts partnerships have assured me on many occasions that their initiatives are not intended to replace specialist arts teachers, their actions too often speak otherwise.

The following example illustrates the attitude.

LTTA developed a professional caliber video to promote its visions for arts education. I watched it in August 1997. The video was informative and interesting, featuring a number of classroom teachers, conservatory teachers, and students. I noticed that no arts specialists were filmed in action or interviewed. When I asked the presenter, Angela Elster, about this absence, I was

informed that there were no arts specialists in the elementary schools (by implication, in Toronto). It is true that the North York Board of Education, where the project was piloted, was without elementary arts teachers at the time, but there were arts teachers in other boards. Partnerships could have been arranged elsewhere had there been an interest in working with arts teachers.¹⁶

The exclusion of arts education associations from the dialogue and policy-making. The national arts education organizations in Canada are the Canadian Music Educators Association (CMEA/ACEM), the Canadian Society for Education through Art (CSEA/SCEA), and Theatre/Théâtre Canada. The National Symposium on Arts Education (NSAE) could be added to the list, although it is a loose coalition with no official membership. In Canada, education is a carefully guarded provincial jurisdiction. The national arts education organizations exist somewhat tenuously through links with sometimes stronger provincial associations. It is difficult for the former to exercise leadership in arts education, leaving a power vacuum that has been filled by other national groups such as the Canadian

Conference of the Arts (CCA), the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM), and the Canada Council (CC). The latter have a truly national mandate in the arts through their connection with culture and heritage, which, unlike education, are considered national issues.

There has been a curious lack of recognition of national arts education associations in the partnerships and the national dialogue surrounding these initiatives; indeed, the associations are unseen and unheard. In contrast, in the United States, a coalition of arts education associations led by the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) released National Standards in the Arts in 1994, and the American coalition has a strong lobby in policy and decision making related to arts education. In Canada, the opposite seems to be true: When any voice is heeded, it is artist-driven organizations and initiatives that are recognized as the purveyors of arts education, while the arts educator associations are virtually silent. Here is some evidence.

In 1985, the Canada Council expressed a concern to the Secretary of State “regarding the role of the arts within the schools” (McCaughy 1988, A1). The result was the initiation of a research project on arts education. The report was presented to the Canada Council (CC) and the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) in 1988. Although the acknowledgments listed some arts educators, no mention was made of provincial or national arts organizations. In 1994, the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) produced *Backgrounder: A Look at the State of Arts Education in Canada in 1993/1994*.

These volumes provided welcome and vital research about arts education in Canada. One might wonder, however, why two organizations whose mandate is related to artists had such a great interest in arts education and how they found the funds to undertake the research. Although such studies continue to be urgently needed, there have been no equivalent studies undertaken by arts education associations, which might be supposed to have a great interest in the results. Why not? Moreover,

with all these arts partnerships between arts organizations and the schools flourishing across the country, one might suppose that there might also be concurrent partnerships with national and provincial arts education associations. There aren't. Why not?

The National Symposium on Arts Education (NSAE) story is instructive. The NSAE first met in 1997 in Cape Breton, having been planned jointly by the CMEA and the CCA. The symposium involved representatives from government, education, industry, and culture. One might conclude that arts educators had finally "arrived" and become active players in important national initiatives. But over the years, in spite of the initial involvement and support of the CMEA for the NSAE, neither formal arts education in the schools (as opposed to partnerships) nor informal community arts education was the focus of the symposia; the real agenda was to pursue the merits of arts partnerships (meaning the role of artists in the schools), particularly in the elementary schools.

By 2000, this agenda was especially evident at the symposium organized by the CCA in Ottawa, "Sharing the Vision." An opening panel discussion focused the discussion: "Sharing the Visions—Working Together" (the integral role of artists, educators, and governments). Three follow-up workshops were called "How Governments Can Support the Education and Culture Sectors"; "Teacher/Artist Partnerships in the Classroom"; and "Teaching Teachers in and through the Arts."

As a member of the national steering committee of the NSAE, I noted that specialist arts teachers were not mentioned, nor was the need for qualified teachers identified as a concern. A fourth workshop was added as an afterthought: "Keeping Specialist Arts Teachers in our Elementary Schools." Even for this panel, however, those selected to speak were involved with "arts integration" and artists-in-the-schools. The message of invisibility was further brought home when, in the wrapup session, one moderator expressed the need for better network-

ing among groups. Mentioned were various arts organizations and government agencies. Not one of the arts education associations was named.¹⁷

Another example is provided by the 2001 NSAE in Calgary, organized by a broad consortium. The focus was on the question, "How Can We Dance Together Without Stepping on Each Other's Toes?" This could have been a time to clarify the nature of the partnerships and address some possible tensions between artists and educators, but keeping a positive, friendly tone seemed to be more a priority than dealing with real issues.

The National Symposium on Arts Education began as a small grass roots initiative. It has stayed a small grass roots initiative in spite of the involvement of the CCA, largely because of the efforts of Susan Annis and the general enthusiasm of participants at each symposium. Beyond supporting each individual symposium, there does not seem to be any interest in funding the concept, an amazing partnership of its kind. The NSAE has developed no political clout in spite of an early initiative to make arts education a pan-Canadian project (Favaro 1999). Neither has the CMEA, the CSEA, or Theatre Canada had a say in large-scale arts education policymaking (when it exists).

Arts education associations in Canada, particularly at the national level, have unwillingly contributed to this unhappy state of affairs. Small membership numbers, inadequate revenue, isolation (even with e-mail), the dominance of provincial educational policy, and competition among national groups have all contributed to the challenge of establishing a national presence at the policy level. The lack of involvement of arts education associations in policymaking cannot be solely attributed to arts partnerships and is not equally spread across the organizations. The CSEA, for example, has developed an arts education policy that has served it well (Irwin, Chalmers, Grauer, Kindler, and McGregor 1999). The NSAE has developed a vision for arts education,¹⁸ although that document has had little impact to date. Arts organizations seem to have a bet-

ter sense of political acumen than their educational counterparts. Whatever the case, the absence of arts education association voices in policy making is troubling.

Unilateral funding for arts education. Presently, arts partnerships are relatively well funded; elementary school arts programs are not. Partnerships provide money to schools for artists-in-the-schools programs, but not for arts teachers. To be sure, schools contribute a portion of the budget, but the cost for arts partnerships programs is much less than the cost of providing qualified teachers with benefits. There is money for research about arts education partnerships (Upitis and Smithrim 2002). Partnerships also seem to provide money for glossy brochures and advertisements. I have been amazed to open my *Toronto Globe and Mail* to find half-page advertisements for LTTA on three separate occasions in 2001. When have there been any national advertisements or glossy brochures for arts education programs to promote student learning fostered by arts teachers in the schools? When has there been a national campaign for arts education sponsored by arts education associations?

A final set of questions involves finances. What will happen to partnership arts programs when the money runs out (as it always does) or when partnerships have run their course? Who will pick up the pieces? The arts partnership proponents hope that their efforts will encourage school districts to find the money to pay for artists-in-the-schools programs (and maybe even arts teachers). These hopes are admirable, but the effort is not being placed where it should be—into providing qualified arts teachers for all children.

Economic benefits for artists—the tacit agenda. One way of looking at arts partnerships is to say that they meet a need. True, there is a need for arts education, and the arts partnerships do make a contribution. But is this contribution the best way to provide arts education? Earlier I asked who benefits from arts partnerships. Speaking of arts partnerships in the United States, Bumgarner-Gee (2002) writes:

I found that all manner of social welfare, academic, and economic outcomes were promised in return for fiscal support of various types of out-of-school ("community-based"), in-school, and after-school arts programs. I found that for reasons of economic and political survival, increasing numbers of arts organizations and groups were offering "education services" to K-12 students and "professional development opportunities" to teachers. Moreover, in order to garner greater political clout and fiscal support, most of the organizations named here purposefully confused learning outcomes associated with years of regular arts study with intermittent arts "experiences" and exposure. (943)

Could the same be true in Canada? I think the answer is clear. The substitution of arts experiences for arts education is quite widespread. The Royal Conservatory of Music's original mandate was to provide studio lessons in music and develop and maintain standards for instrumental and vocal music through a national network for examinations. The conservatory is renowned for the excellence of many of its graduates. Now, however, it claims to be "a leader in early childhood development through the arts" [my italics] and has spearheaded Learning Through the Arts to "meet the needs and concerns of public school teachers." It claims that LTTA participants report "increased library and Internet use, reduced incidents of behavioral disruptions, increased teacher satisfaction, gains in cultural sensitivity, and significant improvements in test scores" in language arts, math, science, and social studies (Royal Conservatory of Music 2000, 4). The Royal Conservatory is becoming conversant with educational jargon too. It talks of providing professional development courses "to the systematic application of new techniques in the classroom, through three year-long partnerships with resident artist-educators [my italics] from the local community" (4). Why has the Royal Conservatory of Music diversified? Why is it advocating using the arts to learn other subjects when one would expect it to be a strong advocate for learning in the arts? When are children supposed to learn the arts? Why has the Royal Conservatory of

Music decided it should become educator of teachers and a purveyor of arts education in the schools of Canada (and the world)?

It may come as no surprise, but partnerships often have much to do with business (Cf. the Yamaha poster for instrumental music education) and employment. Beneath the rhetoric, arts partnerships are more about the employment of artists than the education of children and youth. A recent article in the *Times Colonist* perhaps explains why: "Across the country, there is a broad range in wages for musicians at the twenty biggest symphonies (with budgets over \$1 million). In Saskatoon, 10 core musicians are paid \$20,000 per year while 33 other receive \$52 every time they play" (Deasy 2002, C6). These salaries are admittedly shameful, but employing artists is not a function of schools.

Partnerships are an attractive idea, especially in a postmodern world seeking to eradicate barriers, but they have a further downside that is little acknowledged, except, for example, in the following kind of warning:

Children as li'l advocates and sales reps have well served the commercial sector for years. High profile, short-term, fanciful theme (park), edutainment projects spotlighting individual artists and the services of arts organizations à la children meeting with the mayor are far more newsworthy than the arduous, day-to-day implementation of sequentially-taught arts programs focused on the study and mastery of an art form. (Bumgarner-Gee, 2002, 948)

Thankfully, this blatant use of children to serve a corporate vision has not yet occurred in Canada, but that does not prevent arts organizations from thinking of students as potential "bums on seats." Who is benefiting from arts partnerships? Clearly artists and arts organizations hope to benefit both in the present and future.

The focus of current research in arts education. Research is needed to present us with an accurate picture of (a) the state of arts education in Canada, including policy, (b) what children are learning in and through the arts, (c) how well arts curricula are being implement-

ed across the country, (d) how well students are learning in the arts, (e) how the arts contribute to general student learning and development, and (f) what teaching and assessment approaches help students learn best. Partnerships bring dollars for research, research that has been focusing on the role of artist-in-the-schools (for example, LTTA evaluation project) but not, it seems, for studies about elementary or secondary arts education in the schools. Canadian research in arts education is trivial in comparison to that in the United States, which funds both kinds of studies of arts education in the schools. Examples of American studies include *Custom and Cherishing* (Stake, Bresler, and Mabry 1991), *Gaining the Arts Advantage* (Arts Education Partnership 1999), *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts, and Student Academic and Social Development* (Deasy 2002), *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999-2000* (Casey, Kleiner, Porch, and Farris 2002), and *Champions of Change* (Fiske, n.d.). England and Australia also have produced excellent research. Where do we find recent information about arts education in Canada?¹⁹

What, then, is the answer to the question, can arts partnerships, in some cases, become ugly? To the extent that, however, unwittingly, they imply a depreciation of the role of arts educators; exclude national, and, to some degree, provincial arts education associations from the dialogue and policy-making; encourage the allocation of scarce dollars to artists-in-the-schools programs rather than the provision of qualified teachers; limit research in arts education to the partnerships; and obfuscate the economic motivation of these partnerships; yes, they can.

Conclusion

The purpose of arts education is "to enable students to understand and value arts expressions throughout life" (Saskatchewan Education 1991, 5). The following conceptualization provides an overview of what most arts curriculum documents identify as central and inter-related components:

- creating and presenting (making art, music, and drama)
- connecting to time, place, and community (understanding the historical and social context of the arts)
- perceiving, reflecting, and responding (developing a critical response to the arts)

Developing understanding is critical to learning in the arts as in all subjects (Hanley and Goolsby 2002, Wiske 1998). This understanding is developed over time through a wide variety of encounters with the arts. In arts partnerships, what happens to the development of understanding in the arts? What happens to assessment and evaluation in the arts? Where is the progression and development of learning in the arts? Something is missing in the arts partnership scenario. Arts specialists could and should play an important role in developing understanding in the arts: "The presence of arts specialists in a school district proved time and again to make the difference between successful comprehensive sequential arts education and those programs in development" (*Arts Education Partnership* 1999, 10–11). Quality education requires the regular delivery of curriculum by teachers who are competent in pedagogy as well as the disciplines being taught (Shulman 1987). The same is true for quality arts education. I claimed earlier that, at this time, partnerships in the arts really mean artists-in-the-schools programs. Too often, these partnerships pass for arts education on the grounds that specialist teachers cannot be afforded, there are no qualified teachers available,²⁰ or the staff does not include teachers competent to teach the arts. These excuses will not do.

Let me be clear: I am not against partnerships. I am not against artists in the schools. I am against those features that result in bad or ugly consequences. Arts organizations who have developed partnerships must be congratulated for their willingness to "think outside the box" and obtain funding at a time when funding has been hard to get. They have been willing to look at what the schools say that they need (integration and better test scores in numeracy and literacy)

and act. They have taken the time to write funding proposals and convince corporations that their money will be well used. Perhaps arts educators have something to learn from the resourcefulness of their artist counterparts. Why do national arts education associations have so little political acumen and voice?

These kudos do not eliminate the dangers identified in this paper. Until these issues are addressed, arts education in Canada will be mired in conflicting purposes, and the arts education needs of children will not be met in elementary schools. Can we all truly work together for a common goal? That is the ultimate challenge.

Notes

1. Arts refer to music, dance, drama, and the visual arts.
2. Not a new metaphor, but apt.
3. For an example of teacher in-service and transformation, see Upitis, Smithrim, and Soren 1999 and Smithrim, Upitis, and Leclair 1999.
4. There are, nonetheless, many forms of Canadian art that are flourishing—including the popular arts. I do see the need to nurture art which is not (or less) driven by the market and which addresses one of the important functions of art—to make new and to shake us from our complacency.
5. One might wonder why arts organizations are so interested in school curriculum, particularly in non-arts subject areas such as mathematics and science. Expediency comes to mind. ArtsSmarts and LTTA have cleverly picked up on the motherhood word, "integration" as a way into the "core" curriculum.
6. But not in arts education, it appears.
7. By sequential, I do not mean the imposition of pre-packaged sequences for conceptual or skill development but rather the engagement of students in meaningful music experiences that promote learning over time.
8. For information about ArtStarts, see <www.artstarts.com>.
9. Teachers with little background in arts disciplines have too often been hired by principals who have no idea of the qualifications that should be required for teaching the arts or who hire someone with minimal qualifications in desperation. More attention needs to be given to teacher education programs in the arts, particularly availability and length.
10. Ironically, some advocates of arts partnerships (Cf. Upitis, Smithrim, and Soren, 1999) are interested in the transformation of

teachers into artists, with the aid of artists, while arts teachers themselves are not valued as artists.

11. There are, of course, artists who are also great teachers. They tend to teach in studio settings rather than in classrooms.
12. See Roberts (1991a, 1991b, and 1993) for a discussion of music education students' identities in schools of music.
13. There is no Canadian equivalent of such a statement in arts education.
14. The usual answer is budget. The real answer is educational priorities. After all, there is money for technology.
15. The other arts seem to fare better than music.
16. There are, of course, are some arts educators involved in arts partnerships across Canada, but the exception does not prove the rule.
17. I did point out the oversight.
18. Both documents are available on line. For the Art Education Policy go to <<http://www.csea-scea.ca/policy.htm>>. For the NSAE vision statement go to <<http://www.artsed.ca>>.
19. There always seem to be enormous roadblocks to undertaking large-scale studies of arts education in Canada, including, but not limited to funding, unless, of course, they study partnerships.
20. In British Columbia, this claim will be close to accurate as the impact of the B.C. College of Teachers regulations and decisions by faculties of education to develop generalist teachers are implemented.

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