



Project Zero is a research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education that investigates the development of learning processes in the arts and other disciplines.

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Deepening the Quality of Arts Education

Many children in the United States have little or no opportunity for formal arts instruction, and access to arts learning experiences remains a critical national challenge. Additionally, the *quality* of arts learning opportunities that are available to young people is a serious concern. Understanding this second challenge – the challenge of creating and sustaining high quality formal arts learning experiences for K-12 youth, inside and outside of school—is the focus of a recent research initiative, *The Qualities of Quality: Excellence in Arts Education and How to Achieve It*, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and conducted by Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The study focuses on the character of excellence itself and asks three core questions: (1) How do arts educators in the United States—including leading practitioners, theorists, and administrators—conceive of and define high quality arts learning and teaching? (2) What markers of excellence do educators and administrators look for in the actual activities of art learning and teaching as they unfold in the classroom? And (3) How does a program’s foundational decisions, as well as its ongoing day-to-day decisions, affect the pursuit and achievement of quality?

These questions were investigated through three strands of research: Interviews with leading arts practitioners, theorists and administrators; site visits to exemplary arts programs across a range of media and settings; and a review of published literature. Sources in each of these areas were selected through an extensive nomination process in which several hundred arts educators and administrators across the country working in wide variety of contexts and art forms nominated candidates in each area.

The report presents several major findings and offers a set of tools to help arts educators and their associates reflect on and discuss the character of high quality

arts learning and teaching in their own settings.

Some of the major themes and findings of the study include:

The drive for quality is personal, passionate, and persistent. For most of the people surveyed in this study, ideas about what constitutes quality in arts education are inextricably tied to fundamental issues of identity and meaning and to their values as artists, educators, and citizens in the world. Though people differ in their specific visions and concerns, a commonality among almost all we spoke to is that the drive for quality is persistent and far-reaching. This drive is ever-present in all aspects of their educational work and shapes their goals for young people. For example, most educators we interviewed wanted young people to have experience *with* quality – for example, excellent materials, outstanding works of art, passionate and accomplished artist-teachers modeling their artistic processes—and experiences *of* quality—powerful group interactions and ensemble work, performances that make them feel proud, rewarding practice sessions, appropriate technical excellence, and successful expressivity.

Quality arts education serves multiple purposes simultaneously. The question of what constitutes high quality arts education is deeply linked to the question of why we should be teaching the arts. So it’s not surprising that when arts educators talk about excellence they also express ideas about the fundamental purposes of arts education—ideas about what students ought to learn through the arts and why these outcomes are important. Many purposes were mentioned by our informants, and most of them cluster into a handful of broad areas. For example, many arts educators believe that one of the important purposes of arts education is to foster broad dispositions and habits of mind, especially the capacity to

think creatively, and the capacity to make connections. Many also believe that arts education should help students develop aesthetic awareness and visual observation skills and provide venues for self-expression and self-exploration.

It is notable that most of the people we spoke with believe good arts programs tend to serve several purposes simultaneously. Though arts programs differ widely in their contexts, goals, art forms, and constituencies, a hallmark sign of high quality arts learning in any program is that the learning experiences are rich and complex for all learners, engaging them on many levels and helping them learn and grow in a variety of ways.

Quality reveals itself “in the room” through four different lenses. When you ask arts educators what they take to be the signs of high quality arts education, they are as likely to point to features of the experience in the setting itself as they are to broad purposes and outcomes. These experiential elements are what you’d expect to observe or infer if you opened the door onto a classroom, studio, or rehearsal hall, and looked for markers of quality.

There are multiple kinds of markers, and one way to look for them is to examine the “in the room” experience through four different but overlapping lenses: *learning*; *teaching*; *classroom community*, and *environment*. These lenses all focus on the same experience, but each one brings a different dimension into focus. The *learning* lens focuses on what students are actually doing in the classroom—the kinds of projects and tasks they’re involved in and the character of their engagement. The *teaching* lens focuses on how teachers conceive of and practice their craft—how they conceptualize the teacher-student relationship, and how they design and implement instruction. The *classroom community* lens reveals the social dynamic of the relationships in the classroom, including relationships among the students themselves, between students and teachers, and among the teachers and other adults who are present. The *environment* lens focuses on concrete elements such as the physical space of the classroom, the materials and physical resources available, and the kind of time students are given—hours as well as years—to engage in arts learning.

Foundational decisions matter. Arts education programs are based on foundational, program-defining decisions that give a program its identity and provide the parameters within which quality is pursued. These decisions include: (1) *Who teaches the arts?* (2) *Where are the arts taught?* (3) *What is taught and how?* And (4) *How is arts learning assessed?* Scholars have written extensively about these decisions, and the literature often takes the form of debate, with arguments made for one side or another. In practice, the ways in

which high quality programs answer these questions tend to be nuanced and contextualized, often embodying high principles and pragmatic concerns at the same time.

Decisions and decision-makers at all levels affect quality. Many decision-makers play a critical role in the quality of arts learning experiences. These include people quite far away from the classroom (e.g., administrators, funders, policy makers); those just outside the room—notably program staff and parents; and those who are in the room (students, teachers, artists). Decisions made by those in the room have tremendous power to support or undermine the quality of the learning experience. This is especially true of students, and it is important for students to be as aware as possible of the potential impact of their choices on their own and others' learning experiences. This may seem obvious, but the role of student choice is often overlooked in discussions of quality, and it invites greater attention.

Reflection and dialogue is important at all levels. An overarching theme across many of the findings of this study is that continuous reflection and discussion about what constitutes quality and how to achieve it is not only a catalyst *for* quality, but also a sign *of* quality. In other words, thinking deeply about quality—talking about it, worrying about it, continually revisiting ideas about its characteristics and its indicators—is essential both to the pursuit of excellence in arts education and to its achievement. Another overarching theme is that a misalignment of ideas among decision-makers about what constitutes quality often complicates a program’s pursuit of it. Alignment is easy to ignore, and achieving alignment among decision-makers at all levels often requires far more basic investigation, dialogue, and negotiation than is given.

The report offers several tools to help decision-makers address the twin challenges of reflection and alignment. The tools are designed to be used solo or in workshops or other collegial settings. Their purpose is to help arts educators and their associates build and clarify their visions of high quality arts education, identify elements of quality in their own programs, reflect on the relationship between quality and a program’s foundational decisions, seek alignment between a program’s beliefs about quality and its practices, and seek alignment across decision-makers at all levels who help to shape a program’s pursuit of quality.

An Introduction to Assessment with EASE

How do we motivate under-prepared and struggling students to do the hard academic work necessary for success?

Why should students receive “F” on their transcript, when with additional time and effort they can master the materials for a class in which initially they were unsuccessful?

At Young Women's Leadership Charter School of Chicago we have worked since the school opened in August 2000 to develop a philosophy and technology for assessment which supports its students to achieve success. We help students understand there is a purpose to education and we support them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

The key elements of the assessment philosophy:

- Focus attention on student learning and not on student grades;
- Give immediate feedback when assessment occurs;
- Encourage students to return to difficult concepts and skills until they achieve mastery;
- Enhance communication between educators, students, and families;
- Facilitate the use of data as a factor in decision-making school-wide.

For each class, faculty members develop a set of outcomes: skills or concepts which can be demonstrated in multiple contexts and multiple ways. Teachers assess students on knowledge they demonstrate through assignments, classroom work, presentations, and tests.

Students can be assessed as

- *proficient*, or, if appropriate,
- *high performing*.

And if they do not grasp the material, they are assessed as

- *not yet proficient*.

Assessment traditionally plays a positive role only for the top scoring students. EASE, our software, gives all students a clear picture of where they need to focus their efforts. For students, improving their level of proficiency is as an ongoing motivation. EASE helps us support students in raising their expectations of themselves. This is the essential ingredient for increasing student achievement.

– Margaret Small, PhD,
Director, YWLCS

All assessment is based on evidence of learning. Students continue to return to skills and concepts in which they are not yet proficient. Because the list of their unmet outcomes is always available on-line, students learn they can't walk away from areas which they have not mastered. The bar of expected achievement is raised at each grade level, focusing students on revisiting unmet outcomes from prior grades.

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To provide students, families, and educators with the information they need to make the system work, the YWLCS has developed a highly data-driven, web-based assessment technology, EASE, to support this approach:

- Students can download and print lists of the outcomes they need to address.
- Students and parents can track progress and academic standing in real time
- Teachers can pull together "mini-courses" or academic workshops to give students extra opportunities to master challenging outcomes.

The technology available to student, teachers, and staff makes this possible.

Teachers and administrators can have a variety of overviews:

- Easy access to a student's entire academic history, showing the outcomes in which she needs to become proficient
- Promotes flexible data analysis by student, grade, class or school-wide

Implementation in a nutshell

- A year-long, full credit course might have 25-30 outcomes. To get credit for the course, students must demonstrate proficiency or better in 70% of these outcomes.
- We also track students' cumulative proficiency including outcomes from all years. A student revisits unmet outcomes from prior years, because each year a higher percentage proficient or better is required to move to the next grade. For example, at YWLCS to move from 9th to 10th grade a student must be 70% proficient or better in all outcomes, but from 10th to 11th grade requires 75% proficient overall; from 11th to 12th grade requires 80%; and to graduate a student must be proficient in 85% of all outcomes assessed during the student's career in high school.
- By demonstrating proficiency in 70% of a class's outcomes, a student can receive credit for a class in which she wasn't proficient the year before. This means that we expect all students to pass all classes. As students mature they can get back on schedule, rather than continuing to fall behind and ultimately dropping out.
- Students can distinguish themselves by demonstrating high performance on a high percentage of outcomes. This is the basis for achieving honors and high honors.

For more information, please contact:

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To Charles E. Wilson, inspiring educator, charismatic guru to so many, and my dear and mostly patient husband.

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8

Evaluation and Assessment

This chapter discusses some of the thorny issues related to the push for program evaluation and assessment of student achievement. It is not a how-to chapter, but it will refer readers to many sources of information regarding evaluation and assessment designs, instruments to measure progress, and ways of interpreting the quality of programming and the immediate effect of programs on students.

The topics of evaluation and assessment have been hot-button items since I first encountered the phenomenon of arts in education. Because of the tendency to advocate for the arts as a remedy for academic or social failure in the schools, there has been a consistent cry for proof that the arts make a difference. Hence the need for rigorous tracking of the influence of the arts on various segments of education—attendance, academic performance, attitude toward self and others, the learning environment, leadership—everything it seems but home cooking! In other words, the cry for evaluation and assessment has also been the cry for validation of the arts in the mandated curriculum for all students, all levels, in all schools.

I have always tried to make a distinction between evaluation (i.e., the process of judging the quality of program elements) and assessment (i.e., the process of measuring the effects of program elements on behavior—students' or teachers' or other targeted populations identified by the program—

mers). In making judgments about any educational program, we generally look at the program's written description, usually found in a proposal that has been funded. We check to see whether the program described is the program offered, and if there are changes, we probe for the rationale for such changes. We look at the proposed outcomes and try to find evidence that the outcomes are being worked on (formative evaluation) or, if the program has been completed, whether the anticipated outcomes have been reached. We may look at student portfolios, teacher and/or student logs, or other documentation for evidence of program impact.

In evaluating most arts in education programs, we look at staffing, roles and functions, instructional materials used, and actual transactions between program participants. We interview key people associated with the program (e.g., teachers, teaching artists, students, and site-based and general administrators) who represent all entities participating in the program. We look for evidence that, if the program is about an arts-integrated effort, there is evidence of good art work as well as good academic work. If problems are revealed—and there are almost always problems—we address them with project coordinators or their superiors in a way that helps them both recognize and then attempt to solve the perceived problems. Our work is purposely consultative as opposed to being merely judgmental. We like to share what we find as we go along.

Assessments call for specific evidence that shows the ongoing or cumulative effects of the program on the targeted population within the context of the proposed program. If the premise is that an arts-integrated curriculum will elevate student scores on reading tests, then we look at the scores *and* compare them with either the scores of similar populations who did not get the program, *or* compare them with scores before the program began, *or* compare the scores with the average score for a grade in the treatment school or a national norm. If we examine portfolios and the scores they have received by their teachers, we look for some pattern or sign of impact. We also look to see whether the rubrics used to rate portfolios are sufficient to assess student progress accurately. And we ask teachers and teaching artists to comment on student outcomes. Assessment specialists try to use procedures that are specific to an artistic discipline and use the state, local, or national standards as a guide for formulating assessment instruments. Unfortunately, most standards are codified regarding what students are expected to know and do at various grade levels, but there is scant literature regarding quality indicators that help assessors to determine outstanding, as opposed to typical, work in art, music, dance, or drama. Nonetheless, if the assessment specialist

is well versed in artistic accomplishment by age or grade, he or she should be able to make some cogent comments regarding the degree to which all, some, or a few students demonstrate particular skills or talents. The 1997 National Assessment of Education Progress in the Arts is somewhat helpful as a model of assessment procedures and findings and could be adapted by assessment specialists.

I first became familiar with the idea of evaluation in graduate school when we were trained how to write lesson plans and thematic resource units. We were required to include procedures that would help us determine whether our students understood what we thought we were teaching, and whether they could apply new knowledge to appropriate situations. We learned how to construct simple tests, and we became familiar with other (soon to be called *alternative*) procedures to measure our impact on learning. With the introduction of proposal writing for federal funding and state regranting, it was incumbent on all of us who wanted to compete for money to experiment with new teaching techniques to learn the lingo of evaluation and include it in our hefty requests to program officers in the state capitol or in Washington.

I got deeply involved in evaluation as a key aspect of arts education when I was manager of the New York City Arts in General Education (AGE) project. Under the facilitative leadership of colleagues at the JDR 3rd Fund, I met some of the major figures in evaluation and research in the country, those who were invited to look at arts education and arts in education and devise defensible data-gathering techniques that would “prove” the importance of the arts in the total educational process. I met Robert Stake, a poetic scientist who showed me that one could record transactions over time in order to determine whether key behaviors were changing as a result of the infusion of the arts into the educational potion. I was introduced to John Goodlad of UCLA and Jerrold Ross, then of NYU, and others, each of whom had a particular view of schools, schooling, and the force of evaluation. My job was to identify schools for a demonstration project (AGE) and at the same time figure out, for proposals, what we would do to show the impact of various project elements on targeted schools. With my colleagues from the JDR 3rd Fund and the New York Foundation for the Arts, I tried to accommodate the requirements of state and federal funders and at the same time put together elements that would strengthen instruction both in the arts and through the arts. Of course, as with so many other programs such as ours, we were encouraged to pick schools that had already demonstrated their support of the arts. This made it very difficult to “prove” that the arts made a difference over a period of time in the change of

school climate, student or teacher performance, or leadership. Nonetheless, as with many grant programs, the idea was to pick schools that were winners, not schools that were in deep trouble.

So intrigued was I by the challenge of evaluation that, when invited to apply to NYU's School of Education to complete a doctoral program, I accepted, and left the AGE project at the conclusion of its third year. My course work and research helped bolster my knowledge and skill in this area, and ultimately, my dissertation grew from an evaluation of New York City's next version of arts in education, Arts Partners, a jointly administered program sponsored by the New York City Board of Education, the city's Department of Youth Services, and the Department of Cultural Affairs. The Mayor's office loosened funds that were allocated to some hundreds of schools, which received various arts services through scores of arts organizations in the city. I was asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnerships, the power of the concept of interagency collaboration, the impact of certain kinds of residencies on reading test results, and the impact of professional development on teaching artists. My dissertation looked at the often-cited claim that the arts support the development of critical thinking and problem solving and creative thinking (frequently bunched together as higher-level thinking skills). We set up a situation where selected artists were given some modest training in cognitive development and then asked to develop and deliver units of instruction that would elicit higher-level thinking from participating students. We developed observation instruments to assess student transactions during the various residencies and analyzed various kinds of standardized measures as well as questionnaires I developed to see what resulted from the artists' direct instruction.

The most important findings in this study related to the ways in which different artists triggered higher-level thinking in their students and the different levels of thinking that resulted from artists' encouragement of student art making. We found that some artists were much better than others in triggering higher-level thinking. And, not surprising, we found that different artists elicited different levels of creative thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking. The study not only earned me my doctorate, but it also garnered some recognition with its inclusion in the NEA-sponsored compendium of research, *Schools, Communities and the Arts*, juried and edited by the Morrison Institute of Arizona State University. Both before and after Arts Partners, I was asked to evaluate scores of other partnerships between arts organizations and schools in various parts of the country and abroad. And I soon found out that, apart from generating data that tried to align "treatment" with "results," my role was really one of

a talking mirror, telling project people what I was seeing, what problems I thought they needed to attend to, what situations were brewing that could create a crisis, and how excellent work could be highlighted as models of effective practice. It was exhausting work, but immensely rewarding as I observed programs growing from innocuous escapes from the daily grind to essential elements of successful schools. In comparison with the national movement toward developing legitimacy in the education community, my work was about how to make the opportunity of arts in the schools most effective. To the degree that my published work advanced the agenda of arts education, I was grateful. But I was never interested in participating in one of the mega-studies that would try to prove the importance of arts education, primarily because I felt that others could do that better than I, and I have yet to be convinced that proving the value of the arts will convince those who will not make even weak efforts to support arts education in their schools.

I have always been most comfortable looking at students engaged at work in a classroom or studio setting, noting the degree to which all, some, or a few are engaged in creative work. I like to look at the works-in-progress and apply my mental template: are they merely following directions or are they investing part of themselves in their work? Are they asking questions of themselves and their instructors to help clarify what they are trying to accomplish? Is their work reflective of a genuine voice or merely a docile response to the teacher's directed instruction. Many of the questions arise from years of experience in observing good, bad, and indifferent situations. Many conclusions are drawn by juxtaposing observations of student behavior with what we researchers know are signs of engagement in higher-level thinking. I would listen to conversations and watch students draw or paint, improvise, or critique each other to see whether they are weighing choices, making comparisons, trying out ideas and evaluating them, putting themselves in the place of their characters, or trying to synthesize a series of experiences into one statement. I would count instances of certain behaviors (teachers' or students' or both), rate numerically the quality of what we observed, and in that way begin to put some quantitative data as well as qualitative data on the table for analysis. I generally engage an artist to work with me so that together we provide an aesthetic as well as pedagogic approach to what we observe and conclude.

Evaluation and Assessment Findings and Accountability

Arts advocates have happily gotten on the bandwagon for accountability, riding the two horses of high-stakes testing and, more reluctantly, Draconian responses to test results. Their thinking—wrongheaded as it may be—is that if the arts played by the same rules as other academic subjects, more schools and more school districts will treat the instruction of art, music, dance, and drama with respect. This has yet to be proved.

Meanwhile, arts organizations and schools in partnerships with them are subject to greater scrutiny than ever before. This is not necessarily bad news, because it is one of the embarrassing secrets of partnerships that without a mandate for rigorous evaluation, most schools would rarely examine the quality or effects of collaboration between artists and teachers in an orderly and structured method.

Nuts and Bolts of Assessment

In the current educational parlance, three kinds of assessment procedures dominate the field: (1) testing dependent on verbal and/or mathematical responses to various kinds of items; (2) performance assessment, wherein students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge through presentation of portfolios or projects for critical analysis; and (3) authentic assessment where student work is examined in situ, analyzed for various criteria, and given some kind of mark representing its value.

Assessment is used at times to diagnose learning needs, establish eligibility for certain programs or classes, and determine and track achievement benchmarks over time. At its most controversial, assessment is linked with measures of individual or school accountability, leading to the rating of teachers and the ranking of schools. There are bookshelves loaded with scholarly works on assessment as well as practical approaches to the selection of the right instruments for use with particular assessment goals. Traditionally, two kinds of assessment have dominated educational practice: classroom tests and standardized tests. Before the 1980s, elementary students endured the classic teacher-made Friday test in which all subjects taught during the preceding week were the substance of

short and long answer items. Then, at some point during the second half of the school year, students would be given state- or city-sponsored standardized tests in reading, math, sometimes social studies, rarely science, and possibly a general skills test. The standardized tests would help a teacher determine the needs of her or his students and would in the aggregate contribute to a local ranking process of public schools within a district and in the state. A new wrinkle in assessment was introduced in the 1980s with the publication of Howard Gardner's critique of traditional standardized testing as an unfair and inappropriate measure of intelligence and the experimental Arts Propel project, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and managed by Project Zero. Within a few years, the portfolio and other kinds of performance assessment were proposed by some schools, districts, and states as an addition or replacement for certain standardized measures.

In recent years, as results of performance assessment have been evaluated, it has become clear that the road to defensible alternative assessment of ability is a rocky one. Although the idea of rating student work on rubrics fashioned by schools, districts, or even states is compelling, making judgments using the rubrics is problematic. Establishing the meaning of rubric cells is much more difficult than attaching a value to a right answer. What looks like an excellent response to one judge in one area can look like an appalling example of high mediocrity to another. When used as a substitute rather than as an adjunct to standardized tests, some of us are concerned that the fine art of memorizing information for later application may be eroded.

Many advocates of performance assessment point to the arts as the source of wisdom, which is flattering to arts advocates but misleading nonetheless. Judging a student's skills and thinking ability by examining a painting or series of sketches leading up to a painting may be analogous to creating a composition in English class, but it is not analogous to the more factually laden aspects of science and mathematics, history and geography, where students need to be tested on what they know as well as what they can do with that knowledge. I want students to know where Iraq is on the globe, and I want them to know how the geography of that country has influenced the development of its social and political structures. I want them to be able to interpret information as presented in the media. I will need to test for that as well as respond to a project demonstration that they have organized as part of their social studies requirement.

Assessment Dilemmas

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

The portfolio has always been a popular technique for assessing student art or literary work when compiled in a structured and purposeful sequence. As a physical trail of thinking, it can be enormously interesting and helpful in figuring out how a student is progressing. If, on the other hand, it is just a collection of unrelated, so-called “best work” with no indication of what has preceded it, the teacher will find it difficult to track a learning arc.

Some of us who were impressed with the result of the 1980s Arts Propel experiment cautioned our colleagues not to forget how much expertise, extra time, and training were invested in this alternative method of assessing student growth. Teachers were trained not only in how to rate portfolio documents, but also in how to organize their teaching and collection methods to result in appropriate documentation. Many thousands of dollars were spent to buy time for after-school conferences with students as well as for periodic training and information sharing. To separate the portfolio from its developmental processes is to do once more what is so common in American public education: to take the top off the ice cream cone and to disregard the base.

The old idea of collecting student work to show at Open School Night remains pretty much what current practice in portfolio assessment entails. In those instances where real time and effort are put into the collection and analysis of evidence of personal, intensive instruction, the portfolio is a valuable assessment process. It helps to document the learning arc accurately.

PROCESSES AND PRODUCTS

Arts educators in school districts around the country have developed standards for measuring the performance of their students in dance, art, music, and drama. In most cases, the standards and accompanying assessment rubrics have been designed to describe quality and competency. In the best situations, the faculty is trained to use these tools, because the future of their students is in their hands. Enlightened texts have been written for practitioners (by Donna Beattie, Arthur Kosta, Bob Marzano, James Popham, Jay Tighe, etc.) to help district coordinators invent site-specific observation and test instruments. But all the tools require seasoned judgment.

THEORY INFORMED BY PRACTICE

I was recently privy to a high school faculty discussion on grading. They raised all the typical questions: How many characteristics should be measured? What happens when the student works really well in class, tries, but just doesn't have the talent to get a score sufficiently high to pass? What is pass? Why is a student taking an arts sequence anyway? At what point is it fair to say that a student's credits should be denied?

These conundrums are especially troubling for teachers in arts magnet high schools, where the stakes for graduation are increasingly high. Here arts credits are most assuredly going to be used as part of the preparation for an institution of higher education, whether an arts college or liberal arts institution. Suppose the magnet high school accepts students because they love the arts but are not necessarily good practitioners. They are great audience but not necessarily great performers. They love going to museums and even trying their hand at painting and drawing and sculpture, but beyond a certain point, they just don't have it. The paradox of assessment and developing appropriate curriculum standards makes the grading situation even more difficult for conscientious teachers in high schools, where grades have life-affecting consequences.

Leaders in the fields of both the arts and education may have created more problems than they intended when they joined the standards movement. With good intentions, they demanded that the arts be treated just the way other important subjects were to be treated. The visual arts, dance (choreography, technique, improvisation), drama (improvisation, voice, diction, characterization, style, playwriting), and music (voice, instrumental, ensemble performances, virtuosity, technique) demand a panoply of skills and a well-developed intellect that goes beyond performing in a class play or painting the scenery for it. Sequential arts programming demands time on task, in some kind of logical sequence; yet the arts curricula are frequently not sequential but colinear, multilayered rather than spiraled. How many art classes start and end with unrelated projects, each representing a different bank of skills (a still life watercolor, followed by a record cover, followed by a portrait in charcoal, followed by whatever...). As we know in theatre education, one learns to do something and practice it at one developmental level and the following year, as one's voice and body change, the exercises become more complicated even though the person is basically the same in tenth grade as he or she was in the sixth grade.

THE FALSE DICHOTOMY OF PROCESS VERSUS PRODUCT

And then we have the false dichotomy of process versus product, as usually voiced by elementary school teachers and teaching artists who are forced to assess the merits of students' creative work. The arguments range from: "Why do our kids have to undergo the rough treatment of assessment in the arts? Can't they just do the arts for fun and as an escape from the pressures of the rest of the test-driven day? Why must we look so carefully at the products—the paintings, the poetry, the plays as written and performed, the elementary ensemble concerts—when the artistic process is important." For me, the product has to be an index to the process. If the concert is painful to listen to, then the instructional process was certainly misguided. If the dancers are whirling around with no pattern or center, something was clearly wrong with the choreographic process. If the poem sounds more like a fifty-year-old than a seventeen-year-old, we must ask where the genuine voice is and whether the process was imitative or creative and value it accordingly.

SAMPLE INSTRUMENTS

The evaluation instruments included here are generic versions of those that we have adapted for various performing arts companies or visual arts organizations that have partnered with schools over long periods of time. In developing these forms, I usually work with artists connected to the projects to make site-specific modifications. Nasha Thomas Schmitt of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Foundation and Ann Biddle, consultant to the Ballet Hispanico Company, were particularly helpful in the construction of evaluation instruments for dance. The instruments are also reflections of what various researchers (including myself) have cited as critical elements in cognitive or affective growth (see Figures 8-1 through 8-5).

Figure 8-1 Typical Evaluation/Assessment Design

Hypotheses or Claims	Procedure to Develop Evidence
1. The arts contribute to emotional stability (e.g., improved self-esteem, better classroom behavior, etc.).	Standardized self-esteem questionnaires (such as Bracken's <i>Multidimensional Self Concept Scale</i>) Project developed questionnaires Structured observations and/or interviews over time by experts including sociograms (such as <i>BRACE</i> , developed by Bank Street College of Education)
2. The arts contribute to better understanding of other domains of learning.	Pre- and post-tests on academic subject matter (standardized and site-specific) Analysis of report card marks Analysis of anecdotal records (teacher's, student's) Portfolio analysis Classroom observations by experts using checklist correlated to academic transactions
3. The arts lead to better understanding of self and others.	Interviews with participants over time Observations over time Project protocols that align with self-understanding checklists
4. The arts contribute to cognitive development (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, analysis, synthesis, etc.)	Standardized tests on thinking skills (e.g., <i>Ross Test of Higher Cognitive Processes</i> or McGraw-Hill's <i>Terra Nova</i> battery of tests or tests used by local school district as part of its accountability design) Observation of transactions in class (e.g., Classroom Observation Checklist by S. Lee Winocur in <i>Costa's Developing Performance Assessments</i>) Comparison of classes with and without arts treatment

Figure 8-2 Dance Assessment Checklist

Name: _____ **Group:** _____

Artist's name: _____

Teaching partner's name: _____

Discipline (circle one): **Ballet** **Jazz** **Modern** **Tap**

Techniques of Performance:

Directions: To be filled out by *artist and teaching partner* together. For each student selected for assessment, fill out column one at the beginning of the instructional program. At the end of the program, fill out column two. Use this scale:
 0 = not applicable; 1 = not evident (but should have been); 2 = poor; 3 = fair; 4 = good; 5 = excellent. Please indicate the difference (+ or -) between the camper at the beginning and end of camp in the "change" column.

#	Item	At Beginning of Program	At End of Program	Change +/-
Dance technique				
<i>When asked to do so, student ...</i>				
1.	Enters and exits dance studio in an appropriate manner.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
2.	Maintains personal space.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
3.	Travels in general space without bumping.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
4.	Assumes correct positions.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
5.	Repeats dance phrases accurately.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6.	Displays appropriate dance energy.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
7.	Demonstrates clear direction changes.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
8.	Demonstrates a variety of efforts (movement qualities).	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
9.	Demonstrates different relationships (duets, trios, small groups).	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
10.	Responds well to feedback from teachers & peers.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
11.	Reaches a performance standard that interprets the choreographer's vision.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	

continues

Figure 8-2 *continued*

#	Item	At Beginning of Program	At End of Program	Change +/-
Character				
<i>Without being prompted, student ...</i>				
12.	Acknowledges the progress of self and others.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
13.	Gets along well with others in class.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
14.	Shows respect for artist.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
15.	Shows respect for group leader.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
16.	Maintains positive behavior during rehearsals.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	
Total points				
Comments:				

Figure 8-3 Generic Creative Communications Observation Form

Artist's Name: _____ **Class:** _____

School: _____

Brief description of activities observed:

Time 1:

Time 2:

Time 3:

Rating scale:
 0 = not applicable; 1 = not evident (but should have been); 2 = poor;
 3 = fair; 4 = good; 5 = excellent.
 Please indicate the difference (+ or -) between the student at the beginning and end of residency. There is space for additional comments that might clarify the ratings and give a fuller sense of each student's growth and development.

#	Item: The teaching artist clearly encourages the following student behaviors:	1st Observation	2nd Observation	3rd Observation
1	Students exhibit concentration, focus.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
2	Students communicate personal ideas verbally/visually.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
3	Students use problem-solving skills.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
4	Students create a mood or atmosphere in writing/art work.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
5	Students create well-defined characters/images.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
6	Students demonstrate control of new communication techniques.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
7	Students follow directions regarding completing assignments.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
8	Students demonstrate control of writing techniques such as metaphor, simile, and other poetry conventions.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5

continues

Figure 8-3 *continued*

#	Item: The teaching artist clearly encourages the following student behaviors:	1st Observation	2nd Observation	3rd Observation
9	Students demonstrate control of technical aspects of writing (spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage).	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
10	Students stick with a project to its conclusion.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
11	Students accept constructive criticism from peers & instructor.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
12	Students collaborate, work together.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
13	Students reflect on their own work and edit/revise accordingly.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
Total points				
Comments:				

Figure 8-4 Resident Artist Questionnaire

In order to assess progress made toward project goals and to plan for the future, would you please fill out the following questionnaire and return it to _____ by _____. The information that you provide will help to inform the planning process for next year. Thank you.

Carol Fineberg, project evaluation consultant

Your name: _____ **Date:** _____

School assigned: _____ **Class(es):** _____

1. What were the most important concepts that you tried to teach your students? (Attach a copy of your lesson plans.)
2. Do you believe that *most* students developed an understanding of these concepts? If so, give examples that substantiate your claim. If not, please discuss your reasoning.
3. What skills did you try to teach the children? Do you think that most students acquired new skills or at least improved existing skills? Explain.
4. Were you able to identify particularly talented students? If so, please list their names and the characteristics that struck you about these children. (Use the back of this form if you need more space.)
5. Using the following scale—poor, fair, good, excellent—please rate your experience with the various aspects that support an artist residency. Use the space provided (or additional paper) to comment on any of these aspects (commendations, recommendations, etc.). Leave blank those items that were irrelevant to your residency.

Rating of Project Elements

Aspect of Residency / Comments	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Planning				
Facilities				
Equipment				
Materials				
Student effort				
Teacher involvement				

6. What changes would you like to see incorporated into next year's program?

Figure 8-5 Professional Development Workshop Questionnaire

FORM A B (Circle one) To be answered prior to enrollment in workshop and two or more months after participation in workshop.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine how the professional development workshops have influenced classroom practice. Would you please respond to the items below and give the completed form to _____ by _____. Thank you.

Dr. Carol Fineberg, project evaluation consultant

Today's date _____

Your name (optional) and school _____

1. Please list below the names of the workshop/institutes(s) you attended:
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
2. To what extent do you think the workshops influenced your teaching practices? Please circle the appropriate choice:

A. To a great extent B. To some extent
C. To no appreciable extent

If the answer to Item 2 was A or B, please describe what aspects of the workshops influenced your teaching practices by checking the appropriate choices below:

Used new teaching resources (texts, photos, curriculum units, videos, etc.)

Used arts as a way to reinforce problem solving or critical thinking

Used arts to reinforce historical and/or geographical understanding

Used arts to reinforce literacy skills

Used arts to reinforce math concepts or skills

Used arts to reinforce science concepts

Other (please describe) _____
3. (To be answered 2-3 months later) How would you describe the results of your trying out one or more of the arts related ideas you checked above?
4. What future workshops would serve your teaching purposes? Describe in the space provided.

Several texts are available that describe how to construct questionnaires, surveys, and other feedback instruments. One that I have found useful is *How to Conduct Surveys* by Kosecoff and Fink. I have also found it helpful to periodically review the essentials of performance or authentic assessment with my clients. The following checklist (Figure 8–6) has proved helpful.

Figure 8–6 The Essentials of Performance (and/or Authentic) Assessment

1. Determine purpose of assessment.
2. Identify and articulate clear standards against which to measure performance.
3. Develop appropriate tasks that will help measure:
 - performance
 - portfolio contents
 - demonstration of knowledge, research skills, higher-level thinking skills
 - exhibition quality
 - slide show/lecture/PowerPoint presentation
 - other special project
4. Establish criteria for assessing the successful completion of tasks using various instruments to measure performance:
 - rubrics (with interpretation of each point on the scale)
 - templates (to determine content)
 - checklists
5. Ensure reliable and valid scoring; ensure interrater reliability.
6. Enlist experts when necessary to validate or in other ways assist in the assessment process.
7. Analyze and report findings.

Program evaluation and assessment of student progress will always be with us. The challenge before arts organizations and educators concerned with the continuation of arts programming in the schools is to ensure that the process of measuring impact does not get in the way of the process itself. Teachers and teaching artists need not change the way they do things because “the evaluator is coming.” On the other hand, we would expect that if during the process of evaluation, we find that the targets are being missed, then program planners

should be amenable to examining the data and creating a process for problem solving.

I have always enjoyed the role of evaluator, primarily because my clients have genuinely wanted to know what I concluded from my observations. I have enjoyed the process of problem solving and have been gratified by the way programs have smoothly evolved after rather bumpy starts. The fact that most funders demand evaluations is a good thing; without this mandate, arts organizations, much less schools, would not pay as close attention to the results of what they are doing, and they would be weaker for it. There is a prevailing feeling that evaluations take good money out of the coffers that could be better spent in delivering services. Yet evaluations do not have to be expensive, nor do they necessarily have to be conducted by outsiders. In the final analysis, it is the data that counts, and in many instances the data can be collected by program staff. Program participants can reflect on the meaning of the data together and can make the kinds of changes needed to increase the power of their programs by themselves. But they have to collect good data, and they have to understand its implications. Many arts organizations find it more cost effective to engage an evaluation consultant than to try to add more tasks to the workload of already overburdened staff.

Assessment and High-Stakes Testing

Schools and arts organizations need to be warned that tying the arts to high-stakes reading and math tests might well result in uncertain if downright absent confirmation. How well I remember my crossed fingers when we did exactly that in an Arts Partners study and in the evaluation of Thinking Through the Arts. In each case, an analysis of the reading scores and scores on the Ross Test proved statistically significant. We could prove the value of the arts as an academic booster. But what if there were not such a correlation? We agree with Hedland and Winner that it is a dangerous game when the arts are hung on the peg of academic achievement. Although they may in many cases contribute to progress, in some cases they may not. Does that mean they are not valuable? If they do not result in academic achievement, then what? Do we dump them as being superfluous to the national plans for education? Of course not. Our children need the arts just as much as they need the humanities and sciences. At the same time, we want to ensure that arts programs are qualitatively on target and aligned with those characteristics and conditions that researchers have linked with success in various circumstances. And for this we need the rigorous practice of evaluation and assessment.