PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF AN ARTS-INTEGRATED FOCUS SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF A PUBLIC FINE ARTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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Abstract

In the current educational marketplace, the range of school options has made parents key players in their children's elementary school education. Unlike previous decades, where students typically attended their neighbourhood schools, today's parents are more likely to transport their children greater distances to their school of choice. This case study tells the story of one British Columbia public elementary school that transitioned into an arts-integrated school—usually referred to as a fine arts school. The arts-integrated curriculum attracted a growing number of families who resided outside of the school's catchment area. As a teacher at the school before and after its transition, I began to notice trends in the students enrolling from outside of the school catchment area. Those trends included issues pertaining to behaviour, social interactions and academic challenges. Thus, my research investigates parental perceptions of arts-integrated (fine arts) focus schools. Data collected through interviews with both parents and educators, detail: (a) parents' expectations and understandings of such schools, and the complex reasons why they enrol their children; and (b) the difficulties in implementing an arts-integrated curriculum. Interview data also became the impetus for the self-study which runs in tandem throughout the research chapters. The self-study speaks to my own childhood and teaching experiences: to an extent corresponding with the way in which students in dance classes are taught to negotiate self within defined and discrete spatial areas. Because the study is situated temporally in what is commonly termed a neo-liberal era, I include discussion of the wider political environment, particularly with respect to parental choice. My case study demonstrates that arts-integrated (focus) schools are accessed chiefly by middle-class families seeking advantage for their children. The study reveals that the main value of fine arts schools may be as enablers of student success in behavior, socialization and academic terms. Finally, I argue that arts-integrated schools can also be spaces of fulfillment for parents who, through choice of school and active participation there, feel that they have played a more profound role in their child's education.

An oath

I will not abuse the voices of my research participants. I will be mindful of context and the lack of ethics in purposely misplaced words. I will use the works of theorists and educational researchers, but not over-state or choose to interpret them inaccurately. Finally, I will try as much as possible to write clearly and to articulate my ideas but not to over-generalize so as to become part of a vast collage of generic writing.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author Suzanne Windsor-Liscombe. The fieldwork reported in Chapters III, IV and V was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H12—00623.

September, 1980. Oxford, UK

I am tired and culture-shocked when I finally arrive at the hostel in Earls Court, London. Afraid and completely taken aback – unprepared – by the immensity of this city, I phone the only contact I have in England, and in Europe, for that matter. He is a friend of my brother-in-law and a student at Oxford. I call him and cry into the phone. He tells me to calm down, have a sleep and get my bearings. Call him in a couple of weeks. Come up to Oxford for a few days. Two weeks later, I get into a cab outside the Oxford train station, and head for 61 Lakeside Drive, about 3 miles north of Oxford city centre. At twenty-one years old, I have travelled only once outside of British Columbia, to Hawaii. I am alone and not feeling as bold as I did when I bought my plane ticket. When the house he is living in requires more tenants to pay the rent, I quickly volunteer. We are five: my one-part town to their four-part gown. Generous and I think somewhat sympathetic they invite me to various social engagements. Over the year that I live and work there, I get an inside look at life in a world-famous centre of academia. And, I realize that my little degree in music was only the beginning. These students seem years ahead and worlds away from where I have come from, and yet we are all about the same age. Now things are changed. I can't just go home and settle down. Oxford has profoundly affected me. It cracks my life wide open. Now I need to live. And learn. Even if it takes a lifetime.

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To my son Owen, for his quiet support

To my daughter Emma, who told me it was time to put away the crossword puzzles

To my husband Rhodri, who made me believe that I could do anything I tried

To my parents, Gerald and Lillian Dittrich, who always put us first

1964. *The Green Man*

There was just no doubt about it. We were all afraid of the Green Man. The Green Man lived in the park that surrounded the new school under construction. Painting himself with thick green paint from head to toe he crawled up into the tall trees where he could watch all of us for miles around. If we ventured into his territory, he would strip us and cut our heads off. What he did with our remains I never did learn, or even think about. The violence of it all was obviously sufficient. I envisioned him looking a bit like a tree trunk with legs, coated in green paint. I imagined that he had drawn black lines all over his green face. And, for some reason he wore only a pair of overalls with one broken strap.

Sitting in Miss MacDonald's class the day that all of this valuable information was shared, I still remember the feeling of anxiety and outright fear that ran throughout me. Mitchell Henderson, whom we already recognized as being the smartest grade one student in our class – and therefore one to be believed—had volunteered to tell us about the Green Man during show-and-tell. If he hadn't exactly shown anything, the telling had left me staring out the window trying to look down the street toward my house, which was just this side of the park: this side of the boulders that lined the park.

I fretted the entire afternoon. What if the Green Man saw me? What if he came down from out of the trees and ventured into the playing field? What if he caught me? I hunched lower and lower into myself and I suppose one of my friends must have noticed because I shared my fear with her. She kindly took me up to Miss McDonald's desk and asked if I should phone my mother to come and get me since, by virtue of geography, I was more in danger of being caught by the Green Man than anyone else in the class. Miss MacDonald must have said something that convinced me it would be okay to walk home alone after school. I remember a sunless rather hazy sky enclosing a feeling of thick tension as I walked less than one block home.

I also remember realizing that the story was far more terrible than the reality of the situation, and as I entered the house I could breathe again.

The walk home alone was anxious, but in my 1964 neighbourhood, parents didn't escort their children home by foot or by car. The odd car that pulled up was usually picking up a child for a medical or dental appointment. Parents were mostly seen in the school on hot dog day, Sports Day, the Spring tea, and at the annual Christmas bazaar. Yet I daresay that my parents and their generation were every bit as concerned about the welfare of their children. But the concern was not so obvious. Case in point: as soon as supper was finished, and as long as it remained light out, we children would all assemble outside and run and yell and generally disrupt the block until as evening moved in, parents took their places on front door steps and started calling us home. If they were anxious and afraid of what we got up to out of their sight, they never told us.

I sometimes ponder the impact of World War II on my parents and their peers: those who grew up then, and those who saw active duty. Did such experiences followed by the post-war welfare state create a feeling of hope and mutual trust? I can only make a guess, just as I can only surmise that the gradual dissolution of the welfare state and the emergence of a neo-liberal society, has resulted in a generation intent on succeeding within a global marketplace: a marketplace that extends into the field of education.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research topic and goals

This dissertation explores parental perceptions of elementary arts-integrated schools within the public school system. It concentrates on analysing the reasons for parental choice of school, and consequently upon their understandings of arts-focussed pedagogy. Thus I have created two analytical components. Those components can be likened to spaces of investigation, ones that in turn correspond with the social and physical spaces associated with my school over time. In recognizing this relationship, and the importance of the concept as well as reality of space, my inquiry has been particularly informed by the spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre and most especially his arguments in *The production of space* (1991). Research and history frame this case study, beginning with my earliest associations with the school under discussion. My own history moves in tandem with the history of the school and up to the present.

My research question has guided my inquiry. It has produced data that were generated through interviews, and through which I have hoped to answer my question. What are parent perceptions of, and motivations for sending children to a public elementary fine arts school? While examining this question, the data also aid in describing the establishment of a school, commonly referred to as a school of choice. Data were acquired through interviews with parents and educators. While the focus of this research is *parental* perceptions of a fine arts elementary school, nevertheless, the context for this research lies within the operation of the school. Therefore the thoughts and opinions of district administration, school administration, teachers, and non-teaching staff provide the backdrop against which to introduce parent interviews. This is a focus school which has had some unique challenges; without input from educators, I believe that the parent data would be less meaningful. Such data are discussed in two separate chapters; a third chapter investigates and connects ideas and themes raised by these two groups.

Throughout my critical analysis of those data sets, and also my chapters on literature review, methods and theoretical concepts, I have introduced self-study essays.

1.1.1 The expected and unexpected

I was not expecting the unexpected. But when, in the Fall of 2006, a significant number of students began to arrive from outside of my school's catchment area, I was perplexed. A newly-established fine arts school, its June 2006 population of 90-or-so students had risen dramatically, to about 130 in September 2006. To be perfectly honest, it just wasn't what I had expected. And this is where my interest in pursuing research into schools of choice begins.

This is what I did expect: students with previous experiences or strong interests in the visual and performing arts would be coming through the door. But, observations of the profiles of September 2006 newly-enrolled students did not match the expectation. I began questioning what motivated parents to send their children to fine arts schools; What were their expectations? This question has driven the case study I have created from interviews with district administrators, educators, staff, and parents, at the school where I am currently Head Teacher. Through interviews, I have sought to gather information from both educators and parents about their perspectives on a range of school-based issues, both pedagogical and social. From this, I have gathered a rich dialogue that speaks to the complexity of school choice. Public and private options abound, and added to this is the home-schooling option. Clearly today's parents do not need to assume that a good education is to be found at the neighbourhood school.

Teaching in the same school district that I grew up in has allowed me to make a connection through time and place. So, running parallel to the research is my own story, a self-study that traces my experiences as a child and as an educator. The telling of my own story supports the formal research involved in this case study by adding a very personal, lived, dimension to my perspectives and understandings of a public [school] issue (Bullough &

Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). I have relied on Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) to assist me in my understanding of self-study and its validity:

> The questions self-study researchers ask arise from concern about and interest in the interaction of the self-as-teacher educator, in context, over time, with others whose interests represent a shared commitment to the development and nurturance of the young and the impact of that interaction on self and other. (p. 15)

Because of my close connection with the school over time, and because of my collaboration with teaching colleagues who shared the same vision for the school, it was easy for me to draw on my own past and to tie it into the research. However, that is not to say that there were not other challenges when I actually undertook to interview teachers and parents. Firstly, I was concerned that my working relationship with teachers could have caused some awkwardness during interviews, which would take us outside our usual professional association. Secondly, while I did have a good relationship with parents—mainly in the form of exchanging pleasantries—I really did not know how they would respond to my set of interview questions. Here I draw on my own experience some years ago. I was interviewed by a university colleague who asked me a set of questions, carefully recorded my responses, and maintained the same pleasant smile on his face throughout. It made me uncomfortable, and I wondered what he was really going to do with my responses. I wondered if I was saying the "right" things, or if he was going to use them in a negative manner. Therefore, I felt rather nervous about beginning the interviews, and in establishing a comfortable, conversational rapport.

Recalling experiences across many years has had an impact on my "self" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15) and as a multi-layered piece of research, should have greater impact on the "other" (p. 15).

Since a self-study requires the naming of people or places, I will use pseudonyms throughout. The only place where I will use actual names is in reference to myself, and in an anecdote that involves my own two children. I have their permission to use their real names.

1.1.2 Contributing to the research

One only needs to type the phrases, *arts integration*, or *arts-integrated*, into a data-base search to know that there is considerable literature on the value, or the how-to, of the visual and performing arts as discrete or integrated subjects. Those that are pertinent to this research will be included in the literature review.

My intended contribution to the existing research is to address more specifically how parents think about what is generically called a fine arts school, and to reveal their expectations of fine arts schools. To this point research relevant to my case study addresses schools of choice in the educational marketplace, and arts integration within the school curriculum. I have not located any analysis of interviews with parents about specific schools of choice and what it was about them that led to the enrolment of their children. Why do those parents who state that they can afford a private sector education—and are not content to enrol their children in their local public elementary school—still have faith in the public system to provide an acceptable education for their children in a school of choice? Thus my research, and its contribution, centres on dialogues with educators and parents about parental motivations.

At the start of this inquiry, and based on my informal observations as a school practitioner, I assumed that parental decision-making depended on their children's social needs, behavioural differences, and academic challenges. My initial inquiry, however, raised a series of additional questions. For example, and from a theoretical perspective, how do parents comprehend the physical spaces of learning in an arts-integrated school? Do parents understand the concept of arts-integrated pedagogy and what it comprises? While there is literature on parents and school choice, nevertheless the literature on fine arts schools as a focus school option, is less apparent. Therefore, I am seeking to uncover new understandings of fine arts schools within the arena of school choice.

1.1.3 Word sort

In any situation there is insider language – words and phrases -- that tend to be used interchangeably and this can be confusing to an outside reader. Therefore, creating a common set of words or phrases to use throughout this dissertation has been a challenge. Throughout this dissertation I have used both *fine arts* and *arts-integrated*. *Fine arts* is a generic term that refers to schools that offer an arts-based curriculum and in my experience is the phrase most commonly used to refer to this type of school. *Fine arts* as a general descriptor of arts-based learning can be confusing since it could also refer specifically to art. Art in itself can be described as fine art, and hence, the term fine arts school might lead one to imagine that it is a school that teaches only the disciplines of visual art, for example drawing, painting and sculpture.

There are some parents particularly, who have assumed that the term "fine arts school" refers to a school akin to Fiorello H. Laguardia High School in New York City, made famous in the 1980 film *Fame*. In fact, *fame school* is not an uncommon colloquialism. With that comes an assumption that a fine arts school is a performing arts school, and therefore the main intent of the school's curricular structure is to teach performance.

An *arts-integrated* school seeks to combine elements of the visual and performing arts with non-arts subjects such as those found in the Humanities and Sciences. But here again come a litany of names such as arts-integrated, arts-based, arts-infused and arts focus. Unlike a school whose goal is performance (product)-based, a school with an arts-integrated curriculum is process-based. This does not mean that performances do not occur, or that they are not welcomed. After all, performance as product, even in its most relaxed form, is still the evidence of process.

What are the visual and performing arts? In elementary schools they are most commonly described as visual art (herewith art), drama, dance and music. These are the subjects that local fine arts schools seek to unite with other areas of the curriculum, and this is confirmed through my visits and observations at fine arts schools across B.C. Lower Mainland school districts.

Then there is the word, *arts.* This word can be mistaken for the word, art. In the public elementary fine arts school the letter 's' at the end of the word, art—arts—is meant to allocate an arts-integrated pedagogy within four general strands: art, drama, dance and music. Frequently literary art is included as part of the arts integration model. At the elementary school level, literary arts stems from language arts and is infused into other subject areas, while in some secondary fine arts schools (or mini schools) students can apply for a literary arts option.[1]

For the purposes of this dissertation I will use the generic term *fine arts* school when referring to these schools as an entity. I will speak about *arts integration* or *arts-integrated* pedagogy. If I speak about a specific arts discipline I will use such phrases as, for example, dance-integrated.

1.1.4 Schools and Choice

A school of choice is only chosen (Harrington & Cookson, 1992, p. 183)

I have a friend who attended the SEED Alternate School in Toronto in 1968, the year that it opened. Its current description is that of "a haven for students with high potential who seek a small and nurturing environment that supports their individual needs" (SEED Website). This alternate school operates under the umbrella of the Toronto School District, and as such, is a public school offering an alternate form of education. Over the years, my friend has realized his high potential and is a successful inventor, businessman and entrepreneur. He will tell you that he owes it to the SEED school where he was able to work independently of a classroom, and

[1] For example, the Lord Byng Fine Arts Mini-school in the Vancouver School District offers a literary arts option in grade 9.

where he acquired a lasting interest and love for gardening. Both his homes in Vancouver and in the Gulf Islands speak to this.

During the 1970s when I was in secondary school, I had peers who attended the Vancouver Free School located at what is now City Square (Cambie and 12th Avenue). In essence, these were schools of choice that offered an alternative means of learning through individualized program design. Correctly or not, my friends and I called them alternative schools, or, we called them free schools.

These examples of school choice are very clear-cut because they have a program design that steps outside of traditional curricular programming. However, one could state that technically, as soon as one selects a school, they have made a choice, and therefore have enrolled at a school of choice. Under this argument, the catchment area school is also a school of choice if one decides to enrol there. Harrington and Cookson, Jr. (1992) refer to schools with specific themes, as alternative schools. What they have called alternative schools, I have called *schools of choice*, but this is a broad term. So, for the sake of clarity, and under this large umbrella of choice, I will refer to my case study school as a focus school: a school that uses a specific theme, or focus, to instruct across the curriculum. Additionally, it is an elementary focus school within the public school system.

1.1.5 Setting the context for the case study

In 2001 a colleague suggested that we should explore the possibility of transforming our elementary school into a fine arts school. In June 2002, this same colleague and I met with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of schools to discuss that possibility. They readily endorsed the idea. The strings attached to it, however, were that we would need to form a committee to locate research on fine arts schools, on the value of the arts in education, and observe other fine arts school programs. This would all need to be compiled into a report and

presented to district Trustees and administrators. It seemed a daunting task and possibly not worth the trouble. However, my colleague was of a different opinion and within a very short time, he had put together a committee of interested teachers to investigate the matter. He had also looked into the possibility of having a principal with an arts background involved, as well as the district's director of instruction. A highly respected music practitioner, his role, among many others, was to coordinate, liaise and direct between the district and the schools, all fine arts initiatives. Each member of the committee took on a task, and mine was to write both the fine arts school and school site proposals.

In 2005 the school that I had proposed as a likely fine arts school site, posted an opening which I applied for and got. Its significantly depleted student population made it a viable option. Thus, I was teaching at the school—henceforth referred to under the pseudonym Mosaic Elementary School--when both the school's community and the school district approved its transition to a fine arts school, offering an arts-integrated curriculum. It opened in September 2006. As new students began to enter Mosaic, I started to notice a trend in enrolments which had little to do with the arts. Students from outside of the catchment area were arriving with issues of social, behavioural, and academic challenges. Curious, I reviewed some of the written explanations that parents had given for transferring their children to the school. While I had not assumed that it would be a fame school, I must admit that I did assume that children with interests or talents in the arts would be enrolled. When it seemed that parents were enrolling their children due to struggles at their previous schools, I was puzzled.

Over the next couple of years I observed the same pattern in new student enrollments, and when I decided to pursue further academic studies of my own, it was easy to find my research focus. What *are* parent perceptions of public elementary fine arts schools? Initially, I had been excited that a school on the brink of closure, could be rejuvenated through the arrival of

students wanting to pursue their love of the visual and performing arts. My thoughts had not gone beyond that.

From this recounting, two thoughts occur to me. This—the student population—wasn't what I expected. And, I had unknowingly played a key part in advocating for schools of choice. Hence I, and my colleagues, had stepped into the education marketplace, and with that would come new levels of responsibility, and parent inquiry.

Prelude

Before this research there was the school that, as it turns out, is situated in a place stretching back into my childhood. It begins this way…

There's a massive swimming pool complex on the site now, but in 1964 it was an empty field where my sisters and I played. Access to the field was gained by jumping from one large boulder to another, what seemed at the time to be a dangerous feat. Having achieved that adventure, my two sisters and I entered the gravel field, its tiny stones crunching pathetically under our sneakered feet as we made our way across its dusty desert expanse – our own Sahara, our own safari to King Solomon's mines. In our minds we could have been lost for days, so, unbeknownst to our mother, we survived by eating the small, tender yellow-green buds of the wild chicory that grew randomly throughout the gravel. Having then eked our way across this desert and past the mysterious and tinder-dry lacrosse box – empty and at risk in the sun – we crawled dramatically up three stone steps to our goal, a small wading pool, where we had been told countless times to watch each other. We were always to walk out to the deepest part – 2.5 feet – and swim back to the shallow end. Having then swam and socialized with those we met during splash fights, we rewarded ourselves by flicking out our thin towels and allowing them to buffer us from the hot cement, we victims thrown up from the water's cold depths. Mission accomplished. Lying there, if one wasn't contemplating the activities of ants, it afforded the opportunity to gaze around and ponder the construction happening up a small hill, a short distance from the pool. It was a new elementary school in its final stages of completion: fascinating because it looked so different from our own elementary school, one that was a square two-story box with pitched roof and bell tower fitted squarely into the middle. Ours was the old-fashioned school. Mary and her little lamb might have gone there. But this new school. Well, it was different! Two long single-story wings with shed roofs wringing out the final stages of Modernist architecture, a covered play area and vertical wood siding, not a shingle in sight!

Throughout that summer we had many successful treks to the pool and much opportunity to watch the school that had claimed some of my friends as its own. That last day of school, June 1964, I had stood at the intersection of my street, saying good-bye to friends who would be crossing the boulder-stone divide along the main avenue, and up past all of our adventure places to attend the new elementary school. It was a sad moment, not entirely understandable and saddened more since the new school had also claimed my favourite teacher. She had opted to leave my school to teach at the new one. I was to see her two years later when my mother took me to visit her one day en-route home from a piano competition. I was delighted to see her again, but confused by the new modern setting I found her in, and felt shy, standing there in my black velvet shoes and green velvet dress. I played with the ends of its ivory satin bow, trying to be polite and make a conversation at my mother's urging. I recall holding up my piano certificate and smiling, a challenge in itself since I was trying to simultaneously smile and hide the two large front teeth that were growing in all wrong – sticking out and misaligned. That was that. It would be another twenty years before I was to familiarize myself with the school and its community.

As a secondary school band teacher, my teaching assignment began daily at 7:30 am. I was required to teach band at six elementary schools. One of them was the school that I had watched under construction back in 1964. Now, in 1986 it was a thriving school with its classrooms filled to capacity. I spent only one year there before my assignment changed again, and ironically, it would be almost another twenty years before I returned to the school. In 2005 I would find a school with a dramatically depleted student population and empty classrooms, on the edge of closure. Yet strangely enough I was about to begin my longest association with any school I had ever taught in…

1.2 Politics, the middle-class, and arts-integrated learning: A Literature Review

1.2.1 Parking lot ballet

If you work there, don't be late. The parking lot--all its designated spaces plus the entire length of the road that rims the western edge of the school property--will be packed with cars. And all the warnings by local police to park in designated spots won't change anything. It is 8:50 am and everything is taken. This is a school of choice. At least half of this school's students are transported from outside of the catchment area. Clearly these parents have a commitment to the school and its program. Clearly, they are prepared to negotiate this parking and driving ballet every morning in order to give their child the experience of an arts-integrated pedagogy.

In the hallway of another Lower Mainland elementary fine arts school is a bulletin board. The bulletin board is covered in notes that attest to parental perceptions of fine arts schools. A large sign asks parents why children go to fine arts schools. Included on the notes are comments such as, "to have fun", "to be creative in every way possible" and "better teachers". These are only a few examples, but the point is that there are many reasons why parents no longer send their children to their neighbourhood elementary schools. A fine arts school is a school of choice and from the broad topography of the literature, a fine arts school encompasses not only teaching and pedagogy, but also politics, competition, geography, parental empowerment, class, and socio-economics, to create a complex field of investigation. The literature suggests a broader framing that encompasses not only arts-integrated pedagogy and parental involvement in schools, but more broadly, neo-liberalism, middle-class empowerment, and associated with that, the dilemma of school choice. All of these are components of my research which will centre on the motivations and factors governing parents' decision to educate their children at elementary fine arts schools within the public school system.

My interest in the arts in education is directed at elementary public fine arts schools. My research investigates why parents enroll their children in public elementary fine arts schools:

what are their perceptions and understandings of the Arts that compel them to look outside their neighbourhood catchment area for their children's education? From a survey of the research on public fine arts schools, there does not appear to be much research into a parent's perspective. The research that most closely parallels my own is that of Gaskell (1995) in her analysis of the establishment of the Langley Fine Arts School. However my specific interest is in parent voices. To that end this literature review focuses selectively on several topics that altogether inform this case study.

1.2.2 Public interest: the arts on stage

Watching the old British television comedy, *Yes, Minister!* (1982) recently, I was very amused when fictional cabinet minister Jim Hacker, in a heated conversation with Sir Humphrey Appleby states that "subsidizing the arts is a middle-class rip-off!" I would say that today, the arts are being promoted more positively. Certainly the public enjoys the arts as delivered by big television networks at primetime, with their plethora of talent shows including: *So you think you can dance, American Idol*, *Glee*, *Dancing with the stars, The voice*, and *Dance moms*. Whether the unspoken agenda is to market entertainment in whatever popular form draws viewers (that is, whatever makes money), nevertheless the arts enter every household that chooses to watch these shows, and that can't be a bad thing. "You're an example of why the arts are so important in our schools," exclaimed Jesse Tyler Ferguson during the August 29th, 2012 airing of *So you think you can dance*. An actor in a popular television sitcom, Ferguson's celebrity could serve to positively endorse the arts to a mass audience. Clearly, celebrity influences (although the means of coming to know and to understand the arts in other forms, does not necessarily occur within the heavily-populated arena of primetime television).

Newspaper articles, such as in *The Globe and Mail* (MacIlroy, 2011) offer examples of how the arts can improve intellectual capacity. "Children aged 4 – 6 [sic] learned about music –

the basics of rhythm, pitch and melody…in a cognitive computer-based program…after 20 days of instruction, the children performed significantly better on a verbal IQ test compared to scores before the training" (p. A8). When querying why this might be so, it is explained in the article that "music and language share brain processing and structure" (p. A8). Indeed it would seem that the arts' time is now.

Locally, I was intrigued with an art work by the conceptual artist, Luis Camnitzer. Outside of the Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia (July, 2012) the wording reads:

> **The museum**
> is a school:
> **The artist** learns
> to communicate,
> **The Public** learns
> to make connections

Apart from its conceptual representation of education, the simple wording encapsulates the idea that the arts have the potential to teach and to encompass and to make connections with the wider community. All of this endorses Eisner's 2009 assertion that education can learn from the arts, as he underscores the importance of subject interaction, spontaneity, somatics and open-ended learning tasks, all of which are achievable in a meaningful way through the arts (pp. 7-9). "Tradition has assigned the arts a marginal position in the armamentarium we use to negotiate the educational world. This need not be the case" (Eisner, 2009, p. 9). And it no longer seems to be the case.

1.2.3 An old-new concept

The notion of a fine arts school is not particularly new. There have been fine arts schools in British Columbia's public school system for more than twenty-five years. There are currently 12 public fine arts schools within the Lower Mainland as well as district-based elite programs across the Lower Mainland region as indicated in the following table. While the elite programs

differ (and are not part of my research) I have included them to give an indication of which districts offer programs specific to the visual and performing arts.

Table 1.1 Fine Arts schools in B.C. Lower Mainland public school districts

School District	Grades	Level	# per District	Criteria for admittance
Abbotsford	K-5 6-12	Elementary Middle/Secondary	1 1	No No
Burnaby	K-7	Elementary	1	No
Delta	5-7	Elementary "Art Stretch"	1	Yes: cross-district program – visual art only - students must demonstrate a natural talent to be accepted
Langley	K-5 6-8 8-12	Elementary Middle Secondary	1 3 1	No No No
North Vancouver	8-12	Secondary "Peak Performance"	1	Yes: cross-district program for students who need to balance their academic studies with their elite level of athletics/performing arts training
Surrey	K-7	Elementary	2	No
Vancouver	K-7 8-12 8-12	Elementary Secondary Secondary "SPARTS"	1 1 1	No Yes: high-average to high grade 7 letter grades, written examination and audition and/or visual art submission Yes: cross-district: balances studies with elite level of athletics/performing arts training

Of the schools represented by this table, the best known example is the Langley Fine Arts School, established in 1985. Gaskell's studies (1995, 1999, 2002) of that particular school exemplify the difficulties of implementing an arts-integrated curriculum, and closely parallel my own experiences working in a fine arts school. Other earlier literature (for example Walling, 1997) attests not only to the value of, but also to a hopeful future for the visual and performing

arts in education. Arts-integrated pedagogy and varying levels of effective application are discussed in Bresler (1995). So chronologically, there was nothing particularly ground-breaking when the fine arts school in my district opened in 2006.

Nonetheless it was an innovative move for my school district since it kept the school in operation. I can think of four elementary schools in my district that suffered enrolment decline and became storage or resource facilities. Another one had its population dispersed to other schools and serves as the district's on-line education centre, its classrooms converted into offices or extra storage areas. But Mosaic, advertised as a fine arts school, survived. An arts-integrated curriculum enabled a school on the edge of disappearing, with its tiny population of only 90 students, to change into a thriving community with more than 200 students, a larger school staff and an active parent group.

If in theory, "fine arts schools do not seem like a very controversial phenomenon" (Gaskell, 2002, p. 40), yet various struggles and issues have arisen as a result of the school's mandate to deliver an arts-integrated pedagogy. Here then is where I begin my review of literature: arts-based learning, since it is that distinct curricular approach that created a thriving student population and maintained it as an educational venue.

1.2.4 An arts-integrated pedagogy

In my experience, pedagogy is often viewed as a top-down strategy for imparting knowledge: knowledge that is absorbed by the learner, with comprehension levels proven through assessment. This is not my prime area of interest. My review of arts-integrated pedagogy acknowledges but does not focus on pedagogical how-to strategies, although some specific examples of arts-integrated practice are provided. Similarly, I reference research which advises on how to establish a fine arts school (e.g., Brown, 2007), as well as success stories in arts-integrated practice (e.g., Bresciano, 2012). My main interest in arts-integrated pedagogy is

focussed on the debate on integration versus discrete arts education; How the disciplines of music, visual art, dance and drama can partner with other subject areas; The type or quality of arts integration practiced in primary and secondary schools, and, the challenges of ensuring quality arts-integrated pedagogy. Since my research is based on the case study of one elementary school, I refer only briefly to arts-integrated pedagogy in pre-service teacher education.

To begin, it is not a simple task to implement an arts-integrated curriculum, as will be noted in my research chapters. Published research including Colley (2012), Charland (2011), Noblit and colleagues (2009), Hornbacher, Lipscomb and Scripp (2008) and Gaskell (1995) all speak to the difficulties involved. Such difficulties include the maintaining of on-site arts specialists in all four arts domains, time issues, collaboration, seniority, testing and accountability, and varying levels of teacher commitment to the arts. Added to this is the problem of school culture, and how a pedagogic shift if not carefully planned, can upset the balance of a "cultural ecosystem" (Charland, 2011, p. 1).

> Every school has its own cultural ecosystem and even the arrival of one new teacher or administrator can upset the balance. It's not difficult to imagine that thrusting an intervention directly into the microsystem, immediately challenging teachers' values and beliefs might lead to the sort of shallow accommodations that have scuttled many educational reforms. (Charland, 2011, p. 6)

Even the arrival of one new staff member can upset the balance of a school community, as will be further discussed in my chapter on educator interviews. Meantime, having succeeded in the installation of an arts-integrated school, one of the major problems lies in the quality of the integration. Bresler (1995) defines levels of arts integration: subservient (arts add-ons), affective (background such as music), social (performance-based) and co-equal cognitive (true integration administered by an arts professional) (para. 18). While targeting co-equal cognitive style as the desired goal, she states that this is most rarely accomplished since teachers with extensive arts

backgrounds are "least prevalent in practice" (para. 18). She most regularly observed the subservient style in her research survey of arts-integrated teaching across several elementary schools. Similarly, Mishook and Kornhaber (2006) found in interviewing educators in arts-integrated schools that a subservient integration was most regularly practiced (p. 8). Part of this likely relates to levels of confidence in teaching through the arts.

Fortunately there are texts that offer strategies for classroom arts integration. A comprehensive example of arts-integrated lesson plans across the four main arts strands can be found in Cornett and Smithrim (2000). Interestingly, six copies of their book, *The arts as meaning makers*, were purchased for our school in 2006 but have gone largely unused, a point to be noted, since it is indicative of the problems that have been encountered in fully committing to an arts-integrated pedagogy.

Walker (2011) and Cornett (2006) offer data and strategies that support academic growth through the integration of drama and language arts with mathematics. Likewise, Sayers Adomat (2012) supports the power of drama in literature for primary-age children. By lifting the story away from text, drama provides a more meaningful context for understanding through role-playing and through interactions with other students (p. 45). Walker (2011) speaks to the power of incorporating drama into secondary school history classes. The summary of her article is very compelling in its support of arts integration:

> My history teachers seemed to do everything they could to suck the interesting out of history, leaving only names, dates, and battles to memorize until the test was over. One forgotten thing is that when Herodotus wrote his histories in ancient Greece, he was actually collecting stories that had been told for generations accompanied by music. Somewhere along the way, the art got separated from the history and "fact" became the assessment tool. (p. 116)

One could argue that this is really just about poor teaching. But, she makes a strong case for arts integration, particularly since the demand for assessment data creates the tendency to want to teach to the test, or the facts, in satisfying district and ministry requirements.

The research on integrating dance into other curricular areas is less easily found than that of visual art, drama or music: music being an excellent example of the power of the arts, and here I refer to the "Mozart Effect". This famous study (Rauscher, Shaw, & Ky, 1993, 1995, cited in Taylor & Rowe, 2012) asserted that students who had listened to a Mozart sonata for 10 minutes gained greater temporal-spatial abilities with the potential to increase IQ scores (Taylor & Rowe, 2012, p. 51). A unique study in that it used only one composer to suggest music as an enabler of greater intellect, it is still worthy of mention; In 25 years as a music teacher, I have encountered many parents who enroll their children in music classes because they believe it will improve their mathematics skills. More applicable to elementary schools is research that looks at music integrated across the curriculum (e.g., Hornbacher, Lipscomb, & Scripp, 2008), or as a means to affirm cultural diversity (e.g., Hoffman & Adria, 2012).

Within the smaller body of research into dance integration in elementary schools, Schreiber (2001) discusses how dance can be empowering for students, particularly those who are not necessarily realizing success academically or socially (p. 21). In Schreiber's article the connection between dance and science is explored; "Dance is physics and how you move with space, how you deal with scientific principles such as gravity" (p. 21). Taking the arts directly into the classroom, Hawes and colleagues (2012) recount their research into a school where students learn algebraic competency through tap dancing.

> Each component of the [math] unit contributed to students' growth in algebraic understanding, and the effectiveness of the unit lay in the combination of three components: integrating visual, numeric and kinaesthetic representations catered to different learning styles as well as provided different entry points for students of varying abilities. (p. 309)

While this study might seem rather unusual, it does represent one means of integrating math and dance at a co-equal cognitive (Bresler, 1995) level, and it exemplifies the importance of involving both skilled math and dance (Arts) educators in arts-integrated pedagogy. Altogether

the arts as integrated subjects, should be viewed as equal partners with the Humanities and Sciences, and along with that as a means for differentiated learning.

Differentiated learning is simply a term used to explain that not all children learn the same way and that educators need to be cognizant of that. Whether a child is gifted or academically challenged, understandings and accommodations need to be considered to help children achieve to their fullest.

Over the years that my school has offered an arts-integrated curriculum, there have been many calls from parents of children with varying learning disabilities. These fall into two categories: high incidence and low-incidence. High incidence students require an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and learning challenges are most commonly related to a learning disability. Low-incidence refers to those children who are dependent on educational assistants (EAs) and other facilitators attached to a school district or a health authority. These students also require an IEP, which is usually more complex since it often requires functional living and speech-and-language (communication) goals as well as academic goals. Likewise a student designated gifted, requires an IEP to formulate a specific learning plan. Mason, Steedly and Thormann (2008) base their research on arts integration for students with varying [dis]abilities. In discussing a type of documentation-communication called "photovoice" (p. 45) they explain its success for low-incidence students and as a strategy for differentiated learning (which also includes students who are advanced learners). Moreover they determine that arts integration "may be a natural avenue for supporting self-determination and helping students to understand and value their own interests and strengths" (p. 45).

1.2.5 Discretion advised?

While there are doubtless many perspectives on the importance of the arts in education the arts are generally divisible along two lines: their effective contribution to other growth areas, or their value as an end in themselves. Maybe these two entities meet somewhere in the middle. Historically the belief that the arts can assist in children's more general development brings up Franz Cizek and Carl Orff, pioneers of music and visual art in education. Franz Cizek (c. 1918) invited children to make abstract pictures to explore "emotions such as envy, fury and rage" (Malvern, 1995, p. 265). Carl Orff encouraged the collaboration of art, music, dance and drama (c. 1924). These may be the milestones upon which our current belief in arts-integrated pedagogy rests, and it is Orff's *Schulwerk* (c. 1930) that forms the foundation for elementary school music programs throughout my school district and many others. More recently, through my own experiences I have become aware that school districts in the Lower Mainland are re-visiting the post-World War II *Reggio Emilia* program, which encourages creative and diverse thinking in pre-school and primary-school age children**.** Other programs underscore the value of the arts and their ability to generate a new venue for learning, unlike "the still alarmingly commonplace deficit model of pedagogy, where the learner is constructed as lacking" (Adams, 2010, p. 687). Adams furthers asserts that this in turn limits the potential for building a learning community of creative thinkers (p. 687).

Noblit and colleagues' (2009) eight-year inquiry into arts-integrated learning in North Carolina joins the discussion, as they ponder whether the arts can be "justified for the creativity they involve or for their utility in other domains" (p. 36), and conclude that if the arts have not been able to justify themselves as discrete subjects, then "much effort has been put into the latter" (p. 36). The word "utility" is suggestive of a device, in this case, possibly being akin to Colley's (2012) student teacher who referred to the experience of integrating social studies and

drama, as a teaching strategy (p. 11), or maybe just a useful approach to teaching. The arts as a useful device, is evident in Noblit and colleagues' (2009) suggestion that "moving the arts from the periphery to the core of instruction tremendously increases the chances that the arts will endure when potentially debilitating events occur" (p. 76) or "even when events conspire against them" (p. 77). Casting the arts as enablers of other skills is also noted by Hornbacher and colleagues (2008), in this case citing music integration as a means of producing improved reading scores (p. 160). But the difficulty of maintaining an arts-integrated curriculum is raised by Noblit and colleagues (2009) not least because schools often experience high staff turnover, and competition derived from what they term "high stakes testing" (p. 75).

Speaking to the value of the arts as important discrete entities, not everyone agrees that they should be viewed as teaching strategies or enablers of other skills. In 1955, Margaret Berger-Hamerschlag, a former student of Franz Cizek, published her memoirs about teaching art to adolescents in working class east London. While no longer current literature, it interests me because she is raising concerns that I share; What are parent expectations for their children when they place them in elementary fine arts schools? How prophetic are her words when she states that "art has been introduced into day schools not so much in order to raise a true understanding (this is regarded as a by-product) but rather because psychologists have discovered it to be healthy for the child's mind. It can unburden itself by painting and lay bare its problems for detection" (pp. 19-20). She follows this up by warning that "to make art a remedy for ills…is a great misconception, and it will bear sad fruit for art as well as for the understanding of it" (pp. 20-21). Berger-Hamerschlag's concerns remain pertinent today as Brewer (2002) argues that,

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

The arts as stand-alone subjects require trained arts specialists and they require the acquisition of varied technical skills and abilities. Yet on a broader basis, if it is a widely-held belief that the arts play a key role in students' social-emotional development, then what are the expectations for classroom teachers? Brouillette (2010) asks, "Should a focus on the social-emotional development of students be an expectation for all arts teachers?" (p. 22) and does that in turn determine a re-structuring of not only arts curricula but also of teacher education? Certainly a deeper engagement with the arts would be realized if it began with pre-service teachers as exemplified by Irwin and O'Donoghue (2012) in their collaborative project with pre-service visual art teachers.

> Wanting to shift the reliance on skills-based pedagogy which is not only prevalent in teacher education programmes but also in schools to a more conceptual-driven pedagogy we were particularly curious about how an enquiry into things that contributed, directly or indirectly, to processes of teaching, learning and art making might contribute to creating a different language of pedagogy. (Irwin & O'Donoghue, 2012, pp. 228-229)

Irwin (2013) also discusses the metamorphosis of pedagogy into something that is no longer "about what is already known" (p. 207) but becomes something that "creates the conditions for the unknown and to think as an experiment thereby complicating our conversations" (p. 207). Such a shift in pedagogical thinking would be precedent-setting in the processes of teaching and learning, no doubt using more of a whole-child approach to learning, and thereby incorporating not only the academic, but the creative and socio-emotional.

Given the possibilities and innovations, one might ponder why the implementation of a fine arts curriculum is not mandatory in all schools. Of further consideration is Colley's (2012) list of the five key strengths of the arts in education: hands-on instruction, integration of art with core subjects, multiple intelligences (that is, differentiated learning), interdisciplinary thematic units and collaborative planning among grade-level teachers (p. 96).

Unlike other choice schools where there are prerequisites (e.g., the ability to skate, or demonstrate high computer or language proficiency skills), fine arts schools appear to be viewed as diversely inclusive. Some literature (e.g., Colley, 2012; Brouillette, 2010; Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Winner & Hetland, 2008; Brewer, 2002; and Daniel, 2000) suggests that the arts enable a range of remedial improvements, including higher academic performance scores, social-emotional development, fine motor skills development and confidence. Even papers or articles that purport to support fine arts curricula (McKnight, 2009; Ryan, 2010) ultimately show them as beneficial adjuncts and rarely as having inherent value. One exception is Phillips and colleagues' (2010) report on the value of a fine arts curriculum at the Kindergarten level. The study gathers information on those parents who valued the arts as an entity in themselves.[2]

The perception of the arts as an enabler of success both academically and socially, is real. The social benefits of fine arts schools are voiced by parents and teachers as in this example:

> [Teacher] The school is seen as more accepting of differences than other schools…I think there are, quite frankly, many students in this school who would not survive in another school, or [who] would be buried in another school, whether that's in the sense that they would be shoved to the back of the class and wouldn't utter much, or, whether [they] would be teased and ostracized by their peers. (Gaskell, 1995, p. 146)

Why is it necessary for anybody to be ostracized? Yet it happens for all kinds of reasons, and not least because for school-aged children, it is about sameness. Those who do not seem to follow the expected routine find themselves distanced from others. I would say from my own experience that it is often not within the classroom but within the unstructured space of a gymnasium or a playground, during recess and lunch. A school's playground is a very abstract space and can be a site of positive interactions but more likely a combination of positives and negatives.

[2] Kindergarten parents are an interesting group because one could say that their children are a blank canvas. That is, they have no previous elementary school experience. Yet these parents also feel that an arts-integrated education is worth pursuing. One kindergarten parent's thoughts are included in my chapter on parent interviews.

One program which is entirely discrete from the school's overall curriculum is that offered by *Room 13,* a visual art program begun in Scotland that now in operation at educational sites internationally. Its purpose is to engage children in the enjoyment of visual art. Children are free to work in the studio during classroom hours and at lunch and recess; As Shani Ali, one of two artists-in-residence at the *Room 13* studio in Hareclive Primary School in Bristol, UK stated, "school grounds are scary places" (personal communication, July 9, 2012). While visiting the school in July 2012, Shani commented to me that children felt safe coming into *Room 13* – a large art studio built specifically for the *Room 13* program. A unique program within the public school system, *Room 13* does not represent the norm. Yet I mention it because it is an example whereby the intention is to create art. While it runs opposite to an arts-integrated curriculum, nevertheless it allows students the opportunity to apply themselves and to develop their creativity through visual art. It is time negotiated with the classroom teacher that allows students to work in the studio and to explore and to create alternate forms of knowledge representation. The success of the program is summed up by a former artist and now patron of Room 13. Writing for *'One Day in the Life of...'* Richard Long (2012) recalls (upon having the opportunity to study art in elementary and secondary school): "I discovered a peer group that could show me much higher standards, and in the exotic ambience of real art in Room 13 studios. It was a taste of another world" (p. 1)

It is "an independent art room…within the state system" (Yarker, 2008, p. 368). Like many parents concerned about their child's emotional well-being, it embodies one simple idea that Yarker (2008) notes: "In *Room 13* she can keep failing until she succeeds" (p. 368). Yarker also notes that Hareclive Primary exists in the "new iron age of Frameworks and Ofsted and attainment targets and accountability" (p. 373). The neo-liberal world with its repositioning of

education within an educational marketplace – its success measured through standardized testing – is a reality in British Columbia too.

1.2.6 Neo-liberalism goes shopping

Of the scholarly writings I have read, that of Simon Marginson most powerfully conveys to me the way in which neo-liberalism has affected today's society through its market initiatives. I include here one such example.

> Neoliberalism offers little to the average family, except that it lifts from them the promises and burdens of local political activism by substituting regulated market signals in its place. Neoliberalism has little warmth or generosity about it; it is considerably less attractive than the notion of equality of educational opportunity. Still, it has secured a blanketing presence in government and media discourse, and it has a superficial discursive fit with the desires for commodified consumption now central to daily life. It seems to cut off the potential for political and social alternatives at every turn. (Marginson, 2006, p. 207)

Marginson, whose work focusses mainly on higher education in Australasia nevertheless underscores how our perceived freedom of choice in education is actually masked by "regulated market signals" and this applies to public education in British Columbia, too. That we have become a society fixated on "commodified consumption" is evident in our schools on a daily basis. For example, nowadays when I ask students what they did on the weekend, they tell me what their parents or friends bought for them at the mall. "Not just political democracy but organic community has been displaced by the 'market democracy' of atomized individuals roaming the shopping malls" (Marginson, 2006, p. 208). This is all rather depressing, but I do agree with Marginson. Take for example how the larger community interacts with the school community: not just in terms of school field trips, but in terms of what it can market to the school community. Corporations now offer fund-raising incentives to schools, such as the Ford test-drive, whereby sales consultants bring new-model cars onto the school site, parents test-drive them, and for each test-drive the school gets $20.00. It is a lovely example of interactive marketing within education and business: the school gets money, and the company gets new

clients. Schools and school districts need new ways to fund-raise and corporations are there to help them. B.C.'s market economy also rewards school districts through the number of students they draw in from elsewhere, since each student represents a dollar amount per annum.

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2006. One of my school's administrators was fond of saying that the school drew in students from outside of the district and so this became new money in the school district's pockets. New money also came in the form of international students and so we were told that a fine arts school would attract them, this time not only adding dollars to the district's pockets but also financial rewards to our school.

New money. Financial rewards. We were indeed embracing the market, the school's principal now taking on the unofficial mantle of sales consultant as she took parents on tour, expounding the merits of the school. We were working to enrolment numbers, not questioning the suitability of the school to incoming students. Nor would we have questioned it. Somewhere along the way, the agenda seemed to be to demonstrate success through student population, through quantity. So, we all kept quiet.

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Marginson's (2006) blanket metaphor evokes a sense of voicelessness, or a voice trapped by government and media. That voicelessness allows the spotlight to shift from student need to student performance.

> Neo-liberalism in education is a productivity ideology that shifts the focus from student needs to student performance…It provides performance measurement tools that help governments to micromanage schools and systems and it uses subsidized competition in governed education systems to manage and control parent and professional behavior. (Marginson, citing Apple, 2006, p. 209)

This chain of actions creates layers of competition "in education at every level (between students, between teachers, between schools, between types of school, between school districts)

as the central organizing principle of human relations" (Marginson, 2006, p. 209). I would add that it also creates competition among parents. All-in-all, we are in danger of becoming a voiceless choir.

1.2.7 Marketing education in British Columbia

In a democratic society, one could argue that there is always the potential for school choice. For example, in British Columbia there has traditionally been the choice to attend independent (private) or public schools, or to home school. Fisher and Gill (1985) provide a historical account of school choice in British Columbia, as they follow the chronology of focus (alternative) programs, mainly within the Vancouver School District but also across the Lower Mainland. "From the early 1960s we can observe a tendency on the part of school districts to respond to specific needs" (Fisher & Gill, 1985, p. 7). While program options within BC public schools seemed to be thriving by the late 1970s (p. 10), the aftermath saw a reduction, which Fisher and Gill (1985) attribute to the government's 1977 policy change allowing for the partial funding of independent schools.

A changing policy intended to reduce provincial costs may have been the impetus for the BC Ministry of Education's passing of the School Amendment Act (Bill 34) on May 30, 2002. Bill 34 allowed for the introduction of a "market element" (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 1). Purportedly to enable school districts (grades K-12) to become less dependent upon Ministry funding, education was to be a product that the public could buy into – a "market – and consumer-driven, decentralized education of high accountability" (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 3). Within a limited set of marketing possibilities, schools of choice were encouraged, as tangible proof that school districts were working to erase any perception that the public school system was "unresponsive to learners' needs and to parents" (p. 3). With the change in funding formula from "a space basis to a pupil basis" (p. 9) schools of choice became an attractive means

of district revenue. Hence the BC Ministry of Education allied itself with commerce, putting the onus on school districts to run their own businesses, and putting them in more direct competition with private sector education. Neo-liberalism, a term so often used as to become generic, had entered the field of public education, as policy.

Callewaert (2006) states that Pierre Bourdieu (who will be under discussion in Chapter III) was someone who "fought with all means the neo-liberal turn; He viewed the neo-liberal turn as a combined and consciously prepared move in international politics and economy, social relations and government, funding and implementation of higher education and research" (p. 74). As a "carefully-prepared move in international politics" it is no wonder that the writings are extensive and worldwide.

Much of the writing on school choice within the public school system comes from the United States and the United Kingdom. Davies and Aurini (2009) caution that school choice within Canada should be viewed with "an individualized quality" (p. 56) since it does not necessarily involve the same structural or political issues as other countries. However, it is important to acknowledge the phenomena of school choice internationally, and in light of the impact of neo-liberalism globally, in order to acquire a fuller understanding of its effect on students, parents and educators.

Having already introduced Marginson's (2006) perspectives on neo-liberalism, I will reiterate that generally speaking, neo-liberalism offers a market or consumerist approach to education, where parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's schooling through independent initiatives.

> While personal and individual freedom in the marketplace is guaranteed, each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being. This principle extends into the realms of welfare, education, health care and even pensions…Individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one's own human capital through education). (Harvey, 2005, p. 65)

Strong words: accountable and responsible. What levels of anxiety and worry does such a system create for parents? In my thoughts it evokes the poetry of W.B. Yeats (1919), when he writes that "The centre cannot hold" (p. 64), for how difficult must it be for parents to tread not only their own individual paths to success, while steering their child's as well? It would seem that for many parents, success begins with choosing the right school.

School choice, as a product of neo-liberalism, is not new. Wilkins (2010) provides some history on the marketization[3] of the British school system as far back as 1977 (p. 172). He explains how school choice – or the right for parents to choose their child's school – entered a new phase of significance under Tony Blair's New Labour Party in the 1990s, through deregulation and privatization of public services (although privatization did not originate with the Blair government). "Schools became more conscious of the market and aware of the parents' 'consumer status' within it as a result of these changes in policy" (p. 172). Promoting school choice as "an investment for effective citizenship" (p. 174) which would "accommodate more 'active' and 'responsible'" (p. 174) parents, the New Labour party sought to place education firmly into the hands of parents. One can then wonder, as Adams (2010) does, whether fine arts schools as a school of choice are simply another political come-on to the public: "an instrument of neoliberal discourse" (p. 686).

But exploring this neo-liberal-education landscape requires mobility and means of transportation. Double-income families, empowered by a higher collective income, are probably more likely to investigate a variety of educational options for their children across a wider geographical space (Bell, 2009). Seeking to find advantage for their child in the educational marketplace, Connell (2008) explains that neo-liberalism adds another layer of complication as she discusses how the modern market-driven family is needing to cope and adjust to a society

[3] Cucchiara (2010) explains marketization as referring "both to privatization and to broader political and discursive processes through which public entities become increasingly 'businesslike'" (p. 2461).

that has "turned [parenting] onto new axes [sic]" (p. 187). Calling it the "remaking of parenthood" (p. 183), Connell notes that neo-liberalism has caused the "disruption of family time by the 'end of welfare' and the long hours culture[4], as well as the increasing penetration of children's lives by unregulated marketing, commercial mass culture and entertainment media (p. 183). Cucchiara (2013) supports these comments:

> A person's freedom (to choose a school, a career, or even a consumer product) carries with it a new set of responsibilities including the burden of planning for and minimizing possible negative outcomes. In this context, parenting becomes as much about managing risk as it does about nurturing children." (p. 33)

Parenthood is probably always open to change, but this particular "remaking" (Connell, 2008, p. 183) seems particularly critical. Putting risk aside, which socio-economic groups are best able to "parent to the market?" (Connell, p. 187) and whose children are perceived to be the beneficiaries of parents' long hours, provision of media entertainment and endeavours to provide the very best educational opportunities?

1.2.8 Seeking advantage: neo-liberalism and the middle-class pursuit

This section examines literature that supports the view that the middle class are the group most likely to seek out school choice and advantage for their children. Apple (2001) writes that in the United States neo-liberalism has created an inequality in education. He asserts that the neo-liberal educational marketplace is both a national and international phenomenon. Apple writes, "We are told by neo-liberals that only by turning our schools, teachers, and children over to the competitive market will we find a solution" (p. 410). And so, the marketplace becomes the means through which full accountability will be realized. This argument appears to suggest that accountability outstrips all other components of education through its emphasis on performance and test results. The marketplace as the great equalizer – "natural and neutral and

[4] I interpret this as meaning long work/school days followed by driving to various lessons and tutorial services not to mention business meetings.

governed by effort and merit" (p. 413) – is then absolved of any blame, instead shifting it "onto individual schools, parents, and children" (p. 416). Ironically, this perceived equalizing may have actually caused a greater imbalance in education, and probably more finger-pointing as blame can then be distributed in a multiple of combinations: for example parents blaming a school or district for not delivering on a product they were offering in the form of a school of choice.

Neo-liberalism in education as discussed by Hursh (2007) in his assessment of the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act, is a scathing account of the evolution of neo-liberalism--as the architect of standardized testing. Hursh writes that, "for neoliberals those who do not succeed are held to have made bad choices" (p. 497), or that "if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education)…then they must be created by state action if necessary" (p. 497). Mindful that Hursh discusses education in the United States, it parallels trends in Canada. With parents often choosing schools based on published Foundational Skills Assessment results (standardized testing), it is clear that neo-liberalism has a firm anchor in British Columbia's education system[5] and may have established itself most profoundly through its emphasis on accountability.

Accountability in British Columbia is manifested through Accountability Contracts that school districts must submit annually to the B.C. Ministry of Education (Nichols & Griffith, 2009, p. 242). A School Growth Plan, compiled annually at each school within a district, contributes to the Accountability Contract. The School Growth Plan requires that educators account for the goals set out in the plan, and the key means of determining the success of the plan is through assessment, that is, standardized testing. "Low-scoring schools (usually low-SES) schools lose important assets when parents of high-scoring students move them to higher

[5] Each September, parents arrive at the schools in my district that receive the highest rankings on the published FSA lists, hoping to transfer their children in.

ranking schools" (Raptis, 2012, p. 196). As noted by Bosetti and Pyryt's (2007) research in Calgary, Alberta, the market-schools approach whereby test results are published, encourages parents to practice an "or else" approach to school choice: "either vote with their feet or apply pressure on schools to improve their ranking" (p. 104). Linked to this is Raptis's (2012) point (in discussing the Fraser Institute's rankings of schools) that if test scores are not competitive, then taxpayers feel that they have been cheated (p. 195). All together it results in a conundrum for both parents and educators. But caught in neo-liberalism's urging to make the best choice, how worrisome it must be for a parent who feels that they might have made the wrong school choice for their child. Marginson's (2006) opinion on the neo-liberal school probably doesn't lessen the worry.

> Taken at face value the rhetoric about choice-making individuals would imply that the neoliberal school is a democratizing institution, focused on forming students as thinking choosers! Instead, neoliberalism's individual subject in education is not the self-realizing student but the parent as "owner" of the student, who is conceived as human capital. And the ultimate neoliberal educational subject is not the individual but the "market" a programmatic abstraction with little popular appeal. For most people, the market in education (and elsewhere) offers not fulfillment, but anxiety and failure. (p. 209)

In addition to Marginson's strong statement, one could also state that children as human capital are the means through which parents can acquire greater cultural capital, that is, their children's success is their success.

1.2.9 Education as big business

As of this writing, there is an American television network that advertises an on-line K-12 education to parents who are unhappy with their children's school achievement. This is a good example of mass-marketed education. All school districts within BC's Lower Mainland offer on-line courses to secondary school students and adults. This might not be the case in the United States. The commercial claims free tuition, although it does not claim association with a particular school district or State. Whether it is or is not, it indirectly suggests that parents

should think about other alternatives, this one being on-line home-schooling. It places children somewhere between public schools and the private sector. Hursh (2007) believes that the agenda for many neo-liberals is to replace the public school system with a private system, therefore creating a transition from publically-funded schools to a market-driven system. This would certainly open wider the door for big business, and there is indeed a place being carved out for the corporate world within the field of education.

1.2.10 Education as a new marketing frontier

For Ball (2009), neo-liberalism has cleverly captured parental fear and packaged it as a new market product. Access to national school performance scales informs parents' decisions on school choice. Enter, the age of educational improvement packages (p. 85), and school audits. With millions of dollars to be made through corporate-driven school audits, public schools are forced to pay for private services and it comes at a price: "45 million tests currently done each year in the USA as part of the NCLB programme are worth $517 million to the private sector" (p. 86). It has opened up an entirely new employment market as consultants and coaches are introduced into schools intent upon bringing students up to a perceived superior level of achievement. Education is the new frontier – an "emerging market" (p. 97) for the corporate world as it embraces the neo-liberalist market-driven agenda.

In Canada, the Fraser Institute, established in 1974 with offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal attests to that market agenda. The Fraser Institute website mission statement describes "a free and prosperous world where individuals benefit from greater choice, competitive markets, and personal responsibility." (Fraser Institute website). Standardized testing and its outcomes, as reported by the Fraser Institute, has eventuated in school waiting lists annually as parents line up at so-called 'best' schools, be they public or private.

No doubt there are countless discussions on the impact of neo-liberal politics on public education. Returning to Apple (2001) where he questions the true neo-liberal agenda: how close did he come in his suggestion that one neo-liberal agenda for education is to create "an imagined past" (p. 412) evocative of phrases such as, when I went to school, and, in the good old days? Apple (2005) further developed his idea of an imagined past through his map metaphor which describes a series of neo-liberal roads, the most dangerous being that which leads to a so-called real culture following the voice of God – "religious fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals who want to return to (their) God in all our institutions" (p. 211) – a neo-colonialist state suggestive of a top-down white-controlled society. Whether based on religion, race or socio-economic advantage, questions of equity and fairness emerge. While neo-liberalism may have created more corporate business opportunities and wealth through its dismantling of public goods and services, it may also have been effective in further maintaining the status and stature of the white population, and this includes their voice in public education. Within the context of school choice, the literature suggests that the white middle class continues to enjoy a high level of privilege and therefore empowerment.

1.2.11 Defining the middle class

The term middle class (and white middle class) has been used in numerous ways, reflecting the fact that this socio-economic group has not only been increasingly diverse in the 20th century but also in a process of ongoing redefinition in the 21st century. Moreover, what began as a seemingly more northern European socio-economic group in North America has moved geographically with the reconfiguration of the world economy. BC's lower mainland reflects that reconfiguration in its changing demography. Therefore when I talk about the middle class I am accepting but recognizing the constantly changing nature of the middle class. It is not a rigidly-defined group. It keeps changing. Those changes socially and ethnically are evident in

my school. With respect to this literature review, however, there is a large body of literature that suggests that within the public school system – where I am focusing my research – when it comes to schools of choice, the white middle class continues to dominate. One of the main reasons, consciously or not, is the perceived need for cultural capital.

1.2.12 What's wrong with the neighbourhood school?

What is it that parents worry about so much so that they step outside the public schools conveniently available to neighbourhoods? Depending on the neighbourhood – as perceived by some parents – it could be matters related to pedagogic quality and safety. It could be matters related to "the reproduction of class privilege" (Cucchiara, 2013, p. 77). Or, it is both.

Lareau and Weininger (2003) cite varying definitions of cultural capital, one being Di Maggio (1982, cited in Lareau & Weininger, 2003) who defines it as "instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed" (p. 570). Thus I draw on an experience teaching music – no doubt something that would be considered worthy of possession. I include an excerpt from an email sent by the parent of a grade one student I taught in 2010:

> Dear Mrs. Windsor-Liscombe,
> I recently sat down with my son and asked him about his classes. I was very shocked to hear that he has not yet had a chance to use the drums that my wife helped the school to acquire and I would like to know when he will be using them.

This email was sent by a white, middle-class professional parent. It exemplifies the comfort level that the middle class have in challenging their children's teachers. There is a tone of entitlement to the email. There is something slightly threatening in his reference to the fact that his wife helped to get the drums, and therefore why haven't I used them in his son's music class? Finally, it challenges the teacher's curricular decisions. In a similar vein, Lareau (1987) cites a parent who felt that he and the teacher were equals and that while the teacher was not working for the parent, yet the teacher was not doing something that he couldn't do. To him, it was "more a

question of a division of labor" (p. 80). Such anecdotes are representative of the research that names white middle- (and upper) class parents as those who, empowered by financial means, mobility, and self-confidence, obtain the best academic advantage for their children. In such anecdotes parents have entered into a partnership relationship with their children's teachers.

When parents choose to transport their children to schools outside of their catchment areas, some neighbourhood schools suffer from depleted student populations; they face closure as parents strive to purchase homes in affluent areas under the assumption that wealth equates with a higher quality of educational services (Bosetti & Pyryt, 2007, p. 100). They buy into a neighbourhood based on the reputation of its local school, known as "school selection by mortgage" (Bosetti & Pyrt, 2007, p. 100). The space between the professional and working classes–"the way in which space is negotiated within different class groupings" (Reay & Ball, 1998, para. 6)–is pushed wider. This widening of spaces lends itself well to what Bosetti (2004) calls "little fiefdoms" which cater to the "needs, values and interests of particular groups," creating a greater potential for "social fragmentation" (p. 388). One can then understand how this could further complicate such issues as immigration.

One example of a white middle-class group's reaction to immigration is found in Levine-Rasky (2007, 2008, Levine-Rasky & Ringrose, 2009) whose studies are framed around concepts of power, ethnicity and multiculturalism. A Canadian study, it recounts her interviews with mothers in a neighbourhood of professional, mainly Jewish families. Their local school population changed dramatically after a nearby apartment building became home to a large population of immigrant and refugee families. Many Jewish parents became concerned and began to look to other public, or private schools as better educational options for their children. Her interviews reveal a range of feelings from mothers, including those who felt threatened by cultural differences, those who felt that their community should remain an intact mainly Jewish

community, those who did not welcome the idea of inner city children mixing with their own children, and those who felt that academic rigor would suffer as teachers tried to accommodate the many language challenges of the new students. Those middle-class parents whose children remained at the school used varying power relations to maintain their stature in the school. These included exhibiting confidence when speaking to teachers, promoting their own vision of school culture, maintaining positions on the school parent council, and advocating for ability groupings, and exclusion.[6] All served to re-affirm their position of power and position within the community.

Levine-Rasky argues that school choice is dependent upon social capital. Here, social capital was used to close ranks and further isolate the newcomers. She notes that,

> As a result they engage in difference-making (prac-tice) [sic] and in evaluating their needs relative to that of others (relationality). Finally, they are invested in the active reproduction of their raced, classed, and ethnic selfhood in the arena of school choice (maintenance). (2008, p. 483)

Through a conscious, social practice of power, and by capitalizing on their own community's cultural and social capital, Levine-Rasky's parents enabled a continuation of white middle-class privilege**.** Counter to, or as an equalizer of such empowerment, Perez (2009) approaches the concept of social capital from an alternate perspective. Her research discusses her attempts to introduce low-income Latino parents to Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital as a means to more confidently self-advocate on their children's behalf.

It could be that Levine-Rasky's three articles on the same topic of research, are not necessarily representative of a more general reading on middle-class whiteness. As Levine-Rasky and Ringrose (2009) state, these mothers' perspectives may have been somewhat affected by their "whiteness as refracted through Jewish ethnic identity (p. 266). The history of Jewish

[6]Exclusion is a subtle business and an excellent example of racial or ethnic exclusion is to be found in Lelyveld, J. (1985), *Move your shadow*, Penguin Books, an account of how South African whites excluded non-whites through subtle practices.

tragedy, culminating in the devastation of the Holocaust during World War II, may have affected their perspectives as they seek to maintain their right to be Jewish and to be accepted for being Jewish. Yet her three papers are important to read because they provide clear-cut examples of parental empowerment through middle-class whiteness.

A different reading of middle-class whiteness is found in the work of Brantlinger, Majd-Jabbari and Guskin (1996). Brantlinger and colleagues explore middle-class values in education and the potential for the middle-class to control the shaping of education: their "beliefs, attitudes, opinions, perceptions, social constructs, knowledges, internalized scripts, metaphors and representations of reality" (p. 573). The results of her interviews with twenty white, middle-class mothers speaks to an attitude of privilege and entitlement. Dividing data into 'ization' categories, Brantlinger and colleagues analyze these mothers' statements. Of these categories, *rationalization* carries the most weight, as mothers attempt to justify their feelings about working class and upper class school choice. One such example is suggestive of intellectual segregation because, "since kids are different, bright kids and average kids should not be in the same classes" (p. 583). Other categories speak to the collective voice of *unification* or *symbolization of unity* when these mothers as a support group explained why they did not want their children to attend schools with lower class children: "low-income kids are not usually exposed to books, printed materials and language use before school, so they are not prepared when they start school" (p. 579). Across the categories there is a thread of intellectual and class superiority and an assumption that their 'class' should remain intact and unchallenged by the working class. *Externalization*, closely related to *rationalization*, justifies class discrepancies as white, middle-class mothers accepted the unchanging situation that "low-income parents are more concerned with their kids getting a high school diploma and finding a job than going to college" (p. 580).

When explaining research methods Brantlinger and colleagues inform us that in the process of phoning parents, if a father answered, he would simply pass the phone on to his wife. This lack of a male voice running through the research on middle-class whiteness is intriguing; Would male opinions be the same, would they be stated differently (and would this matter), and would they add a new dimension to the study of middle-class whiteness? Considering Connell's (2008) comment that neo-liberalism's socio-economic web in which school choice is enmeshed has created a generation of mothers who have the "moral responsibility for giving their children 'the best possible start in life'" (p. 185) and situates fathers as the managers of "families' investments in schooling" (p. 187), the male voice might be worth a greater level of consideration. I address my own experience with fathers versus mothers in my chapter on research methods.

In contrast to her 1996 study, Brantlinger's 1985 paper about low-income parents' perspectives on school choice since some consistencies between the middle and lower classes emerge. For example, both groups were unaware of schools within other socio-economic neighbourhoods, both groups lied (about their addresses) to secure places in schools that they deemed suitable for their children, and hierarchically speaking, both groups aspired to better socio-economic neighbourhoods – the middle-class to the upper class, and the working class to the middle-class. Finally, in both cases, low-income parents echoed middle-class parents in their statements that they would not send their children to many low-income schools because the neighbourhoods were too rough. This is an unfortunate "vicious circle" (p. 400) that Brantlinger discusses whereby low-income parents want their children to succeed and are prepared to explore higher-income neighbourhood schools but are offended by the middle-class who ignore school choice in low-income neighbourhoods. On that score if the working class strive for schools in more affluent neighbourhoods how can they fault the middle class?

This article, read in conjunction with middle-class whiteness underscores the importance of taking action to "prevent the further development of parallel school systems, one for the rich and favored and another for everyone else" (p. 407). Brantlinger asserts it is not only the middle class who have aspirations or well-intentioned plans for their children's futures. While her point about parallel school systems is valid, the results of this American research might not necessarily match with similar research undertaken in Canada. Surely a two-tiered public education system is not to be desired in either place. But one might argue the problem does not lie entirely with socio-economic groups since school boards must surely take some responsibility through their own policies and management.

Interestingly, twenty-five years past the publication of Brantlinger's paper, middle-class whiteness appears to hold a strong position of advantage and privilege in school choice. This is further exemplified by Cucchiara (2008) whose article on the re-gentrifying of a failing inner-city school highlights the importance of place for the upwardly mobile. In an attempt to re-market the school to a group of professional parents, one agitated parent called out, that the school in question was not an "inner-city school! This is a *Cobble Square* School!" (p. 171). By claiming it as part of an elite neighbourhood, parents were able to place a new set of expectations upon the school.

Middle-class advantage as presented by Reay, Hollingworth, Williams, Crozier, Jamieson, James, and Beedell (2007) investigates white middle-class parents in the United Kingdom, who chose to keep their children at their local comprehensives schools. (Local secondary schools, with their diverse cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, and visible minorities, are considered a better preparation for their children's post-secondary education.) Reay and colleagues argue there is a hidden agenda of self-interest. The advantage for their children is accrued by working within a multicultural society–"a source of cultural and social

capital" (p. 1046). And there is a secondary advantage as demonstrated by those parents who believed their children would be "at the top of the tree academically" (p. 1047). The authors refer to this as a "value-added" gain–white middle-class children acquiring more confidence and self-esteem as a result of attending a school with less-privileged peers (p. 1047). However, Crozier, Reay, James, Jamieson, Beedell, Hollingworth and Williams (2008) discuss the risk of staying at the local school where socializing with those "not like us" (p. 267) or "some bad boys" (p. 267) adds to the dilemma of middle-class parents' decision-making.

Reay and colleagues (2007) add another layer of complexity to white middle class dominance by asserting there is a white hierarchical caste system. As one parent explained:

> You know they might be poor and they might be refugees but they have still got a very positive attitude towards the benefit of education as opposed to the white trash families basically who are the third generation of Thatcher's dross or whatever. If you get too many of those in the school then that is actually much worse than, people of different colour and races frankly. (p. 1048)

In the eyes of the white middle-class, those immigrant and/or refugee families with whom their children associate assume a "paler shade of dark" (p. 1048)–an acceptance-by-selection, evoking differing levels of prejudice. It also serves another purpose, which is to mask the stark difference between these two groups by a "shading-in of whiteness that serves to mask its privilege" (p. 1052). Altogether the research provides a new dimension on the ambitions of the white middle-class and how they problematize the means by which to attain them. As noted by Reay and colleagues, the white middle-class gains advantage through the disadvantaged: their presence absents the others, and yet without the others, they cannot enjoy such high status, or put another way, "to do justice to the 'other' of presence" (Biesta, 2009, p. 394). Cucchiara (2013) also discusses how some middle class parents in her study felt that it was a benefit to remain at the local school (although she does not clarify the socio-economic profile of the school catchment area).

The power of the middle-class in general terms is clearly an imposing entity within the discussion on school choice. One wonders if it will always be baby steps or no steps at all for the working class. Yet, one should not judge the middle-class since it is a group that holds many subsets of socio-economic advantage within its framing, and everyone denominated as middle class necessarily fit the descriptions of the research discussed so far. (Nelson (2010) for example, uses the phrase "professional middle class" to describe this group). And whether or not there is the perception of advantage within the middle class, nevertheless, and because of this, they have found themselves caught within their own dilemma – that of school choice.

1.2.13 School choice and the middle class dilemma

> According to Anthony Giddens, popular thinking about risk changed in the last decades of the 20th century, from a focus on "external risks" (e.g., risks derived from acts of nature, such as flood or famine) to a fixation on "manufactured risks" (e.g., risks derived from human actions, such as climate change or terrorism). (Cucchiara, 2013, p. 76)

This section looks at the effect of school choice upon some middle class parents. The following research focuses on one by-product of school choice, and that is the anxiety that affects middle class parents as they investigate differing educational options. While of their own making and therefore manufactured, by taking the risk of pursuing educational choice options, some parents then experience levels of anxiety about their decisions. It becomes a dilemma.

Although affluent parents with their perceived safer neighbourhoods, material goods and ease of mobility may bask in the moneyed comfort that provides them with greater opportunity, they are in fact faced with the dilemmas of school choice. These dilemmas center mainly upon the way in which parents are torn between their intent to provide the best education for their children and their commitment to their community.

One representation of such conflict is found in the table devised by Wilkins (2010, p. 179):

Choice	**Community**
Individual	Collective
Self-regarding	Community-regarding
Consumer	Citizen
Commercial	Political
Monocultural	Multicultural
Social selection	Social mixing

Here choice could be interpreted as a selfish act of promotion and elitism. Wilkins sees school choice as a contributor to the undermining of "public welfarism and a democratic citizenry" (p. 172). Maybe that is why throughout his and other researchers' papers (e.g., Oria, Cardini, & Ball, 2007; Cucchiara, 2013)) there are parents trying to resolve their inner conflicts or private dilemmas about school choice.

Oria, Cardini and Ball's (2007) thought-provoking paper on school choice and parental dilemmas, parallels Wilkins's table. The focus for their discussion is Nagel's theory of the divided self. While Wilkins (2010) talks about a private-public dilemma (p. 82), so Oria et al use Nagel's theory of personal (parental values) and impersonal (community values) dilemmas to explain how parents justify school choice. Termed "parentocracy" (Bosetti & Pyryt, 2007, p. 105) "the needs, values and preferences of parents as consumers take precedence over impersonal and impartial values of the collective good." (p. 105). Examples include parents who falsify their address to ensure acceptance into the desired school, and then justify it by blaming the political situation as the impetus for their actions; Parents who are relieved when their children are not accepted into elite schools; Parents who explain away their "moral discomfort" (Wilkins, 2010, p. 93) by saying their children attend specialty schools only because they were lucky to pass the entrance examination (p. 93).

All of these situations show the contradictions between parents' personal belief systems and their ultimate school choice decisions. No doubt this is reflective of Lareau's (2003, in

Cucchiara, 2013) point that worried parents are becoming more determined that their children will not be "excluded from any opportunity that might eventually contribute to their advancement" (Cucchiara, 2013, p. 77). So, how does one go about selecting the right school? This is therefore another type of dilemma, and as explained by Oria and colleagues (2007) it is where there are so many school options that parents wonder whether they have done their best for their children. They are caught in a parental spin-cycle: **"**they [the parents] see no way out, since these actions are taken in response to their own and other parents' anxieties about the reproduction of class privilege" (Nelson, 2010, p. 81). In a similar circuitous manner, Nagel (1984) asserts that "suppression of the impersonal standpoint is a denial of our full humanity and of the basis of full recognition of the value of our own lives" (p. 102). Yet in the end, do we not want to make sure that our children get the best value? This viewpoint fully reflects Wilkins's (2010) table of choice versus community and questions the notion of loyalty or allegiance to a neighbourhood school.

The issue of safety is evident in many papers, such as Bell (2007, 2009), Bosetti and Pyryt (2007); Brantlinger and colleagues (1996); Levine-Rasky (2008); Levine-Rasky & Ringrose, (2009); Oria and colleagues (2007) Wilkins (2010) and Cucchiara (2013). One interesting study, discussed in Williams, Jamieson and Hollingsworth (2008) investigates middle-class boys and issues of safety. As all three researchers were co-investigators with Reay and colleagues (2007), they refer in part to the same research data to make a different point. Set in London, it is an account of how middle-class parents compare their sons against the others, those "aggressive ragamuffins" (p. 403) whose overt masculinity have earned them a reputation for being "the rough and tumble of the local authority school" (p. 404). Taking pride in their own boys' "alternative masculinity" (p. 406), these parents have channeled them into the creative and performing arts, encouraging select clubs as a barrier against "the wrong kind of

mixing" (p. 406) at school. Parents in this particular study appeared to be concerned about their sons' safety in a secondary school, and their ability to remain good, academically-focused students within a racially and socially-diverse school population. Therefore they are faced with the dilemma of opting out of the local comprehensive school in favour of something they feel nurtures their sons' 'other' masculinity: "I think we did feel that Mark was a delicate child who needed to be protected…there was a moral dilemma there" (p. 404). That they have created the dilemma through their own self-interest in what their vision of a model child might be is never discussed.

Davies and Aurini (2009, citing Lareau, 2002, 2003) and Nelson (2010, citing Lareau, 2002) speak of a 'concerted cultivation' meaning those parents who have created highly-structured lives for their children (p. 57). Wilkins, Jamieson and Hollingsworth's research could be a case in point. The parents in this study have actually modeled their sons into a distinct type of person with distinct interests. What is interesting about this study in relation to my own research interests is the implication or outright averring of an 'alternate masculinity' that derives from their own conscious decision to encourage their sons' interests in arts-based subjects.

Another dilemma is that of geography across socio-economic boundaries (Bell, 2009, p. 515). Wilkins (2010) discusses two sets of parents: those who transport their children long distances to school, and those who insist that their children remain at the local school partly because it is within their community and partly because they can still maintain some control of their children's social interactions.

Bosetti and Pyryt (2007) also raise the issue of middle class dilemmas but they advocate for school choice given that it will create more advantage for all students since parents will argue the opportunity for their children to study in environments that best suit their interests and/or learning needs. Fallon and Pacquette (2009) point out that the intention of including schools of

choice—specifically focus schools—within the British Columbia public school system was in part to show that districts were taking seriously the fact that not all children learn the same way (p. 3). Similarly Taylor and MacKay (2008) note that that schools of choice promote diversity, allow districts to appear to be innovative and responsive to educational needs, encourage parents to become more actively involved in their children's education, shift responsibility for student outcomes to parents, and increase "the district's ability to respond to demographic changes" (p. 562).

Yet, a dilemma still exists in the fact that new district-initiated learning opportunities are mainly acquired by the socially and economically advantaged. And, it appears that this is the same group that seeks to enroll their children in, for example, fine arts schools. What motivates parents to enroll their children in fine arts schools? Davies and Aurini's (2008) research notes that "public school (religious and non-religious) parents are more likely to choose a school close to home and to choose their residence based on the quality of local schools rather than a special theme" (p. 61). If that is the case, something rather profound is driving parents to explore beyond their neighbourhoods, the right schools—with a special theme—for their children.

1.2.14 Research says

One of the phrases that motivated me to take a closer look at fine arts schools was the oft-used phrase, "Research says." At the community meeting that was held to discuss the possibility of a fine arts school, I recall various speakers supporting the initiative by using that particular phrase. It seemed to carry an inarguable weight to it. But since I never knew the source of the research, I always wondered what the research was. In my review of the literature, I have addressed the fact that neo-liberal politics has changed the educational landscape, and from that has arisen broader access to schools of choice. I have discussed the debate on the Arts as discrete subjects and the Arts as an enabler of other skills. I have included the research on the

middle class and how it is empowered to search out or take advantage of the schools of choice that are available within the public system. And, I have included research on the anxiety and dilemmas suffered by some middle class parents when opting for a school outside of their neighbourhood. In much of this research (e.g., Brantlinger, 1985; Brantlinger et al., 1996; Oria et al. 2007; Reay et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2008; Cucchiara, 2013) parents were interviewed. But, what I have not located in the research are interviews with parents around specific focus schools and what it was about them that led to the enrolment of their children. Nor have I located research that focuses solely on transitioning children in and out of schools—regular and choice—during their elementary school years.[7] Instead the main focus of school choice focusses on the transition from elementary to secondary schools, as exemplified by Reay (1996, 2006); Reay and Ball (1998); Oria, Cordini and Ball (2007); Crozier, Reay, James, Jamieson, Beedell, Hollingworth and Williams (2008); and Perez (2009). I question the value of multiple elementary school placements in terms of the child's social relationships and perception of self. There is clearly a need for further research into both the reasons why parents enroll their children at elementary fine arts schools and, by extension the actual outcomes for both parent and child.

[7] For example over the years the school has seen children arrive from private, high-status fee-paying schools, private religious schools, home-schooling, Montessori, Waldorf, and public French immersion schools. It has also seen the withdrawal of some of these children as parents continue the search for the right educational site.

1963-1968. Working Class

In the working-class neighbourhood of the 1960s where my parents first rented a house, fathers ambled home wearing heavy-duty work clothes. In the early evenings we watched them return carrying their metal lunch buckets and dusty work jackets, a cigarette usually hanging from their lips. Indoors, mothers waited dinner in floral house dresses (except for Marlo who paraded her rather over-sized physique in a black body suit and stockings and high heels). My mother scrubbed the kitchen linoleum, paste-waxed and buffed the living room floor weekly, wearing her hair in curlers and bobby pins all day every day. At about 4:30 she would remove all the metal bits from her hair, comb it out, put on bright lipstick and be ready to greet my father.

Our house, near the park, was on a street of small stucco abodes built on 33-foot lots. Uniform in design these houses averaged 800 square feet, with three bedrooms, one bathroom. Partially finished basement. No garage. My father was a student at the University of British Columbia, and since we were nowhere near the campus I can only surmise that (a) it was what they could afford to rent, and (b) it was convenient, being only six blocks away from my grandmother's house. With one parent a student, and the other working part-time as a cashier at a downtown Vancouver cafeteria, money was tight for a family of five. So, every late April, when his exams were finished, my father caught a plane to various logging camps in northern British Columbia where he toiled away until the end of August, sending weekly letters to my mother who would read them aloud – a very exciting event because he would always have a personal message for each of us. They were filled with funny things about the others in the camp and we looked forward to meeting his workmates, but the only one that we ever met did not seem nearly the comic fellow that my father had described him as being.

My mother dealt with us all alone in our little house on our hot and treeless street, with only the pay cheques my father forwarded to her and the occasional loan from my grandmother.

I can probably tell anybody anything they need to know about the great decades of MGM, 20th-Century Fox, Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros: who the stars were, their intrigues, their greatest movies. Afraid to go to bed, my mother would invite one or all of us to stay up watching late-night movies. When the dawn came, we would go to bed and sleep in. How she did this for several years I will never know. I think of my parents during this time and I see their courageous decisions: –my father, age 28 would return to university and my mother, age 26 would hold the family together four months every year on pittance and alone. My father worked his guts out in logging camps each summer for years to support all of us and out of this they somehow produced the funds for piano lessons for me and my younger sister, and dance lessons for my older sister. This was not a world of entitlement.

My father, who had discarded his construction uniform for a suit and tie, was by now teaching at an upper-middle-class elementary school. At supper he would relate stories about his students and their travels, such as those who visited Expo'67 in Montreal. It wasn't anything I really paid much attention to, other than the fact that Canada was now 100 years old. But it clearly defined for my parents, our lives, as against their (his students') lives. His students' summer vacations were defined by huge spaces of air travel whereas ours was the annual bumpy 7-hour car ride up to Kamloops. But so be it. We just travelled in different spaces, their wealth represented by distance, ours by driving conditions.

We had been in our house about two, possibly three years, when the Jamesons moved onto our street. They moved into their maternal grandmother's house across the street. The three Jameson children were competitive and always bragging about things. They seemed so clean-cut. They had lots of things. We played with them but never enjoyed the play as much as we did with the other children who just took life in a more raw and matter-of-fact way.

There was Tanya who enjoyed putting her dog into a nylon stocking and swinging him around as she sang off-key. There was Darren down the street, who Tanya once tried to play doctor with, while the rest of us watched. There was Mikey whose mom was always yelling at him, Ben who became a felon in adult life, baby Antonio next door, whose Italian immigrant parents with their limited English nevertheless were incredibly generous neighbours. And there were the lovely and kind German immigrant sisters, Helga and Mary. For our part, my older sister played primly with a select few, while my younger sister and I took on the neighbourhood at large, our undershirts hanging out below our untucked blouses, skirts falling below our waists, shoes untied and pockets glued shut by chewed bubble gum hurriedly placed there.

One day the Jameson children told us all quite boastfully that their grandmother was paying for a new house for them in a rather upscale neighbourhood about two miles away— in fact not all that far away from the new school being built, but somewhat east of it. So, while we stayed on our 33-foot working-class patch the Jamesons moved on and up into a middle-class neighbourhood. We weren't particularly sorry that they had gone.

What shaped our world—the space that we lived in—satisfied us. We had the space of our neighbourhood and our school culture. We had the space of our family home and our relationships with each other. Whatever was difficult or fraught was always resolved.

In 1968 my parents moved us into a more middle-class neighbourhood. The property was considerably larger than 33 feet. That is what stands out the most for me. It did then. And it still does. The one thing I told my friends when describing this place was that you could fit a whole house (and maybe even two) in between our house and the neighbour's house. You couldn't hear your neighbour's toilet flushing. They didn't seem to get it and I couldn't really articulate it clearly, but it was what stood out for me the most. Space. The idea of space. That

spatial contrast defined for me, the difference between where I had lived and where I was going to live.

When I review what I have written here, I am not surprised that the concept of space will also shape this research. But thinking about space lay dormant for me until, in 2009, I was required to read a chapter in a book by Sherene Razack (2003) for a policy course. Entitled Space, race and law. Unmapping a white settler society, the topic did not relate particularly to my research interests. But by applying space to an assignment about policy in access and diversity, I began to view aspects of learning differently. Although I did not consider space a potential theoretical concept in 2009, now it has re-emerged for me as a valid theoretical means of framing school choice, and as such is further discussed in the chapter which follows.

2 Framing space through research and self

2.1 Theory at 30,000 feet

I had flown out of Vancouver on May 26th, 2011 and was now returning from London, England, on June 1st, 2011. The trip had been necessarily short and I was tired and stuffed into the plane's economy section, seated beside two young men who kept breaking the rules and regulations of Air Canada, as I saw it. Annoyed and trying to ignore them, I opened a book by Pierre Bourdieu called *The Field of Cultural Production*, and tried to make sense of it. Maybe the surrounding melee caused me to focus more intensely, because I read the following passage and suddenly I understood why a theoretical concept might be a good idea in a dissertation:

> The *autonomous* principle of hierarchization, which would reign unchallenged if the field of production were to achieve total autonomy with respect to the laws of the market, is *degree specific consecration* (literary or artistic prestige),i.e. the degree of recognition accorded by those who recognize no other criterion of legitimacy than recognition by those whom they recognize, in other words, the specificity of the literary and artistic field is defined by the fact that the more autonomous it is, i.e. the more completely it fulfils its own logic as a field, the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization (1993, pp. 38-39).

Admittedly, I needed to mull this rather difficult passage over. However what I gleaned from it was the fact that I needed to figure out where I was situated in the research: what space I was taking up in the field. Where was I locating myself? As the long flight continued, and as I continued to work my way through Bourdieu's first chapter, I began to realize that from the outset I had firmly believed in "the representation of artistic production as a 'creation' devoid of any determination or any social function…[or] 'art for art's sake'" (p. 36). I had planted myself in the autonomous field assuming that from the beginning, students would be coming to the fine arts school because they were (a) privately trained students of the Arts or (b) they had a natural interest in extending their skills within the visual and performing arts. This would truly be a place to nurture art for art's sake. It had not occurred to me that students may be arriving for

other reasons, and even when I did become curious about other motives, I was not entirely correct, as parent interviews will show. In the end, I realized that I needed to consider re-positioning myself and examining the value of a fine arts school from another perspective.

2.2 Theoretical concepts

In this section I situate my theoretical concept of space through the works of Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. I explain my rationale for citing both Bourdieu and Foucault who are considered to have had differing critical standpoints. I relate them to my discussion on space and the main components that will run throughout this document: schools of choice, the educational marketplace and middle class parents in company with my self-study. Finally I draw a comparison between Lefebvre's spatial analysis of Picasso's radical approach to painting, and a school.

In an elementary school, one of the first concepts that kindergarten children are introduced to, is that of space–specifically personal space. But, there is also general space, a tidy space, a learning space, an academic space, a large space, a small space, board space, outer space, an aesthetic space, a play space, a desk space and in dance instruction, self space. In dance classes children are taught to think of self space as movements within a bubble that does not allow for physical contact. It is a private space but unlike personal space which is usually static, self space allows for movement. Thus the self-study that accompanies this research is the history of my self space which moves in and out of the research chapters: research and self space being separate entities but nevertheless interacting, one with the other.

2.2.1 Henri Lefebvre and space

I have chosen Lefebvre's theory of space as the main lens through which I view my research, but it will be informed by analytical themes within the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. It will not be my intent to gather in all of the works of Bourdieu and Foucault

but to apply specific themes from their writings. I have considered their roles in this paper carefully, particularly since Foucault as a philosopher, and Bourdieu as a philosopher-turned social scientist – are considered to have had viewpoints that were in conflict with each other.

"There are many parallels between Bourdieu and Foucault, some of which can be traced back to their common training in the history of science and medicine under Canguilhem" (Callewaert, 2006, p. 95). However, he points out that, in his opinion, "the major differences are rooted in Bourdieu's historicizing of reason via the notion of field" (p. 95, citing Wacquant, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992b, p. 94, n. 41). Callewaert further adds that "the concept of field signals a profound divide between Bourdieu and Foucault" (p. 95, citing Wacquant, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992b, p. 48, n. 86). Despite any divide, both Bourdieu and Foucault, singularly and interwoven with Lefebvre, are relevant to this research. The following diagram forms the basis for my discussion on space.

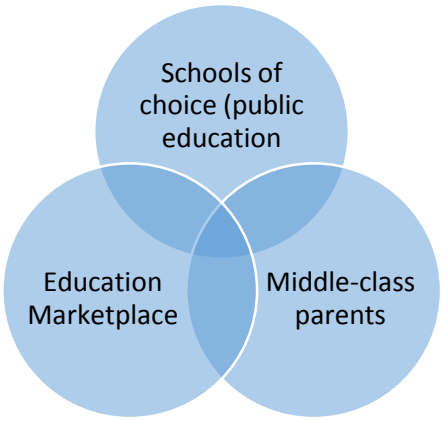

Diagram 2.1 Education triptych

From this venn diagram one can see that these three elements are necessarily inter-active since one impinges upon another, creating a complex educational space. Focus schools within the public school system are one means to address different places of learning (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 3). Middle-class parents, having financial access to both private and public education, are prepared to investigate across a wider geographical space, the best educational site

for their children (Bell, 2009, p. 501). This has been enabled by the current globalized world which has commodified public school education by making it competitive with the private sector; School districts must now create their own revenue-generating opportunities and be accountable to the public for their choices (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 3). This returns to neo-liberal doctrine which asserts that the responsibility also rests with parents to make the best educational choice on their children's behalf (Wilkins, 2010, p. 174). Thus education is a canvas upon which the spaces change and are changed. It is evocative of Lefebvre's (1991) discussion on Picasso's radical approach to painting:

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

I can apply this to a school. A school, while a homogeneous space, is physically broken through its architectural requirements and functions. This applies also to its structure, which arguably not often considered fascinating, nevertheless is fascinating for the plan that allows for varied spaces of learning and socialization. Antagonism is part of the daily exchange of people in a school – the differing objectives, attitudes and perspectives (which will be related in the interviews). Yet whatever occurs on a school site never goes so far as to fracture the unity of place. The dialectical framework becomes the school as a coherent whole, although made up of different elements of expression and narrative. However abstract it contains a number of expressive and technical modes of representation. My school is where we—my colleagues and I–approach arts-integrated learning. While we may perceive it from different standpoints we share an overall belief in the value of the visual and performing arts in education.

2.3 The space of the middle class

I begin this section by relating a memory from my early years as a music student. It is interesting to me that within my memory items which may have held the smallest and least important spaces suddenly become relevant, as in this anecdote. When I was a teenager studying music history for my ARCT piano credentials, I read how *The Beggar's Opera*, written by John Gay in 1728, was a defining moment for England's middle class populace. Later, studying music at university, our history professor re-iterated the point. Wondering if I had remembered this incorrectly, I turned to my music history text which did indeed note that, "Sung in English, its times related to the experience of the audience, this humorous ballad opera was the answer of middle-class England to the gods and heroes of the aristocratic opera seria" (Machlis, 1970, p. 306).

Ronald Poulson (1991) in his biography of the artist William Hogarth, states that "even if only Gay's ballad opera and Hogarth's paintings had survived, 1728 would still be one of those pivotal years in English culture" (p. 172). He further describes *The Beggar's Opera* cast of characters as "people who are acting up to a respectable social class to which they do not belong (but which, Gay implies, they have as much right to belong as anybody else)" (p. 180). Maybe the middle class time had simply arrived, and *The Beggar's Opera* was just the impetus that had been needed. Poulson describes how in portraiture at this time, "aristocratic women were painted as shepherdesses and goddesses; Middle class women then were painted as if *they* were shepherdesses, that is aristocratic ladies" (pp. 161-162).

From the literary, dramatic and musical elements of the stage, Hogarth went on to create a number of modern history paintings and engravings which focused on contemporary life, and thus re-created art as a narrative of urban life. It was partly moral, partly salacious, partly material. In short, he created a new medium of a pictorial communication. It corresponds to the

increasing presence of middle-class values in British society. It also corresponds with the growth of the novel, being very much about the middle class since writers like Laurence Sterne and Daniel Dafoe brought in a whole new middle-class readership (Poulson, 1991, p. 172). Pondering all of this, I find it intriguing that the visual and performing arts appear to primarily represent but also participate in the changed economy that gave rise to the middle class.

I will use a metaphor of pentimenti whereby a space on a canvas can be created and then subtly re-configured therefore creating a layered *history* of an idea. Neo-liberal policy (a political idea) creates the history around which schools of choice have emerged within the public school system and been strongly supported by the middle class. My reference to The Beggar's Opera is meant to exemplify an event within the space of history that enabled the middle class to become more socially prominent. From 1728 forward, through a "decrypting of the space that went before" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 260), the layers of history have subtly reconfigured the abstract space of the middle class.

> This is the space where the middle classes have taken up residence and expanded – neutral, or seemingly so, on account of their social and political position midway between the bourgeoisie and the working class. Not that this space 'expresses' them in any sense; it is simply the space assigned them by the grand plan: these classes find what they seek – namely, a mirror of their 'reality', tranquillizing ideas, and the image of a social world in which they have their own specially labeled, guaranteed place. The truth is, however, that this space manipulates them, along with their unclear aspirations and their all-too-clear needs. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 309)

As will be seen in the chapter on parent interviews (and has been noted in the literature review), the middle class are indeed manipulated by the socio-economic space within which they live through self-imposed demands and constraints, resulting in dilemmas based on what they perceive to be the needs or societal musts, for their children. This is where we enter Bourdieu's fields of position-taking (1993, p. 30), where "the change in the space of literary or artistic possibilities is the result of change in the power relations which constitute the space of positions" (p. 32). Here I am using "literary or artistic possibilities" to refer to the altered state of an

elementary school transitioned to an arts-integrated school and how the spaces have changed and with that, the changing power relations between teachers and staff, and between parents and teachers. But, I can also interpret this passage as the change in power relations between a new principal and his/her impact on staff. Indeed this most certainly creates and re-creates the "space[s] of positions" (p. 32). When I speak of the autonomous field I speak of those who believe in the arts as discrete subjects, or art for art's sake. By contrast the heteronomous field is that occupied by those who see the Arts as enablers of other skills.

Lefebvre (1991) states that "space as an ensemble [is] at once, social and mental, abstract and concrete" (p. 295). This spatial quartet becomes a framework upon which we stretch our lives over time. Over time as those spaces change so do our relationships and therefore the types of power we access or seek. Foucault states that, "space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" (2000, p. 361). Like the brushwork on a canvas, all of these pieces go together to inform what the middle class perceives as their needs, and helps direct the power they feel they need to practice, in order to ensure that their children achieve to their fullest.

2.4 The space of exclusion

Just as social and cultural inequalities reproduce "from one generation to the next" (Harker, 1990, p. 86), so does the space of exclusion. While the public school system cannot exclude anyone from attending,[8] there still exists the potential for exclusion—both socially and culturally. As discussed in my literature review, parents grouped within the middle class tend to be acutely aware of the opportunities available for their children, and search them out accordingly. If educational choice is pursued mainly by the middle class, then it contributes to the creation of an exclusionary space that holds within it, like social and cultural capital. In this

[8] Up to the age 18, and this is subject to proof of citizenship or landed immigrant status, proof of residential address, and medical immunizations.

way, the focus school becomes an exclusive site. I call this public-private education, the word *private* being suggestive of an exclusive space.

2.5 Siting schools of choice

"The founding image of Greek space was a space already fully formed and carefully populated" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 249).

Is the founding of an educational space any different? My school was founded on a particular space, fully formed and carefully populated. In fact, population determined its transition to a fine arts school. It was the space of a tiny population functioning in a substantially greater space that led to its establishment. But like the Greek space, other things went into it too. Lefebvre speaks of the Greek space as a site that was "well-chosen, well-situated, sunlit and close to an abundant source of water." The school was well-chosen. So too was the school site well-situated. In the presentation proposal for the fine arts school, location, accessibility to transportation, its location within a park contributed to the argument why this would be the place to establish a fine arts school. Certainly place as discussed in Levine-Rasky (2007), Bell (2009), Bosetti and Pyryt (2007) and Cucchiara (2008) can be influential in a parent's school choice. This will be a topic for discussion in the chapter on parent interviews.

Within the interior space of a school, there are spaces of learning, spaces of socialization and spaces of authority. Enveloping all of these spaces is time. For teachers, staff, students (and parents indirectly), it is largely their "living time, their time of their existence" (Foucault, 2000, p. 80). Time will be discussed in more detail in the chapters which follow. It is here that I would like to introduce in addition to interior and exterior space, that of transparent space.

Today one often hears about conversations and processes remaining transparent. From the literature, it would appear that middle class parents in particular assume an association of egalitarianism with their children's teachers (see Lareau, 1987; Davies & Aurini, 2009). Therefore it follows that they assume access to information – or transparency – in the daily

events and occurrences within a school. As such, it puts educators under a new type of surveillance. I refer to a re-styled version of Foucault's panopticon, that is, today's parents as the new "seeing machine" (1979, p. 207). Or to take it further, the school as "a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole" (1979, p. 207). In other words the professional space between educators and parents is lessening as parents find their own places within the school. Ironically, given Foucault's writings on institutions, the space of a fine arts school embodies those qualities as described by him, as: "a machine to carry out experiments" [such as piloting a fine arts school of choice]; "To alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals" [those students enrolled in a fine arts school due to a perceived behavioural challenge]; and "To try out pedagogical experiments" [the perception of a new type of pedagogy based on the visual and performing arts] (pp. 203-204).

Foucault asserts that "space is fundamental in any exercise of power" (2000, p. 361). Bourdieu (1993) talks of "the space of the position-takings" (p. 30). (Here again I will remind the reader that I interpret this as the altered state of an elementary school transitioned to a fine arts school and the changing power relations between teachers and staff, administrators and staff, and finally parents and staff.) Additionally Lefebvre (1991) states that, "the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space (p. 38). This is all about the divergences in influence and relationship exerted by those existing in such institutions as a school, extending beyond matters of status. As parents push their expectations forward, for a new pedagogy and new opportunities (for themselves and for their children), and as teachers maintain their autonomy as the right to teach as they see fit, the spaces of power change. Thus social space is continually being reconfigured.

But there is also power in the use of a space in relation to creativity and utility. For example, students attend dance and music classes (creativity) thus providing teachers with non-

instructional (NIS) time (utility). Hence there is a blurring-over effect between creativity and the utility of the strictly-maintained schedule. In this situation space is controlled by the power of the teachers' Union collective agreement which allows for NIS time. Thus there is a contradiction between the creative inner spaces of the dance and music rooms, and the timetable which imposes regimentation external to that space.

In contrast to the music and dance rooms is the space of the art room. It also requires the formulation of a timetable but because it is not tied to NIS time, the space becomes more flexible and for some teachers, multi-purpose. Therefore it is less regimented since teachers can choose to cancel an art class altogether, rendering the art room an inactive space.

The final spatial quandary is that of difference, whereby parents demand that educators account for how the space of an elementary fine arts school differs from regular elementary schools. Hence, following Bourdieu's (1993) discussion on the literary and artistic fields but applying it to a fine arts school, one can speak of the "field of forces" and the "field of struggles" (p. 30) and how relationships change and are strategized, dependent "for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations" (p. 30). Hence, parental expectations and educator praxis can be construed as a recurring cycle. This cycle can be described as a circular dynamic comprising the following: educator accountability to parents, parent expectations, new pedagogy, flexible curriculum and more activities. While these interconnect or overlap, there is always the potential for variation or even tension.

> The network of objective relations between positions subtends and orients the strategies which the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions, strategies which depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations. (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 30)

Each component in this descriptive model influences the parent-teacher relationship. Power is an interactive force as teachers struggle to maintain their autonomy while parents seek accountability and new educational initiatives. Within the cycle is the potential for further

conflictual interactions such as the tensions arising from the imposition of marketized education within the public school system.

2.6 Marketplace space

> The space that homogenizes thus has nothing homogeneous about it. After its fashion, which is polyscopic, and plural, it subsumes and unites scattered fragments or elements by force. Though it emerged historically as the plane on which a socio-political compromise was reached between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie (i.e. between the ownership of land and the ownership of money), abstract space has maintained its dominance into the era of conflict between finance capital – that supreme abstraction – and action carried out in the name of the proletariat (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 308).

Returning again to Lefebvre's (1993) discussion of the Greek site (p. 249), Lefebvre defines the agora as "a spatial and social hierarchy…at once means and ends, at once knowledge and action, at once natural and political, this space was occupied by people and monuments" (p. 249). The juxtaposition of a school whose spaces are a multiplicity of "scattered fragments" (p. 308), and an agora, or marketplace, with its complexity of social interactions and the commercial and the political is akin to the challenges within today's public school system. Overall, a school is a homogeneous place, but therein lie fragmented spaces of learning, opinions and practices, and relationships.

Public education (at least in British Columbia) is a good example of an abstract space that mixes both commercial endeavours and social classes. The marketization of the space of education through strategies such as schools of choice has potentially reconfigured student populations within the public school system. A dollars-per-student formula creates competition across districts, and raises the potential for one socio-economic group to gain more access to educational commodities than another. (It also, as will be discussed within teacher interviews, adds to an administrator's job description, as they now become a student recruiter). As has been noted in the literature review, it changes the space of neighbourhoods and reduces the space of travel. It changes the space of relationships between parents and educators as accountability is no

longer simply about the parent-and-child unit, but about the overall product they have bought into. Finally, as parents access these new spaces of learning, schools of choice may have unavoidably created a whole new space, that is, the perception of a private educational space within the public system. But there are other spaces of learning, too. It can be something as simple as the space between one student and another, the space between classrooms, the space between streets, or the space between cars…

1966. Elmer the Safety Elephant

The forested area behind the newly-built school was clearly and emphatically out-of-bounds. Our parents had told us to never go there alone. The only time we went there was to have a summer birthday picnic, and then we were accompanied by our mother and grandmother. I did wonder how the children at the new school felt, working within the range of the Green Man. But, I suppose time passed and soon the Green Man followed me around only in the periphery of my thoughts.

At school matters of personal safety, and health could be rather tense as when our teacher awarded stars to students with short, clean finger nails. More enjoyable were the colouring pages we were given to supplement a lecture about not talking to strangers. Pictures usually featured strangers offering candy to children. As we coloured the picture (for my part giving most consideration of colour selection to the candies) we noticed that strangers were lean, rather good-looking businessmen in suits and brimmed hats. A greater warning to us was about traffic safety. "Look both ways before you cross the street. Use your eyes, use your ears, and then you use your feet." That catchy little jingle was a daily reminder to all of us. But a bigger enforcer of safety was Elmer the Safety Elephant. Elmer's jolly round face smiled cheerfully from the flag high on the roof of our school. It demonstrated to passers-by that no student had suffered a traffic accident. Constable Wilson of the RCMP visited our school regularly to remind us at rather sober assemblies, about road safety.

One day the flag came down. Lizzy Pringle had been hit by a car while attempting to cross the street from between two parked cars. Her brother, Mitch, the worst-behaved student in grade 2, who risked booing and popcorn showers at weekly Saturday matinees when between feature films he climbed up onto the stage to proclaim that it was yet again his birthday (thereby receiving a piece of birthday cake), was for the first time quiet and unnoticeable in our classroom. There was a tension of unhealthy quiet, further amplified by the arrival of Constable

Wilson. At that day's assembly, Constable Wilson explained that while Lizzy was going to recover, we must nevertheless forfeit our Elmer the Safety Elephant flag. Constable Wilson carried out an official lowering of Elmer. It was clear to us that with Lizzy's accident we had all failed. We would have to wait one year before our school would again qualify to wave the flag.

With that traffic accident, I became mortal. The busy road that needed crossing to get to the park now became a barrier. The lacrosse-box was less innocent. Something might lurk behind it. I was less inclined to linger on the gravel field. I still enjoyed the pool, but I was more alert to my surroundings. Somehow that space had changed. That space continued to change over the decades as my professional life kept me weaving in and out of it. The choices that I made now became more serious.

3 Research methods: creating dialogue

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain who my research participants were, and the interview process that led to the final collection of data. I describe the educator and parent profiles and present my rationale for the selection of interviewees (for a complete explanation see Appendix A, letters of recruitment). I also discuss my approach to data collection and analysis, bias, ethical concerns, statistical information and anecdotal pieces arising from the interviews.

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (Creswell, 1998, p. 15).

This definition of qualitative research in microcosm accurately describes and constructs the context for my case study inquiry into parental choice and public elementary fine arts schools. Here I set out to explain why a case study was the most viable format and I lay out the processes I followed to achieve this.

A case study allows for an in-depth inquiry; Mine follows the basic descriptors of a case study as set out by Creswell (1998, pp. 36-37); Firstly, the case is a small public elementary school with parents participating in discussions about the purpose or efficacy of fine arts schools and schools of choice in general. Secondly, the case is bounded by set periods of time in which the data were collected, as well as being limited to a particular place (the school site). While the main data collected is derived from one-on-one interviews, I have referred to standard district forms to verify some numerical data. Finally, the setting and recent history of the school sets the context for this research.

3.2 Situating myself as interviewer

As an established teacher at the research site, I wanted there to be a relaxed atmosphere between me and the teachers, staff and parents, most of whom I had known for a few years. I didn't want to lose my place as a researcher, and being in the comfort zone of my work place I worried that things could become so relaxed that I might not adhere to the same interview structure. Each interview took on a quality of its own as each participant found their own larger topics of discussion. But the interview questions formed the structure around which the discussions developed and moved. Interview data includes some short, direct responses, but mainly consists of more detailed and thoughtful conversations. This data was the impetus for the self-study included in this thesis, since its analysis triggered my own personal recollections.

3.3 Establishing interview criteria

The interviews for this case study were conducted in two stages which together form my narratives. The first stage involved one-on-one interviews with educators including a district administrator, school administrators and elementary school teachers and staff who had been involved in the formation of the school from its earlier stages of implementation. The second stage consisted of parent interviews. Thirteen parents were interviewed, and fall into two categories: (1) parents living outside the catchment area whose children had been at the school for at least two years, and (2) parents from outside the catchment area who were enrolling their children (grades K-7) at the school in September 2012 for the first time. Thus it comprised parents with an existing knowledge of the school and parents looking forward to a different curricular approach. This would be the key recruitment time because there would be no experiences with the new school for parents to draw on during interviews. While it was hoped that the larger set of interviews would be derived from the latter group, in fact this was not the case. Parent interviews consist largely of those out-of-catchment parents whose children were already enrolled at the school. Upon reflection I cannot say that I am surprised. The more-

established parents would already be school insiders with some experience in the way the school worked. The only problem here would be pre-existing knowledge of the school and its operation. Hence the newly-enrolling families were of interest to me because I was hoping that they would have different perspectives to offer on their reasons for enrolling. Still, there are variables to consider. If my agenda was to find out why they were enrolling their children, new parents might have felt that the interview was more of an attempt to determine whether their children should attend the school. In such a case, interviews would not necessarily represent motives for enrolling, and in that sense new parents would not have been the fresh voices I was seeking. Moreover, the perceptions of new arrivals would be less mediated by actual experiences at the school and therefore, I assumed, more reflective of motivations in operation at the time of deciding whether to enroll their child or not.

The September 2012 group had been selected because they had no history with the school. I could only guess based on past September enrolments, how many interviews I might conduct, partly because the numbers each September have fluctuated from year-to-year. And, although there is some indication of student numbers in June of the previous school year enrolment approval does not necessarily happen until the following September. Parents change their minds too about where they want their children to be, and will withdraw them, altering the enrolment list that the school receives each year in late August prior to September school start-up. Thus it was difficult to ascertain how many letters of recruitment I would be sending out. This was a situation that I could not control, and therefore I needed to work within the parameters of the school's new enrollments list. Initially it had appeared that there would be a relatively large intake of new students in September 2012. However, by September, some families had withdrawn their applications, reducing the number. Of the list of 13 new out-of-catchment families, three had siblings already in the school and since they were not part of a new

family I did not include them. One student whose parent is a teacher at the school and was attending for that reason only (having previously been looked after by a family in the school's catchment area), was not included on my list. Another student's caregiver, a grandparent, lived in the school's catchment area. Additionally, the extended family were or had been students at the school, so I did not include that family on the recruitment list. I wanted new families who had no history with the school. Of the 8 eligible families, three agreed to be interviewed but one later declined due to time constraints.

3.4 Matters of ethics

> Would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them? (Tracy, 2010, p. 837, quoting Guba and Lincoln, 2005, p. 205)

I include this brief quotation here, because from the outset, as beginning researchers, we were asked to ponder why our research mattered. Pushing this idea further, if it is devoid of reflexivity and ethical considerations, *does* the research matter? Tracy (2010) describes eight "big-tent" (p. 837) criteria for producing quality research. Those eight points are: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, meaningful coherence and ethics (p. 840). It seems to me that ethics is a combination of sincerity, credibility and resonance and it has certainly caused me to reflect upon my own practices within the scope of this research.

I pondered whether there could be a question of ethics with respect to recruitment of participants. Specifically I did not want to exclude new immigrant families coming into the school. However, no newly-arrived immigrant families living outside the catchment area enrolled for September 2012 (but had this occurred, I do not doubt that an arrangement could have been made for translation of the materials.)

Another ethical concern is based on context. I have been careful within my writing, not to place comments out of context or to insert them in ways that would misrepresent the intentions of the speakers. I have been mindful that interviews serve to validate or negate my research

question: that they should not be shaped to a pre-planned mode of thinking. I am reminded of Tracy's (2010) assertion that "researchers should not confuse voyeuristic scandalous tales with great research stories; Participants' feelings of anger at being mislead or tricked almost always trump 'accuracy' or 'truth'" (p. 847). It has not been my intention to undertake research in order to get a "great story" (Tracy, 2010, p. 847) at the cost of creating ill feelings between me and my interview participants, or the discrediting of this research.

Similarly, I have also strived to show, as much as possible, equal representation of each participant. Otherwise one could argue that certain respondents' contributions were purposely featured more often in order to gain a particular perspective. Each interview is unique in the way in which questions were answered or elaborated upon.

3.5 Setting the context for interviews

This case study focuses on Mosaic Elementary, a small public school in one of BC's Lower Mainland school districts. It is sited within an aesthetically pleasant neighbourhood, and is bordered by forested area. On a slightly raised elevation it offers a good view of the city from most of its classrooms. Traditionally, this neighbourhood has been home to European immigrants and those families have remained in the area, their children marrying and buying homes within the neighbourhood. While there is an increased Asian student population within the school's catchment area, these are largely second or third-generation families that have moved into the neighbourhood over time. Over the past few years it has attracted a higher-income set of families although there remains area directly south-west of the school that provides social housing. For the first time, in 2012, families that reside within the catchment area have contributed approximately half the students that comprise the current population of 230. Historically it has been the outside-catchment-area families that have maintained the life of a school that was faced with closure seven years ago. They have come from both private and

public school systems within and outside of my school district. This is the data that first drew my attention to the composition of the school's student population, ultimately causing me to question what the public valued in elementary fine arts schools; Why were they enrolling? Consider the following two grids:

Table 3.1 Mosaic Elementary ESL students & levels of English language acquisition 2012/2013

ESL levels	**Levels descriptions**	**Number of students per level**
Level 1	Beginner – little or no English	3
Level 2	Functional English	6
Level 3	Oral and written English exceeds functional level	4
Level 4	High level of competency in oral and written English	2

Table 3.2 Mosaic Elementary: students with B.C. Ministry Designations 2012/2013

BC Ministry of Education designation codes	**Code descriptions**	**Number of ministry-designated students**
D	Chronic health impairment	3
G	Autism	4
H	Severe behavioural/mental health challenge	1
K	Mild intellectual challenge	1
P	Gifted	8
Q	Learning disabled	10
R	Mild behavioural challenge	2

Of the 15 ESL students, only three were born outside of Canada (one is an international student), while the remainder were born and raised within the school's catchment area. Over the years that I have been at the school, ESL numbers have fluctuated between 8 and 18, so there have been no significant changes before or after the fine arts transition. Nor at any time has the school population risen due to an influx of immigrant families as has happened elsewhere. However ministry designations have risen – from 4 in June 2006 to 29 in June 2013, (or from 1 ministry designation per every 23 students to 1 ministry designation per every 8 students). Such data motivated me to take a closer look at the student population and its student profiles. In order to

do this, I needed to talk to both educators and parents: the former because they were working with these students daily, and the latter because they were making the school choice.

3.6 Interview process – educators and parents

This section follows the process for the creation and dispersal of letters of recruitment to educators, school staff and parents. It also outlines my criteria for inclusion in these interviews, as well as my rationale for including some members of school staff. While teachers generally responded to the letters in a matter-of-fact manner, as it will be shown, parent reactions to the letters were more complicated. Therein follows some examples of unexpected parent reactions to the letters. Finally, I draw a comparison between parent profiles for this research, and the middle class as discussed in my literature review.

3.6.1 Recruiting educators

Interviews with educators and support staff formed the first stage of this research. Letters of recruitment and letters of consent were sent to the school secretary, custodian, teachers, administrators and district administrators in late April 2012. Invitations to participate outlined a specific set of criteria (see Appendix A). Out of a total teaching staff of 12, five teachers—enrolling and non-enrolling[9]--as well as two school administrators, one district-based administrator who had played a significant role in the school's establishment, and the school custodian were interviewed. Through a process of elimination I arrived at five teachers based on recruitment letter criteria. For example, to make a comparison between the demands of a regular public elementary school and a fine arts elementary school they had to have taught elsewhere for at least five years and to have taught arts subjects regardless of whether they had had formal or informal arts training. The school custodian was interviewed to learn how his role in the school

[9] Enrolling teachers are assigned a specific grade and group of students while non-enrolling work with multiple grades outside of their regular classroom. Typical non-enrolling subjects include music, dance, ESL, learning support, library, or advanced learning, to name a few.

had changed. The school's secretary was also invited to participate because she is the first person that new parents meet and over the years has answered a lot of parent questions and given many school tours to potential new families**.** Teachers returned their recruitment letters quickly and I was able to begin interviews within a short period of time. But before teacher interviews began, I practiced my set of questions with a non-participant teacher—a "disinterested professional" (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007, p. 19) and this helped me to test my question design**.** Regarding school support staff, I had not heard from either the custodian or secretary, so nearing the respond-by date that I had set, I asked our custodian if he had had time to consider whether or not he would be interested in participating. To my surprise he stated that he and the secretary had discussed their letters and had decided that he would be interviewed on behalf of them both! I thanked him but explained to him that it would be great if he would consider an interview representative of his views only, since their roles within the school differed. In the end he was happy to be interviewed independently of the secretary who due to an unexpected family emergency took a short leave of absence and therefore declined to participate. This was one disappointment to me, because as the person at office reception, she is usually the first to meet new parents and students. She may have had some interesting insights to offer on the experience of working in a school of choice—conversations that further clarified what parents were seeking in a fine arts school.

Eight interviews were held in my room or the teachers' classrooms after 3 pm. The last interview was conducted in a private space on the school's lawn since it was a beautiful day, students had left for summer break, and it seemed like an opportunity to be taken advantage of. In retrospect it was probably the most fluent interview not least because there were no interruptions from teachers, students, bells, vacuum cleaners or messages over the speaker system.

3.6.2 Recruiting parents: new enrollments from outside catchment

The second stage of the research focussed on interviews with parents. A list of new students from outside the catchment area was generated in September 2012. After consultation with my principal, it was decided that letters of recruitment would be sent to new out-of-catchment parents with children in grades K to 7, at the end of September.

3.6.3 Recruiting parents: previously enrolled from outside catchment

Letters of recruitment were sent to parents who had children in intermediate grades, who lived outside of the catchment area and had been at the school at least 2 years (see letter, Appendix A, for specific criteria). This was done to provide a comparison in terms of expectations and realization of expectations, and also of perceptions of what the school could do for their children – after all, as a school of choice, what was driving their decision(s)?

To ascertain which already-enrolled families I should recruit, I consulted the school's master list. I grouped students into families, then did a search of each family address to confirm whether it was inside or outside of the catchment area. Next I checked each student's grade level. I had decided to focus on parents of students in intermediate grades mainly because I wanted the students to have been at the school at least two years, and I wanted to guarantee that the majority of students would have been previously enrolled at another elementary school prior to arrival at Mosaic.

In June 2012 I had told the incoming principal about my research but reminded her of it in September. While the research had been approved by the district it was important to have her support. To ensure that there would be no misunderstandings among parents my research was announced in the school's newsletter which was sent home in late September. Parents were encouraged to talk to me if they had any questions about it but there were none. Letters were sent home to families that matched my criteria in late September/early October 2012. Stamped

envelopes with my name and school address were provided with the letter. Most responses arrived at the school by hand but the stamp allowed parents the option to maintain a greater distance (or less obligation) from the research request by simply responding via the postal system. Twenty-five letters of recruitment were sent out: eight non-returned, and 17 returned. One parent who did not reply to the letter approached me one day in the hallway and rather tentatively queried why she had been picked, there being an implication that it was because one of her children is low incidence. This was not the case. Her family's profile simply fit the criteria. In the end she chose not to participate.

Of the parents who declined in writing, one wrote a letter of apology that she was too busy at the time and couldn't take on any more commitments. One parent had initially responded yes to an interview but because the family frequently travelled he eventually declined to participate. Two other parents agreed to the interview but later pulled out, one because they had moved away, and the other—a single parent—due to unresolved conflicts in her work schedule. A small problem arose with the single parent. In referring to the school's parent data, I had included her husband's name on the letter of recruitment. I soon received a letter expressing her dismay that her husband's name had been on the letter of recruitment and she launched into a lengthy paragraph about how the school had no business having his name on file at all since he had not been part of her child's upbringing. It was a moment that was entirely unexpected but there was no way that I could have known that. It is an example of risk, when seeking to interview an unknown population. It was a reminder to me that research is not a straight-forward venture**.** This has been further underscored by my reading of studies by researchers such as Kelly (2000) and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2011). In both cases the complexities of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with administrators and

teaching staff resonate, as well as the difficulties around language and how one person's understanding of a statement is not necessarily understood the same way by another.

> During our first meeting with the school administrators, the language that we used to communicate our research interrupted our ability to communicate with them. This required us to reconfigure how we represented the research in order to negotiate access and build trust within the research site. (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2011, p. 7)

Since I was undertaking research at my work site, I did not encounter the same challenges as Gaztambide-Fernandez and his research team. Nor did I, as in the case of Kelly, need to remind my school administrator that the research had been approved by the previous administration. Although a new administrator did come in to my school just prior to beginning my interviews, she was accepting that this was a pre-established and pre-approved situation. But such readings have made me aware of just how tentative and fragile research with live participants can be.

3.7 Parent participants

In all, 11 females and 2 males participated in the interviews, for an overall response rate of 61% (77% of those who returned letters). A third male parent had agreed to an interview and seemed enthusiastic about it, but in the end he was not able to commit to any times, citing his or his wife's trips out of town as the reason why. The relative lack of a male voice is reminiscent of Levine-Rasky (2008) and Brantlinger and colleague's (1996) research interviews with middle-class parents where in each case only two fathers participated in their studies. Reay (1998) addresses this in her study on middle-class "mothers in the educational marketplace" (p. 195), naming it "'the mums' army' who, whether or not they have been conscripted into the classroom, have already been conscripted into extensive educational work with children in the home" (p. 197). She also suggests that the "hard labour of involvement in schooling" is mainly unshared with the father (p. 197). Further discussion on this point is found in Stambach and David (2005) wherein they point out that gender is worth discussing in relation to school choice since "the absence of gender as a focused subject naturalizes women and men as "equal" parents,

when in fact they have different histories of engagement within families and public education" (p. 1637).

Parent interviews were conducted over the months of October and November 2012 mainly at the school site – before school, at noon, or after school. However, due to conflicting schedules, three interviews were conducted off-site, at parent residences. Public places were not deemed as appropriate interview locations due to the general noise levels, and more importantly to protect the confidentiality of the interviews.

Interview participants tended to be white, middle-class well-educated professionals. Only two parents interviewed were separated or divorced. While the majority had been born and raised within BC's Lower Mainland, one couple were English-speaking immigrants, one parent was from a small BC community, and three came from other Canadian provinces. Two parents had attended religious or language-based schools, but the balance had all attended public schools. These were professional families; five parents interviewed—or their partner—held a post-graduate degree. In summation they could be described as in Cucchiara (2008), "educated workers between the ages of 35 and 44 who have entered 'prime earning-growth years'" (Cucchiara, 2008, p. 167, citing Levy, 2003). Only two parent interviewees did not match this profile.

3.8 Interview questions

This section discusses interview questions with a particular focus on parent responses. It also addresses the challenge of asking, re-phrasing, and accurately representing participant responses. Interview questions for educators included discussions around the processes for establishing the district's only elementary fine arts school (district administrators), typical questions that parents ask when considering enrolling their children (the school's former and then-current administrator), motivating factors that had led to the formation of a district

elementary fine arts school (teachers who played a role in the school's foundation) and pedagogy (teachers currently at the school who have been there at least two years). For the complete list of questions see Appendix A.

Both educator and parent interview questions were constructed as carefully as possible so as not to appear too personal or to suggest that they had been tailored to elicit a particular type of response. Farenga, Joyce and Ness (2010) discuss how language can be interpreted. "Even words once thought of as having very precise definitions can become difficult to delimit" (p. 13). Therefore I sought to use words, phrases and/or expressions "that nearly everyone will define the same way" (p. 13). Despite this, I did not always find that the responses to certain questions were necessarily as straight-forward as I had imagined. Therefore some responses were direct, while others prompted a more detailed discussion.

And yet, through the interview process I was able to generate rich dialogue that cannot be captured in, for example, a survey (which had been my original plan). The interviews allowed for clarification in a way that words anonymously written, or rating scales, cannot. They better elicit each participant's voice in a clear and accurate manner since there is the opportunity for greater discussion and clarification. They allow for voice. Mazawi (personal communication, 7/20/10) explains that good research allows for voice: "Create space for these voices. [These] voices need to emerge in the research [and] will generate light in some way."

Those voices were not always so apparent since interviewee personalities and conversational styles, did not always allow for much elaboration. Some participants appeared to be nervous, and those responses were pared down and to the point. Others enthusiastically entered into detailed discussions. Yet others appeared to be trying hard to say things in just the right way, possibly because they were being recorded. I sensed sometimes that a few participants felt that they needed to find an absolute answer to questions that were opinion-based

and not yes/no responses. Hence the task of fairly interpreting responses was at times challenging.

Also challenging was eliciting responses beyond one or two-word replies. With one question in particular I wanted to draw out, or hoped that parents would allow for, wider discussions. Sometimes this happened but not always. There was one question that never did seem to go in a direction that I had hoped it would. No, I did not want to predict outcome of the response, but my question as to whether or not a fine arts school had benefits beyond its actual curriculum, never seemed to go anywhere of interest. I had thought this question would result in varied discussions but it did not. I found myself rephrasing the question, but the replies, interestingly, were quite similar, usually speaking to students' improved public speaking skills and confidence. I had anticipated that someone would state that a fine arts school tended to attract students with a range of challenges. Only one parent (Parent 10) addressed that, and since no others had, her comment actually took me by surprise. Still, it was interesting that parents were not seeing the school populace as I had. Or, was it more a case that as my doctoral advisor had pointed out to me, parents might not want to respond to certain questions in an entirely transparent manner? That is, was there some information that they felt uncomfortable disclosing? I suppose in any research there is never a way to truly authenticate interview responses but neither do I have any reason to think that they were being evasive. It could be that some things about the school had now become commonplace so they were not raised.

Yet within the contexts of the main categories that make up educator and parent interviews, there is enough consistency of recurring phrases and ideas across the interviews to lend credence to the responses. Still, my long association with the school has made me aware of all new incoming students and I did notice that with two parents whose children had been

referred to the school-based TEAM[10] regarding their behaviour, those behaviours were never mentioned in the interviews. In one case, the principal had made it clear that the student was arriving because the previous school could no longer tolerate his behaviour and in turn the parents were no longer tolerating the school. Yet this was never acknowledged in the interview as being at least a partial reason for leaving the other school. Therefore, while I believe that the responses from parents are genuine, in some cases, they may not necessarily reveal all of the motivations for enrolling their children at a fine arts school. Maybe our shared history silenced some of the conversation since there could have been the unstated assumption that certain things didn't need to be said. While this is nothing that I can prove, it raises the problem for teachers as researchers at their worksite since our collegiality may have left some parts of the conversation unexplored.

3.9 Questions of Bias

This brief section explores my feelings and concerns around the notion of bias and how it applies to this particular research. I begin with this quote:

> A qualitative approach allows for an exploration of the process of human meaning-making (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 455).

Throughout this research I have been aware of the potential for bias**.** As Kelly (2000) and others have argued, "bias" differs from "stance".

> All researchers seek knowledge while grounded in a particular stance, although that stance is not always acknowledged, let alone explored. Their beliefs, values and interests shape the topics and interpretive frameworks they select, the questions they ask and the evidence they gather or co-produce. This does not mean that good researchers (whatever their stance) willfully distort their findings or selectively use evidence to score ideological points or that all truth claims are relative. It does mean that the views of researchers are inescapably partial…(p. 186)

[10] TEAM is used to identify the group of classroom teachers, learning support teachers (including speech-and-language pathologists, counsellors and psychologists) as well as professionals outside of the school such as medical professionals or social workers. Parents are invited to the meetings which are usually held on a weekly basis before school.

If bias differs from stance, then I cannot state that my perspectives, at the outset of this research, constituted a particular stance. That would have meant (in my opinion) that I had carefully considered other sides to my research interest, and after some consideration had taken a stance on the student composition of a fine arts elementary school. Instead, my own arts background had left me with strong opinions that were driving the research. I had felt actual dismay when I first realized that Arts-trained or Arts-interested students were not being enrolled. This formulated my question as to what the real reasons were for parents to enroll their children in elementary fine arts schools. In that sense, I had a stance, and it was unwavering and I felt indignant.

Did I anticipate my research results? Certainly from the outset I had assumed that parents, seeing a problem for their child, sought to avoid it by moving their child to a new school, the new site of choice seemingly being my school. I didn't think beyond that, so initially my thinking was rather one-sided and not particularly reflexive. But, I will credit Pierre Bourdieu with tempering both stance and reflexivity since it is his *The Field of Cultural Production* that first alerted me to the fact that I needed to expand my viewpoint. As a result of that, I was able to view the situation more multi-dimensionally. I was also helped by readings such as those by Sandelowski and Barroso (2002):

> Reflexivity is a hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge. (p. 216)

This personal piece of the research story serves, as Greenbank (2002) writes, to "make a statement about [my] underlying values" (p. 795), through "biographical details" (p. 795), and while it may not be "value neutral" (p. 795) such reflexivity has guided me in maintaining a fair approach both in crafting my questions and in the actual interviews. Whatever my original feelings may have been about the motivations of parents in opting for a fine arts school

education, I had no interest in steering interviews in a particular direction. Moreover, my discussion on parent interviews will detail the fact that the school is about more than just solving a past problem. So while I have wished to explore "the process of human meaning-making" (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 455) it has not been my intention to invent meaning. And on that note, I take a stance.

3.10 Data Analysis Strategies

This section details how I went about interviewing and then transcribing interviews. It also explains how the data were sorted so as to arrive at a means to arrange and categorize it. Each participant was interviewed for no more than one hour. Conversations were taped and transcribed and given alpha-numeric codes as a means of identification. This would ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews were listened to repeatedly to assure accuracy in transcribing. This was my greatest challenge since I had suffered a profound hearing loss in 2010. There had been a discussion with my advisor as to whether or not interviews would be a reasonable research method. However, I found that by listening repeatedly to each interview, and with state-of-the-art listening technology I was able to accurately transcribe the conversations. To respect the school district's request that I not disclose its name, neither the school district, school name, obvious identifying factors or participants' names are included in this study. Finally, all consent forms and contact forms were stored separately in a secure place off of the school site.

The process of analysis started with educator interviews. Having transcribed pages of responses from these educators, I needed to find a method of sorting and categorizing. I started by reading through each interview, taking note of repetitions in words or phrases and soon began to notice some consistencies across the interviews. After highlighting these consistencies I turned to Spradley's (1979) semantic relationships to isolate main categories arising from the

interviews. Spradley's domain and taxonomic analysis allows for a sequenced critical consideration of the information, experience and opinions expressed by the educators I interviewed.

Five main categories were determined: Arts-Integrated Pedagogy, Trust, Leadership, District Hiring and Re-Appointment Policies, and Student Population. For each category, I applied words or phrases that appeared frequently across the interviews. I then used Spradley's concept of x and y to ascertain to which categories they were relevant to since not all words and phrases apply to each category. Each category was colour-coded as a means of mapping where certain words or phrases appeared across the categories. For example, teacher collaboration appears as an "Individual item (x)" in the categories of Trust, Pedagogy, Arts integration, and Leadership. As an example, the category of Trust uses six of Spradley's 12 semantic relationship options. Underlined words are his.

Leadership is a kind of trust
The school community as a family is a product of trust
Fragmentation amongst staff is a result of insufficient trust
Unethical behavior is a result of insufficient trust
Poor communication is a reason for insufficient trust
Team re-building is used for establishing trust
District hiring policy is a stage or step in establishing trust,
Teacher collaboration time is a place for building trust

Through this process I was able to make connections between individual interviews as well as making connections across the educator interviews. This holds true as well for parent interviews.

To remain consistent in data-analysis, the same process was followed for parent interviews as for interviews with educators. Spradley's (1979) semantic relationships – domain and taxonomic analysis (see also LeCompte, 2000, p. 149) – were again used to isolate main categories arising from the interviews. While I had isolated five main categories from my interviews with educators, the richness and diversity of parent interviews yielded eight: Cultural

capital, Social capital, Art for art's sake, Pedagogy, Life skills, Teacher accountability, Meeting the needs of parents, and Environment: place and space.

As with the set of educator interviews, I applied words or phrases that appeared frequently across the interviews. I then used Spradley's concept of x and y to ascertain to which categories they were relevant since not all words and phrases apply to each category. Each category was colour-coded as a means of mapping where certain words or phrases appeared across the categories. For example, the concept of "small school" appears as an individual item (x) in the categories of Cultural capital, Meeting the needs of parents, and Environment: place and space.

3.11 Identifying the unexpected

I will admit that I didn't expect the unexpected. But, the unexpected provides new insights, and new questions to take one into new research directions at a later date. For now the unexpected provides texture and a greater depth of interest to the research. Here I discuss some findings that did not necessarily fit into a particular category as previously described.

In order to uncover that which was not consistent across the interviews, I turned to LeCompte & Schensul's (1999) discussion on assembling research data. I was particularly drawn to their suggestion to create tables where graphic representation more clearly presented information (p. 189). One of the most unexpected, and research-worthy pieces of information came to me this way. I had been looking at my list of parent participants. As a reminder to myself, I wrote down their pseudonyms and the genders of their children as well as catchment area data as follows:

Table 3.3 Profiles of parents interviewed

Parents Interviewed	**New to school or Experienced**	**Public, Private* or home-schooled**	**# of schools previously attended**	**Families of M, F, or MF**
Parent 1	Experienced	Public outside catchment	1	1 M
Parent 2	Experienced	Private outside catchment	1	1 M 1 F
Parent 3	New	Public outside catchment	2	1 F
Parent 4	New (married to Parent 3)	See above	See above	See above
Parent 5	Experienced	Home-schooled and public outside catchment	2	1 M 2 F
Parent 6	Experienced	Public outside catchment	1	1 M 1 F
Parent 7	Experienced	Private outside catchment	1	2 F
Parent 8	Experienced	Public outside catchment	1	1 F
Parent 9	Experienced	Public outside catchment	1	2 F
Parent 10	Experienced	Public outside catchment	1	1 M 1 F
Parent 11	Experienced	At fine arts school only but live outside catchment area	0	2 F
Parent 12	Experienced	At fine arts school only but live outside catchment area	0	2 F
Parent 13	New	Public outside catchment area	1	1 F

*****Parents whose children attended private schools all made the point that their catchment area public school was not a choice for them.

I discovered that I had 4 parent sets with male children and 8 with female children. From that I decided to check the gender balance at the school and the following table represents that data:

Table 3.4 Mosaic Elementary 2012/2013 student enrolment in and outside catchment

Students in Catchment		**Students Outside Catchment**	
Total Students	109	Total Students	110
Total Families	80	Total Families	81
Total Females	48	Total Females	74
Total Males	61	Total Males	36
Female-student only-families	24	Female-student-only families	43
Male-student-only families	36	Male-student-only families	13
Male/Female-student families	20	Male/Female-student families	25

For the first time, the number of in-catchment and out-of-catchment students is balanced. Until the Fall of 2012, out-of-catchment typically represented 60% of the student population. Of interest here is the number spread between male and female students attending from outside of the catchment area. Female students dominate, more than doubling the number of males from outside catchment. It has caused me to wonder whether, (a) there is a greater concern about daughters than sons when it comes to satisfaction with educational choices, or (b) whether parents generally perceive that the Arts are more likely to guarantee greater overall success for females or (c) whether parents, to ensure equality for their daughters in a traditionally male-dominated society, look for other options as a type of reinforcement to their learning.

I also noticed that the male and female numbers from within catchment are better balanced. Would this be a more typical gender balance, and if so, what are the implications for student populations in regular public schools? Do schools of choice upset the gender balance, and what are the ramifications of that? Note the difference in families with male-only children. What does that low number for out-of-catchment male-student-only families speak to?

My research is not based on gender issues, and so while not intending to digress, I think it is important to note this data which was not that apparent to me until I used the method of creating a graphic. I did not ask any gender-based questions during my interviews mainly because I was looking at what parents perceived the value of fine arts schools to be. However

there was opportunity for parents to raise gender issues. Yet only one parent brought it up, and that was when I asked her whether there had been any particular circumstances that had caused her to look at other school options for her daughter. Within a larger response was her point that there had been mainly boys in her daughter's grade at the previous school. There were no references to gender in any of the other parent responses.

Another method I used was that of a display (Lecompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 195). To create my display, I performed a variation of the one they described in their 1999 paper. I created a template of boxes into which I typed individual comments that parents or educators had made. I then cut them all out and began sorting them across the width of my dining room table. Despite the unique quality of many of the comments, I was looking to see if they fell into particular groupings. Therefore I created loose category titles on sticky notes. Just as LeCompte had spread her data out across her living room on newsprint (p. 197) I left my comments on my dining room table for several days, re-visiting them, making notes on some of the comments, and drawing arrows on some to connect them to other groupings. I then photographed the dining room table display as well as entering all of the information as a computer document. Ultimately I developed a series of seventeen small categories. The question then became how I would bring the unexpected into the discussion. It seemed like a patchwork quilt of comments, some relating to others, with some singular in themselves. I was reminded of the suggestion in LeCompte and Schensul (1999) to consider a metaphor (p. 191) for one's research and I thought about using a patchwork quilt as a metaphor but it felt like I was trying too hard to be clever. After some reflection it occurred to me that much of the unexpected was so because of the change in direction that many of the conversations took, or because some conversations had blatant contradictions in them. Original statements changed, were slightly re-shaped; Conversations had been multi-layered. Were they really that unexpected or like pentimenti layers of a work of art,

simply shifted or re-directed, like so many altered layers in a painting? Thus I use the metaphor of a canvas over and across whose space is painted many conversational layers (under-drawings), some of which are more expected than others. But isn't that always the way? We don't really know what to expect, even if we expect it. Take me, for example. My life is a whole series of drawings overlaid upon other drawings – variations on a theme. For example, I was happily living in a friendly little neighbourhood, enjoying the various society and intrigues it had to offer, and then we moved.

1968-1976. Middle class

The new neighbourhood had its good points. I have already described how the spaces between the houses had struck me. Ours was a white clapboard house, and the yard was generously sized to the point that we could run around, and play on all four sides. If the back was bordered by a fence, to the west the property was bounded by a long stand of evergreen trees, which are there today, bigger and older, but somehow giving an air of consistency to a neighbourhood that has undergone several transformations.

Our neighbours immediately behind us had two children about our ages, so we soon struck up a bond with them. We had moved in during the late Spring and throughout that summer, we played with Karen and Rick. Rick fascinated us because his left leg was entirely enclosed in a cast earned by somehow slipping beneath the merry-go-round apparatus at the park a few yards from our houses. Sometimes I wished that I could also have a cast since it seemed heroic and adventuresome. Our father had built us a go-cart and so Rick and Karen's father did the same. (I admit to some jealousy here, because their father had upholstered a padded seat onto theirs.) Living on a steep hill, we spent endless days roaring down the street, sharp left where it curved, being careful not to land in the ditch, although sometimes we did. It never occurred to us that we might run smack into a car headed the other direction. Evidently we had abandoned Elmer the Safety Elephant at our old school. We just raced, wiped out, and fought, fought, fought over who the winner was. That was our first summer.

September. A new school. Grade 5. Walking up to the school through the park, I had chosen to wear a pair of new white knee socks and open-toed sandals. This proved to be my first memorable fashion blunder since by the time we arrived at the school I had many tiny green blades of grass sticking to the toes of my socks. Somehow that story exemplifies my life in a middle-class elementary school. We had come from a place where we knew everybody and

nobody really cared about one's "look". My red-and-black cotton dress with the high mock mandarin collar, accompanied by grassy white socks and brown sandals did not cut it beside the brightly-coloured dresses, fishnet stockings and go-go-boots. To this point I had only ever seen Tanya wearing go-go-boots. We had been playing Chinese skip, and the tiny heels kept getting caught on the elastic bands. Still, we had admired her sense of style, since go-go boots were the footwear of the teenage girls who swaggered their hips across our street every day at about 3:30 pm as they walked home from junior high school. Their chain belts swaying, and their platinum back-combed hair and pink lipstick gave a message of real attitude. No, go-go boots were definitely not what elementary school girls wore, and anyway my parents couldn't afford them. So that was the real difference. At this school, parents apparently could afford them and other faddish items too.

I don't remember my older sister being bullied. She was, and still is, very pretty. She had long, dark hair and I idolized her. She was tall and thin, and had straight teeth. She was also athletic. I had missed out on these attributes. All I had to fall back on was my ability to play a mean piano. By now I had skipped three Toronto Conservatory grades and was considered real competition in the local piano festival circles. If it was the one hook I could hang my hat on, it had nothing to do with school. So, I suffered a litany of bullying tactics. We all suffered to some degree from the fact that our father taught at the rival school. He was a popular and respected teacher in the district. It was difficult being the offspring of such a highly-esteemed educator. Equally difficult would be the realization that his students were to be my peers in secondary school. They exuded confidence and intelligence and they were snappy dressers. I did not believe I presented as such, so I thought they regarded me as a major let-down to my father whom they all seemed to revere. I never told my parents any of this. I felt that it would make

them feel bad for me, and that my lack of popularity might be a disappointment to them, and I just did not want to ever disappoint them.

The telling is probably worse than the reality because as a friend of mine always says, "It is what it is." So, if I had to endure a certain lack of society and popularity at school, I was lucky to have found it in the circle of friends with whom I spent my weekends and many week nights in music competitions. We competed in piano solos, duets, trios, two-piano four hands, and two-piano eight hands. It kept me happy and so I was able to view school for what I needed from it: an education, and an exit to somewhere else.

In retrospect, I wonder what my parents might have done if I had told them what my school days were really like. Would they have cast about for another school? Would they have wished for a site of arts-integrated learning, where my music abilities might be further recognized, or where they hoped bullying and social issues could be eradicated? Would they have felt anxious, or experienced any sort of dilemma as to where I should go? I doubt this, only because in those days school choice simply was not out there. But now it is.

4 Growing Pains: the challenges of creating and teaching in a school of choice

4.1 In the beginning

This chapter examines the outcome of my interviews with teachers, school staff, school-based administrators and one district administrator. I have relied mainly on interview data. Through one-on-one interviews—as explained in Chapter 3, Research Methods—I was able to take part in a diverse set of interesting and thought-provoking conversations with both educators and one member of my school's support staff. Such conversations offered many perspectives, ranging from general observations to personal or more exactly-aimed comments. The numerical data contained in this chapter have been included to clarify some statistical information. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) explain the value of graphics in the fact that text "requires many pages to present what a table can display in one" (p. 195). Hence my including them.

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September, 2005. First day of school. My colleague and I arrive at our new school. This is the same colleague that I accompanied to the District office to discuss a fine arts school possibility. By chance we are both assigned here. The halls are empty. There is not one parent to be seen. Nobody is waiting at the office to enrol a student. Later I tell my husband that you could have shot a cannon down the hallway. At some point my colleague announces to the entire staff of five teachers, that the school will likely become a fine arts school. I suggest to him that maybe he shouldn't have done that. After all, nothing has been finalized by the Board. I am uncomfortable looking around the small group of teachers fitting around one table. Do they think we are trying to take over? My colleague tells me he is going to tell the staff a couple of his favourite jokes—ones that I have heard before. I advise him against it. He tells them anyway. I sit there nervously, laughing too loudly, and looking around, I decide that they are a dull group.

They smile in tight amusement. Eight years later I still feel uncomfortable about that first meeting with the staff. The first year as a fine arts school saw dramatic emotional scenes, one that effectively cleared the hallways. For a short time the staffroom became a ghost town. One could say it was a bumpy start.

****

Having survived that rocky start I have become a keen observer of the school community. I have wanted to learn from educators and teaching staff, their thoughts and opinions of this fine arts school through either their own experiences teaching there, or as a facilitator in the process of its establishment. My presentation of interview data begins with a conversation with a district administrator.

4.2 Quietly moving ahead: a view from the district office

> "When one school tries to differentiate itself from other schools in a system, the process is contested and the outcomes will be constrained" (Gaskell, 2002, p. 40).

The quotation cited was published the year that a colleague and I approached our Board's administration to explore the possibility of setting up an elementary fine arts school in our district. Yet in my own experience nothing about the proposal to establish an elementary fine arts school was contested; Elementary and secondary fine arts schools were already up and running in other lower mainland school districts, from which our committee was to benefit through observations and conversations with teachers already at work in them.

The only feeling of some opposition to the idea that registered with me, came from a district administrator who became our committee's liaison person with the Board as the proposal was being discussed and drafted. A highly-respected music practitioner, he had built a strong visual and performing arts legacy for the district and therefore when he seemed to question the idea, I was concerned.

Now ten years later, he explained his apparent reluctance, as I had perceived it to be.

> I think it's, I'm not in favour of the elementary school that has a program that is all taught in discrete areas and never makes a relationship to other subjects, because that is what I saw in Langley Fine Arts School and lots of other schools around the continent. It wasn't – it was just one more thing that kids had to pigeonhole in and put into boxes and learn that way. And so that was part of it. The part also I think was that initially it felt like there wasn't a larger discussion about where this had come from, and are other teachers supportive of this? I worried a bit about staffing given how staffing is done in any school district… does it rob the best teachers from other schools? I wasn't worried about the kids coming from other schools because the percentage attending would be minimal.

Interestingly enough, this district administrator refers to the same school that Gaskell is talking about in my citation. Both Gaskell and this interview point to the importance, at the implementation stage, of careful dialogue among interested parties.

> But I guess the most extreme reason I had – the *strongest* reason, was that when Langley developed their fine arts school the rest of the world saw the Langley Fine Arts Program as being the fine arts school. They didn't recognize that many Langley elementary schools had very fine programs…and some of their secondary schools had programs that were way stronger than the fine arts school at that time. So I was concerned that because there was an evolving political role from the [his] Board, to create a fine arts school that *that* would be what they saw and the province would see (school district's] fine arts program as a fine arts school…I thought, I believe very strongly that every child should have that opportunity [access to the visual and performing arts] and so [another district administrator] and I worked very hard to make sure that all schools have that opportunity.

Apart from his own concerns, when I asked him if there had been any worries raised at our District offices, he replied that he had not heard any. But he also pointed to the fact that since the new program was starting in a small school with a small student population, that that might have been a reason why concerns were not apparent.

Maybe there were fewer worries because the idea had been initiated by teachers. Davies and Aurini (2008) note that schools of choice are rarely initiated by educators (p. 58). However, Taylor and MacKay (2008) in their research into schools of choice in Edmonton also pointed out that "there was no evidence or involvement from parent representatives in developing the

proposal for a fine arts program" (p. 554) at one of its secondary public schools. But apparently it is more likely to be parent interest and advocacy that eventuates in the establishment of choice schools. Davies and Aurini (2008) point out that school choice is "typically endorsed by politicians and parents who want educators to comply with their wants for a particular school philosophy" (p. 58). What exactly that philosophy is probably varies from parent to parent although concerns around academic achievement and school rankings may well contribute to the tendency to seek out new places of learning, for example Bosetti and Pyryt's (2007) reference to parents voting with their feet (p. 104). Another discussion is found in Kelly and colleagues (1995), whose research into one secondary school on Vancouver's east side revealed that while there was an apparent decline in parental involvement at the secondary school level, nevertheless, within the secondary school, programs that ran counter to that were those more academically focused and considered elite. Kelly questions whether the reason for this stems from a history of parental involvement, a preference for a smaller programme or a socio-economic advantage where more resources allow for more parent involvement.

Like Davies and Aurini (2008), the district administrator whom I interviewed, also concurred that schools of choice were initiated by parent advocacy groups. But, in the case of my District, because parents did not initiate the fine arts school, fewer players were involved in the start-up process. The transition from regular elementary into fine arts elementary school appeared to be seamless. The district provided funds to transform empty classrooms into a dance studio and another into an art studio. The music room was equipped with high-quality instruments, and a state-of-the-art sound system and portable stage system were purchased.

From September 2006 to September 2010 the enrolment rose to approximately 225 students (allowing for students moving in and out of the school) and it has maintained this number. The school, situated on the edge of a park, draws from a catchment area that includes

single-parent low-income families to upper income two-parent professional families. It has an active Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and a notably large group of parent volunteers. The majority of students at this school have typically come from outside of the catchment area and/or the public school system and this speaks to a public interest in schools of choice, and in this particular case, fine arts schools. It also suggests that parents have not necessarily privileged private over public education so much as wished for more program options in public education. Or, it might speak more to the concept of specialized education, more akin to a private school experience, but without the cost.

Any student living within the catchment area – whether they had attended Mosaic Elementary School, another public school, or a private school – had automatic admission into the school. Students from outside of the catchment area were admitted via a cross-district transfer or out-of-district application form and then put on a waiting list. Since 2006 the school population has diversified. In that respect no year has been the same. My initial observations of students entering from outside the catchment area were that many students were arriving with ministry designations for behavior, or learning disabilities. As well, students from religious and elite private schools were beginning to arrive. Children previously in Montessori and Waldorf schools or from other public school programs such as French Immersion also entered and continue to enter the school. Others had been home-schooled. Some students had been at multiple schools and it appeared that a fine arts school might be perceived as a last chance or "safety valve" (Kelly, 1993) for them. More recently the school has seen a growth in students designated 'gifted', a label that brings with it its own set of student profiles and needs.

Since 2006, Ministry Designations have fluctuated between 18 to 28 students annually and the number currently sits at 29, eight of which are low-incidence students. Prior to being a fine arts school there were, in 2005, four Ministry-designated students. After its transition to a

fine arts school of choice, it became a rare occurrence for a child to arrive from outside the catchment area without a ministry designation or social dilemma. Therefore my initial impression was that parents saw the school as catering to children with mainly social and behavioural needs. I questioned whether fine arts schools equated in parents' minds with personal growth and skills development more than the pursuit of the arts. From observations on how some students interacted with their peers, I assumed that some parents perceived it as a place of higher tolerance. Whatever the reasons, it was parental perspectives that drove this research. Table 6 summarizes the changes in the school since 2005.

Table 4.1 Comparison of Mosaic Elementary School before and after its arts integration focus

School composition	**Regular Elementary Public School – 2005**	**Fine Arts Elementary Public School – 2013**
Student population	90	229
*Enrolling (Classroom) teachers	4.5	10
Non-Enrolling Teachers	3	7
Ministry-Designated students	4	29
English language learners	16	15
Aboriginal students	3	8
Educational Assistants	0	4.5
School Administrator	1 (.4 teaching time)	1 (.15 teaching time)
Head Teacher	1	1
# of rooms utilized for teaching	10	18 (including the addition of 3 portables)
School secretary	1	1
Custodian	1.2	1.5
Teacher Assistant	0	.5
*Staffing based on Full-time Teaching Equivalent (FTE)		

There has been very little staff turnover. One would think then that this would have developed into a cohesive group. However, there have been growing pains, probably not aided by the fact that, within its eight years as a fine arts school, Mosaic has seen considerable turnover in school leadership. There have been three principals, and three head teachers, each with different approaches to leadership. This information creates a backdrop against which I

will present the opinions and perspectives of parents on elementary fine arts schools and how it affects the nature of their school choice (in the chapter which follows). For the purposes of this chapter about educator/school interviews, I will provide a brief description of each participant, although I will omit some details such as number of years taught, to maintain participant anonymity, given the small size of the school. Such information is represented in the following table.

Table 4.2 Detail of teachers and staff interviewed

Educators/School staff	**Enrolling/non-enrolling**	**Formal training in 1+ of the VPA Arts**	**Informal training/personal interest 1+ of the VPArts**	**Taught one of the VPA subjects to multiple classrooms**
Teacher 1	Enrolling	No	Yes	Yes
Teacher 2	Enrolling	No	Yes	Yes
Teacher 3	Enrolling	No	No	No
Teacher 4, Retired	Enrolling	No	Yes	No
Teacher 5	Non-enrolling	Yes	N/A	Yes
Principal 1, Retired	Non-enrolling - .2 Teaching assignment	Yes	N/A	Yes
Principal 2, Retired	Non-enrolling - .2 Teaching assignment	Yes	N/A	Yes
District Administrator	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes
School Custodian	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Two of the teachers interviewed had strong physical education (PE) skills and this is an important piece in the school curriculum. Our initial proposal had suggested that the district appoint a full-time PE specialist to the school to provide non-instructional time (NIS) to teachers. It would have avoided any concern that this curricular area was being sidelined by fine arts subjects. But it could also have caused resentment from other schools within the district

who saw not only the status of a specialized pedagogy, but also the privilege of being the only elementary school in the district to have a full-time PE specialist. However, partly due to hiring practices at the elementary school level – not to mention restrictions under the district's collective agreement – this never eventuated. Currently NIS is provided throughout the district by music teachers and because of this every elementary school has a music specialist and fully-equipped music room.

4.3 The evolving student population

Since my research question targets the student population at this fine arts school, it makes sense to begin there. Prior to the establishment of this school, I had not given much consideration to diversity or sameness within a school's student population. Still, when the fine arts school proposal had been passed by the Board, my assumption was that a number of highly-trained students of piano and dance would arrive. That did not happen. But neither did I observe a group of students with a genuine interest in the arts arriving. Naturally I was interested in knowing whether staff shared similar observations and so this became one of my interview questions.

4.4 The visual and performing arts as behavioural program?

Interviews with teachers and administrators offer observations and opinions about the school's student composition including comments both general and specific, both questioning and authoritative. When asked whether they had noticed any trend in the type of students attending from outside of the catchment area or from the private school system, teachers and school administrators shared their observations or experiences with students and/or parents coming into the school.

For example, Teacher 1 speaks confidently about the age group and points to students arriving due to poor academic success.

> [They arrive]Typically at the grade 4ish level and it's interesting because it's the grade level where they get marks. So parents might have coped with what they thought was not a good situation until it showed up on paper, the marks showing up at the grade 4/5 level. For a couple of years, it's easy to kind of blame the teachers, the kids, the environment, but now there's an accountability. "I better get my kid somewhere else and maybe they'll be more accepting...My kid, she likes to dance, she likes to draw therefore that must be creativity and there's a fine arts school. Hopefully they'll fit in there." And so, definitely the kids coming in from outside the catchment area, it's [the fine arts school] there for them. So they [the parents] think, "I would like my child at your school." (Teacher 1)

Other teachers talk more directly to the different types of challenges that children from outside of the catchment area were bringing with them:

> I was starting to notice, and you know again I don't spend much time looking at the enrolment. We have a lot of special needs kids, a lot of behavior kids, a lot of that kind of thing going on. "Oh they like art, we'll put them there they will be ok," and I was thinking, these are the kind of kids who shouldn't be at the school. (Teacher 2)

Counter to others' beliefs that a fine arts school is exactly the right place for children with behavioural challenges or other types of educational needs Teacher 2 believes that a fine arts school puts more demands on students and teachers and that parents do not seem to consider this.

> They think it will just be arty and really you have to do way better on your academics – because if I'm going to fit an hour of drama and hour of music every week into my program, then they better be listening during math and language arts because I have less time. There are no other classrooms that have to do that, no other schools with a mandate – this is what you're going to do – so I feel like that was becoming an issue….I don't know how much that is right now….You just have to listen to some of the intermediate teachers who talk about the kids who are struggling in basic math skills. Why do you think they are? I can tell you why. They don't get enough math time. Like when you think about that. They have some kind of learning disability or they've just been given excuses as to the fact they don't have to do it because they're learning disabled. (Teacher 2)

During this particular interview, I raised the idea of a fine arts school being perceived as a type of bandage or cure. While I emphasized that it was important that children facing a range

of challenges should not be hindered from attending the school, nevertheless the idea that the school could solve a multitude of problems, seems to me, to be naïve.

> Well it's one thing if you say, well, "My child struggles with behavior," but they're maybe gifted musically. I see that as something completely different than what we're talking about. Because what I was seeing was, well, "My kid can't hack it at this school so I'll try the fine arts school where they spend more time doing drama and art and music," but really in effect, all the moving around and the platooning makes the behaviours so much more difficult because there are so many teachers trying to manage it too. (Teacher 2)

A word about platooning: it is a scheduling system that provides a different teacher per subject and is most commonly practiced in secondary schools. At the start, platooning was the format used to teach the arts subjects. It was expected that while one classroom was for example, having an art lesson, that particular classroom teacher would be teaching another subject in someone else's room. If ever an ecosystem (Charland, 2011, p. 6) was tested, this was it since the situation caused anxiety and general staff disgruntlement. It was particularly difficult for primary students who were still learning how to be in one classroom per day, never mind several.

Proceeding with my interview with Teacher 2, I mentioned to her the notion of the fine arts school being a last chance or a last stop for some students.

> Well I guess there has always been that thing, that kind of reputation of anybody can pass art, right? Anybody can take art, anybody can pass it and if you work hard at it you'll be able to get it…It was really scaring me when I was here and I saw that happening and I thought, "What are we becoming a behavioural school?" I was kind of thinking "Okay," when I first got here, "Oh (Principal), she just wants more and more and more students…oh we're new, [she's] letting in as many people as she can"…I got that, but when we ended up what was it, last year the year before they had 14 designated students between two grade seven classes – that is an issue considering our population. (Teacher 2)

At that time the population had a less than 1:10 ratio of students with ministry designations. But this high rate of students with diverse learning challenges was not limited to just one year. It had happened right at the beginning, as recounted by a now-retired upper intermediate teacher.

> The first year we were designated a fine arts school, in my class I had three new students come in because it was a fine arts school, one who definitely belonged but was definitely off the wall. This was the right school for her… The second year (my last year here), in all the years that I taught, 35 years, 28 of those years in grade seven, rarely do you get many new grade seven students, and that year 10 came in. Of the 10 you could not get a more diverse set of students. Some in-area, catchment, home school, Montessori, Waldorf, from the streets, basically a street kid, every single one of them had some sort of exceptional – they weren't exceptional – some specific needs that they thought a fine arts school would be able to address and it did for some extent do that (Teacher 4, Retired)

"Definitely off the wall." "This was the right school for her." If there is a general perception of the arts as addressers of all manner of difference and needs then that is a huge responsibility for teachers to wear and a huge amount of faith that parents have in this school. And, it implies that the Arts are a healer, or experiential, or therapeutic:

> Doesn't surprise me, [parents thinking],"Hey, they'll be better here. They can play, they can fool around in drama they can play around with a paintbrush"…Those parents they just think it is just a solution and they're maybe not thinking. "I need something this kid is off the wall I need something." So this is what they try. (Teacher 2)

4.5 The fine arts school: a need for admittance criteria?

The sense that the school was rapidly turning into a behavioural program more than a fine arts school reached a head at a professional development day meeting in about 2009, when the suggestion of requiring admissions criteria was raised. I raised it privately with the then Principal, but later and without prompting from me, at an in-school professional development day, it was raised by 2 other teachers. The suggestion resulted in one upset Principal, and so it was never pursued beyond that. Nevertheless I did raise the question of criteria for admittance in my interviews. Many of the responses were unarguably logical such as Teacher 4's point that "if you haven't been exposed [to the Arts] how do you know if you have an interest?" He does clarify grade levels however, noting that for students coming in from another school at the intermediate level, "they should have some interest." Teacher 3 used Kindergarten students as

an example of why criteria would be difficult to establish due to their age level. However, like Teacher 4, she also believes that there should be some level of interest for older students.

> It's hard enough with a kid in grade 5 and the parents are thinking. "Yeah, they just don't have any friends, they're being bullied, I'll put them in a fine arts school." The parents are thinking, "I've got to try something." I struggle with that. I really have a hard time with that. Parents who have a good handle on their kids they must know that at least their kids are interested in the arts. (Teacher 3)

But Teacher 3 also expressed her belief that a lot of the children in this particular district are in a fine arts school because school choice is limited at the elementary level, making the school not so much about the fine arts as about a just-another-school option.

In a similar vein, Teacher 2 ponders whether parents take a close enough look at their children's interests in the fine arts given the fact that for some a daily commute is involved.

> You think about parents making the commute and if their child is not interested what's the point? You know, like I think some parents they want things for their kids I mean, I get that, you want the best things for your kids but maybe your kid is not, it's not your thing, a lot of kids that's not their thing. (Teacher 2)

But Teacher 3 pointed out that there would be problems in developing admissions criteria since those students inside the catchment area have the privilege of automatic acceptance, and therefore how can there be criteria for one group and not for another? Still, not all students within the catchment area attend [this fine arts school], their parents opting for other school choices.

By contrast Teacher 1 believes that the school is open for any student and uses boys to make her point.

> When you look at boys who are dancing their little feet off up to grade 7 with nary a concern is this masculine is this cool is this acceptable? I like that. That is a group of boys who are probably not going to be dancers or to take art. Why would we shut that off…if you started saying you have to have a certain level of competence?

Teacher 5 when asked about criteria for admittance responded by explaining that in her opinion "the sports-minded kids at our school, they're totally on board and they'll do what they're comfortable with, so my answer is no." Without citing any research here, it is my personal

experience that there has been a traditional divide between what are colloquially termed "jocks" and "artsies". Here she is making the point that there is no divide. The "jocks" are "totally on board" with the expectations of a fine arts curriculum.

Apart from teachers' opinions on criteria for admittance, the district administrator I interviewed felt that the process was working. "It's parents who want their kids to have an education through the arts." Of the two principals that I interviewed, Principal 1, now retired, commented on the type of student composition that would have concerned her.

> I would have been concerned if we got all the top violin players. We would have looked like an academy. We didn't. This way we were a school that did the school business but it wasn't just for someone who was particularly good at something…I would have been concerned if we had had a lot of gifted piano players…Often when we did tours they [the parents] would ask if we had violin or piano lessons. No. We're not here to train musicians. We're here to integrate the arts. That's the part you really need to understand.

Paralleling the district administrator's point that school district fine arts programs are not and should not be solely defined by the presence of a fine arts school, Principal 1 points out that her previous school had an abundance of talented students –"You never had to get a parent or teacher to play the piano there to accompany the choir. You just got one of the kids". A fine arts school is not an arts academy. It is a particular approach to pedagogy which teachers have addressed to varying levels of success. Whether that pedagogic approach attracts struggling students is up for debate, but Principal 1 does make the interesting remark that, "When I walked in the doors of this school I felt we had two to three times more behavior problems than I had at [another school] with a student population of 500." Equally interesting is her recollection of attending district meetings. "Some of the kids, the parents didn't very often admit when their children were being problems, but sometimes I would run into a teacher or administrator at a previous school and they would ask, "how is so and so doing…boy, we were sure glad to see the back end of that family!" Empathetic to the needs of students, Principal 1 avers that the fine arts

school is there for the purpose of inclusion and not that of exclusion. "This is a place for everybody and anybody."

Principal 1, at the school for five years, and as the school administrator tasked with welcoming students into the fine arts school's first year of operation, shared her experiences with parents looking for another educational choice.

> Most of the people that were coming to talk to me were coming either looking for a different school for their child because they might not have been doing so well, or somewhere else because they already saw that their child had a creative bent so that needed some discussion time to explain how the fine arts would thread throughout their curriculum…Sometimes the parents were frustrated because it didn't matter how many meetings they had with their current child's teacher or others in the school, they couldn't see past whatever the program was. Many programs are formula-driven with lots and lots of worksheets. I explained that in something like this there had to be a lot more of creative group work going on.

While Principal 1 could share these experiences, it was more difficult for the second administrator who was at the school for only two years. Nevertheless she did recount one incident where a parent had come to see her several times about her daughter, whom she felt was being bullied at her then-current school.

> I think that's the other part of being this type of school that there are so many different talents and abilities and the children are very accepting of quirkiness and individuality and those unique traits. (Principal 2, retired)

As well she related an incident that occurred while Principal at her former school.

> I recommended from my previous school that a girl come who was having a tough time fitting in, but she was artistic and really creative but socially just was not accepted by the other kids and we thought this might be a place where she would fit in and so I can see that that might have been the type of families who applied [at the outset]. My child is not making it, my child is struggling academically and behaviourally. They end up coming to try out a different venue, just a different scenario…[the school] is wide open to anybody who is not fitting in to the typical box.

This concept of not fitting into a box is complicated, and evokes great empathy if one considers Foucault's (1979) views on discipline, that it "operates four great techniques: it draws up tables; it prescribes movements; it imposes exercises; lastly in order to obtain the combination of forces, it arranges 'tactic'" (p. 167). While written to describe 18th century conditions, Foucault's

insights remain relevant. In today's typical elementary school today, these four measures still apply. One, an elementary school operates on the structures of visual or pictorial timetables on classroom walls and daybooks on the teacher's desk. Two, these timetables prescribe movements throughout the day within the structured and unstructured spaces of a school. Three, each subject taught imposes an exercise whether mental or physical. Finally, these disciplinary tactics, intended to create successful spaces of learning, are not always the most useful spaces for children described as not "fitting in to the typical box."

On a lighter note, it is intriguing to see that Foucault includes a diagram of an 18th century "steam machine for the 'celeriferous' correction of young boys and girls (Plate 9) to be used by any parent or boarding school that houses lazy, greedy, disobedient, rebellious, insolent, quarrelsome, tale-bearing, chattering, irreligious children, or children having any other defect" (p. 204). Given my previous discussion about the nature of the school's student population, this advertisement cannily pre-figured an elementary fine arts school.

More seriously, if the school's (unofficial) credo is akin to Principal 2's comment that the school welcomes those who fit mainly into an atypical box, then it is not surprising that Teacher 3 offered the following advice to a friend who wanted to enroll her Kindergarten-age child in a fine arts school in another school district. Apart from pointing out that her friend's child would not be in the catchment area and therefore not with children from her neighbourhood she also told her friend,

> I don't think the fine arts will be a challenge the way you are thinking of it being an academic challenge. You get all these parents who have all these problems [at a fine arts school]. I don't know what other fine arts schools are like, I have no idea, but that's what happened here. I'm not convinced you will get that structure [that your daughter needs].

It perpetuates a belief that only those deemed different need attend, and it is evocative of Teacher 2's revealing comment that she had not had much involvement in the arts in high school because she was "an academic kid."

This school was more commonly being viewed among staff as a place for those students who could not find the right educational fit. Whether it was Teacher 2's worries that the school was becoming a behavioural school or the intermediate teacher (no longer at the school) who once said to me, "Let's face it. They're loveable losers," it seemed that student composition was becoming of greater interest to the staff. But whatever the case, the district had allowed for the school's establishment and as such, it became the teachers' responsibility to deliver the B.C. Ministry of Education curriculum through an arts-integrated pedagogy.

4.6 Arts-integrated pedagogy

> What is arts-integrated pedagogy? Do we really understand what this is? Arts integration. You can make it look like you're integrating when it kind of looks like I'm doing social studies and here's a cool art project that goes with that unit and I think a lot of teachers can do that at any school. How many years ago was it we just called that themes? (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 makes a good point. Is "integration" just a new term for "theme"? Whether it is an integration or a theme, the real point is that the understanding at the District level was that this would be a school that integrated arts throughout its curriculum and based its acceptance of the fine arts school proposal on that understanding.

> I am very supportive of the model at [fine arts school] because I see that as, although there are discrete courses in the arts it is the relationship of the arts to other subjects. I think it enhances the curriculum. I think it ties things together rather than seeing social studies by itself or English by itself. The idea of the curriculum through the arts as it has been developed here is critical. Those subjects that are taught discretely like dance, there are very good reasons for that, because there are safety issues and so they must be attended to and so the best way to do that is through discrete classes. (District administrator, Retired)

Yet there have been considerable frustrations from the onset about how and to what extent the curriculum would be enhanced, not to mention the interest of individual teachers in arts integration. The delivery of an arts-integrated pedagogy has been pulled in different directions depending on the power of individual classroom teachers and their perceived level of commitment. All the teachers interviewed expressed frustration at a perceived inconsistency in

other teachers' levels of commitment, some holding more tightly to an 'art for art's sake' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 36) perspective while others maintained a looser hold on the concept of a fine arts school. Consequently, there was some discontent.

> I still find this collective group of people [to be] people who might fit in at another school because they don't seem to be worried about that level of commitment that I brought so it frustrates me as an individual. (Teacher 1)

While Teacher 1 is making a judgment call by comparing her perceived level of commitment to that of other teachers, nevertheless she is not the only one to voice this concern.

> I found that at times there are some of the staff who are not as interested in kind of going out there and trying something different and really … well definitely not stretching themselves but just kind of just you know, "I'll just close my door and do my thing" and I don't think you can do that in a school like this. (Teacher 2)

Teacher 2's comment about closing the classroom door speaks to some situations where the perception has been that a few teachers are not prepared to work as a team in integrating the arts, or to take the risk of integrating the arts across the curriculum. Teacher 3, who is not an arts specialist, expresses something similar: that not all teachers have been genuinely interested in implementing an arts-integrated pedagogy.

> Even if teachers didn't have the qualifications at least they would have the passion and the interests that was the first thing. Second, I thought there would be more collaboration. What I am struggling with is I want to have more integration in my program. I really like the idea of working with other teachers, I always have. I'm finding that not happening [it's] almost like a competition. I don't work that way and I never have. (Teacher 3)

Mason, Steedly and Thormann (2008) assert that collaborative time between classroom teachers and arts specialists is an important part of professional development in arts-integrated teaching and also note, like Teacher 3, that some teachers in their research tended to work in isolation (p. 45). Collaboration has been one problem. Another concern has been the negativity traded between staff, and between staff and school administration. From an administrative perspective, there were initially some feelings of dissatisfaction with staff that chose to stay at the school after it acquired the fine arts focus. While these teachers were seemingly happy with the new

plans for the school nevertheless the first two years saw the most dramatic disagreements between teachers and administration.

> I don't think, I think they didn't realize they might actually have to work hard… that an arts program is a commitment of time…There's a discipline you must have as an artist… An arts project –it's all the work that goes into planning the project – sharing, planning – those are such critical skills. (Principal 1, Retired)

To date the staff continues to disagree over how best to deliver an arts-integrated curriculum. Is it down to each classroom teacher to deliver that program to their classes? If this is the case then it might be further complicated by such data as provided by Alter, Hays and O'Hara (2009) in a study that showed teachers to be generally least confident in the teaching of music, dance, drama and art in that order (p. 26). The quality of instruction would then vary from one classroom to the next and platooning was not the solution. Platooning did ensure quality arts instruction, but some teachers tended to negate arts integration within their classrooms since it was understood that students were receiving it through discrete classes. At that time, the system had not yet been clarified and to make matters worse, the sense that there was a *them* (arts teachers) and an *us* (non-arts teachers) stuck. Thus this lack of vision in pedagogy served to create negative power dynamics among the staff.

4.7 Power within the spaces of a school

> Power…traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (Foucault, 2000, p. 120).

Unfortunately, it does not appear that the staff has yet arrived at a point where power can be "considered as a productive network" (Foucault, 2000, p. 120). Instead, power still more closely follows Foucault's explanation of feudal times, whereby (in this case) one person's words are tested against another's; "This system was a way of proving not the truth, but the strength, the weight, the importance of the one who spoke…basically, it was always a combat, of deciding who was the stronger." (Foucault, 2000, p. 37). Competing practices of power have

threatened to override the growth of this school because some staff members confidently state what they are and are not prepared to do, while others agree to try something new, while yet others practice power in its most inhibiting way—by saying nothing at all.

This matter of power is evident in the responses I received when I asked teachers (given that "fine arts" is part of the school's pedagogy) how they would in fact define the term, *fine arts*. The following table encapsulates a variety of responses:

Table 4.3 Teacher definitions of the commonly-used term, *fine arts*

Teacher 1	I don't really have a specific answer about fine arts and visual arts, but then that leads to a bigger question which is what is art? I think you can put it in a box and cover the four strands but then what does fine arts mean?
Teacher 2	I think for me it's kind of a combination of the strands of arts and being able to incorporate them into what I'm doing with the kids.
Teacher 3	I think of the specific disciplines. I think of the visual art, the drama, the dance and the music, so it is the four disciplines that we do here. But for me it is kind of individual, for instance I think the fine arts is linked in to the language arts as well.
Teacher 4, Retired	I guess I look at music, drama, visual arts, and dance. And that's what I would call the fine arts.
Teacher 5	I can't answer that.

Note the phrases, "I don't really", "I think", "I guess" and "I can't". It is clear to me that defining fine arts is not easy, the safest thing being to break the arts into categories. Are these categories really what define the arts, or is it just that at Mosaic Elementary school, it is how they are defined? Here I will include Teacher 1's complete response to this question due to the reflexive nature of this comment:

> I don't really have a specific answer because fine arts – music, dance, drama, visual art, -- it leads to a bigger question actually, what is art? … I think you can put it in a box and cover the four strands, but then what does fine arts mean?.. I think I'm still pretty much in the box myself. I forget about, I don't include automatically all these extensions and all of the other pieces that arts can be so it tends to limit it, so I think the fine arts are a discipline where people develop skills and knowledge based on what they know but then it tends to move on from there to what they want to express. We are in the business of being at a supposedly skill-building level with the potential to take it further. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 has no problem in overriding my question with a comment and question of her own; "It leads to a bigger question actually, what is art?" Can one really define art, or music, or dance, or drama, and is there a definition that everyone would agree with?

If this question was too complicated, teachers found it easy to discuss whether they felt that teaching staff should have arts qualifications in order to work in a fine arts school.

4.8 Arts qualifications versus an interest in the arts

Not surprisingly, the responses to whether or not one should have qualifications in at least one area of the visual and performing arts were divided between those without arts qualifications who responded no, while Teacher 5, a fine arts specialist responded yes. When I asked her why, she answered, "Why? Because it's more than just a passion for the fine arts. There has to be that core understanding of skill and foundation to be able to build skills for the students themselves." By contrast, Teacher 1's opinion was quite different.

> I really don't [think so] because I think the key to being a good teacher, everybody can find the same information, resources for curriculum…I think you have to be a teacher who wants to take on the challenge of taking on the curricular area…I think you can be a great artist and not a great teacher and you can put on a great play and not have the skills to teach children how to do it…It's more about the person and personality and their teaching style than their teaching credentials. (Teacher 1)

The matter of arts training versus an interest in the arts has been an arguable conversational point since the school was established. But interestingly, as the discussion continued Teacher 1 then did admit that music and dance would require a skilled specialist, while drama and visual art could be managed by the classroom teacher. This perspective paves the way for visual and performing arts subjects to be placed in a hierarchy, creating the potential for an arts value scale. If art and drama do not require an innate talent, or specific technical skills, is it any wonder then, that when asked on the school district's transfer application why they want their child to attend the school, the most popular response is, "My son/daughter likes to draw"? Wanting to push Teacher 1's point about good teaching over credentials, I told her

that I didn't think I could teach PE. Her response was "You could if you wanted to," privileging one's desire, popularly-termed 'passion', over ability and training.

> Another non-arts specialist saw the value of both sides of the argument.
>
> Yes and No. I really think it's important that there are teachers for core fine arts but I think the people who come in should have a strong desire in one of the areas, and want to do professional growth to become more competent [but] there has to be the expertise in the school if you're going to call it a fine arts school. (Teacher 4, Retired)

Having made this statement this teacher clarified his own role by pointing out that while he was not an arts specialist he saw himself as a teacher who could offer support and address other areas of the curriculum. He also alluded to the importance of personal desire to teach in a fine arts school, saying, that he "would go for passion over perfunctory any time because passion can be transferred." Yet another non-arts-specialist explained the importance of good teaching practice over an ability in the arts:

> Well that would totally leave me out, I think, because I don't have dance education, I don't have music education. I mean I didn't even take art in high school because I was an academic kid but I think it's more about being able to embrace those strands of arts and not necessarily that you are proficient in doing them yourself. (Teacher 2)

That she did not take art in high school because she was "an academic kid" is suggestive of the Arts as an educational aide or a lesser form of learning: an enabler of students, with an intrinsic value when embedded in another subject area, but not necessarily as an academic subject. Passion and a will to teach a new subject seem to override the need for skills and training in an arts discipline. Moreover, how does the district value the visual and performing arts when hiring or re-assigning, in light of Teacher 3's statement: "I don't have those [fine arts] qualifications and I made that quite clear in my interview." This comment was justified by the fact that Teacher 3 is an upper intermediate teacher who wants her students to have the experience of multiple teachers as they prepare for secondary school. Teacher 3 made it clear from the start that she had no fine arts skills, and yet was still appointed to the school.

4.9 A matter of timing

At the heart of many statements on pedagogy was the issue of time and therefore timetabling. Foucault (1979) discusses institutional time and in particular the timetable, as it was designed to "establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition" (p. 149). If his words conjure visions of repetition and stale classrooms, all negativity aside, timetabling is still necessary. Unfortunately power struggles are at the forefront as teachers discussed how they viewed their own time management issues.

Principal 2 allowed that, "Of the concerns that have been voiced to me, it tends to be around how do we meet those basics in math and literacy and how much time is being taken away?" Here she is voicing parental concerns about academic time. Speaking on behalf of teachers, Teacher 3 states that "there is definitely more expectations on my time, that I don't have. The interruptions here are more, just more demanding you know." Teacher 3 refers to the many school productions that cut into teaching time as compared to other schools she has taught at. But time problems manifest themselves in more subtle ways. Part of the success of the school hinges on teachers committing to the time it takes to develop an arts-integrated curriculum and that time committed has been perceived as being uneven. For example, Teacher 1 suggests that some teachers have relied on the delivery of a fine arts program mainly through the tireless efforts of the school's music and dance teacher. "I have a lot of problems with other classroom teachers. [Teacher] is seen as a specialist, oh yeah, [Teacher] can do it because when it comes down to it thanks for doing the work. Because I can't do it anyway." But she also discusses her own concerns around time when she was teaching both in the classroom and as the school's art teacher. It is best summed up in her own statement that she "started to lose it in the classroom." Time management has been a continual challenge, and although there has been collaboration time offered, not all staff have always used it for its intended purpose, which

brings up a new set of frustrations among staff. Teacher 3 believes that competition among staff has stopped meaningful collaboration, and therefore allocation of time needed to explore arts-integrated initiatives has not been realized.

Teaching staff aside, how has an arts-integrated pedagogy affected non-teaching staff? In interviews with the school custodian, it becomes clear that his role has changed from that of purely custodial to managerial as he works with each teacher to set up staging, lighting and sound equipment, and performance seating. Just as some teachers have spoken about the need to have a genuine interest in the arts, so the custodian agrees with them from his own job perspective.

> Anyone [another custodian] coming to this school, they have to love the arts. Or it will be very difficult for them. They could make it very difficult for the music teacher, the dance teacher. Again, I think it's basically to a certain point, it's my choice and I'd rather work with these people than work against them.

Here is an example of power as "a productive network" (Foucault, 2000, p. 120). Working with fine arts specialists, the school's custodian plays a role in creating positive power relationships instead of working against them.

When asked about a greater demand being placed on him in terms of physically setting up a performance area – portable staging, choir risers, lighting and sound equipment or curtain backdrops – he responded by saying that it wasn't only about the maintenance of the school structure, but that, "If anybody was to take my spot. It would have to be a very special person that would want to do these types of things too, or they wouldn't be here for very long." Based on my observations and working relationship with him, I can state that his contribution to the success of the fine arts program is significant. So when he says that the new arts-integration model has "made a lot more extra work" he clarifies that this is positive. "It's nice to see the school being utilized properly now instead of just a lot of storage which was quite sad, because we were quite frightened that the school could have been closed." As school custodian he has

been directly and indirectly involved in the school's transition to an arts-integrated model and he has become someone upon whom all staff rely. This demonstrates the importance of teamwork from the school staff as a whole. Whether it is support from the school's custodian or teacher perceptions on what is paramount in delivering an arts-integrated pedagogy, one category seems to pervade all of the others, and that is Trust.

4.10 Trust

If I could identify a point in time where trust became an issue, I would say that it was when there was a shift from a classroom space, to a "space emptied" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 91). Spaces once full and now emptied by a declining student population, were then filled with art and dance equipment as they transformed into functional rooms in which to teach discrete arts classes. That was in September 2006 and from this point the erosion of trust appears to begin. Although trust was not raised as a discussion point this issue arose when teachers were asked (a) whether they had had to rethink their pedagogical approach as a result of being at a fine arts school, and (b) what their expectations had been upon being assigned to the school. While not wanting to paint an entirely negative picture of this school, there was nevertheless considerable frustration expressed among these teachers as they discussed the inconsistencies among those teaching staff who appeared to have a lesser commitment to arts-integrated learning. Asked how teaching at a fine arts school compared to their expectations, teachers offered the following comments:

> I'm feeling really good about the music and dance program especially the dance program, because that was new to me… It's the hit and miss. It depends on the staff that I work with and it depends on the relations and if the relations aren't there because there's such a trust factor things don't seem to get off the ground. It doesn't matter how qualified people are. (Teacher 5, arts specialist)

While discussing the role that she played in the beginning stages of establishing the school's visual art program, Teacher 1 expressed her disappointment in how some staff members had

perceived her. The following excerpt shows a more emotional side to her generally un-phased persona.

> I had no idea I'd end up teaching the entire school [art]…there was resentment from teachers who wanted to teach their own art. Hey, I'm just doing what I've been asked please talk to the person who's doing the asking. It's been difficult. It's like the more you do the more trouble you get into. The more you stand out, the more you shine the more resentment. … The shut door policy and the whisper policy… very hurtful…Jealousies, parent-friendly. People now think it's okay to talk in an entire staffroom about somebody? (Teacher 1)

Jealousy was a word Teacher 3 also used in describing staff relations. Trust is such an important factor because it affects staff relationships which can break down into unethical behaviours, poor communication and fragmentation of staff. Lack of trust drives some teachers behind closed doors while those outside the doors learn to be distrustful. It stops the fluency of teacher collaboration. Teacher collaboration seems to equate directly with the level of trust each individual teacher places in another. Given the mix of fine arts specialists and non-specialists, collaboration has been regarded by both school administrators and some teachers as critical in the success of this school. One might also consider the trust that parents have placed in the school. Whatever their motivations for placing their children in a fine arts school, they are trusting that this is the right educational site. Trust therefore traverses the geographical space and networks throughout the space of teacher relationships.

Here I would like to reiterate Foucault's point that "space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" (2000, p. 351). It is possible that architectural space has indirectly played a role in this staff's struggle with trust, and here again is the concept of the panopticon – "a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole" (Foucault, 1979, p. 207). Thus it enables teachers in varying stages of distrust to isolate themselves from others, alone or in small groups, to create their own little micro-powers within a smaller space. "Society [teachers] as a whole" (Foucault, 1979, p. 207) is missing. Why has this happened? I would suggest that it goes to the levels of skill and

interest that teachers are bringing into the school. The notion of an educational marketplace adds another level of complexity to this problematic; Parents have bought into the school. They have invested in it for their children for any number of reasons. Problems among staff should not interfere with the quality of programming, and this takes us back to the district's process of appointing or re-appointing teachers to schools.

4.11 District hiring and re-appointing policy

Like all school districts, my school district must adhere to the union local and its collective bargaining agreement, which privileges seniority over other considerations in its hiring policy. Unlike secondary schools, where subject-specific credentials are required in tandem with seniority, elementary school teachers are considered to be generalists. Thus for elementary school classroom appointments, the only gatekeeper is whether teachers have completed practica at the primary or intermediate level(s) with appropriate methodology courses to confirm that. Otherwise, seniority directs school appointments.

When asked about school staffing within the first two years of the school's operation, Principal 1 responded that it was "something I had to deal with even at the Board. There were teachers who had to be here, and it just had to happen. It was very challenging." Currently the policy on re-assigning teachers is based on seniority. The complexity of staffing across a large school district is not limited to a seniority policy. In the case of my school, those teachers already there were given a choice to stay on if they felt comfortable with the new model. One new teacher was what is called a forced transfer. And it was not helpful that the District's job posting did not indicate that this particular school was a fine arts school. Teacher 2, "actually didn't know that it was a fine arts school when I applied." Teacher 3 was very candid that it had been the school's location since it was important to her that she be close to her home and admitted that "it wasn't the fine arts that got my interest at first." Teachers 1 and 2 had been

motivated to move to the school mainly because they had taught at inner-city schools and had wanted a change.

> I wasn't trying anything different it wasn't challenging, been-there-done-that and I needed something more. This is something different having to put kinda myself out there in a zone that was not always comfortable for me but one I thought I could get a grip on. (Teacher 2)

> I wanted a different school, with more parent involvement. A fine arts school I thought, oh, that would be cool. I had had the opportunity to work with some of the artists-in-residence but it was stand-alone. So I thought, if I go there, there will be a lot of people like me who are happy to be in the classroom who are looking for a new challenge. They're bored they'll go let's explore together…For me I was just getting bored so I like to just move on. (Teacher 1)

While not an arts specialist, Teacher 1 did commit to the school's vision.

> When I started here I was here at 6:30 a.m. in terms of a full-time classroom and a full-time art program. I often stayed one night a week late, every one of my NIS [Non-instructional service] was used prior to art. Lunch was setting up the art class. I had to be really confident and capable in my classroom to feel I could take on the art. The principal gave me two extra NIS so I could set up. It was a huge commitment and I loved it. (Teacher 1)

Given this level of dedication, one can certainly understand her perspective on the need for motivation and real interest as against only subject-area training; "If I didn't have the desire, all the credentials in the world wouldn't have helped me." Yet she then queries the hiring process and motivations for some teachers transferring into the school.

> There were people who were recently hired who say I don't do this, I don't teach that…I'm curious about their understanding and what are you doing differently, why would you plan on this? I wouldn't go to a French immersion school unless I was committed to learning French. I wouldn't go to the BC Provincial School for the Deaf unless I was committed to learning signing. (Teacher 1)

The problem here lies in the fact that just as she was able to be part of a fine arts school without fine arts credentials, so were others and it is largely due to the advantage of seniority. Whether the motivation for being there can be justified, in the end they have the same right to be there as long as seniority continues to eclipse all other considerations. Meanwhile, other interviews also yielded concerns about the process of teacher hiring or re-appointments. Teacher 4, now retired,

but a member of the original district fine arts proposal committee, also questioned the District's hiring practices.

> I didn't think the Board supported us in the program with respect to staffing the school. They put people in the school who had an interest in the fine arts but not the expertise and there's nothing wrong with that but you have to have those core people. (Teacher 4, Retired)

In reviewing my interview transcripts and re-visiting the questions I asked, it is interesting to note that I never asked a question specifically about the District's hiring practices, only whether there should be a requirement for fine arts subject-specific credentials. But the intensity with which some teachers raised the District's hiring or re-appointment practices actually eventuated mainly as a result of my exploration into arts-integrated pedagogy. Clearly the two are closely allied and integral to the future of this school, particularly in light of Teacher 2's comment on arts integration; "I think that idea of saying that those teachers who are teaching the arts are specialists when in reality they don't have specialist training, I think it's kind of like false advertising." This is an important statement if one believes that parents are motivated to enroll their children in fine arts schools for the experience of an arts-integrated education. Is this a faulty product?

4.12 Leadership

> "Are we doing what we say we're doing?" (Principal 2, Retired)

My father, a retired school and district administrator, has often said that it is the principal who directs the success of a school. As a fine arts school, there have been two principals, and a third one took on the role in September 2012. The first two are now retired, but were included in the interviews. In looking at the interview transcripts I have noticed that there is significant difference in how they perceived the running and success of the school. For example, when asked how their roles as principal had changed as a result of being at a fine arts school, Principal 1 tended to turn the conversation onto herself, explaining that she had been approached to be the

principal "by several of the district superintendents and directors of instructions." By contrast, Principal 2 spoke to a higher level of teacher collaboration – ironic, given teachers' disappointment at a lack of collaboration at the school. She also expressed personal satisfaction at the opportunity to step outside her role of principal, since she had also taught the upper intermediate art classes. Most importantly, she asks, "Are we doing what we say we're doing?"

> How do we fit everything in while giving all those components that we say we do and is our mandate, to give the drama and the art and the music and the dance? How do we do that and still meet all the requirements because the government never takes anything away they only add?…what's the perception of the public and are they seeing it the way the teachers intended?…maybe it's not being viewed that way so how do we make sure that the perception matches the reality? (Principal 2, Retired)

"Are we doing what we say we're doing?" Two principals had to work their way through the problems of directing a new type of school, encouraging student enrolment, offering school tours to potential new families, directing programming and negotiating with teachers individually and as a staff. Leadership has played a large role in the success of this school as will be seen in the chapter on parent interviews. Principal 1 and Principal 2 had different leadership styles. For example Principal 1 was a strong advocate of parent volunteerism. Therefore, her response, when asked if there was a question that parents had asked her the most often, or that had stood out for her was that:

> They wanted to know if they could be a part of the school, if there was something they could do to be a part of their child's learning. In previous situations the most they could do was fund raise or hot lunch but here there might be some program things they could help out with. A person like [Parent] became involved to the point where she has changed her career to be an artist in residence. This school was right up her alley…The parents would be here after school and they would be here after the lunch hour. (Principal 1, Retired)

4.13 Parents as teachers?

What are parent motivations for sending their children to fine arts schools? It could be that their personal interest in the arts is in part responsible. But some teachers found it a bit too intense.

> The parents are needy. I think too a lot of these kids are from wealthy families and the mothers are around because they don't work they're always around. You have these parents who have the time and the money. I think there's definitely a sense of need here for instance some of the teachers have put up with a whole lot worse than I do, have allowed parents to come in and teach once a week…I've never seen teachers who put up with it and I don't get it. (Teacher 3)

This is a strong statement, and only one teacher's opinion. But her complaint about parents taking on a teaching role is real. I have been present at conversations where parents have communicated that they are happier now that they are being allowed to teach in their child's classroom. The parent-as-guest speaker/helper differs from the parent-as-teacher. The parent-as-teacher is a difficult situation to negotiate, and at the risk of editorializing perpetuates the belief that anyone can teach.

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Kindergarten 1963-style. For some reason I am the only one in the family who attends kindergarten, which is not yet part of the public school system. Kindergarten classes are held in the low-ceilinged space of a local church. The teacher is in fact an older woman who sings in the church choir and has no teaching credentials at all. Throughout the year she disciplines by locking naughty boys in the bathroom, encourages us academically by holding up papers done incorrectly, and telling us that so-and-so didn't do his (usually a his) work correctly, so he "gets a big goose egg!" He (usually a he) also doesn't get to enjoy one of the pink spearmint candies she occasionally offers us. I feel sad and embarrassed at the same time. But this is not my biggest memory. Nor is it the icing that fell off my Dolly Madison cupcake in one big sugar lump during our recess break. Not even the day I cut off my pigtails and threw them under the chunky blue kindergarten tables thinking nobody would notice. No. What is most memorable is the story of the running toe. We are all allowed to have one go at the painting easel. It is my turn and I have been waiting a long time for this. The rest of the class are listening to a story. I begin to paint and in a typical 5-year-old style, I paint flowers, a fence and a girl. The girl looks

pretty good to me, but I forgot to dab the paintbrush and running down from the foot attached at a right-angle to the leg, is a long line of orangey paint that trails to the bottom of the paper and drips off. I am sunk. Nothing I can do about it and here comes Miss or Mrs. Whatever-her-name-was. It's too long ago to remember exactly what she said, but this is probably almost exact: "Class, this girl didn't dab her paintbrush. So the paint has run. This girl doesn't use the easel again." I will never forget that. So, let us remember that teaching is a skill requiring career-long professional development not to mention empathy. It is not just anybody that can teach, even if the teacher is a singer and lets you try on her church mortarboard.

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4.14 We haven't become anything yet

Beyond the parent-as-teacher concerns, other issues were raised, for example, Teacher 4's statement on the original vision for the fine arts school:

> My original thinking was that it would start at grade 4…There would be four teachers and those four teachers – music, dance, visual art, drama – each with an area and they would then work together where they were platooning to teach their specialty area to the students and work collaboratively through the curriculum where each person would be responsible for seeing where their specialty could be integrated. That was the plan I think we originally had and we don't have that here…when I come in here, being at all sorts of schools, I don't see this as significantly different from a lot of schools. I don't think that our original idea, we're not there yet. We're a long way away from it. (Teacher 4, Retired)

That we're a long way away from it was confirmed by Teacher 1's response when I asked her if parents had ever discussed the advantages of an elementary fine arts school education. "Unfortunately more recently people talk about the disadvantages. They're unhappy with the fact that they didn't know what we would become and I think in many ways we haven't become anything yet and we're several years into it."

Teacher 2, in discussing teachers' levels of commitment to the arts, referred to an unfortunate comment one of the school's administrators had made about the use of the art room.

She had been suggesting that if the art room was not available, teachers could use their own rooms to teach art, as was the case in all other elementary schools in the district. Well-intended, nevertheless the principal's comment, possibly taken out of context by some teachers, had placed a new attitude on the use of the art room. In the end, some teachers did not use the art room at all.

> I think it kind of gave permission for people not to do it [teach art]. I understand why she said it, but at the same time, my interpretation of that comment and your interpretation of that comment are totally different and I think that's the road we went down and we're down that road and we need to somehow get out of that road. (Teacher 2)

That situation exemplifies the importance of clarity – and of a principal's ability to keep a staff cohesive – because once things begin to fall apart in a school it is tough to put them back together again, making it very difficult indeed to "somehow get out of that road." Yet despite any negativity, the school has been generally regarded as a success, as evidenced by the school's continually growing student population. Whatever has occurred within the school's staff has not affected the motivations of parents to enroll their children.

A final observation on these interviews goes back to Chapter 3, Research Methods. I had stated that as much as possible I had tried to give all participants equal voice in this research. The one teacher who is represented the least is teacher 5, Arts specialist. I find it interesting that the arts specialist appears to be less represented in this chapter. When I re-visit that interview, it is also the shortest. This could be because as the arts specialists she is the most focused and clear on what her expectations of herself and the school are. She is not at a midway point between planning for multiple subjects across the curriculum while trying to integrate arts subjects. She is the one teacher I interviewed who, while practicing integration between the arts and other subjects, also has the luxury and skills to teach the arts as discrete subjects. Therefore she is not in the same stage of re-defining her pedagogic approach or her role at the school: she exemplifies co-equal cognitive arts integration (Bresler, 1995, para. 18).

This chapter has set the context for my interviews with parents about their desire to send their children to an elementary fine arts school. While this chapter has presented the complexities in terms of pedagogy, leadership and staff relationships, nevertheless the school has continued to maintain its maximum population of approximately 230 students, and it is important to remember that it is only in 2012 that as much as 50% of the student population is coming in from the catchment area. Parents within and outside of the catchment area have sustained the fine arts school vision. And so have the teachers, although there have been growing pains. Teacher and parent support matter in order to have a successful program, but one doesn't always necessarily get both.

1987. Itinerant teacher

The mid-1980s were not exactly a great time to try to get a teaching job in the Lower Mainland. But having completed various short-term teaching assignments, I finally landed a job due solely to the fact that I was a music specialist. It entailed teaching band at 6 elementary schools and running the music program at the secondary school that the elementary schools fed into. In a way the job was rather fun because travelling in-between schools, nobody knew where I was. It's not that I was doing anything unprofessional, but the idea that I was invisible just appealed to me. It always has, although with invisibility comes forgetfulness. I can't remember how many times I would show up at a school and be told that they had forgotten to mention that it was a professional day, or the times when some teacher – usually primary, since they didn't have any students in the band program – would ask, "and who are you today?" – referring to the fact that I must be a teacher-on-call. Years later, when I became a Head teacher, I tried to make a point of ensuring that itinerant teachers each had a letter box, that they were introduced to all staff members, and that they were invited to participate in any school-based or social events.

Each school had its own atmosphere and therefore each school had its own take on what a band teacher needed to run a successful program. Consider the provision of a band room. Most schools gave me the library. One school gave me the custodian's office. One gave me an unused classroom which was loaded with furniture requiring me to un-stack and then re-stack some chairs and desks each visit. One school put me on the stage in the gym, while a PE class was in session. Another school provided me with my own room, but I was told very clearly (and rather peevishly I thought) that my program was taking up 90 minutes per week of academic time.

There was one school that provided me with a music room. This was very exciting because all I had to do was show up, have the students help me with the music stands, and we were ready to go. How ironic then, that the only person who seemed to fully support the band program was the Principal. I think the intermediate teachers found the whole thing a bit of a nuisance, since I would often arrive only to be told that the students would not be coming for band that day. The Principal, being the nice guy that he was, never appeared to challenge his teachers. I suppose then, that I am not surprised that out of the six schools, this one had the smallest number of participants. The program therefore became rather hit-and-miss because I never knew when I would actually teach a complete class.

Would this happen in 2013? Probably not. I think today, when students told their parents that they had missed yet another band class there would be an inquiry, and justifiable complaints about the expenditure of money to rent instruments. I think also, that parents would want some proof of product. Today's parents investigate and make choices. They make more consistent connections with the school and its community. But in 1987 none of this seemed to be happening. The students and I just sort of mooched along and made the best of the situation. It's a shame because this attitude undervalued the children, the teacher and the parents, who were literally not getting what they were paying for. It's a shame, too, because I really liked going to that school. It was so aesthetically pleasing with its surrounding forest of tall trees and bushes, bordering on a park where in the distance you could see a lacrosse box, a lovely stone wall and an old swimming pool...

5 Talking with parents: differing perspectives

She should have more choice than just the hallway. (Parent 9)

He knew we were in a Ford and needed to upgrade to a Cadillac. (Parent 1)

I was just happy to know that they would be getting the arts. (Parent 11)

5.1 It's complicated

Here to begin this chapter, are three quotations speaking to diverse reasons for enrolling a child at an elementary fine art school. They point to issues of pedagogy, status, and the value of the arts in education. This chapter will present an analysis of my interview findings, examining commonalities overlaps, and points of departure. The data in this chapter also provide opportunities for me to continue the thread of my self-study in-between the key topics under discussion. These threads also provide a more colourful reading of the data in conjunction with my own story.

Between the years 2006-2012 the school population continued to grow, resulting in a district waiting list for entrance into the school. Not unlike the 1989 screen adaptation of W.P. Kinsella's "Shoeless Joe" – Field of Dreams – with its famous line, "If you build it, he will come," it seemed that if you established an elementary fine arts school within the public system, then they, she, or he would indeed come. Like Lefebvre's (1991) discussion on the transformation of spaces, in this case a nearly-abandoned space, the community around this school became "subtly, but profoundly changed" (p. 213) – "subtle in its unchanged exterior but profound by its abstraction: at once homogeneous and divided, at once unified and fragmented" (1991, p. 306). The results of both interview sets – parents and teachers – speak to the complexity of this school's community.

From a population of 90 in June 2006, rising steadily to 230 in September 2012, it is clear that parents are interested in an arts-integrated curriculum. Observing this phenomenon

over five years, I began to wonder what the motivations were. If it was not the concept of art for art's sake as I had assumed it would be, what was it about the arts in general that was so attractive to parents? The following discussions based on my interviews with parents at this particular fine arts school, point to a wide range of reasons. Few of them are related to the arts as discrete subjects.

Recalling Bourdieu's (1993) fields of power (p. 37), I had positioned myself within his autonomous field (p. 38) hence assuming a more elite perspective of a fine arts school. However, the play of power between the arts as discrete subjects (autonomous field) and the Arts generalized across a diverse space (heteronomous field) parallels Bourdieu's graphic of an autonomous field dominated by a heteronomous field (p. 38). That is, the arts as discrete subjects can be appreciated but their value, in pedagogic terms, rests in how they interact with other subjects. That is where their power lies. And, the varying categories I will be speaking to--Cultural Capital, Social capital, Pedagogy, Life skills, Teacher accountability to parents, Meeting the needs of parents, Physical site/school aesthetics, and Art for art's sake—are proof of that statement.

5.2 Cultural capital

> There is no doubt there are people attracted to it because, just like people who see private schools as – they see the fine arts school as a vehicle to buy into some stuff, buy into a certain stature in society, and hence you probably get people coming just because of that (Parent 4).

Quite apart from the status that accompanies the notion of a private school, this quotation also speaks to parents making choices on their children's (and possibly their own) behalf. While parents 3 and 4 made it clear that an education within the private sector was not an option for them, some parent interviews confirm their investigation into private schools. For example, Parent 11 said that while they had looked into private schools, "we ended up choosing not to go." Likewise Parent 1 stated that "Had I not come here we would have gone somewhere else.

Perhaps private sector. I had brochures for St. George's, etcetera." Contrary to this were parents whose children had previously been enrolled in private schools and those who had previously home-schooled their children.

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I have only two real memories of political events from the early-to-mid 1960s. One is the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Sitting at my grandmother's house we watched the funeral procession all day, and I wondered why they wouldn't open the long narrow box that was being horse-drawn through the streets. My other memory of a political event was the day that the entire student body went outside and watched as our custodian lowered the Union Jack flag and replaced it with the new Canadian flag. We all clapped and were each given a metal coin as memorabilia. I still have mine. The new flag and the politics behind it may have shaped my world, may have given direction to future neo-liberal policy, but I was unaware of all of this.

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One personal and rather unique conversation was with Parent 13. She had seriously considered home-schooling as an option because of what she had witnessed in the community where she had attended school.

> As far as school goes I think the Gordon Campbell government came in and they were closing down schools, I didn't think they could close down schools. I see how the government has not much, support [for education], so the government doesn't care about the schools, why should I? So I was just going to home-school her.

Here then is a real example of the impact of neo-liberal policy: a parent who appeared seriously concerned about the quality of education in the public school system to the point where she was prepared to home-school her child. Since a private school was not an option, Parent 13, ironically, did go shopping in the education marketplace after all. Living very close to her neighbourhood school, she first turned to other public school choices such as French immersion.

Parent 13 had considered French immersion as another possibility because her child is "very intelligent and I think a typical kindergarten would have bored the heck out of her but at least a French Immersion kindergarten, that's more challenging, but a fine arts school that's going to interest her more." (This speaks to another theme in the interviews, which will be discussed later in this dissertation, and that is the sense from many parents that a typical elementary school will not challenge their children intellectually.) All-in-all these parents were not content to send, or to keep their children in, their catchment area schools. Despite looking into her catchment area school, Parent 12 explained that "it was a tough choice…to try and find a school."

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We could choose one thing to do. I desperately wanted to be a Brownie, admiring all of the wonderful brown uniforms and accessories – even brown under clothes (or blue if you were a Girl Guide) – that you could gaze at in a special section at the downtown Hudson's Bay store. I guess my mother thought music lessons might be a better way to go, and when my grandmother suddenly decided that her enormous house no longer had room for her piano and that we in our tiny house should probably keep it for her, we began lessons. In varying groups of sisters and mother, we would walk the considerable distance to both piano and dance lessons since we had one car which my father needed.

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While private schools and the private sector revealed tensions from some parents, those who had investigated them, and were therefore comfortable making a choice for private sector education, nevertheless spoke against the very status-seeking culture they were considering buying into. Parent 1, who had seriously considered the private school option, nevertheless expressed concern for the fine arts school's changing community:

> I've noticed academically, I've noticed in this school, this school is, it appears to cater to a higher financial bracket. I see this school as very, very competitive with regard to sports, with regard to children, enrolling your children in everything from dance to Kumon to hockey, additional money in people' pockets in this catchment."

This is a curious statement coming from a parent who withdrew her child from another elementary school because she "did not like the percentage of renters", and used the words "upgrade" and "stable" to describe her motive for transferring to another school. Therefore she becomes a player in the re-shaping of the school's population, that is, families arriving with higher levels of education and income, or, cultural capital. This desire to move up the hierarchy of the socio-economic scale will no doubt be passed on to her son, judging by her admission that "he knew we were in a Ford and needed to upgrade to a Cadillac." More curious seemed to be Parent 1's dissatisfaction with a perceived, market-driven attempt to change the school's neighbourhood:

> There has been a lot of re-zoning so it is more family … The [area] Merchants' Association is really selling this area as a neighbourhood, just like Deep Cove, White Rock…and I think you see a lot of the old bungalows being torn down and splitting of lots, two houses going up so the neighbourhood is expanding and they are selling the neighbourhood and they're doing a good job…It is attracting people up from [street name]. As you get more affluent you come up [street name]. .. as you're doing a little better you move up [street name].

Her statements have some validity. I have noticed in my time at this school that after it became a fine arts elementary school, the main thoroughfare closest to the school, within the same block of the school, and one block east, now includes a dance studio, three arts-and-crafts studios (one part of a larger chain), and a large Arts complex, not unlike Vancouver's "Arts Umbrella". Several of the owners of these businesses were very keen to begin an association with our school. Indeed the neighbourhood has changed but these comments come from a person who was considering an expensive private school, in itself a symbol for greater social and cultural capital.

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That my sisters and I were required to come home from school and practice our dance and music lessons was an oddity to some of our play mates. My mother would put the stove timer on, and tell us we could go out to play only when the timer buzzed. The $8.00-a-month-per-child that it was costing them for these lessons needed to be taken seriously. And my mother would tell us that while those others were outside playing we were learning something much more valuable. We were being educated. Looking back at this now, one could say that my mother was unknowingly establishing a foundation of cultural capital for her children.

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Expressing some dissatisfaction through her perception that the neighbourhood has changed by parents moving in and pushing the market up, Parent 6 attested to the gentrification of the general area, citing this as one of the reasons she moved her child into a fine arts school. "At [previous school] there was a lot of emphasis on fitting in. Because that is how the parents are – worried about how their house looks, what kind of car they drive, the clothes they wear."

If Parent 1 believes that the fine arts school is catering to a more up-market set, by contrast Parent 6 sees the same school as catering to those who don't necessarily fit the neighbourhood. It presents two distinctly different interpretations of the fine arts and the concept of status – a sort of public-private school, or a place to fit in. Or a "guaranteed place" such as described in Lefebvre's (1991) statement on the space of the middle class, a space which "manipulates them, along with their un-clear aspirations and their all-too-clear needs" (p. 309).

These are tough words. But it is apparent that where their children's education is concerned, middle-class parents are faced with dilemmas of choice – of space and place. And as such, they are manipulated by the social box that they have been assigned, or assigned themselves to.

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In those days you just went to the neighbourhood school. Back of my grandmother's house was a large Catholic school which my sisters and I marveled at because the girls all wore navy blue pinafore dresses and white blouses. There was such a sense of order to them. In contrast, we wore an eclectic mix to school mainly due to my benevolent grandmother and a doting aunt who either purchased or gathered in hand-me-downs from various friends. Although usually too large for us, nevertheless my mother was an excellent seamstress and could alter and adjust accordingly.

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The middle-class has the financial and logistical ability to weave in and out of the public-private school system. Certainly my school has seen a number of families arrive from private schools. Such a case is Parent 7, who expressed concerns about status when explaining one of the many reasons why she withdrew her children from their previous school – a private school: "one of the questions that should have triggered me off right away was what kind of car do you drive? I think about that a few years later, apparently the kind of car you drive, yeah…" Yet her children's catchment-area school "was not an option for us". Likewise Parent 2, whose children had attended a private school as well, felt that "there was always a one-upmanship, I have this, or I have that." Asked whether they had explored their catchment area school, the response was that they had been "lucky that there was space across district and were able to get in." For those parents coming into the school from the private system, a school of choice could be deemed a lateral move, something equivalent. Again, a public-private school. The following simple table shows how many parents considered a private or home-schooling option. Is a school of choice a compromise between the two?

Table 5.1 Private and home-schooling options

Parents	Parents investigated private schools	Parents took their children out of private schools	Parents home-schooled their children
Parent 1	Yes		
Parent 2		Yes	
Parent 3	No		
Parent 4 (married to Parent 3)	No		
Parent 5			Yes
Parent 6	No		
Parent 7		Yes	
Parent 8	No		
Parent 9	No		
Parent 10	Yes		
Parent 11	Yes		
Parent 12	No		
Parent 13	No, but considered home-schooling		

A final consideration within the category of cultural capital is the importance of school size. Parents mentioned how the size of the school was conducive not only to a greater sense of community, but also provided far more opportunities for their children. While this discussion is really part of another category it is worth noting because it is clear that an advantage is being sought and a smaller student population will yield a larger field of opportunities. "It's a small school…It's a sense of belonging, [there are] lots of opportunities to get involved because it is a small school" (Parent 7). How does one build cultural capital? One builds cultural capital through opportunities presented to them. A small school with children who come from similar backgrounds both professionally and economically is one way to make connections and this is linked directly to social capital.

5.3 Social capital

I think art is divided along social and economic lines. (Parent 11)

When asked how they had heard about the school, with the exception of one family, all other interviewees indicated that information had come to them through word-of-mouth, or as

Parent 9 put it, "parents talking to parents". Only one set of parents who had recently moved into the school district had found about the school on their own. "Just by chance. On the internet. I saw it. Nobody told me. Nobody could tell me anything about it. I was in [another district]. I thought it was an interesting place" (Parent 3). While geography may have excluded these parents, yet it is clear that the other parents have a strong social network and drew upon this social capital to inform their decisions to change schools. Interestingly, Parent 3 – new to the school – feels that the parent community is not necessarily an inclusive place.

> The one area that I think it's a little bit, a little lacking, and it's to do with community feeling – the parents. A lack of parent community. PAC meetings are great. But they are ridiculous too...they are working for years in that school and somebody new comes in to suggest something and it's "you have to do your time," right?

Parent 3 has attempted to become part of the community by volunteering at the school, and in fairness she, and her husband, (Parent 4) did discuss the possibility that it was partly the fact that many parents come from outside the catchment area and are busy. Yet Parents 3 and 4, like the majority of parents at this school, do not live within the catchment area. Her comment is evocative of the research by Levine-Rasky whose research trilogy (2007, 2008; Levine-Rasky & Ringrose, 2009), discusses among other things, the subtlety of exclusion which can be something as benign as not passing on information for a meeting time (2007, p. 406).

Also critical of the parental face of the school was Parent 1. Having been involved with the school longer than some other parents she reflected on how she thought parent interactions had changed.

> I saw a lot of children in un-ironed clothes [at the time of enrolment] here kind of running amok and a younger parent base, it was, and I noticed, um, more relaxed parents here. Not as uptight. Not as intense, and I notice um, not as friendly now. 'This is what works for me today if I have time I will acknowledge you if I don't I'll see you on Thursday'.

The fact that the number of families in and out of catchment are now almost equal (see Table 3.4, p. 87) suggests significant change in the neighbourhood which may account for the type of

parent whom Parent 1 describes: professional, more mature, well-educated, and wanting their children to be successful. That they seem less friendly may speak to Connell's (2008) point about "the long hours culture" of neo-liberal parenthood (p. 181).

A final point reiterates geography. I stated that Parents 3 and 4 felt excluded from local conversation due to geography. Their information came from the school's listing on the district's website. But, the website provides minimal information. For full details, one must phone the school's principal, and therefore one must be linguistically competent and confident. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) state that linguistic competencies are "one of the surest distinctive signs of the speaker's social origins" (p. 117). Hence linguistic competencies can serve to include or to exclude. That not one of the families that have come into the school from outside the catchment are non-English-speakers could be proof of this statement. Quite apart from the challenge of entering a new country with an unknown language must be the daunting task of trying to gather information through conversation. In fact this school has a very low number of students registered as English language learners (ELL) on the school district's 1701 form. And over the past seven years the number has stayed low, ranging from eight to 16 per year.

In the case of Parents 3 and 4 they eventually met with the school's principal, but one does wonder how much exclusion exists – even unintentionally – by the means in which the school is described (or not) on the website. It perpetuates the same social network with its same social status and cultural capital. And it caters to the needs of the same type of parent.

5.4 Meeting the needs of parents

When interviewing parents it became apparent that the expectation of a neighbourhood school addressing the needs of its catchment-area students is naïve. Most parents interviewed indicated dissatisfaction with their child's previous school. Parents of kindergarten-age children had nevertheless investigated a variety of educational options, including home-schooling, French

immersion, religious-based private schools, and high-status private schools. For many parents, it was a concern about traditional teaching methods. For others it was a concern about boredom. But beyond that, it seems that when putting a child into a school of choice, it is not only student needs that are being met, but also those of the parents.

Just as Parent 3 expressed her concern about a lack of warmth from some parents, so other parents spoke to a need to be involved in the school, as exemplified by Parent 5.

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

Parent 5 furthers her statement in a more general comment about the school:

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

This supports the comment made by the school's first fine arts principal (Principal 1, retired), who when interviewed and asked which question stood out for her that parents commonly asked, responded by saying,

> They wanted to know if they could be a part of the school, if there was something they could do to be a part of their child's learning. In previous situations the most they could do was fund- raise or hot lunch but here there might be some program things they could help out with.

Since it is my observation that most parents who are actively involved in the school – some on a daily basis – do not necessarily have a background in the visual and performing arts, I am reminded of McNeal's (2012) research into parent involvement. He hypothesizes that parents are apprehensive about participating in areas of the curriculum where there are potentially weaker knowledge relationships (using science and math as examples, p. 80). Hence parents may feel they can find their own place in a fine arts school through an assumption that arts-based subjects will place less demand on subject knowledge and proficiency; They will feel more successful than in more generally-regarded rigorous academic subjects. McNeal (2012) bases

his research article on a "reactive hypothesis" that parents respond or react to poor academic performance by getting involved in their child's school (p. 80). However, I would say that this is not the case at my particular school. Therefore I can only conclude some parents are there partly as a service, and partly because it fills a personal need for self-fulfilment or social interaction. Yet transportation might play a role as well. There is a minority who remain on the school site daily, possibly because they don't want to make additional commutes home and back. Therefore the school offers social opportunities for this group as they can be seen coming in and out of the school throughout the day with no particular agenda, walking their dogs frequently and making trips to the local Starbucks.

Meeting the needs of parents does not equate simply to a personal need for self-realization. I believe that it also involves an invisible space, but one that can be heard, as parents feel that they have a voice, and that they have a choice in their child's education. While meeting the needs of their child is no doubt a parent's first consideration, yet within that, there is a subset of parent needs that must be met as well, such as the need to confirm that the right decision has been made.

> Here there's always something going on to showcase what the kids have been doing whether it has been a play or a song and so I notice that particularly since we are still friends with people at [former elementary school]. (Parent 8)

By speaking with her neighbours Parent 8 can re-affirm that she has made the right choice for her child. One of the complaints from parents interviewed was that their child's previous schools did not do enough to provide performance opportunities, whether through an arts discipline or through public speaking, or some other presentation format. Parent 8's comment that the fine arts school is always providing opportunities for some form of public presentation is exemplified by Parent 12:

> They can't wait to get home and do what's needed to be done and get back to school and get involved in whatever it is that they're involved with at the school. Busy. They're not getting bored.

A further example of this is offered by Parent 13 who, in speaking about her daughter said, "I think a typical Kindergarten would have bored the heck out of her. "

When speaking about her daughter's need for a more challenging curriculum Parent 9 stated that if the program as it was offered at her previous school "was going to continue she would get bored." Generally a fine arts school was considered an active place, a place of more social interactions for both child and parent.

Another type of parent need relates to school leadership. There are examples in these interviews of parents who brought their children into the school because there was a high level of satisfaction with the school's principal(s). "She gave us a thorough tour and bent over backwards and we both walked out of here wanting our children here" (Parent 1). The needs of the parent to feel that their interests have been addressed should not be underestimated. As Parent 1 states, had she been unhappy with her meeting with the principal, "I would not be here. He'd be somewhere else" (Parent 1). Parent 11 was equally candid about her children's catchment-area school and why they had not gone there; "I didn't like the leadership there." Parent 12 confirms the influence of school leadership on their school choice. "My husband came here and fell in love with the fact, at that time the principal here had taken time to show him around and actually explained the details. That was it." The image of the principal cannot be overstated. Consider Parent 7's opinion of the leadership at her children's previous school:

> I believe the principal sets the tone and so having worked in the system if you have a great principal everything just sort of falls in place. If you don't have a great principal the staff is disconnected, kids are disconnected, parents are disconnected. So the principal at the school, not a lot of respect there for him…you just felt he was always, if you had a complaint he was always trying to say whatever he thought the parents wanted to hear… He didn't want to make decisions that would upset parents…and that's why I interviewed principals and teachers and that's why I went through that process."

Issues of pedagogy also arose in this interview and are shared later on, but clearly from this piece of the interview, not only was Parent 7 unhappy about her children's needs; Her own needs were not being addressed or supported.

In a different way, Parent 10 considers leadership to be a key in choosing schools. It was not only the teachers that she had been unhappy with: "the principal, too, I didn't get much, support from her." Parent 10 emphasizes both the importance of good teaching and good leadership, when voicing her general level of satisfaction. "I am happy with this school, there are certain things I am not happy about, I think it depends on who is running the ship at the school." The need for different leadership motivated Parent 10 to withdraw her children from their catchment area school even though, when asked whether she had conferred with her children about leaving the school, she admitted that "my daughter did not want to leave. No way." It provokes the question of whose needs are greater – the needs of the parents to feel that they have been satisfied by the teachers and/or administration, or the needs of the children?

Parent 9 decided to take her child out of catchment, and her response to the question of whether she or her husband had conferred with her child before making the decision, raises concerns about the importance of the child's voice or need.

> [Child] is very, loyal to wherever she is and so she identified herself as being a [school name] child so there was actually a lot of resistance to coming here although some of her friends had moved here…she was emotionally tied to [school name]…[it was] traumatic for her. She was only eight or nine so we pulled her against her will and put here in here and after about a month it worked but before that, it was very traumatic for her.

Again this parent had not been happy with either the classroom composition (being mainly boys), or the program that was being provided for her child. Nor was she satisfied with the manner in which children were receiving their arts curricula. The transfer to Mosaic appears to have met the parent's needs for her child. The transfer did eventually become a positive environment for her daughter but not immediately.

> It was awful. But she loves it now. We have talked about the process of that happening and what we learned from it and I hope that she will learn that even though she's scared sometimes she needs to put the fear over here and actually evaluate what it is she is doing and make her decision apart from the fear. (Parent 9)

Indeed this is a tall order for an eight or nine-year-old. But Parent 9 wanted the best for her daughter. She wanted that choice.

The following comment may point to another need for most parents—that of a different type of curriculum delivery. "I wanted less paper work, I wanted a more creative approach to learning, and academically, too, I guess I wanted my daughter challenged" (Parent 10). All of these parent wants – on her children's behalf – resulted in a move to a fine arts school, even though her older child did not wish to move: "No way" (Parent 10). This need, this dilemma that today's parents are faced with must be an anxious exercise. Bosetti and Pyryt's (2007) discussion on "parentocracy" whereby "the needs, values and preferences of parents as consumers take precedence over impersonal and impartial values of the collective good" (p. 105) is a reminder of the self-perpetuating circle of doubt and decision-making that seems to have arisen in part due to the expectation that public school districts market themselves (Fallon and Paquette, 2009, p. 7). In all of this, it appears that even if the decisions made were well-intentioned, the needs of the parents have also played a role in sending their children to this Mosaic. Such decisions have served to place a greater onus on the teacher in terms of their accountability to the parent (or consumer) and the expectation of a wholly new method of pedagogic delivery.

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1960s elementary school pedagogy was definitely reading, writing and arithmetic. Music and art classes consisted of what fare the classroom teacher offered, with the occasional choir sessions imposed upon us by the grade 6 teacher, Mrs. Lawson. Her high soprano and red, red lips stirred both fear and mirth in us. Art consisted largely of folding coloured paper into

accordion pieces for multiple uses, and weaving coloured paper one way or another. I have some of the art work we produced in those days – paper chains that my mother has kept all of these years. They still go on my parents' Christmas tree, although they are to be handled with care and are as soft and pliable as cloth. Dance was something learned only if it was part of an over-all plan for a school-wide performance. Drama the same.

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5.5 Pedagogy

When reading through these interviews, the words or phrases linked to pedagogy, that appear with the most frequency, are 'textbook' and 'hands-on'. When asked about the benefits of an arts-integrated curriculum the most anxious response came from Parent 7:

> It [previous school] had a lot of workbooks, we had one for math, spelling, science, every single subject had workbooks [parent explains that student responses needed to correlate exactly as required by the creators of the workbooks or the answer was incorrect] … The exercise book doesn't say that, so it's wrong. There was no interconnection made between these workbooks, no creative thinking, no problem-solving skills…I just thought this isn't working anymore. Too workbook oriented, no creative thinking, no problem-solving. You know what, I think we're done here! (Parent 7)

This parent carefully investigated several schools in the general area of her home before making any decisions to move her children. Similarly my other interviews pointed to a belief that a fine arts school would deliver a pedagogy that removed children from non-traditional or textbook learning through a hands-on, more interactive approach. Here I offer four examples:

> Integrating the fine arts allows her to understand the curriculum better…When she is able to have it delivered in a visual way, in a way that is not teacher directed, not the teacher just providing the information from a textbook. (Parent 6)

> I just thought of it as an arts school and to me that meant that more of the time in the classroom would mean working on non-textbook, more visual arts. (Parent 8)

> Not all kids are academically inclined, not all kids learn from textbooks. (Parent 2)

> I don't know what high school will be like for her but I hope it's not just textbook based learning and I think she has an understanding that learning is more than that…her older sister – some of the science classes have been entirely textbook-based. You learn if you do the question and you don't get close to a chemical or anything. (Parent 9)

All of these examples seem like good reasons to justify a hands-on, less textbook-based curriculum delivery.

This discussion on textbooks recalls Kelly's (2000) study of secondary-school teenage mothers; Encouraged by the researcher to keep daily journals, nevertheless this was deterred by the teacher who appeared focused on grammar more than content (pp. 196-198) and therefore possibly missed out on a deeper knowledge of her students' thoughts and academic capabilities. This is an example of a traditional pedagogical mindset – like that of textbook-based learning – that has driven some parents to search for other educational modes of learning: interactive, arts immersion, differing learning styles, and application.

However, it is not only the desire to move away from textbook-based learning that was attractive to parents. The sense that the arts should be embedded and not seen as add-ons was mentioned. Integration of the arts was important to these parents. "Integrated arts is part of everything that they do and nothing that is not just an add-on. Not just certain kids doing things" (Parent 9). Here I am reminded of the district administrator's point already noted, on the importance of embedding the arts into the curriculum and not just adding them to an already loaded curriculum.

During my interview with Parent 9 she explained how she had been concerned about the teaching, or lack of teaching, of arts subjects at her child's previous school. It appeared that apart from music, children had opportunities to perform only within extra-curricular presentations, such as a talent show.

> It was just sort of working to what was out there. All the kids that wanted to could do something for the talent show but there was no development in this. It didn't involve the other kids. They just watched.

The notion of performance is interesting. It can occupy the physical space of a stage or a podium, or a canvas. It is a silent partner in many of these interviews, because while parents spoke to the value of the arts across the curriculum, there was the assumption that it would groom their children for public presentations whether they were arts-based or otherwise. When asked about the benefits of an arts-integrated curriculum responses were similar and focused on the area of Drama. Parent 10 pointed out that it helped with self-confidence: "their poise, they need to know how to make speeches later on, being on the stage definitely helps how they carry themselves." Parent 8 included the importance of "their emotional growth" and the development of "their outgoing-ness or willingness to act out, in a positive way." Parent 2 stated that his children were "not afraid to speak in front of groups which a lot of people think is scary." While it has always been emphasized that it is not a performance or "fame" school, yet parents expect their children to acquire a heightened ability to address the public.

Also important to some parents was a visual art program that was not limited to crafts. Parent 7 said that at her children's previous school art had been "crafts". Parent 10 considered it important that "you're not like, you don't want to just be doing crafts you want to teach them art, drama, you don't want to teach them just games you want to teach them skills." Parent 7 also raised this point explaining that crafts teach to a particular project but do not necessarily promote skills development or creativity. "Art in the school where the kids went before was crafts. All you have to do is colour, cut and paste it. And so everybody's looks the same."

Since music is part of the district's strategy to deliver consistent non-instructional time to its teachers, music has always been a strong subject. Parents appreciated that their children were receiving weekly dance classes and not just as a small segment of their physical education program.

One of the problems in the formation of an elementary fine arts school is that elementary school teachers are considered generalists. Here, it is assumed that teachers will be generalists and specialists and this is not so easily achieved since district hiring practices play a considerable role in the school's teacher profiles. Still Parent 10 believes that all the teachers at this school should be arts specialists.

> It helps if the teacher has a teaching methodology and ability to integrate the arts into the classroom because I think some of the teachers have traditional ways…if it doesn't get meshed in with the other curriculum it's not as strong a program (Parent 10).

When asked if it was acceptable to have teachers with no arts background but a keen interest in learning such skills, she replied, "No, because you need a certain expertise." When asked if her expectations of the school had been met, Parent 11 expressed disappointment that not all of the teachers did have a background in music, theatre, dance or art. "I was surprised that the art, drama, music, dance were not taught by specialists so my expectations were not met…this is my only disappointment." Whatever might be lacking in the pedagogical backgrounds of the school's teachers, nevertheless parents seem to feel that quite possibly what is more important as an outcome of a fine arts school is its ability to teach life skills.

5.6 Life skills

If "textbook" and "hands-on" occurred frequently in discussions on pedagogy, then "confidence" appeared most often in discussions about the non-pedagogic benefits of an arts-integrated education. Confidence was often paired with the word *creativity* which is also an assumed benefit. Parents have placed huge faith in the power of the arts to provide advantages in terms of socialization, empathy, public presentations, and confidence. In short, life skills appear to be very important to parents, maybe more so than academic success. Linked to a non-traditional approach to pedagogy, parents believe that the most important product of a fine arts

school will be a well-rounded education that prepares their children for secondary and higher education.

> It is not just the growth and creativity but also the growth and confidence that you can create something…I think she has more confidence in her ability to create …I think it [creativity] helps with academics too because it really opens your thinking which then translates into how you approach things – confidence, again, confidence. (Parent 9)

In this same piece of the conversation Parent 9 also discussed how an arts-integrated education affected social relationships in a positive manner.

> …I think the social and the academic you know the projects they were working on all got integrated together which is lovely. They [the students] have a deeper relationship…the socialization doesn't just happen on the playground at recess it happens through the process of the Arts (Parent 9).

Given all of this, why are arts are not the foundation for all elementary schools–private or public –instead of being continually under threat when cuts need to be made to education? Noblit and colleagues (2009) discuss this as well. "Moving the arts from the periphery to the core of instruction tremendously increases the chances that the arts will endure when potentially debilitating events occur" (p. 76). Some parents concurred with the notion of the arts as the foundational piece for elementary schools. "Creativity is a foundation. That's where you generate ideas and problem-solve and all those skills and so creativity, they can just grasp anything, tackle anything. It's a foundation" (Parent 13).

When I reflect on all of this, I recall that when we, as a small group of teachers decided to investigate the nearly-abandoned space of this small elementary school in June 2002, there was no clear understanding of what the outcome would be. In May 2002, the British Columbia provincial government had decided to legislate for schools to become entrepreneurs, marketing educational services as a means to earn income independent of the Ministry of Education's cash flow (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 7). With the funding switched from "a space basis to a pupil basis" (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 9) a school of choice was an attractive marketing venture. I

now wonder whether, when my colleague and I met with District administrators in June 2002 they were welcoming of the idea of an elementary fine arts school mainly because we had (unknowingly) offered them a marketing proposal. If so, it paid off as parents bought into it.

But whether one is paying to educate their children through the private sector, or making a choice to travel distances to place their children in a school that they consider best-suited to their children's needs, they are in essence "buying" a product. They are "paying" for accountability and the responsibilities and demands on teachers are being tested more so than in previous decades.

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June, 2004. It is the last day of school. I come home from work entering the house via the back door and through the kitchen. The light through the camellia tree stencils leaves onto the walls. It is very quiet. The children do not greet me as they usually do. Lying on the table are two brown envelopes side-by-side. They are report cards. I look at my son's first. Hmm. He has had a pretty good grade 8 year at Lord Byng. Next I look at my daughter's. She has just completed grade 6 at General Gordon where she has been a student in the late French immersion program. I look at her report card. It starts out well enough, but then, as I read on, I see that during the third term her marks have taken a drastic plunge and she has a lousy year-end grade-point average. She wants to go to Byng Arts mini-school. How is she going to get in with marks like this?? I am dismayed. Worse still, as I read on. She is apparently rude and disrespectful. She argues. She won't compromise. My face is a melting candle. I feel anxious and desperate and now I feel angry! Why didn't somebody tell me about this? Why didn't somebody call me? I pick up the phone receiver. I am going to crawl right through that telephone cord! I am speechless! I stand-up-sit-down-am-not-in-a-good-head-space-should-I-get-in-the-car-drive-to-the-school? Start yelling?

And then. Emma walks into the room with a massive grin on her face. Owen is right behind her, laughing. She is holding up an identical yellow paper. A quick-study in computer technology, Emma has created an admirable replica of her report card right down to the Vancouver School District logo. She has just re-written it for my enjoyment. I weakly take the paper she is offering me. I look at the real report. She has had a good year. We all laugh. I congratulate her on her clever and successful stunt. But what if it hadn't been a stunt? Then who should have been held accountable?

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5.7 Teacher accountability to parents

> The teachers were not working for me. Very traditional, it was way too much paper work, we needed something more innovative (Parent 10).

In the Fall of 2012, my Principal and I met with two parents who, while claiming to have no objections to how the school was running, nevertheless wanted to begin a series of dialogues with us over the coming months, to discuss what the teachers were doing and how our school differed from other elementary schools. In short, they were looking for accountability both within the private spaces of the school's classrooms and outside in the public space of the community.

Accountability is a powerful word, partly because it places responsibility in someone else's lap–a sort of IOU–and partly because as soon as a parent tells a teacher that they were not being accountable, it renders the space of their conversation finite. Accountability makes demands. Where's the accountability? It reminds me of that song with the words, "so high you can't get over it, so low you can't get under it, so wide you can't get around it."

There are more scholarly discussions about accountability, however, such as that in Biesta (2004). I called accountability an IOU. Biesta (2004) explains that it is suggestive of "being answerable to" (p. 234) and further adds that since the late 1970s the word in the context of

education has come to mean a practice by which teachers are responsible to "pupils, parents and society at large" (p. 235). Metaphorically speaking accountability in the education marketplace becomes an I-buy (parent) you-owe (teacher) "economic relationship" (p. 241):

> In the end, we are left with a situation in which systems, institutions and individual people adapt themselves to the imperatives of the logic of accountability, so that accountability becomes an end in itself rather than a means for achieving other ends. (Biesta, 2004, p. 241)

Accountability as a means to an end limits the parameters of school choice as it becomes more about being answerable to something than about extending, or as Biesta writes, "achieving other ends." In the context of my school and in the parental anecdote just cited it becomes about "show me" or "prove it". How are we different? Account for it. If, within the inner space of the school parents are expecting accountability, then in the outer space of government–that "final frontier"[11]—the government also wants proof.

Accountability as measured by difference is clearly evident in the school's annual School Growth Plan, as required by the Ministry of Education's Accountability Contract that all school districts are required to submit annually (Nichols & Griffith, 2009, p. 242). As a result such accountability measures have led teachers to more intensely scrutinize their own abilities to integrate the arts into their curricula. That alone is not necessarily a negative. However it has also put more pressure on teachers to demonstrate visually how the school is different from other elementary schools. This has included over the 2012/2013 school year two major school performances incorporating art, music, dance and drama (with props, staging and costumes to be designed and coordinated); An art auction; December choir performances at a hotel, senior citizens' complex and a shopping mall; A visiting art exhibition about specific artists, which teachers were to emulate in their art classes; A weekend flash mob at the Pacific Coliseum;

[11]The famous opening lines from the television series Star Trek – "Space. The final frontier." That phrase may be the best-known use of the word 'space' in our modern western culture. I use it because it evokes Marginson's (2006) discussion on the blanketing effect of government and media (p. 209).

participation in dance and choral festivals; Open house with varying student performances; implementation of a school garden assisted by a successful grant proposal[12]; Artist-in-residence assisted by a successful grant proposal; An upper intermediate collaboration with the feeder secondary school art show, assisted by a successful grant proposal, and an advanced learners' special project assisted by a successful grant proposal.

All of this takes a great deal of time, both at school and outside of school hours. There was lengthy time spent in dollar stores looking for costumes and props not to mention time spent in front of a sewing machine on the weekends. Substantial time was taken in the evenings writing both of the school's plays. Since the intent was to prove to parents that the curriculum had been arts-integrated, a specific theme needed to be woven throughout the performance and it wasn't something that could be purchased in a pre-packaged school play. It should also be noted that these plays were practiced during lunch hour and before and after school. Such were the preliminaries of accountability, that is, proof to the parents that the school differed from other schools. A majority of the work for these events has fallen to the school's music and dance teacher (Teacher 5). So it is not surprising that in her interview she mentioned that there are "more expectations. Mostly from parents, the community."

For Lefebvre (1991) religious institutions subject absolute space to "identification and imitation" (p. 236). So do schools with their sameness of curricular approaches and use of textbooks – textbooks being the ultimate form of sameness or imitation. This fine arts school's parents want, as previously noted, lots of activities, performances, creative approaches to delivering pedagogy. Moreover, actual technique-building in the arts is preferable to crafts. Finally, some parents believe that all the teachers at the school should have particular skills in the arts despite being expected to also be subject generalists. They want a clear distinction

[12] Grant proposals themselves take up considerable time to write and are another addition to a teacher's work load outside of teaching hours.

between their child's school and the other elementary schools. All of this is expected within the constraints of teacher hiring and re-appointment practices. This raises another point, and that is about the parental expectations of any new Principal. To date there have been three.

Gaskell (1995) noted that the Langley Fine Arts school's first Principal was not an arts person. In a secondary school with its large student population, it might not be as necessary for the Principal to be an arts specialist since the job is strictly administrative. However, in an elementary fine arts school it is essential to have a Principal with an arts background. That portion of the Principal's assignment which is dedicated to teaching, has always been used to pick up pieces of arts subjects that could not all be carried by arts-trained teachers either enrolling or non-enrolling. Davies and Aurini (2008), found that private school parents believed that they should be "involved in hiring a Principal" (p. 63). While this was not expressed by any of the parents that I interviewed, they nevertheless, had strong feelings about the school's leadership. Parents have bought into a product, and maybe that is why there are such high expectations of both teachers and school administrators to prove the school's difference. Regardless it has placed a high degree of accountability on all educators at this school.

5.8 Physical setting and school aesthetics

Parents also raised the issue of the school's environment–its place and space–during interviews, and this is interesting because it was not an interview question. Both the physical and intellectual space came up for discussion. Regarding physical space, one of the key attributes was that it was small. "The size of the school was really attractive" (Parent 5). It was viewed as a place where children were more likely to become part of a community and find opportunities. Small equated with community for many of these parents. Parent 10 noted that there was "a community feel to the school, more sense of community than in my other school," while Parent 7 appreciated that a small school means that "the kids they get to know all the other

kids in the school. They may not know them really well. But they know they belong." She also felt that there were "lots of opportunities to get involved because it is a small school."

Parent 7 was also positive about the general space of the school; "When I walked into this school…the atmosphere in the hallways made me think, okay, this is where I want my kids to be." Atmosphere and the school's physical site were also important to Parents 3 and 4. Describing the "vibrancy" of the school's atmosphere, Parent 3 shared her distaste for her child's catchment-area school which she described as "a sort of insane asylum. It's so bizarre, it's so white and clinical!" Her husband, Parent 4, added to this by stating that, "the environment she [his daughter] is in doesn't seem as oppressive." The one negative statement, which I had not expected, but which nevertheless is intriguing, is that made by Parent 1. She pointed out that the school was missing a key social space and that was, a lunch room. In her opinion, this was essential for students to fully socialize with their peers instead of building relationships only with those within the walls of their individual classrooms.

The intellectual space of a classroom was discussed by Parent 9. "There were about 70% boys in her grade at [her previous school] so there wasn't the social mix." (In this case Parent 1 would definitely agree that it be essential for students to step outside of their classrooms into the general space of a lunch room in order to fully socialize.) If the general space of a classroom was not socially ideal, the personal learning space for this student was even less appreciated. Requiring an individual program to address her advanced learning needs, this student was often placed in the hallway to work. To quote her parent, "she should have more choices than just the hallway." Learning spaces also figures into Parent 2's explanation for one of the main reasons they had enrolled at the fine arts school.

> We found that the private school at the time, classes were massive. We had 34, 35 kids in classes at that time, they weren't learning, they seemed to be behind all the time, there seemed to be things taking precedence at the time. We weren't happy and they'd come home with tons of homework, they didn't have time in classes and so we, we made the decision. [It was] very easy to move them over. (Parent 2)

5.9 Art for art's sake

> Art for art's sake has become a dirty philosophy. After centuries of struggle against the pressure of courts, nations and tyrants, the arts have succumbed again to servitude. The only good sculpture is one that helps "community cohesion." The only good orchestra assists the eradication of poverty. Funding for orchestras that simply make nice music, or sculptors that merely engage our imagination, is cut. (Toronyi-Lalic, 2012, p. 20)

I see Toronyi-Lalic's point. Why can't we just enjoy the arts for their own sake? In education, and certainly at the elementary school level, it is possible that the arts as discrete subjects can be suggestive of something elite and less accessible: something less collaborative or inclusive. Certainly in fine arts schools, the thinking is that arts-integrated learning promotes team work and collaboration as well as more meaningful learning. So when I talk of programs such as Room 13, which does not attempt to integrate but stands alone from the school and its curriculum, I am still applauding a program that has created opportunity and its own inclusion and collaboration within the space of its studio. Through teacher-student dialogue, student leadership is encouraged in its student council which, under teacher supervision, governs the studio. This is a different pedagogical philosophy so I will not dwell on it. It might have its shortcomings but it does serve notice that the arts as discrete subjects should not be undervalued.

Art for art's sake is surprisingly under-addressed by the majority of parents interviewed. Throughout the interviews parents said very little about the value of the arts as discrete subjects. They appreciated how their children had greater exposure to the arts and therefore to performance, whether it was in the form of a play or a presentation. But one could just as easily argue that this came about not because of the arts, but because it was a small school population. The following table summarizes parents' perceptions on the value of a fine arts school. All comments are quoted directly from interviews.

Table 5.2 Summary of what parents value in an arts-integrated education

Parent 1	Fine arts education provides a parent with choice beyond public education, beyond French immersion. It is something else on the menu. You are exposing them to a fuller lifestyle. Not just learning out of a textbook. My child is not academically-inclined. He is not competitive. This is the right fit for him. This is the first step of many. This is giving him a leg up and exposing him to his future.
Parent 2	I think the whole reason we came was it [learning] becomes more. In my opinion [my son is] not afraid to speak in front of groups. There is the freedom to provide an opinion. At the end of the day, it [fine arts school] exposes them to more than what a traditional school would supply.
Parent 3	When you integrate creativity into a school you learn more empathy or kindness. All I can say is that she is happy and I think that to me is the main thing.
Parent 4	It's like everyday skills that one needs to have living life so it's not just the academics. Fine arts exists, it's exposed, it's like living in the moment. It's like living through the moment as opposed to this is something sacred [instead] this is what we are just going to do.
Parent 5	There is more opportunity for creativity and less by the book, more vibrancy. The only time [my daughter] feels focused is when she is on stage and she would never have had that opportunity [at her previous school].
Parent 6	I think it [the Arts] solidifies information for kids, that they get to experience in different ways. [My child] needs to understand, and integrating the fine Arts allows her to understand the curriculum better, when she is able to move, when she is able to have it delivered in a visual way, in a way that is not teacher directed, not the teacher just providing the information from a textbook.
Parent 7	With the dance, music, art and drama the kids just got your basic programs [at previous school]. Here you get a lot of it. So it is more intensified, more integrated and more connected. People need to understand it is not 'Fame' and your kid doesn't need to be a brilliant student, brilliant in drama, but if they are so inclined, it will help and maybe open up doors for elsewhere.
Parent 8	There is value to kids or people who don't necessarily fit the mold that the usual classroom provides so it allows for some lateral shift in thinking because you can act differently if you are acting or singing. It allows some broadening of the experience and some flexibility in assessment.

Parent 9	It is not just the growth in creativity but also the growth and confidence that you can create something. I think she [daughter] has more confidence in her ability to create. Whether the final product is the way she will want it or not, she has feelings that her ideas are good. I think it helps with academics too, because it really opens your thinking more which then translates into how you approach things, confidence, again, confidence.
Parent 10	Music in this district is in all the schools but they don't get the dance, and art is, hit and miss and in drama of course nothing happens [in regular elementary schools]. Drama helps their self-confidence, their poise, they need to know how to make speeches later on. Art they learn different ways to express themselves. Coordination is another thing, the dances they do.
Parent 11	Instead of memorization you show application, instead of product you work through process, instead of immediate resolve you are allowed additional reflection than if you were learning out of a textbook. Academically I just would hope that if they [her children] have things that are challenging, they have more opportunities, so if someone is not an academic-style learner, it gives them a broader opportunity for learning.
Parent 12	Socially, I think it teaches them to test, or maybe test the boundaries, be more, extroverted, to really expand and use your mind, use your creativity. They [her children] want to get involved, they want to learn more, they can't wait to get home and do what's needed to be done and get back to school and get involved in whatever it is that they're involved with at the school. Busy. They're not getting bored.
Parent 13	If they're [children] allowed to have that time to be creative then they can build confidence and that's where they get their social skills and more confidence. Creativity is a foundation. That's where you generate ideas and problem-solve and all those skills and so creativity, they can just grasp anything, tackle anything.

In analyzing these responses I have picked out key words or phrases to summarize parents' perceptions of the value of an arts-integrated education. They are: choice, latitude, flexibility, deeper engagement, organic, opportunity, creativity, tolerance and gratifying. I will specifically address my inclusion of the word *organic*, which refers to Parent 4's comment that the arts are "like living in the moment. It's like living through the moment as opposed to this is something sacred [instead] this is what we are just going to do." In other words arts-integration is not an add-on but the vehicle that steers the entire curriculum. How well the other parents understand

this is less clear given that they are speaking specifically about their children and not in more general terms. And that is another point to make. Upon review of these comments I realize that these 13 parents, representing 19 students, are offering their opinions on arts integration based on their children's needs and experiences. For example, Parent 1 considers her child to be unmotivated academically and so she perceives that an arts-integrated curriculum is just the "right fit." Parent 5, whose child is innately talented in the performing arts situates the value of a fine arts school in performance opportunities. Parent 6, whose child needs to move about throughout the day, likes that her child is not desk-bound. If I had been an outside researcher I would conclude that parents value fine arts schools for their choice, latitude, flexibility, deeper engagement, organic, opportunity, creativity, tolerance, and learner gratification. However as an insider, as someone who knows all of these parents' children, I conclude that their perceptions of fine arts schools are very personal and based on individual need. This is how I believe fine arts, or arts-integrated schools, differ from other schools of choice within the public school system. For example children attend language immersion schools to acquire linguistic fluency. They attend computer technology schools to learn the application of technological skills, possibly for future employment. Some selected students attend sports-themed schools that are designed to coach potential professional athletes. In these examples students are attending school to achieve a particular outcome. Such outcomes are measurable. Less measurable are the outcomes for those children who attend fine arts schools, since each child brings with them their own individual need(s).

My research has been motivated by an inquiry into how parents perceive the arts and what motivates them to enroll their children in elementary fine arts schools. Were I to have interviewed myself as a parent, I would have given more emphasis to an appreciation of the arts as discrete subjects. However, based on my research interviews I conclude that the arts are

perceived as enablers of other academic and life skills, addressing need. It seems that parents believe their children to have had, and to be having, a positive experience in this fine arts school. Still, I was provoked to write this small piece when I considered whether parents were getting what they expected from an arts-integrated place of learning:

Fine Arts School, 2012

Your child likes to draw
This is not the whole picture
See between the lines

Winter, 2012. Green Man, Part Two

It is one of those really beautiful, clear, cold winter days. It is windy, and you can see the trees moving, and you can see the spaces between the trees, rather empty, but beginning to acquire new ground cover. My Principal has been away a few days, attending to her mother's illness. As such, I am playing Principal. Shortly before our morning break a parent finds me and tells me rather anxiously that she has seen a man standing at the edge of the upper field looking across toward the school. Upon reflection she is pretty sure that his face matches that of a face on a local Crimestoppers commercial. Not wanting to over-react, nevertheless I call the police liaison officer, ban all students from the upper field on the pretense that it is too muddy to play up there, and then I call the district office. I am advised by my superior that I should spend the lunch hour wandering the upper field.

As I say, it is a really beautiful day and I am not unhappy to be up on the field. It is elevated from the rest of the school grounds and so offers a great vista to activities below. I can see parents getting out of their cars, I can see students playing, I can see teachers in their classrooms and I can see them walking around outside. But most immediately, I can study the trees, and the shrubs, the rather ugly brown grass waiting to be re-born. I see a shiny van pull up to the edge of the field. A large, crew-cut/clean-cut man gets out of the van. He walks around to the back hatch and lets out a massive German shepherd dog. He and the dog stay at the edge of the field and play fetch. It is not a good disguise. He is clearly a policeman sent to survey the situation. I stand there watching him. I watch the teachers, parents and students. So, who is watching me? And then I remember the Green Man. What if the Green Man, a myth at least as old as me, is hiding in the trees?

Time has changed the distance between me and the Green Man. I am no longer sitting in a classroom afraid to walk home after school. Then, the Green Man would have had to leave his

space in the trees to get me. Now, I am in his space. Encouraged by the presence of the policeman and his dog, I walk right up to the slope of trees and look up and I am not afraid. Are you there, Green Man? I'm not afraid of you. No bad will happen. I turn my back on the trees and walk toward the school.

I realize now, that while standing up on that graveled mesa I was engaged in surveillance. I could see the external inter-connections of children and adults. I could see relationships, a continuum of complex social play. Such is a school and its community. Caught up in my own history of the Green Man, I could see, but not hear, these relationships. So too, walking down the hallway of a school, or observing children at play, the first sense that most of us use to gauge a situation, is our sight. But, educators, parents, children, extended family, acquaintances, community professionals and volunteers, artists-in-residence–just a few groups that are part of the weavings of any school–have a voice as well and want to be heard.

The parent who informed me of the stranger needed me to hear her voice, and I acknowledged it. I believe that the educators and parents whom I interviewed also wanted me to hear their voices. In the next chapter, I bring together these two sets of voices.

6 Connections: parent and educator conversations

6.1 Summarizing key data

This research has sought to understand parental motivations behind arts-integrated focus schools. Using spatial theory, as mainly defined by Henri Lefebvre, I have examined how space shapes not only the physical, but also the social and professional spaces of learning. Self-study has connected me directly, to Mosaic Elementary and its community. Whereas the two previous chapters sought to analyse each set of interviews separately, here I bring both sets of voices together for further discussion. Therefore, to begin this chapter, I have compiled two tables as quick summary lists of data I collected from educator and parent interviews. These tables will be referenced in this chapter.

Table 6.1 Summary data of information from parent (13) interviews

Data	**Yes/No**	**# of Parents**
a. Child's previous school was private	Yes	2
b. Child's previous school was public	No	11
c. Parent learned about the school by word-of-mouth	Yes	11
d. Parent learned about school from own investigation	Yes	2
e. A particular situation caused parent to withdraw child from previous school	Yes	9
f. Parent conferred with child about going to a fine arts school *includes children who entered the school at kindergarten level	Yes No	5 8*
g. Children had previous experiences in the Arts *R = Recreational experiences only F = Formal training	Yes	10R* 3F
h. Parent's educational background played a role in fine arts school decision-making	Yes No	5 8
i. Do fine arts schools offer the potential for better education?	Yes No	12 1
j. Should there be criteria for enrolment at a fine arts school?	Yes No	1 12
k. Parents assumed textbook used minimally or not at all	Yes	13

Table 6.2 Summary data from interviews with educators (8) and staff (1)

a. Number of educators interviewed with formal training in the visual and performing arts	4/8
b. Number of school-based educators interviewed with no formal training in the Visual and performing arts at the time of these interviews	3/5
c. Number of educators who said YES teachers should have visual and performing arts qualifications	3/8
d. Number of educators/staff satisfied with the school as it was operating at the time of these interviews (includes interview with school custodian)	4/9
e. Number of educators who believe children do not require experience in visual and performing arts prior to enrolment	7/8
f. Number of educators who believe children should have some prior expertise in visual and performing arts prior to enrolment	1/8
g. Number of teachers interviewed who felt an overall satisfaction with how the school and its fine arts program was working	0/5
h. Number of teachers who felt that there were more demands/expectations placed on them than teaching in a regular elementary school	4/5
i. Number of school-based educators who believed the student composition to differ, based on their experiences at regular elementary schools	7/7
j. Number of teachers who when interviewed stated that they had had to re-think and adjust their pedagogical approach	3/5

In the sections which follow, I have organized my discussion around Wolcott's (1994) distinction between "analytic affirmability" and "interpretive plausibility" (p. 24). Wolcott makes the point that analysis is a very broad and widely-encompassing term. Therefore, he suggests a streamlining of *analysis*, hence *analytic affirmability*. Sections 6.2 to 6.7 are closely linked to summary data in Tables 11 and 12 (analytic affirmability), and then transition into a more reflective mode. As I understand Wolcott's term, *interpretive plausibility*, it is a sub-set of analysis that allows for the researcher's personal, more speculative reading of data, and this is contained in sections 6.8 through to 6.12.

6.2 Perceived alternative pedagogy

Parents considered textbooks to be unprogressive (Table 11, k). Teachers said they needed to adjust their pedagogical approaches (Table 12, j). As a concrete object, a textbook informs and instructs on a particular subject. But if I consider a textbook as a more abstract space of learning, then it is simply a means of conveying information and therefore it too, can be used in

arts and subject integration. Teachers thought that their pedagogical approach would need to better reflect arts-integrated learning. But they didn't necessarily define this as a classroom without textbooks. However, the fact that 0/5 teachers felt satisfied with how the program was working is comparable to parent dissatisfaction with textbooks; Both parties were looking for a change. Two teachers (Table 12, j) did not make any pedagogical adjustments because they felt that they were contributing through their teaching of non-arts subjects that required a different type of expertise, such as physical education, and French. Since focus schools must still follow the same B.C. Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines as other elementary schools, it is important that there are teachers with other specialized teaching fields.[13] Teachers spoke of integration as the means to fully encompass both arts and subject-specific outcomes. Teacher 3, in commenting that the fine arts school would possibly provide a new, or "fresh start" because "the learning is supposed to be structured differently" is also speaking to a revised pedagogy. So, here is where the two points meet. Parents consider a new pedagogy to be one without textbooks. Teachers envision a new pedagogy as one that is arts-integrated. Both groups speak to pedagogical change. Parent 4 made the same point, but slightly differently, placing his child at the centre of the conversation, but nevertheless speaking to a new way of learning when he stated that a fine arts school was the right place for his child: "smart, savvy, who needs less conventional ways of learning than just sitting in a desk." What about the parents who appreciated that the fine arts school was a good place for their children because their children were less bored? Maybe that also speaks to less textbook learning.

[13] When arts-integrated teaching pods were introduced, it was sometimes necessary for arts-integrated instruction to be traded for other specialized areas of instruction. This fell short, however, for those students who were in classrooms where teachers did not use arts-integrated pedagogy. In these cases, they only received arts education in discrete classes, which was 1 hour per week each, for dance, drama, art, and music.

6.3 21st century learning

One interesting observation, upon reviewing the data, is that nobody – neither educator nor parent – ever spoke to issues of digital/new media technology. Yet the B.C. Ministry of Education has been very clear about promoting this technology in its 21st Century Learning vision:

> In 21st Century Learning, students use educational technologies to apply knowledge to new situations, analyze information, collaborate, solve problems, and make decisions. Utilizing emerging technologies to provide expanded learning opportunities is critical to the success of future generations. Improved options and choice for students will help improve student completion and achievement. (B.C. Ministry of Education website)

Further the "Premier's Technology Council" (2010) document includes two key points, one being technology literacy.

> Technology literacy is the ability to use technology to amplify one's learning ability, and improve one's productivity. It means the ability to use technology rather than the ability to construct or maintain technology. (p. 1)

The other key technology point in the document is that of communications and media literacy:

> Communication is the ability to relate concepts and ideas to others either in person, on the page or through technology. Media literacy includes the ability to interpret and use media to access, assess and analyse information and the ability to use new media forms to communicate information.

At the request of the school's administration, the school's PAC has contributed generously over the years to state-of-the-art technology equipment. The parents I interviewed, however, never raised this as an important component of the school, or as a means to effect pedagogical change. No parent expressed a worry that their child might fall behind the speed of developing new technology as a result of being at a fine arts school. Maybe they assumed that a focus school would be making full use of such new media technology. This is a group of parents whose main interests seem to have been in ensuring that their children had positive perceptions of themselves and of learning. Most parents discussed the fact that their children were showing confidence in doing presentations and public speaking, and therefore their children were happy, and happy

about learning. And yet, the teachers I interviewed felt that the vision of the school as an arts-integrated place of learning had not been realized. This feeling is exemplified by Teacher 1 who said, "I think in many ways we haven't become anything yet and we're several years into it." Table 12 (d), indicating the number of educators and staff who felt that the school was working, might not seem that bad. However, that 4/9 is composed of one district administrator, two school administrators and the school custodian – and no teachers. This in itself suggests a gap between teachers and administrators' communication or understanding of what the school should be, particularly given that no teachers felt satisfied with how the program was working**.** But to me, the larger disconnect is between (a) parents being happy with the school because their children are happy, and (b) teachers who are unhappy with the school's operation. I think that one should complement the other, so, should I conclude that this school was just an alternative to what some parents described as traditional learning; Did it matter what the school's focus was?

6.4 Motivated by a means to an end?

Returning to my question of what motivated these parents to send their children to an elementary fine arts school, I query whether focus school are often, in reality, a means to an end. Parents, such as Parent 10, were prepared to explore other school options when their children completed elementary school.

> When I enrolled my kids three years ago, they are interested in sports, so, if there was a soccer school of choice, I would perhaps enrol my kids, and that's what I'm looking at for high school for Mathilda. (Parent 10)

Such statements prompt me to question levels of commitment to the arts. Was this school just a convenient alternative? Another anecdote, suggestive of a means to an end comes from Parent 8.

Parent 8 related a story about a colleague who had completed his undergraduate degree at an American Ivy League university.

> I remember thinking, Why bother? That's a really expensive undergrad. Isn't that the place where you go for your post-grad work because that's what you want on your CV? In a way it's [an elementary school] kind of the same, right? Does going [to an Ivy League university] for your undergrad really mean anything and is that what you will become in life?

This was Parent 8's response in part, to my question as to whether she thought having attended an elementary fine arts school would have an impact on her child's future education. During the interview Parent 8 was very relaxed and unconcerned about the school both in what she said and in body language as she leaned back in one chair, stretching her legs out and crossing her feet across another chair. When asked whether it had met her expectations she stated that she "wasn't too fussed about it really," although she did say that the arts were "very helpful for the way her [child's] brain works." While Parent 8 may value the fine arts school experience, it could be that her child's enrolment there was ultimately just a means to an end.

Likewise some teachers suggested that this particular fine arts school's success might have been, at least at the outset, predicated on a means to an end. Teacher 4 (Retired) in discussing the school's establishment stated that,

> Some parents [in catchment] were looking for a reason to keep the school open and we really presented a vehicle that would keep the school to continue so they were happy in the fact that we were going to do that, but it [fine arts focus] wasn't necessarily a priority for most of them.

This is reminiscent of Pete McMartin's (2010) article on "A public school system going private," where he discusses, among other things, the challenges of offering the same range of curricular and extra-curricular activities in schools with fewer students and teachers. Speaking to the proposed closure of several schools on Vancouver's east side, one school slated for closure was Queen Alexandra Elementary school. The decision to transition it into a fine arts focus school has kept it in operation, as I have noticed from the large orange sign at the corner of Commercial and Clark Avenue. This parallels Dorfman (2008), who uses the phrase "school renewal" to explain the transformation of some schools into fine arts schools.

The school custodian, who had been at the school for 13 years, fully embraced the school's new focus. But, he stated that there had been a genuine concern with the declining enrolment and that the school might have been otherwise closed.

> It's made a lot more extra work. But in a positive way. It's nice to see the school being utilized properly now instead of just a lot of storage which was quite sad, because we were quite frightened that the school could have been closed. (Custodian)

Again, a means to an end – a means to keeping the neighbourhood school open, which ceased to be just a neighbourhood school.

6.5 Matters of Status

Matters of status also arose. While Parent 7 had been dissatisfied with what she perceived as status-seekers at her child's previous (private) school, and while Parent 2 had echoed a similar concern, there were some contradictions to the whole notion of status. For example, Parent 6 stated that they had come to the school believing it would have a more diverse and accepting parent population. As previously mentioned, she included the fact that her child's catchment area school was populated largely by parents focused on material goods. But when a number of these parents (and families) from Parent 6's catchment area arrived at Mosaic it did not appear to have affected her negatively. (Perhaps these parents happen to share some of Parent 6's viewpoints or concerns about the previous school's parent community). Parent 1, who had indicated her dissatisfaction with the fine arts school's parents since there was "additional money in people's pockets in this catchment," nevertheless made it clear that her son's former school simply was no longer good enough for him. The area had changed as I pointed out in her statement about there being more families renting in that school's catchment area. Parent 4 made quite strong statements about those parents who opt for private schools.

> Most people I work with, they all went to St. George's [an elite all-boys school in Vancouver] and I mention education through the arts and they're "what's that?" It's public schooling. It's a whole world! It's an I-have-to-belong-to that-club mentality.

Parent 4, who works within the private sector, is a strong advocate for arts-based education and public education. If he feels that there is a group of parents who miss out – or are living in too enclosed a social network by choosing private education – he has nevertheless made his own choices within public education. So, one could argue that he has subscribed to the perceived status of a focus school. One thing that I have noticed over the years with regard to students arriving from the private sector is that none of them lived within Mosaic's catchment area. Students came from private schools for a number of reasons (as explained on school forms, and in conversations), including marital splits, learning challenges that private schools do not accommodate, general dissatisfaction with their child's previous school, and behavioural issues. As the former district administrator pointed out to me, "private [meaning elite] schools do not take kids who have special needs."

Regarding behavioural issues Teacher 1 pointed out that they are often (in her opinion) masked as creative or artistic talents when "in fact they may just require some structure."

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In the late winter, 2010, a grade seven student arrives. In hearing about a district fine arts school, Ted's mother has made a sudden decision to transfer him to the school. She hopes that it will resolve Ted's lack of motivation. Ted is a nice, quiet boy who is tired most of the time, often placing his head onto his desk and closing his eyes. Ted faces two challenges: making new friends, and functioning in a grade 7 classroom when his level of success equates to grade 3. Ted soon finds some likeminded peers, so socially he is comfortable. But, he requires intensive learning assistance which he clearly does not like. His fatigue concerns me. I ask him if he gets enough sleep at night. He tells me that he watches t.v. each night, sometimes until 3 a.m. I ask him if his mother ever tells him to turn it off, but he says she doesn't hear him, and anyway he sleeps in the living room so it is available. On the weekends he hangs out with his

older brother and his older brother's friends. The transition to a new school does not change Ted's interest in learning. After meeting with Ted's mother what eventually emerges is that since Ted likes to draw, a fine arts school, with less focus on academics is a better place for him. I explain that despite the school's focus we are still required to deliver the complete grade 7 curriculum (although his has been adapted). She seems perplexed. She actually states something along the lines of, "but this is a fine arts school." From where I sit, Ted didn't need more flexibility. He needed more structure.

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Whether it is a need for structure or something else, former private school parents have not considered the local neighbourhood school to be an option. Are they still looking for some form of status not generally associated with their catchment-area neighbourhood school? Personally, I have wondered if a school of choice is a face-saving and more affordable way for parents to transition their children into the public school system. The district administrator that I interviewed was direct in his comments that "the private sector for whatever reason, they're still looking for something. They want something for their children. It has to have an edge. They want to be able to talk about their children." But it would be unfair to colour the space of this particular canvas with references only to private schools. When giving her opinion on why some students had arrived from other public schools within the district, Teacher 3 pointed out that there were few options in our school district outside of French immersion. "This is one of the few schools that encourages kids to come in from outside [the catchment area]. French immersion does not apply if the kids aren't academically capable. They don't survive. It's a very elite program." Over the years, some former French immersion students have been enrolled at Mosaic and not at their catchment area schools. Altogether it suggests that focus schools have real power in parental decision-making.

6.6 Inclusion

For my own part, I had expected that parents would raise the issue of the number of children who had entered the school over the years with academic, behavioural, social, or special needs challenges. Yet, only Parents 2 and 10 mentioned it, Parent 2 more as an aside: "In my son's class there is a child that has a learning disability but they are inclusive which is good because you know we shouldn't be segregated." Parent 10 in talking about difference took great care in how she stated it. The taped interview is notable for how slowly she makes her statement and for the considerable pauses that occur as she chooses her words carefully:

> There is a wide variety of children. It's good to work with other kids. It's harder to program, harder to address all the needs. There are a lot of children who are definitely more hyper or more behaviour, social problems. I mean you can have that in other schools too but a fine arts school does attract that and it's so great that kids get to work with them, it's a positive thing, you need to learn to work with others, but academically it isn't always such a benefit, in the case of with my kids sometimes it makes it hard.

Parent 10 implies that her children are more academically capable. It corroborates Levine-Rasky's (2007) research into the reasons why some middle-class parents had remained at a neighbourhood school that had become heavily populated by immigrant students, while others had left. One parent who moved away from the school stated in her interview with Levine-Rasky:

> Both my kids were very bright and I don't feel they were challenged enough by the teachers. I wanted something extra for my kids. And I didn't just say that they were smart because, like, every parent says their kid is smart. But, I mean, my kids were *smart*. (p. 414)

Just as in this excerpt from Levine-Rasky's (2007) research, so there seems to be a general sense in my own parent interviews that parents believed their children required something extra in their education to challenge their more advanced academic capabilities. In Levine-Rasky's (2007) research, the parent felt that immigrants posed a challenge to her children's learning; In my

research, Parent 10 felt that children with behavioural or social problems posed a challenge to her children's learning—in ways both positive and negative.

6.7 Acceptance and nurture

If the majority of parents did not address the school's student composition, then all of the educators I interviewed acknowledged that a fine arts school could be considered a place of acceptance and nurture. Teacher 1 believed that parents started to look at other school choices when their children entered intermediate grades. Parents could no longer make excuses for a lack of success. They needed to take action. "I better get my kid somewhere else and maybe they'll be more accepting. Creativity. They're a fine arts school. Hopefully they'll fit in there" (Teacher 1). Teacher 2 stated that, "we have a lot of special needs kids a lot of behaviour kids a lot of that kind of thing going on."[14] In speaking with the district administrator about my assumption of the type of students that would arrive when the school first opened and then the type of students that did arrive, he said,

> I can't recall a conversation about who was expected. I would say that my feeling was probably like yours [mine]. I wasn't worried. It was a small school. It was catchment first. That figures in the decision-making process of parents. If a child is happy, then why move them? If they're not happy, I can see them thinking, a parent whose child is being bullied, might see this as a place of nurture. (District administrator, retired).

Apart from the fact that this district administrator shared views similar to other educators, what I find equally interesting is his questioning why a parent would move a child that was happy where they were. From my discussion in previous chapters, it is evident that parents did move children who were happy where they were. This takes me back to my questioning whose needs the school was actually fulfilling, and also of the literature on the middle-class parent dilemma (Oria et al., 2007): parents feeling the necessity of searching out and finding what they perceive

[14] In this quotation I have purposely omitted any use of commas to convey to the reader the quick, and emphatic way in which this was stated.

as the best school for their children. (Here, "best" is not necessarily defined in present terms, but with an eye toward future success).

Parent 8's comment that she felt the school offered a better education for HER child connects to my own question as to whether parents had conferred with their children before enrolling. It confirms to me that not all places of learning are for all students, and therefore, parents should be mindful of their reasons for enrolling their children in any focus school. Comparable to this are the motivations for some teachers who transferred to Mosaic. Of the teachers I interviewed, two were there because initially, they had simply wanted a different posting. Yet another had been attracted to it due to its proximity to her home. If those teachers interviewed were unanimously not happy about the school's direction, then one wonders if there needs to be some discussions among teaching staff as to what their motivations—and not just those of the parents—are, or were. For them, is it also a means to an end? If that is the case, then where does it place the arts in education?

6.8 The arts in education

Is arts integration about acquiring various creative and performative arts skills, or is it about using creative and performing arts to enhance pedagogy? In my chapter on educator interviews, Principal 1 pointed out how she had had to tell some parents that it was not a performance-based program. Yet from the interviews it is clear that parents at Mosaic enjoy the numerous performances and presentations that the school offers. The overriding view from parents seems to be that the arts are enablers of both academic and life skills. This is supported by researchers and educators as cited in my literature review. Why then, do we not have the arts as the core of learning in all elementary schools?

A short time after writing this question, I was introduced to Herbert Read's *Education through art*. Published in 1958, Read examines the same question, although he refers

specifically to visual art: "art, widely conceived, should be the fundamental basis of education" (p. 70). In particular, Read presents a new relationship between the aesthetic and the intellectual that is organic, in the sense of allowing each entity to act creatively upon the other, without forced synthesis. To emphasize his point, he cites Benedetto Croce: "art and intellect are the two wings of the same breathing creature, and together they ensure the progress of the human spirit towards the highest range of consciousness" (p. 106).[15]

If as Read suggests, the arts should be the "fundamental basis of education" (p. 70), then why are we, 55 years later, still advocating for this? Or, is it that arts-integrated focus schools have become "an instrument of neoliberal discourse" (Adams, 2010, p. 686). This would be the ultimate marketing ploy: a school that addresses the types of needs of students in all schools but is kept exclusive by choice. Here I reiterate a component of neo-liberalism as offered by Harvey (2005): "Individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one's own human capital through education)" (p. 65).

Has school choice, as a product of neo-liberal discourse in effect created a type of privileged ghettoization? I explain *privileged ghettoization* as a group of parents who for various reasons including social or economic pressures come together out of a perceived need for "a different education" (Parent 6) for their children. Mainly middle-class parents, they know that if need be they can afford to explore options within and outside of the public school system. Being well-educated and articulate they are confident in how they interact with teachers and administrators (Levine-Rasky, 2008; Lareau, 1987). They are not deterred by the distance of geography (Bell, 2009). They come together in specialized places of learning, such as focus schools. If we are creating individual islands of learning simply to cater to the parent as

[15] Croce, B. (1941). History as the story of liberty (London).

consumer, then we are indeed teaching to the neo-liberal agenda. Hence, I suggest the emergence of a privileged ghettoization: an exclusionary process which is in practice even at Mosaic school.

6.9 School choice and the whole child

Our learning seems to run on two tracks: one that is quantitative and one that is qualitative. A French immersion school, as a type of school of choice, offers a recognizable measure of success, that is, the ability to comprehend, write and speak French fluently. Its success can be reflected on a report card by a letter grade. Teacher 3 spoke of French immersion as "an elite program" and as a program where "if the kids aren't academically capable they don't survive" (on French immersion operating as an elite program, see Kelly, 1996; Yoon, & Gulson, 2010). From both parent and teacher interviews I have ascertained that it is not necessarily measureable types of success that appeals to both parties. Success appears to be linked mainly to self-development: poise, confidence, greater self-esteem, higher levels of participation, public speaking ability. While measureable in a certain way these types of success do not usually get recorded onto a report card. Instead they may have played a role in creating a particular letter grade. The parents I interviewed wanted their children to acquire these attributes. While they valued academic success it appears they were more interested in what might be termed whole-child development. As noted in previous chapters they wanted their children to be happy and to enjoy school.

Over the years students have entered Mosaic with a range of challenges. Sometimes parents have not been satisfied with what the school has offered, or how it has resolved issues. In these cases they have withdrawn their children and enrolled them at yet another school. Mainly, however, the children have stayed and parents have been pleased with the school. This research has not set out to prove that an arts-integrated education solves behavioural, academic or social issues. Some educators, such as Teacher 3, firmly believe in "a fresh start," so a new

learning environment is certainly a viable strategy. Regardless, from both my observations and that of other teachers, the general consensus has been that arts-integrated schools offer a second chance or, for some students, a "last chance" (Kelly, 1993). The research of Griffiths and colleagues (2006) argues for the role of arts in education as an important means of promoting inclusion, showing how arts-based work in school "helped disadvantaged and/or disaffected children engage in activities (both arts-based and others)" (p. 368). Lorimer's (2011) dialogues with educators reveal define the benefits of arts-infused learning as, "persistence, attention to detail, increased confidence and motivation" (p. 7). If further research could prove this, then school districts might wish to re-visit how to implement a strong arts program in all elementary schools.

6.10 Elementary arts-integrated schools as public-private spaces

> I worry about the differential between the public and private schools becoming greater and greater and greater. Parents who can afford to put their kids into private schools, and some of those [parents] coming here. Private schools do not take kids who have special needs…Those kids who come into public sector schools with all sorts of deeper issues. Public schools compared to when I started teaching – are hospitals. (District administrator, retired)

In our neo-liberal market economy, in our educational marketplace, how has politics affected the public school system? That is a huge question which I cannot answer. However, I can relate what this research discloses. And that is, as Parent 1 put it, "more parental choice". That choice has eventuated from the government's decision to give the larger responsibility of generating revenue to school districts (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 3). As previously said, focus schools are one means of generating revenue. Parent 11 and her husband had considered private school as an option, as had Parent 1. Parents 3 and 4, as strong supporters of the public school system saw the private sector as a real threat, and possibly the eventual dismantler of public education. Parent 3 cited a report that claimed there were "2100 kids on waiting lists for private schools in the lower mainland" and went on to express her dissatisfaction that the private sector "want[s] to

go into old public school buildings and create private schools." Her husband (Parent 4) added to her statement by saying that he believed there is currently "a move to dismantle anything that is public. It has been in the planning for many, many years." While I cannot consider these statements more than anecdotal, nevertheless it is the same point made by Hursh (2007) in his discussion on neo-liberalism. This is evidenced by the growing trend for parents to explore what the educational marketplace has to offer, both public and private.

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c. 1967. Even though we live a considerable distance away we still see a dentist whose practice is in Kerrisdale, an affluent neighbourhood on Vancouver's west side. As we drive down West 41st I admire the interesting little shops that line the village-like shopping area. We stop at a light, I don't remember which one, perhaps the one at Balsam Street. A teenage girl is standing at the corner waiting to cross. I admire her beautiful plaid skirt with matching blazer. I notice the blazer's crest. I like the togetherness of the look, although I know it signals a lifestyle that excludes me. My mother has told us this. She has explained that the uniforms of the private schools are worn by only those children who are wealthy and privileged. I would really like one of those outfits but I know that it is not going to be. Within the small space of the back seat that I occupy with my three sisters, I think to myself, "Why shouldn't that be me? How do I get to that girl's living space?"

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This anecdote evokes not only a lasting memory, but also raises the issue of access to private education which has certainly become more accessible through the availability of credit, either at the bank or in a credit card. Private sector education welcomes them and it enables parents to educate-now-pay-later. That economy of choice has created a new means of access to varied education and as a result becomes an escape clause for some parents because if they don't

like the public education experience they will go private; Like any market there is competition. Whether Hursh (2007) is accurate in his statement about the agenda to dismantle public education is still to be seen, although the expectations placed upon public schools continue to grow.

The district administrator noted that today's public schools are like hospitals with all they are expected to encompass.

> Given the political situation I am just worried about the public schools system period. Yes, we have record numbers of parents coming into the private schools because of the uncertainty. I think what is happening right now is robbing kids and teachers of those skills that make their careers rich. (District administrator, retired)

He also noted that private and public sector education is about "issues of choice and economy." Economy would certainly explain the popularity of focus schools within the public system as I pointed out earlier: focus schools as public-private schools. They operate within the framework of the public school system but carry with them that cachet of exclusivity often associated with the private school system. Taylor and Mackay offer a more subtle explanation in citing Ball (2007), that there has been "a blurring over time of the distinctions between public and private schools" (p. 558). In other words with more school choice in the public system and more financial access to private education the divide between private and public education is more porous.

Parent 13 expressed her concerns about the Liberal government under Gordon Campbell and explained that she had had difficulty in wanting to place her child in a public school at all.

> When the Gordon Campbell government does things like that [closing down schools] it has a huge effect on the community and they still do it. And, how teachers are just not treated well by the government. I just don't expect much from the [public] schools although this school is awesome. They don't value. That's the word. The government doesn't value the public school system. (Parent 13)

If Parent 13 questions the worth of the public school system then there must be other parents thinking along similar lines. It is understandable then, that when considering what

motivates parents to enroll their children in an elementary arts-integrated school, the assumption, or hope, that a focus school will offer a better education than that of the neighbourhood school does not surprise me.

6.11 From fine arts to arts-integrated

This space, or series of spaces, was most commonly referred to as a fine arts school. Nobody coming into Mosaic called it an arts-integrated school although the school district endorsed it as an arts-integrated school. Nor does Mosaic's full title include the words, fine arts.

Interviews indicate that both teachers and parents have multiple understandings of "fine arts". For example, there are those parents who explained that a fine arts school meant "less by the book" (Parent 5) and "more hands-on" (Parent 11). There are parents who have been allying fine arts with visual art. Parent 12, when asked how she would define *fine arts* was not able to offer a concise definition. Instead, while mentioning music, mainly cited visual art: "art, different types of art, I think music, special arts." For Parent 10 fine arts meant "drawing and sculpture and those sort of things and painting and that sort of thing." She did later add that in the context of the school she would include drama, dance and music. But it is obvious that that term initially triggered an understanding of visual art for her. Likewise, Parent 9, when asked how she would define fine arts stated that: "I'm a piano person, that's what I grew up with so fine arts, I don't feel I am well-versed in it and there are parents in the school who are…fine arts is something that involves creativity." Parent 9 did not consider her music background to be a part of the fine arts umbrella. Other parents, such as Parent 1 saw it as "anything non-academic unless you are studying the history of where you would study the masters." That says two things to me: (a) the fine arts are non-academic if there is no traditional text involved, and (b) she regards them as visual art, that word "masters" most often associated with visual artists.

My current administrator initially used fine arts only when speaking of visual art. Nevertheless, teacher understandings of the term, fine arts, are mainly interpreted through the B.C. Ministry of Education's Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) which direct expected performance standards for each grade. The visual and performing arts IRPs are divided into art, dance, drama and music. With all these variations on a fine arts theme—from educators and parents—I would recommend that the term, *fine arts*, be replaced by the term, arts-integrated. If schools are performance-based, let them be Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) schools. If they are arts-integrated, then let them be called that, or even, Arts Immersion, to keep a consistency with other schools that carry a specific theme, such as language immersion schools.

6.12 The space of failure

Why do parents send their children to elementary fine arts schools? What motivates them? The reasons are varied and point mainly to the arts as enablers of other skills. I would like to conclude this chapter by talking about another type of space: the space of failure. When interviewed, Parent 4 (as well as Parents 11 and 13) talked about the arts as a foundation for other skills. Parent 4 saw it as "the training ground of communication." He also believed that the arts are a necessary first step in education because they are needed to communicate "with the world around you before you can specialize." Using the concept of learning to skate, he said, "The emotional journey a person has to go through to learn to skate there is nothing similar to that in a fine arts program. Emotionally it [the arts] is not as humiliating as falling on your bum and hurting yourself—A visual failure."

This is not to say there is no such thing as visual failure in an arts-integrated school since there will always be those who can dance, act, create art or perform music better than others. But it is certainly not as profoundly visual as a child falling or failing to hold up his/her side in a

team sport activity, relegating them to some marginalized group—one of "those whose names were never called when choosing sides for basketball" (Ian, 1976).

Is failing in an arts subject a less visual failure? Is this, then, why the majority of parents enroll their children in elementary arts-integrated schools, that is, to ensure success? In this most abstract space on the canvas we discover a space that nobody *sees*: where failure can hide and therefore humiliation cannot exist. It cannot be represented by a letter grade. It is an empty space. It houses success for all students. Nothing visual is exposed. It appears as a homogeneous space, or "a space emptied" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 81) of failure.

Late Spring, 2001. Cambridge, UK

It is a sabbatical year for my husband and we are living at Clare Hall, Cambridge University, UK. I am sitting in our small drawing room pondering an email from my school district. Out of silence a noise is getting louder and louder. It is so loud, that it sounds like the air is breaking. I look out our windows and see a helicopter landing in the field just the other side of the Clare Hall fence. Anyone who is about the residence runs out to have a look. A large black SUV drives quickly down the walking path and heads toward the helicopter. A couple of smaller army-green trucks appear. A figure steps out of the helicopter and walks toward the black SUV. It is HRH Prince Phillip. He is in Cambridge for the day to hand out honourary doctorate degrees. We all line the walking path and wave to him as he is driven away. He waves back. I am wearing an orange checkered dress which I picked up for one pound at the market. It is old-fashioned and too long for me. I wave. I feel like an extra out of Hope and Glory.

The excitement now gone, I return to our townhouse and look at the email. My school district is asking that I choose whether to remain at the University of British Columbia in my job as a program coordinator, or to return to the school district. I have to make a choice. My time is up. I try to think of the pros and cons of both jobs. I loved the job at U.B.C. But I also liked the freedom and creativity of being in a school. I think about my children who we yanked out of their school and dragged to another country. Same language, yes. Same culture? Not really. They have had their struggles here. I could teach part-time and be more readily available for them. I can't do that with my UBC job. Maybe I could take my experience from UBC and apply for an administrative position in my school district. I think about stressful moments I had with some students who would come in to my office at UBC and tell me stories that were blatant lies. But I also think of students who came in and thanked me. I am in a bit of a dilemma. After long

and careful thought, I tell my school district that I will return to them in the Fall. I stare at the email. I am not entirely certain that this is a good idea. But, I hit the send button.

I too made an educational (albeit professional) choice. Did I make the right decision? Sometimes I think I did not. On the other hand, my choice gave me the experience and the motivation and the interest to pursue another degree. I learned to read carefully, maintain a routine, keep focused and most importantly, be responsible. I had a duty as a researcher and that could not be played about with. My choice gave me the impetus to leave behind the daily routines–both professional and domestic–that I pulled around me like a comforter. It gave me confidence to step outside again and take a risk. And that is always a good thing

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7.1 A re-fit, big time!

When I began my doctoral program in July 2009, I was interested in doing research based on my observations of the type of students that began to attend Mosaic after its transition into an arts-integrated school. In my observations, children with social, behavioural or intellectual challenges were entering the school. Therefore I questioned parents' perceptions of the school. Were they looking for a solution to a problem? Were they confusing art and music therapy with arts education? Through interviews with educators, staff and parents I acquired data that spoke to that assumption but then went well beyond. In the end it appears that an elementary fine arts school is a complex site of learning, not only for students but for parents as well. I say "appears" because no doubt further research needs to be conducted across a wider sample of schools, parents and educators. This is only the beginning, and Parent 1 reminded me of this at the very start of our interview together.

It was a complete surprise to me, when upon sitting down to begin the interview, Parent 1 immediately informed me that my research would have no validity if I did not interview parents and teachers at other fine arts schools around the Lower Mainland. She went on to say that Mosaic's surrounding neighbourhood was being marketed and promoted by the local merchants and therefore it was not representative of other fine arts schools. Not sure how to respond, I replied that my research was just the beginning and that further, more extensive research could

be undertaken at a later stage. This satisfied her and we began our interview. Still, I wondered where her knowledge of other fine arts schools and their socio-economic geography had come from. Throughout the interview I had the feeling that she was trying to demonstrate that she was well-educated and aware of new initiatives in education.

Parent 1 made the point that she had moved her son to a fine arts school because he needed an educational upgrade, that his previous school had needed "a re-fit, big time!" But left unsaid was whether the more upscale neighbourhood had attracted her. After all, she stated that the student population at her child's neighbourhood school had comprised "too many rentals," that phrase being suggestive of transience and lack of income and stability. Taking this one step further, her view of renters may have been that they were of an uneducated, lower class. Parent 1 did not define what "re-fit, big time" meant but I would assume she meant that the school had suffered a socio-economic decline over the years.

Parent 1's generalizing statement about arts-integrated schools parallels Teacher 3's stated advice to the friend who was considering placing her academically-strong daughter into an elementary fine arts school in another school district: "the fine arts academic challenge won't be there. I don't think the fine arts will be a challenge the way you are thinking of it being an academic challenge." Teacher 3 used her experience at only one elementary fine arts school to categorize all elementary arts-integrated schools as less academically focussed. Like Parent 1 she makes a generalization.

7.2 Keeping focussed

Ultimately I appreciate what Parent 1 said to me, because while I was completely taken aback by her statement, it has nevertheless helped to keep me focused on the relevance of my research. Having taught at Mosaic for a number of years, I knew that there was a recurring trend in the students who were being enrolled from outside of Mosaic's catchment area. I wanted to

know what motivated parents to send their children to fine arts (focus) schools**.** This research has informed me of issues that I didn't know or recognize as important to the success of Mosaic as a focus school.

For example, I was not expecting parents to introduce their own agendas into the school's daily operations. Nor was I expecting them to speak to Mosaic's small size as a means to highlight and offer greater opportunities for their children. I was certainly not expecting the unanimous opinion that parents would define arts-integrated pedagogy as an absence of textbooks. Parent comments on pedagogy and teaching left me feeling even more, the weight of accountability that teachers are under, particularly when working at a focus school.

The process of social networking that brought parents into the school bears more investigation. Only Parents 3 and 4 (married) found out about the school on their own. I am reminded of how my principal (Principal 1, retired) expressed frustration that the school district was no longer advertising Mosaic in its local newspapers as it had in the Spring of 2006. Yet, in the end, it appears that social space—that of "parents talking to parents" (Parent 9)—was far more effective.

7.3 The spaces of arts integration

I have discussed the look of space--the *visual dimension* of space--and how that may have directed parents' decisions to enrol their children. A typical institutional space was transformed into a place to foster arts-integrated learning. The school district underwrote the cost for both a dance and art room, new music instruments, a portable stage and lighting equipment. All of this is visual and it is what fills the spaces of the school. We are lucky to have these spaces, and yet arts-integrated learning also takes place in the classroom. So here there needs to be further education as to what constitutes an arts-integrated pedagogy.

The dedicated arts spaces (music, art and dance rooms) enrich the learning for Mosaic students. But, these spaces also delayed the commitment to an arts-integrated program since some teachers perceived that those were the only spaces in which the arts could be taught. After repeated urgings, staff agreed to experiment with a pod system where small groups of teachers shared each other's students to deliver arts classes. This was less divisive than platooning which, as previously discussed, tended to set staff up as either the exclusive (arts-trained) arts group, or the others. Platooning had also concerned some parents who felt that their young children found it difficult to manage all of the classroom transitions. Only recently has the school begun to assume a consistent arts-integrated pedagogy. It took eight years for the school to evolve into a place where arts integration happened consistently within classrooms. A careful investigation and a full understanding of what arts-integrated pedagogy means, and how to communicate it effectively, is essential knowledge prior to establishing this type of focus school, and this connects directly to instructional materials.

7.4 Textbooks: resource, learning strategy, or hindrance?

A textbook as a learning resource, can be a useful thing. As part of a larger teaching strategy it can be effective. Yet, one of my conclusions is that textbooks signify a traditional pedagogy—a sameness—and without them, learning becomes more diverse and fosters creative thinking. But, hands-on learning can be just as limiting as a textbook if there is no underlying reason for it, or if it is poorly taught. The most obvious example is that of crafts. Some parents (e.g., Parents 7 and 10) did not want their children to be learning crafts in place of art technique. Avoiding add-ons, or subservient (Bresler, 1995) arts instruction is crucial in creating true arts integration and in validating the school's learning focus. I can't help but wonder if textbooks are partly parents' key remembrances of their own learning.

We should be careful how we regard them. There are worse things. There is the Gestetner machine.

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1973. Grade 10

My school runs on a semester system. During the second semester, I have social studies. We are studying Canadian history. Our teacher is Mr. Grant, a veteran of World War II. He does two things which rankle. The first is that, since my surname is Dittrich, every time we discuss the war, he asks me if I can translate into English any German passages, and he frequently glares at me as he recounts the atrocities of the war. The second thing, though, the thing that bores me to death! Is his method of instruction. He does not use a textbook. He uses legal-sized, multiple-page handouts in thin, easily-ripped paper that smells of smudgy, purple ink. The myriad, small-font questions about World Wars I and II, which we answer every day, are to be written in complete sentences. If we finish before class ends, we must read newspapers. I hate the Gestetner handouts. To make matters worse, these question sheets have been around since at least 1951. We all laugh quietly among ourselves, where he has crossed out the word king, and written above it, the word queen. Forget textbooks. That would have been a treat. If my children brought home a Gestetner worksheet, I would be horrified.

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7.5 Fine arts schools as social equalizer

For those parents who felt that the demography of their neighbourhood schools suffered from either too much or too little status, such social distinctions did not operate at Mosaic. This is exemplified by Parent 6 who enrolled her child because she was uncomfortable with the parents at their former school. They were competitive and seemed mainly interested in acquiring material goods. But, she was comfortable when some of those parents did enrol their children at

Mosaic. Thus not only does Mosaic offer all parents choice: when at the school they are socially equals. Added to this is the evidence from interviews that a fine arts school addresses the needs of both parent and child. While all schools want and accept parent volunteers, Mosaic allows for a deeper level of participation through all of its arts initiatives.

7.6 The chicken or the egg?

Which comes first as a signifier of success? The teacher or the program? The answer is not so obvious. Teachers attend to pedagogy, but the variables associated with teaching, such as classroom management, classroom composition, organization, fairness, and interpersonal skills affect parent satisfaction. Arts integration has attracted parents, but the teachers deliver it. Parents spoke of more performance opportunities, inclusion, and confidence. Yet how much of the success should be attributed to teacher willingness to devote extra time in preparing for such performance opportunities?

7.7 Middle-class agency

My research confirms the dominant position of the middle class in school choice**.** It supports claims by researchers such as Bosetti and Pyryt (2007), Brantlinger and colleagues (1996), Cucchiara (2008, 2013) and Lareau (1987) that there is a sense of empowerment which encourages middle-class parents not only to investigate a range of educational options within the private and public school arenas: they are also empowered to take an equal partnership with educators (Levine-Rasky, 2007, 2008; Levine-Rasky & Ringrose, 2009; Lareau, 1987). Certainly at my school this is proven frequently in ways that are not always huge, but exemplified by the parent who during the 2012 BCTF Job Action initiative, told Mosaic staff that she would not let her children miss a Sports Day, and that she would come into the school and organize one herself. As noted before, my research shows how the professional space between educators and parents is lessening.

7.8 A balancing act

In my methods chapter I used as an example of some unexpected data arising from this research, that of gender. More females were being enrolled than boys. This in fact could upset the balance of populations at other schools. I noted that one of the parents I interviewed had said that her daughter's grade had an imbalance of boys. I recalled that several female students had come from that particular school to the fine arts school. So in conducting this research one unexpected result of this fine arts school is how focus schools affect other schools in the district. The district administrator said that because the school had been small he "wasn't worried" about other school populations. Yet since 2006, three portables have been added to the school, a there is a waiting list, so Mosaic's spaces of learning have expanded. This suggests a need to monitor the population balance between regular and focus schools within the public system require careful monitoring and to maintain balance so that one school does not take away from another.

I think about the physical spaces that parents and their children traverse twice daily to attend a school outside of their neighbourhood. How does that impact our environment? How does it relate to issues of pollution (gas emissions), traffic congestion, and strain and stress on both parent and child? Finally, I question the strength of neighbourhoods if children are being transported to different schools. Relationships between both adults and children in a neighbourhood where nobody really knows anybody, affect living spaces, that is, how we interact with each other.

7.9 Implications for policy: future hiring and re-appointment practices

A prime audience for this research is the school district—its trustees and district administrators. At the district level, there should be a clearer investigation into how to establish a fine arts school. General district policy does not necessarily apply in the same way, to a focus school, and this should be taken into consideration. For example, should focus schools have more autonomy in policy for school admission? Parents are making a choice on behalf of their

children, which may not necessarily result in a positive school experience if the child does not want to be there. As stated earlier, any child in the catchment area can attend the school, and those from outside the catchment area are admitted from a waiting list generated through a cross-district or out-of-district transfer application. This is the format for all schools in the district. The special nature of Mosaic has not generated any new policies.

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Spring, 2006.

7:00 p.m. In Mosaic's gymnasium a sizeable crowd has gathered to hear about its pending transition to a fine arts school. The supportive and the curious have arrived; one parent has brought a painting which he places at the podium, and for further emphasis, he has his son standing by the door, playing a violin. One after another, parents and others stand at the podium to voice their support, including a local actor and a retired teacher who has worked with Mosaic's administrator at a previous school. "You are getting numero uno," she tells us. Only one parent asks a question about school programming, expressing her concern about the potential for time cuts on mathematics and language arts. Two school trustees and one district administrator attend the meeting. The next day we are told it was a success. The school receives district funding to furnish art and dance rooms, and a stage. After that, it becomes a view from a distance. Once a year someone from the district offices visits the school. The visual success is evident on its display boards. But the invisible of the school—its unique pedagogical approach and with that the need for locally-developed policy—remains unexplored.

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In terms of policy, this research also emphasizes the problems of process in teacher re-appointments. Currently school districts are bound by their collective agreements which in elementary schools, privilege seniority over specific qualifications (unlike secondary schools

where teachers instruct in subjects where they have specific qualifications). If the public school system is going to set up focus schools, purporting to offer differing educational experiences, then there should be some consideration given to teachers' areas of expertise. While it is true that elementary teachers are considered generalists, nevertheless they all have some field in which they have particular skills. I do not disagree with teachers 1, 2 and 4 who spoke to professional growth opportunities to develop visual and performing arts skills, and nor do I suggest that "passion" (Teacher 4) isn't important. However, if a district is going to market a focus school, it seems that as much as possible teachers should have some previous skills in whatever it is the school of choice is all about. And this falls to both school boards and their local union associations to re-think how to address the need for specialists within some elementary schools without taking away from seniority. It could be something as simple as a satisfaction rating scale survey distributed to all teaching staff within a school district. Currently my district's local teachers' association (union) is surveying teachers on the efficacy of the teacher-on-call (TOC) process. From there the union will consider how it can introduce changes to the system. A similar approach could be used to begin the conversation between school boards and teachers' associations.

7.10 A shared space for arts integration and the discrete arts

The literature review discussed neo-liberalism and the marketization of education; The power of the middle class; The dilemmas of the middle class, and the arts as discrete subjects and as enablers. Not so apparent in my review and research literature search, is the reasons why parents choose specific focus schools. Fallon and Pacquette (2009) help us to understand the history of schools of choice**.** Marginson (2006) describes the market economy and how it has affected education. Less clear is the research into the perceptions and motivations of parents

who choose particular focus schools. Understanding this would be important in the establishment of future focus schools; What is the need and why are we doing this?

Finally, while not wishing wholly to occupy Bourdieu's (1993) autonomous field (p. 30) of art for art's sake, I cannot help but wonder how the arts as discrete subjects will fare in elementary schools. I will use a very recent example—that of my school's spring concert. It was highly successful as confirmed by parent and district administrators' comments. The programme notes included information that the production had been put together based on arts integration across the curriculum, linked to a common theme. Therefore, the nature of the concert had changed. From my perspective, the intended purpose of the concert was no longer about presenting a celebration of the arts. Instead, it sought to demonstrate how the arts had enhanced the learning of other subjects, and this is not the same as the enjoyment of art for art's sake. The performance became about accountability (proof) to parents and to the school district that we were "doing what we say we are doing" (Principal 2, retired). Indeed arts integration is the school's mandate, but we should not underplay the importance of the discrete arts.

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

I support an arts-integrated curriculum. But, by focusing only on integration, we should take care that we do not marginalize the arts as discrete subjects.

> We do the arts no service when we try to make their case by touting their contributions to other fields. When such contributions become priorities, the arts become handmaidens to ends that are not distinctly artistic and in the process undermine the value of art's unique contribution to the education of the young. (Brewer, 2002, p. 32, citing Eisner, 1991)

I understand the dedication and skill that is required to acquire proficiency in the arts. Therefore I believe there is room within an arts-integrated school to allow for both arts integration and the discrete arts; Every lesson should not have to be based on a thematic web. So, here is where I

need to re-assess my own practice and my own beliefs in fine arts elementary schools of choice. For now, this is where my research rests.

7.11 Looking forward

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c. 1962. Rogers Pass. I remember varying shades of gray, and I remember the heat. We are sitting in our grey station wagon. The windows are unrolled and we are peering down the road. We are looking back. Where is Daddy? He seems to have disappeared around a bend in the road. Cars whisk by stirring up dust which just adds to the grey, the heat and the memory of thousands of particles of gravel. Our father has pulled over because one of us released from the car window, into the unknown of space, a long pink balloon, which is now being lamented. He has gone to scout out its location, but alas it can't be found. Around the bend comes our father, empty-handed. The only spot of colour that afternoon had been that pink balloon. Now we can only look back and realize what we have missed.

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Before looking forward I will address a comment by one of my supervisory committee, that I had almost missed the promise of the school from the beginning (personal communication, O'Donaghue, D.,7/18/13). There is some truth to that because I was holding fast to my initial assumptions about the type of student population the school would enrol. In effect I was continuing to look back. I don't think that anything was helped by the fact that although arts integration was talked about it was not consistently practiced. Initially, Mosaic had been not so much about new initiatives in pedagogy as more time allocation for the arts.

7.12 Future research

From my more recent observations at Mosaic, it is clear that an arts-integrated curriculum can indeed offer an innovative pedagogy and means of learning. But, having come this far I realize that there are more directions in which to take this topic. For example, what happens

when the neighbourhood school is a focus school? What about the students who live in Mosaic's catchment area but attend school elsewhere? What are *their* parents' perceptions of the arts and arts-integrated pedagogy? Future research could be a survey of an entire catchment area population to acquire a broader understanding of the value of arts-integrated learning. It could be interviews with parents who reside within Mosaic's catchment area but choose to send their children elsewhere. A more complicated research undertaking would be to interview Mosaic students who live outside the catchment area to learn their views on arts-integrated learning. Finally, what is it about the neighbourhood school that has scared so many parents away?

In another vein, I have a keen interest in word games, crossword puzzles, and the history of words. So here, I suggest that one could research the whole complex state of that term, *schools of choice*. For example, I have stated that some parents might have seen Mosaic as a means to an end, or just an alternative to the neighbourhood school. So, is Mosaic an alternative school? This could be another direction to take, not just in terms of arts integration, but in terms of focus schools in general.

Further research into gender should also be considered. Stambach and David's (2005) discussion on mothers and fathers as equal parents and "their differing histories of social engagement" in education (p. 1637) is also an interesting dynamic within the middle-class arena of education. My realization (Table 5) that mainly female students from outside of their catchment attend my school is another investigative route to explore. Finally in looking further at gender and arts-integrated schools, I have observed over the years that when children have come into the school due to social challenges, it is usually boys who sooner find their place at the school. Girls seem to struggle more. This is based only on my school but it merits another look. Finally, I have not found research that speaks to the effect that multiple changes of

elementary school have upon children. The research mainly describes situations that exist in that transitional space between elementary and secondary school.

Clearly there are many more spaces to paint on my canvas. One that has taken me across the world and enabled new learning directions. But at the end of the day, the space of my life has been defined by the place of my earliest memories, where over time I have, and still continue to, return.

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The lacrosse box is still there. The gravel field is long gone. The wading pool is now a water park. All that remains to mark the pool is the stone wall that we craned our necks over to see the new school being built. Happily, I still see children trying to leap from one large boulder to another. Then I am back in 1964, trying to traverse the same dangerous terrain.

Epilogue

This case study has sought to understand how the parents at Mosaic elementary school appreciate its arts-integrated pedagogical focus. What do they understand about the arts and how the arts can direct learning? It has arisen out of my observations of the school's overall student profiles; they changed between 2005 and 2013 with the increase in population arriving from outside of the catchment area. Without realizing it, I had entered the field of position-taking, favouring an elite, privileged group of visual and performing artists. It was my assumption that this would be the type of student who would attend Mosaic. Or, if not previously-trained artists, they would possess a natural interest in the arts. While as a teacher, I certainly did not sit in judgement of any Mosaic student, nevertheless I felt disappointed that more natural artists had not arrived, and I tended to remain fixed in the autonomous field, as described by Bourdieu (1993, p. 36) in his *The Field of Cultural Production* – art for art's sake (p. 31), which I first read in 2011.

While maintaining this stance, I was also observing two interactions: teachers with teachers, and teachers with the school's principal. The conflicts and tensions arising between two groups of teachers – those arts-trained, and those not arts-trained—were affecting the overall success of the school. Further, it appeared to some, that the principal was favouring the arts-trained group of teachers. Teachers who had been at Mosaic prior to its transition were now in conflict with the principal. Moreover, the principal had personally created a platooning schedule which caused a delay in arts integration, as previously discussed. There was an imbalance and disconnect between varying groups of teachers.

At the same time, the student population was growing and becoming more diverse in its needs, as evidenced by the high number of ministry-designated students now at Mosaic. The number of ministry-designated students-per-class were exceeding classroom limitations as

contractually agreed upon by the local teacher association and BC Teachers' Federation. If students did not have a ministry designation, nevertheless they generally had experienced some type of difficulty at their previous school. Mosaic had been saved from closure by the significant increase in students from outside of the school's catchment area. Ultimately it was parental decision-making that led to their arrival. And, this is what has led me to undertake research into parental perceptions of Mosaic as a fine arts school.

My decision to interview educators as well as parents was based on my belief that the teachers and administrator were the fabric of the school. More broadly, the district had assigned one district administrator to the district fine arts school committee in 2003, and to acquire an in-depth picture of the school from its early days, it seemed fitting to include him as well. On a daily basis teachers were meeting the needs of a diverse group of students at Mosaic. The teachers I interviewed had been at the school since its transition in September 2006, or shortly thereafter; one had been on the committee that had formulated the plan for a district fine arts school. They had all had teaching experiences at other schools and would be able to differentiate between a regular elementary school and a focus school. They had a stake in Mosaic, and therefore, why not acquire an understanding of their own position-taking?

Without feedback from educators I believe that my parent interviews would have been insufficiently contextualized. While my prime interest was parent dialogue, nevertheless, when I look at this research as a case study—as the study of one school community's transition to a focus school—it seems remiss and incomplete not to bring in the educator experiences as well.

Within the spaces of Mosaic, both parents and educators occupy varying fields of position-taking. Teachers disagree on the need for arts qualifications or training, some privileging commitment and interest over the other. Some parents have arrived at Mosaic looking for a gain in cultural or social capital, either for themselves or for their children. Yet

others have arrived hoping to have left that behind. Parents interviewed have taken up a firm position on pedagogic tools, that is, no textbooks.

> When we speak of a field of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a system for the sake of analysis is not the product of a coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus…but the product and prize of a permanent conflict; or, to put it another way, that the generative, unifying principle of this 'system' is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders. (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 34).

For me, the data has revealed a remarkable range of position-takings bereft of "coherence-seeking intention". Bourdieu's idea of what appears—seemingly to parents—to be homogeneous and unified comprises quite a fractured situation; teachers are not in agreement on matters of arts qualifications or commitment to arts integration. This is an important understanding for policy-makers who should do more to ensure that both educators, and the public, understand what is intended at Mosaic. Clearly a consequence of this includes better interactive participation with potential parents within and outside of the district. Here we might take Bourdieu's sense of contestation in framing better means to communicate with potential parents. In effect, both the school district, and Mosaic, have handed over the responsibility of promoting the school, to parents. Furthermore, Bourdieu, and my research, indicate the need for fuller consultation between policy-makers at the district level and the teaching staff at Mosaic. The disconnect between parent and teacher satisfaction which Bourdieu's theory helped me to understand bears further investigation and could be a new area of research to further this study.

My lived experience—personal and professional—as described through my self-study adds another critical perspective to this research. It provides a situated voice that can speak to the way in which education in British Columbia has changed over the last fifty years in terms of both pedagogy and parent-teacher relations. By describing my experience of being both working-class and middle-class, the self-study excerpts, in a manner of speaking, animate the formal research. Rather than imposing bias, the fact that I applied my experience living, learning

and teaching in Mosaic's neighbourhood and school district, contributes to a keener understanding of the contested conditions, of an apparently unremarkable focus school. If my detailing in these studies sometimes seems indulgent, it is only to provide a clear and vivid picture of not only my circumstances, but also of me—the time of *my* existence (Foucault, 2000, p. 80)—directly experiencing the circumstances and conditions I sought to analyse. As a researcher, I have stood outside the school dynamic, but inside the spaces of its operation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letters of consent, and Interview questions

Consent Form: Parents/Guardians
Elementary Fine Arts Schools: Investigating Parental Choice in the Public School System

Principal Investigator: Dr. Deirdre Kelly, Professor
UBC Department of Educational Studies, UBC
Phone 604-822-3952. E-mail: deirdre.kelly@ubc.ca

Co-investigator: Suzanne Windsor-Liscombe, Graduate student
Department of Educational Studies, UBC
Phone 604-222-3053.
Email: suzanne.windsor-liscombe@sd41.bc.ca

This research forms the basis of my thesis as a requirement for the completion of a Doctorate in Education. All data that is included in this final thesis will form part of a public document, but is not intended for, nor will it be used for, any professional or commercial gain. Access to the report will be available only to current students and faculty of the University of British Columbia. Participants wishing to read the final report may request a copy.

Sponsors
There are no sponsors, grants or contracts involved in this research and therefore no conflicts of interest are anticipated.

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to investigate the complexity of parental choice within the public school system. It focuses on schools of choice, and specifically upon elementary fine arts schools. This case study will seek to explain parent perceptions of the visual and performing arts and its place and purpose within school choice. If you have been invited to participate in this research you match one of two sets of criteria:

- You currently have children enrolled at the school where the research will be undertaken
- Your child has been a student at the school for at least two years
- Your child is in an intermediate-level grade.
- You live outside of the school's catchment area or you live within the catchment area but your child has not been attending (Mosaic Elementary).
  OR
- Your child has enrolled at the school in September 2012 for the first time.
- You live outside of the school's catchment area.

Study procedures
The study would involve up to 1 hour of your time and include the following:

- A personal interview (audiotaped) with the researcher, to be carried out on the school site (or other mutually-agreed-upon site); Should there be the necessity for a further interview, it will be conducted only with your consent and at your convenience.

- Interviews will take place either before or after school at your convenience.

Potential Risks and Benefits
There are no known risks as a result of your having been involved in this research project
The potential benefits of this research will be a clearer understanding of the place of school choice within the public school system, and the type of importance attached to the visual and performing arts, as perceived by parents. If you would like a copy of this study we will mail you one.

Confidentiality
All documents will be identified only by code numbers and kept in a locked filing cabinet off of the school site. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Data records stored on computer hard drive or audiotape will be encrypted so as to maintain the anonymity of participants.

Contact for information about the study
If you have any questions or require further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Deirdre Kelly or me.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject information line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to you or your child's school associations. Any data that you have contributed can be withdrawn prior to analysis.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. Your consent also indicates that you agree to maintain confidentiality by not disclosing information about your private interview with other participants or non-participants. Please mail or return this form in person to (Mosaic) Elementary by Friday, October 12th.

_____

Subject Signature Date

_____

_

Printed Name of the Subject

If you would like a report on the findings, please provide your mailing address below.

_____

Street address City

_____

Postal Code

Letter of Initial Consent – Educators and Staff

Dear

I would like to invite you to participate in a study titled "Elementary Fine Arts Schools: Investigating Parental Choice in the Public School System". I have been seeking prospective teachers, staff and administrators who played or continue to play an active part in the successful development of (Mosaic) Elementary as a fine arts school.

My research objective is to understand the assumptions and factors that impact parental choice within the public school system with respect to fine arts schools.

The project will be carried out in two phases. Phase 1 applies only to educators, administrators and school staff, while Phase 2 will involve parents who currently have children enrolled at (Mosaic), or children who will be entering the school for the first time in September 2012.

The study would involve approximately 1 hour of your time as follows:

- Participate in a personal interview. Ideally interviews will be held on the school site before or after school hours, but can be adjusted to suit your schedule.

This research is part of my doctoral degree, which I am conducting under the research supervision of Dr. Deirdre Kelly, a Professor in the Department of Educational Studies.

This is a pilot study for the larger case study of Phase 2. In the case where you indicate interest in participating, I will contact you to arrange a meeting time and place for the interview. Ultimately I intend that this research will illuminate parental choice and clarify the complexities of establishing fine arts schools and their pedagogical values.

With every best wish,

Suzanne Windsor-Liscombe
Co-Investigator
E-mail: Suzanne.windsor-liscombe@sd41.bc.ca
Phone: 604-664-8669/604-760-3025

Consent Form: Teachers/Administrators/Staff
Elementary Fine Arts Schools: Investigating Parental Choice in the Public School System

Principal Investigator: Dr. Deirdre Kelly, Professor, UBC Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education
Phone: 604-822-3952
Email: Deirdre.kelly@ubc.ca

Co-investigator: Suzanne Windsor-Liscombe, Graduate Student, Doctorate in Education, UBC Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education
Phone: 604-222-3053
Email: Suzanne.windsor-liscombe@sd41.bc.ca

This research forms the basis of my thesis as a requirement for the completion of a Doctorate in Education. All data that is included in this final thesis will form part of a public document, but is not intended for, nor will it be used for, any professional or commercial gain. Access to the report will be available only to current students and faculty of the University of British Columbia. Participants wishing to read the final report may request a copy.

Sponsors
There are no sponsors, grants or contracts involved in this research and therefore no conflicts of interest are anticipated.

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to investigate the complexity of parental choice within the public school system. It focuses on schools of choice, and specifically upon elementary fine arts schools. This case study will seek to explain parent perceptions of the visual and performing arts and its place and purpose within school choice. You have been invited to participate in this research because you have been directly involved in the successful implementation or administration of the school, or you have played a significant role in the teaching of the arts at this school.

This pilot study (to my larger case study) will involve teachers and administrators at the school and district levels. If you are a teacher participating in this research, you have at least five years teaching experience, and you have taken an active role in the teaching of one of the four fine arts strands – dance, music, art and drama – for at least two years. If you are an administrator, you are currently overseeing the successful running of this school, or you previously played a key role in the school's implementation.

Study procedures
The study would involve approximately 1 hour of your time and include the following:

- A personal interview (audiotaped) with the researcher, to be carried out on the school site; Should there be the necessity for a further interview, it will be conducted only with your consent and at your convenience.
- Interviews will take place either before or after school at your convenience

Potential Risks and Benefits
There are no known risks as a result of your having been involved in this research project. The potential benefits of this research will be a clearer understanding of the place of school choice within the public school system, and the type of importance attached to the visual and performing arts, as perceived by parents. If you would like a copy of this study it can be mailed to you (see consent form).

Confidentiality
All documents will be identified only by code numbers and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Subjects will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Data records stored on computer hard drive or audiotape will be encrypted so as to maintain the anonymity of participants.

Contact for information about the study
If you have any questions or require further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Deirdre Kelly or myself at 604-822-3952 or 604-760-3025 respectively.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject information line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your long-standing teaching or administrative record. Any data that you have contributed can be withdrawn prior to analysis.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature also indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

_____

_
Subject Signature Date

_____

_
Printed Name of the Subject

If you would like a report on the findings please provide your mailing address below.

_____

Street address City

_____

Postal Code

Interview Questions: Parents/Guardians

- How did you learn about this particular fine arts schools?
- Was your child's previous school within the public or private school system (or both)?
- Was there any particular occurrence at your child's previous school that motivated you to move him/her/them?
- Did you confer with your child about a placement at this school?
- How do you define "fine arts"?
- What is the value or advantages of the fine arts in learning?
- Do you believe that there are other benefits to attending a fine arts school beyond its arts-based curriculum?
- Did your child have any previous experiences in the fine arts prior to coming to this school?
- Did your own educational background play a role in your decision to choose a fine arts school?
- Do you believe that a fine arts school offers your child the potential for a better education [given the choice of educational options available, why did you choose a fine arts school?]
- [where applicable] Did your child's ministry designation play a role in your decision to apply to this school?
- What differences have you noted between this school and the previous one(s)?
- How many schools had your child been enrolled at prior to entering this fine arts school?
- What were the reasons for moving your child to multiple school sites [where applicable]
- Do you think that previous skills or experience in the arts is necessary prior to enrolling a child in a fine arts school?
- Do you think that previous skills are required for other types of focus school programs (eg., technology, sports, language immersion)?
- What are your expectations of this fine arts school for your child's social and academic success?
- What do you believe will be the impact on your child's academic achievement as a result of having attended a fine arts school?

- What do you believe will be the impact on your child's social development as a result of having attended a fine arts school?

- Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not discussed?

Interview Questions: Educators/Support Staff

- How do you define "fine arts"?

- Do you have prior training in one of the visual and performing arts? Do you mind telling me what that background is?

- Do you think that teachers should have to have arts qualifications in order at this school?

- What piqued your interest in teaching at a fine arts school?

- As a teacher, what were your expectations upon being assigned to this school?

- How has teaching here compared to your expectations?

- Have you had to re-structure or re-think your pedagogical approach?

- Do you think that children should have any prior skills or interests in the arts, prior to coming into this school?

- Have parents ever discussed with you any advantages to a fine arts school?

- Do you find that there are more demands placed on you at this school than at your previous one? (Parental? Pedagogical? Students?)

- Have you noticed any trends in the type of students who are enrolled here from outside of the catchment area?

Specific to School Administrators:

- How has your role as a school administrator at this school differed from your previous assignment?

- What sort of challenges have you been faced with that you might not have encountered at your previous school?

- What types of concerns do parents express when discussing the school? (For example, do they express concerns about less time spent on academic subjects? Concerns around their child's social issues?)

- What is the one question that parents ask(ed) you most often?

- What reasons do parents give for wanting to enroll their children at this school?
- Have you noticed any trends in the type of students who are enrolled here from outside of the catchment area?

Specific to some or all School Staff:

- You often give tours to parents coming into the school for the first time. What questions are asked most often?

- Are there any concerns raised by parents? Can you give some examples?

- How has your job changed since the school transitioned to fine arts?

- In your opinion, what impresses them the most about this school?

- We seem to have a lot of Kindergarten cross-district applications. Do these parents ever discuss what interests them the most about coming here?

Specific to District Administrator:

- What is your view of the role of the visual and performing arts in elementary school education?

- In what ways does a fine-arts based curriculum help elementary children's learning?

- Do you consider that there are other benefits to attending a fine arts school beyond its arts-based curriculum?

- What do you believe the advantages might be in having schools of choice within the public school system?

- Can a fine arts school offer the potential for a better education – here meaning not only disciplinary learning but also the development of the whole person? If so, how?

- There has been some discussion about schools of choice creating a two-tiered system within the public education system. At the time that this school was first established as a fine arts school, did you receive positive or negative feedback from your peers? School trustees?

- Something that the staff has frequently discussed is criteria for coming into this school. Given that some schools of choice do have criteria, do you think that the district should establish a policy for admittance into elementary fine arts schools?

- My colleague and I met with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent to discuss the possibility of establishing a fine arts school. I'm just wondering whether this discussion had already come forward ie., was the Board considering such a school of choice prior to our meeting?

- If so, what would the process have looked like? We put together an ad hoc committee of teachers. According to some research, it is rare for educators to promote schools of choice – usually comes from the parents. Had there been any requests from parents to the Board, to establish such a school?

- When you initially began attending the meetings, it was my perception – and quite possibly entirely wrong – that you were not completely in favour of the idea. Perhaps a devil's advocate. If that is the case, can you tell me what your concerns were about the proposal?

- After the school was up and running, were you ever part of any discussion as to the general profile of the students coming into the school from outside of the catchment area?

- From the longer perspective of your distinguished career, do you have any observations about the potential for fine arts schools and/or other schools of choice?

- Are there any matters related to fine arts schools that you feel we have not discussed? Anything you would like to add?

Appendix B

Spradley's (1979) taxonomy – Educator and Staff interviews

BOX A

Individual Items (X) as issues or observations by staff	Taxonomic name (Y)
• Gifted • Behavioural • Special needs • Social issues • Academic issues • School as therapeutic/nurturing • Experiential • A second chance or a last chance • Arriving from private schools • Within and outside of the catchment area • A new educational choice	Student population

BOX B

Individual Items (X) as issues or observations by staff	Taxonomic Names (Y)
• Impetus for this school • Commitment to arts integration • Definition of "fine arts" • Teachers as fine arts practitioners • District hiring practices – appropriate staff • Teacher collaboration • Validates the school • Time	Arts-Integrated Pedagogy

BOX C

Individual items (X) as issues or observations by staff	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Leadership • Staff fragmentation • Poor communication • Team re-building • Unethical behavior • Staff relationships • District hiring policy • Sense of family and community • Teacher collaboration	Trust

BOX D

Individual Items (X) as issues or observations by staff	Taxonomic Name (Y)
• Union's collective bargaining practice of re-appointing based on seniority • Potentially the cause of trust issues • Re-visit hiring policy for choice schools • Job posting information • Staff Fragmentation • Poor staff relationships	District Support/Hiring/Re-appointing Practices

BOX E

Individual items (X) as issues or observations by staff	Taxonomic Name (Y)
• Building a sense of family/community • Achieving the vision of a fine arts school • Staff relationships – positive and negative • Fragmentation amongst staff • Unethical behavior • Planning/Collaboration	Leadership

Appendix B

Spradley's (1979) taxonomy – Parent interviews

BOX A

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Material possessions/Image is an attribute of a particular status • Academic drive is used for advancement • Private schools is a place for the middle class and beyond to investigate • Small school is used for finding advantage for one's child	Cultural Capital

BOX B

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Parents talking to parents is a way to convey information within a specific community • Word-of-mouth communication is a means of inclusion and exclusion • Marketing the neighbourhood is a way to ensure status • Material possessions/image is an attribute of a particular status • Small school is used for finding advantage for one's child • Mobility is a reason to move beyond the neighbourhood school	Social Capital

BOX C

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Small school providing more opportunities for volunteering and a sense of belonging is a way to ensure parent interest • Parent participation is a part of their child's education • Parent satisfaction is a result of arts-integrated education • School choice is a step in ensuring the "right fit" for a child • Involvement in a school is a way of becoming part of a social network • Leadership is a part of a successful school	Meeting the needs of Parents

BOX D

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Textbooks/workbooks/worksheets/exercise books are a part of traditional pedagogy • Traditional programs are kind of pedagogy • Non-traditional programs are an attribute of a school of choice • Hands-on learning is a way to ensure student interest • Flexibility in curriculum and in testing is a reason to investigate a fine arts schools • Integrated arts is a way of teaching a curriculum • Exposure to non-traditional methods is a way to acquire a more broadly-developed education	Pedagogy

BOX E

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Confidence is a part of positive interactions • Risk-taking/challenging other voices is a result of attending a fine arts school • Public speaking is a product of a fine arts school • Socialization is an outcome of integrated arts pedagogy • Whole child/whole learning/whole person/well-rounded child is a product of socialization • Empathy • Appreciation for diversity • Inclusion	Life skills

BOX F

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Flexible curriculum is an assumption of a fine arts school • Flexible testing is an assumption of a fine arts school • Non-traditional teaching methods are a way to deliver an integrated arts curriculum • Keeping busy/or engaged is a part of the life of a fine arts school • Educating the whole child is a product of an education through the arts	Teacher Accountability to Parents

BOX G

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Positive atmosphere is an attribute of a good school – good leadership • Small school is a place to ensure involvement and importance in a school • Small school size is a positive attribute as against larger schools	Physical setting/school aesthetics

BOX H

Individual items (X) as shared during parent interviews	Taxonomic names (Y)
• Creativity • Balance is an outcome of arts-integrated learning (left and right brain) • The Arts are a means to an end	Art for Art's Sake