

SHIFTING HORIZONS: HOW TEACHERS INTERPRET CURRICULUM IN THEIR
PRACTICE

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Educational Leadership and Policy)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 2007

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores how four teachers interpret the provincial arts education curriculum in their practice. During the 2002-03 school year, I discussed ideas with, and visited the classrooms of, four Elementary Level teachers over a ten-month period. These teachers were employed in a rural school division in Saskatchewan. Each teacher taught in a different school and the four schools were located in three separate communities. All grades at the Elementary Level (grades 1-5) were represented among the four teachers. I explored how these teachers interpreted the arts education curriculum in their practice through examining the “vibrant space” (Aoki, 2000) between the provincial arts education curriculum (i.e., the curriculum-as-plan) and the curriculum that was brought to life by the teachers and their students (i.e., the curriculum-as-lived). In this space, new tentative understanding emerged.

To support my examination, I turned to Gadamer’s (1975) philosophical hermeneutics and the critical dialogue that surrounds it. In describing the arts education curriculum, I referred to the provincial October 2002 draft of the renewed curriculum and recent research in arts education. For exploring the teachers’ ideas and practices, I used individual conversations, classroom visits, group discussion, and materials such as teachers’ journal entries, school newsletters, and student art works.

Based on the results of this study, I claim that there are at least four conditions that influence these teachers’ interpretations of curriculum. These conditions are: the individual contexts that teachers bring to bear on their interpretations of the curriculum, the informal theories shaped by these contexts, the availability of resources which support these theories to different degrees, and the reflective practice of each teacher which raises these informal theories for examination. I contend that, through the illumination of these conditions, possibilities of interpretation increase

and teachers' horizons of understanding shift to incorporate these new interpretations. To assist in discovering strategies to illuminate these four conditions, a heuristic is presented in the final chapter of this thesis.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the teachers who participated in this study. They opened their classrooms to me and freely shared ideas with me. I am deeply indebted to these teachers and their students. I also wish to acknowledge the members of my research supervisory committee and the “critical friends” who helped me make sense of my findings. They encouraged me to think more deeply throughout the research process and pointed me in new directions when I was “stuck”.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my maternal grandmother and to her daughter (my mother). Due to the influence of these two women, who supported a particular way of being in the world and coming to know the world around me, I am able to experience the joy and wonder of my continually expanding and shifting horizon of understanding.

CHAPTER 1: MY HORIZON

“Here, Janey ... pick this one, not that one.” I release the mushroom I am about to pick and pick the one that Grandma indicates. We are moving through a wooded area, picking mushrooms along paths of our own making. Most of the time, we are silent. If I lag behind to look at something (as curious four-year-old children tend to do) or if I am about to pick a poisonous mushroom, Grandma speaks to me. Otherwise, she is a woman of few words.

(Thurgood Sagal, Journal Entry, 1995)

Through such early experiences with my maternal grandmother, I interpreted the world around me and developed tentative understanding. I used this understanding to make sense of new information. As a young child, I experienced a lot of freedom (along with the related responsibility) to explore and take action based upon my interpretations. I learned from the results of my actions and my horizon of understanding enlarged to accommodate each new interpretation. Each enlarged horizon supported a tentative way of knowing the world which supported me in relating new ideas to prior knowledge and in developing preconceptions about pending experiences. Such preconceptions of “prejudices” informed my view of life events and, at the same time, shaped my view of them in particular ways. Assumptions that I developed based upon this contextualized understanding were shaken, sometimes, by life events that did not fit my prejudices. I solved such dilemmas by observing and talking to others and comparing their actions, beliefs, and experiences with my own. These comparisons often shifted my horizon of understanding so that I began to see and experience the world differently.

Wachterhauser (1986) describes this phenomenon as “a way of seeing things from the standpoint of a historically mediated set of concerns and preunderstandings, which is subject to inevitable change whenever our historically mediated standpoint shifts its focus” (p. 8). When a shift occurs, I see things differently. Such seeing leads to new understanding which is not something I do, “but something that I am included in ... a way of being taken up into the whole” (Gallagher, 1992, pp. 45, 183). This way of being in the world is “an elusive, tenuous, and

possibly contradictory reality” as there are any number of possibilities that might influence my understanding and a variety of ways in which I might understand them (Wachterhauser, 1986, p. 233).

My horizon of understanding evolves from my past, through the present, and into the future. This tentative and provisional knowledge contributes to a way of interpreting the world that permeates my practice and, subsequently, shapes my research (Crotty, 1998; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Conle (1999) asserts that “how we go about knowing shapes us as people” (p. 8) and that “particular ways of being in the world affect the kind of research [we are] able to do” (p. 28). Ultimately, this study portrays my way of being in the world and how I go about making sense of it.

In this chapter, I describe my horizon of understanding so that readers are aware of the context and parameters that I bring to this study as a researcher. In the second chapter, I describe a conceptual frame based on Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics that I use to investigate my research question. In the third chapter, I show how I designed the study to shape the generation and analysis of empirical materials¹ as the 2002-03 school year progressed. In the fourth chapter, I describe the teacher participants in a way that summarizes our experiences together. In the fifth chapter, I describe four conditions that influence these teachers’ interpretation of curriculum. In the final chapter, I present a heuristic to assist in discovering potential strategies for illuminating these conditions to examine their influence on teachers’ interpretations. It is my hope that this study will contribute to the broader conversation of how curriculum theory relates to classroom practice.

¹ According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), “empirical materials” is the preferred term for what are traditionally described as data in qualitative research.

Purpose of Research

Curriculum, I think, must be conceived in terms of possibility for individuals, all kinds of individuals. It must offer varying perspectives through which all kinds of people can view their own lived worlds. It must provide opportunities for them to see that they themselves, whoever they are, constitute those worlds as self-determining human beings existing with others in intersubjective community.

(Greene, 1974, p. 169)

This study describes how four teachers, in Saskatchewan schools, interpret the provincial arts education curriculum in their practice. The term 'curriculum', as used in this thesis, refers to the Saskatchewan 'institutional' curriculum that is developed for use in provincial schools – the curriculum-as-plan. Curriculum in Saskatchewan is defined as “a set of planned and purposeful learning experiences, based on intended learning outcomes and organized around the developmental levels of students” (Saskatchewan Education, 1991, p. 1). Kliebard (1970) notes that since 1918, curriculum has been defined “as a series of experiences” which students require in order to attain objectives and that “various definitions of curriculum have used the term *experiences* ever since” (p. 44).

These experiences are shaped by “the interaction between teacher and curriculum materials” (Eisner, 1990, p. 64). Fiala (2006) observes that “in a perfectly articulated system, an intended curriculum of general goals would shape a formal curriculum of required activities and information, which would then be expressed in the active curriculum of the classroom” (p. 17). For Aoki (1983), this articulation is dialectically shaped by both teachers and students (p. 121). In his view, “life in the classroom is not so much in the child, in the teacher, in the subject; life is lived in the spaces between and among” (1993, p. 282). It is these spaces that my study attempts to explore.

Research Question

... each interpretation of history or an historical document is guided by a certain interest, which in turn is based on a certain preliminary understanding of the subject. Out of this interest and understanding, the “question” put to it is shaped. Without these, no question could arise, and there would be no interpretation.

(Palmer, 1969, p. 51)

I developed my research question by reflecting upon Van Manen’s (1990) query, “What human experience do I feel called upon to make topical for my investigation?” (p. 41).

Generally, I am interested in the human experience of *how* we arrive at understanding the curriculum-as-plan. That is, what are the conditions that influence understanding and how is this understanding expressed through the curriculum-as-lived? In reflecting this interest, my specific question for this study is: *How do teachers interpret the provincial arts education curriculum in their practice?*

I feel ‘called upon’ to investigate this question because of my current work in curriculum development at the Department of Learning in Saskatchewan. I have been employed in several positions (Consultant, Co-ordinator, Policy Strategist, Director, and currently Executive Director) within the curriculum development area of the provincial ministry of education for 19 years. Prior to this work, I taught for 10 years in Saskatchewan’s K-12 schools and was a principal for two of those years. Teaching and learning has been a significant part of my professional and personal life.

My interest in the relationship between curriculum theory and classroom practice is intensified by evidence, both research-based and anecdotal, that the provincial curriculum-as-plan is not necessarily realized in practice. Both national and provincial assessments show that our students are not performing as well as we might expect. Through this study, I am hoping to

discover ideas for strengthening the provincial curriculum and related supports in order to strengthen teaching and improve student learning.

My research question is neither neutral nor objective for it reveals this interest which is formed through a particular way of knowing or coming to understand lived experiences. Without this interest, there would be no question and no subsequent research to pursue. It goes without saying that my question shaped the design of this study and influenced the interpretation of the findings.

Researcher Assumptions

My research question arises from my professional interests within the educational context of Saskatchewan and is based upon at least three assumptions. First, it assumes that curriculum emanates from “an extraordinarily complicated conversation [where] the generations struggle to define themselves and the world” (Pinar, 1999, p. 366). Second, it assumes that the provincial curriculum (i.e., curriculum-as-plan) is shaped by, and includes, substantive ideas worth exploring. Third, it assumes that teachers feel invited to engage with the ideas in the provincial curriculum and to express their understanding of such ideas in practice (i.e., curriculum-as-lived).

Complicated Conversation

The thoughtful practice of everyday educational life requires us to understand practice theoretically. So understood, curriculum becomes intensely historical, political, racial, gendered, phenomenological, postmodern, autobiographical, aesthetic, theological, and international. ... When we say that curriculum is an extraordinarily complicated conversation, we are underscoring human agency and the volitional character of human action.

(Pinar, 1999, pp. 366-367)

Pinar encourages us “to make the curriculum field itself a conversation” (1999, p. 367). The curriculum development cycle² in Saskatchewan attempts to use conversation to collaboratively develop curricula. By conversing with individuals and groups who are selected to reflect the diversity of the educational community in Saskatchewan, experiences are “exchanged” which can “lead us to new concepts and help us find a common base for understanding” (Arnsward, 2002, p. 34). Hess (1993) notes that “The necessarily limited horizon that guides our questioning is expanded by the inclusion of a wide range of voices in the conversation. The questions that these others bring to the conversation may be the very ones that open up the truth of the subject matter” (p. 200). As most of these conversations occur within the educational community, it can be argued that the range of voices is too narrow to “open up the truth”. Hence, it can only be claimed that curricula in Saskatchewan reflect the voices of those *who are included* in the conversation of preparing our students for a future that we do not know.

With the range of voices included, we struggle to answer the question, albeit provisionally for schooling purposes, “What knowledge is of most worth?” Eisner (1990) claims that “No effort to build creative curriculum materials can neglect decisions about what is worth teaching” (p. 68). For Pinar (2004), the decisions we make “will change according to project, person, nations, and the historical moment” (p. 19). Therefore, curriculum in Saskatchewan reflects the collective “best” thinking at the time of development as the conversations do not necessarily end with the publication of the institutional document.

In Saskatchewan, curricula are developed through a four phase cycle. The first phase of the curriculum development cycle is the evaluation phase which may include a provincial curriculum evaluation, learning assessment, or targeted needs assessment regarding a particular area. The

² The curriculum development cycle includes four phases: evaluation, design, implementation, and maintenance.

results of provincial and national assessments are examined along with relevant research and recent trends to clarify direction for the design of the curriculum.

During the second phase of the cycle, the design phase (which includes field testing), each curriculum project is guided by a provincial curriculum reference committee which includes representatives³ from provincial organizations such as the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations; the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan; the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils; the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan; the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce; post-secondary institutions; and provincial government departments such as Health or Justice. Individuals from groups such as students, First Nations and Métis Elders, the Francophone community, and various professions (such as accountants, lawyers, or newspaper editors) are also represented depending upon the particular curriculum being developed (e.g., Accounting, Law, or Journalism Studies). Provincial curriculum reference committees meet for the duration of the design phase which varies from 1-5 years depending upon the scope of the project (e.g., number of grade levels under development).

Each curriculum project is also supported by an internal program team that includes representatives from various areas of the Department such as Instructional Resources, Special Education, Aboriginal Education, Assessment and Evaluation, and E-Learning. Internal program team and external curriculum reference committee members are united in their efforts to support the development of a curriculum that has "the potential for a curriculum-as-lived that is charged with life" (Aoki, 1987a, p. 362). Draft curricula are then field tested with teachers from each of the seven educational regions of the province. Involving classroom teachers as partners grounds

³ Educational partners are invited to nominate individuals to represent their respective groups on curriculum committees.

the development in classroom experience and contributes to future implementation (Connelly, 1972; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978).

Teachers who field test curricula are selected to ensure a provincial representation of urban/rural, male/female, specialists/generalists, various cultures, range of teaching experience, and other criteria deemed to be important for the particular field test. Through field testing, the contents of curricula are negotiated in an attempt to build a curriculum that “will touch something deep that stirs teachers and students to animated living” (Aoki, 1987a, p. 362). To date, such attempts to “stir” teachers to “animated living” have not been realized. The *Arts Education: Grades 1-9 Curriculum Evaluation Report* (1998) notes that the “curriculum guide is considered by many teachers to be cumbersome, repetitious and not ‘teacher-friendly’” (p. vi). This finding also points to the discrepancy between the value of the development process over the value of the developed product as field test teachers found the arts education curriculum to be “friendly” (no doubt due to their prolonged interaction with the text through various drafts along with the feedback discussions, networking sessions with peers, and related practical classroom experiences). Regardless, a measure of a “good” curriculum is one that amplifies “the teacher’s ability, given the circumstances in which he or she works” (Eisner, 1990, p. 67). It appears that our provincial 1991 Elementary Level arts education curriculum falls below this measure for many teachers.

The third phase of the curriculum development cycle is the implementation phase. For Aoki (1983), curriculum implementation as situational praxis (rather than instrumental action) requires a deep understanding of the curriculum “and transforming it based on the appropriateness of the situation” (p. 118). This phase draws upon the expertise of the field test teachers who introduce the curriculum to their peers, and share what was learned during the design phase. By describing

their “improvisations” (Aoki, 1990) and the results for students, the field test teachers point their colleagues in potentially fertile directions.

The fourth phase of the cycle is intended to maintain the momentum of the initial introduction of the curriculum through varied professional learning opportunities and through fine-tuning of the curriculum. During each phase of the cycle, conversation is used to engage individuals from different communities in an attempt to tap a diversity of voices, viewpoints, and experiences. To benefit from such diversity, it is incumbent upon the educational partners to acknowledge and promote the voices of individuals or groups who may be marginalized or experience systemic barriers in our communities. For Kerdeman (1998a), a diversity of voices and viewpoints highlights the tension “in the intermediate space between perfect familiarity and absolute strangeness” (p. 4) and “clear understanding” arises from the negotiation that occurs in this space (p. 7). In Gadamer’s view, “the person who is awake to and accepting of living ‘in between’ is able to ‘have new experiences and learn from them’” (Kerdeman, 1998a, p. 7). By attempting to situate ourselves in this “in between” space, new understanding can arise through the “complicated conversations” of the curriculum development cycle.

Substantive Content

As Grumet (1988) observed, curriculum is what the older generation chooses to tell the younger generations. The school curriculum communicates what we choose to remember about our past, what we believe about the present, what we hope for the future.

(Pinar, 2004, p. 20)

Grumet’s observation is supported by the notion that the contents of curriculum reflect national and cultural priorities (Fiala, 2006). Although the curriculum-as-plan is shaped by such priorities and appears to be static, Pinar (1999) suggests that “deciding on how to proceed in our everyday engagement with students and ideas is not a self-evident matter” (p. 370). Pinar (2004) notes that how teachers interpret curriculum for their practice necessarily includes “the complex

and shifting relations” between teachers, their self-formation, and the particular area of study they teach (p. 24). For Aoki (1990), teachers are “curriculum improvisers sensitive to the ongoing life and experiences of themselves and students” (p. 366). He claims that there is a dialectic between the curriculum-as-plan and the curriculum-as-lived and that the “vibrant space” between them is “at times a site of both difficulty and ambiguity and also a site of generative possibilities and hope” (2000, p. 322). Eisner (1985) also distinguishes between the *intended* and *operational* curriculum. It is the tension between these two curriculum worlds that informs my study.

In Saskatchewan, curriculum is designed with Eisner’s (1990) five criteria in mind. These criteria focus on 1) the inclusion of key ideas that are intellectually challenging, 2) presented in various ways, and 3) intended to help students make connections with other learning both inside and outside of school. Most importantly, curriculum is 4) designed to “provide multiple options for teachers to pursue” (p. 68). The purpose of these options is 5) “to enlarge the teacher’s ability to exercise professional judgment” (Eisner, 1990, p. 72). In alignment with these criteria, the contents of each provincial curriculum include: a K-12 aim or purpose; philosophical statements regarding the area of study and the developmental level of students; broad foundational objectives (spanning a grade or several grades); specific learning objectives;⁴ and model lessons with suggestions for instruction, assessment, and resources.

Much of the material in Saskatchewan curricula (except for the objectives) is suggested or provided as models. These models are based on research including the practices of Saskatchewan teachers. It is intended that such models will provide a starting point for teachers to address important concepts, processes, and attitudes in a particular area of study. For Eisner (1990),

⁴ Learning objectives describe what students will know and be able to do in achieving the broad foundational objectives of the curriculum. These objectives may be addressed in a single lesson or through a sequence of lessons.

curriculum should “both emancipate and educate teachers” (p. 68). The inclusion of models allows teachers to see the parts (e.g., a description of a dance-making process in a model lesson or a list of criteria in a sample student assessment for a contextual drama) in order to understand the whole (e.g., the creative/productive component in arts education). Notwithstanding the inclusion of these models, teachers are encouraged to choose alternative instructional methods, assessment techniques, and resources to support student learning. It is clearly understood that teachers are in the best position to decide how to proceed in their “everyday engagement” with students.

My experience in schools, school divisions, and the provincial Department of Learning leads me to believe that “curriculum improvising” (Aoki, 1990) within the context of Saskatchewan’s K-12 curriculum is an intellectually rigorous activity. The curriculum is intended to provide a broad, comprehensive education to all Saskatchewan students no matter where they live in the province. Where previous curriculum (developed in the 1960s and 70s) required teachers to focus on a certain genre in literature or to use a particular textbook, the new provincial curriculum establishes objectives to be addressed within broad themes where the particular instructional topics, methods, and resources are determined by teachers. These objectives contain the central concepts, processes, skills/abilities, and attitudes to be addressed at each grade level in each area of study. Suggestions are also provided within the curriculum (and related support materials) for resources, planning, instruction, assessment, and evaluation to support teaching and student learning.⁵

⁵ Some examples of support materials include: an annotated bibliography of recommended resources to accompany each curriculum, an interactive CD-ROM featuring 100 contemporary Canadian artists to accompany the arts education curriculum, and an audio CD to support the listening strand of the Grade 12 English language arts curriculum.

Believing that curriculum includes substantive ideas worth exploring requires “a consciousness of our own ignorance, a recognition that we do not have all the answers and can learn from others” (Warnke, 1987, p. 155). This stance assumes that the knowledge of others (as expressed in the curriculum-as-plan, for example) is capable of expanding our understanding and supports the notion that curriculum contains substantive ideas worth exploring.

Risk Taking

Teachers who participate in the design phase of the curriculum development cycle are invited to explore aspects of the draft curriculum through living in the spaces between and among the students, themselves, and the area of study (Aoki, 1993); for example, in reflecting upon a responding activity introduced at a networking session, one of the field test teachers noted, “I really enjoyed responding to the arts expression. I think my students would enjoy this.”⁶ Field test teachers meet regularly to discuss successes, challenges, and questions that arise within the space between the curriculum-as-plan and the curriculum-as-lived. As one field test teacher comments, “I have not always agreed or felt comfortable ... but I have always been challenged to grow”.

Responding to such challenges is supported through networking for as one teacher notes, “My involvement in this project became a very nurturing experience for I found mentorship relationships here”. Another teacher observes that her involvement in the project “has been one of the most rewarding professional development activities I’ve experienced. I have appreciated the network of individuals I’ve met with as well as the wealth of experience around the tables. My teaching has significantly changed due to this experience.” Yet another teacher finds that the

⁶ I am indebted to the teachers who provided the comments, used in this section, in 2005 through field test networking meetings and teacher experience feedback forms.

most valuable experience from participating in this project was the collegial coaching that took place within the process of participating and leading”.

This openness on the part of teachers to explore new ideas and share their thoughts (and, potentially, to place their understanding at risk) supports learning and, often, shifts understanding. At the end of a project, one of the teachers reflects on the experience as being “valuable in so many ways. From the early process of forming and evaluating a curriculum to feeling like I have a voice and am assisting others in a big way. It has also made me self-critical of my teaching yet eager to improve.”

Based upon my observations within the phases of the curriculum development cycle, teachers involved in these phases are willing to grapple with the theoretical underpinnings of the particular area of study and to consider the implications for teaching and learning. Such risk taking supports teacher engagement with the substantive ideas in the curriculum.

Significance of Research

Saskatchewan has been in the midst of curriculum reform for over 20 years. During this time, curricula in all Required Areas of Study from kindergarten to grade twelve have been revised. Data regarding the introduction of new provincial curricula have been collected through curriculum evaluations completed by the Assessment and Evaluation Branch of the Department of Learning. The arts education curriculum evaluation, conducted in 1997, focused on the grades 1-5 and 6-9 curricula which began a three-year introduction phase in 1991 and 1994, respectively. All Saskatchewan schools were deemed to be using the new arts education curriculum by the Fall of 1994 (grades 1-5) and 1997 (grades 6-9).

Provincial curriculum evaluations include the collection of a comprehensive array of data to: evaluate the extent of implementation, collect information about classroom and school practices and student experiences, identify supports and barriers to curriculum implementation, and provide information about the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. These provincial evaluations provide some evidence regarding teacher use of the curriculum; for example, 42% of grade 1-9 teachers who responded during the evaluation find the arts education curriculum to be helpful for planning (*Arts Education: Grades 1-9 Curriculum Evaluation Report*, 1998, p.42).⁷ The evaluations, however, do not explore *why* teachers find the curriculum to be helpful for planning or *how* teachers use the curriculum for planning or *how* teachers, generally, *interpret* the curriculum in their practice. My research is intended to address this gap. While contributing to an understanding of how teachers interpret curriculum in their practice, my research also explores ways to facilitate such study with teachers. A conceptual frame to guide this study is described in the next chapter.

⁷ Approximately 90% of all teachers surveyed report having copies of the curriculum guide (*Arts Education: Grades 1-9 Curriculum Evaluation Report*, 1998, p. 43).

CHAPTER 2: GADAMER'S HORIZON

To understand (*verstehen*) is, in general, to grasp something ("I get it"), to see things more clearly (say, when an obscure or ambiguous passage becomes clear), to be able to integrate a particular meaning into a larger frame.

(Grondin, 2002, p. 36)

The conceptual frame that guides this research draws upon Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. As defined by Gadamer, philosophical hermeneutics "consists of a reflection on the nature of interpretation and on the conditions of possibility which allow for the art of interpretation" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 55). Such interpretation "is the attempt to get to the meaning of something" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 120). For Gadamer, the work of hermeneutics "is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place" (1999/1975, p. 295). As I am interested in the conditions that support teachers' understanding of curriculum, Gadamer's work on hermeneutics is instructive for my study.

For Gadamer, hermeneutics is "the art of understanding" (1975, p. 146) and "we human beings cannot help but engage in understanding the people, events, institutions, and practices that comprise our everyday world" (Kerdeman, 1998a, p. 6). Gadamer believes that "understanding is possible and indeed unavoidable because we are born or 'thrown' into sociohistorical contexts that are saturated with meanings that always already have been interpreted" (Kerdeman, 1998a, p. 6). From this perspective, I am exploring interpretations that already exist and that may shift due to the interdependent nature of understanding for "in the process of interpretation no one element – reader, text, meaning, and so on – exists in itself, in an isolated manner" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 5).

In Gadamer's view, "what we know cannot be divorced from who we are" (Kerdeman, 1998a, p. 8). This view is rooted in Heidegger's work where "understanding is essentially a way of being, the way of being which belongs to human existence" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 42). Gadamer

describes the ontological nature of hermeneutics thusly, “Our very being-in-the-world is interpretive, and hence, we can never escape or avoid interpretation and understanding.”

(Feldman, 2000, p. 55). Further, “understanding is never immediate but on the contrary always mediated by interpretation. Thus, understanding and interpretation are indivisible”

(Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 216). Wiehl (1990) describes the relationship between interpretation and understanding as one where “interpretation is an art that comes to the aid of understanding” (p. 28). It is this art, in particular, that I want to explore. I am curious about the conditions that influence the art of teachers’ interpretation of curriculum and how these influences are similar or different among teachers.

Weinsheimer (1985) asserts that “difference is the condition of interpretation. ... unless there is some difference to be integrated, some gap to be bridged, the interpreter will have nothing to say and no interpretation will be possible” (p. 254). For Gadamer, “only something different and unexpected can provide someone who has experience with a new one” (1999/1975, p. 353). By exploring the interpretations of teachers with differing backgrounds and in four different schools, I experienced some particularities related to people, communities, and practices which enlarged my horizon of understanding.

Gadamer further claims that:

Understanding is not, in fact, understanding better, either in the sense of superior knowledge of the subject because of clearer ideas or in the sense of fundamental superiority of conscious over unconscious production. It is enough to say that we understand in a *different* way, *if we understand at all*.

(1999/1975, pp. 296-7)

Bernstein (1986) explains such understanding as involving “a dialogical encounter” between what we are trying to understand and our “own hermeneutical situation” which leads us to “understand the ‘same thing’ differently” (p. 347). A hopeful aspect that Grondin (2003)

acknowledges is that “even if we do not understand fully, we do not understand less” (p. 53). In describing Gadamer’s hermeneutic philosophy, Hoy (1997) expands on this notion claiming that “interpretation involves being able not only to distinguish sound from unsound claims, but also to make a case more generally for the cogency of understanding” (p. 125). As researcher, it is my responsibility to describe the people, events, and situations in this study as fully as possible so that my interpretation can be judged for its soundness. This interpretation will be achieved through attending to the elements in the following conceptual frame.

Conceptual Frame

Gadamer contends that all understanding is always a matter of interpretation and is historically situated. He claims that “Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live” (1999/1975, p. 276). For Gadamer, we are “situated within an event of tradition, a process of handing down, [which] is a prior condition of understanding” (1999/1975, p. 309). It is this prior condition which allows us to understand through the prejudgements or prejudices that comprise our ways of making sense of our experiences. Such sense making is shaped by particular horizons of understanding. Gadamer finds that “a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see” (1999/1975, p. 306). We can, however, revise our prejudices and expand our horizons by being genuinely open to new experiences and traditions through engaging in certain kinds of dialogue. Such engagement allows us to expand or fuse horizons, largely through the interplay of part and whole in a hermeneutic circle of understanding. According to Gadamer, a key aspect of understanding is that it “always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter’s

present situation” (1999/1975, p. 308). Bernstein (1982) notes that, for Gadamer, “all understanding involves not only interpretation, but also application” and that these activities “are internally related ... and moments of the single process of understanding” (p. 824). For my study, this interaction of application, interpretation, and understanding is critical in exploring how teachers interpret the arts education curriculum, how they understand both art and teaching art in their particular contexts, and how their practice reflects this understanding. In the following sections, I briefly describe the key elements in my conceptual frame that are intended to inform the exploration of the conditions that influence teachers’ interpretation of curriculum.

Historical Situatedness

“We should learn to understand ourselves better,” Gadamer insists, “and recognize that in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work.”

(Warnke, 2002, p. 317)

According to Gadamer, we interpret texts or events from particular perspectives that are shaped by our historical contexts. These historical contexts influence our way of being in the world and, thus, our interpretations. Such contexts “exercise what Gadamer calls an historically effected hold on our interpretive abilities” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 83). Gallagher (1992) explains that

We always find ourselves with a past that does not simply follow behind, but goes in advance, defining the contexts by which we come to interpret the world. Despite the fact that traditions operate for the most part “behind our backs,” they are already there, ahead of us, conditioning our interpretations.

(p. 91)

Crusius (1991) asserts that “history is not so much understanding what happened back then, but understanding its continuing impact on us now” (pp. 41-42). Due to our historical situatedness, every thought, every feeling, and every action is influenced by our prior knowledge and experiences. Feldman (2000) notes that, for Gadamer, “we are historical beings who live in

tradition” and that “Traditions are not things of the past; rather they are something that we constantly participate in” (p. 55). In discussing philosophical hermeneutics, Page (1997) quotes Gadamer and writes that “understanding should be thought of ‘less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated’” (p. 374). Such mediation may cause our interpretation of texts or experiences to differ from those of others interpreting the same texts or experiences. It stands to reason, then, that teachers’ interpretations of curriculum may differ depending upon prior knowledge and experiences.

A.S. Byatt, through her fictitious poet Randolph Henry Ash (*ca* 1840), eloquently captures the influence of history by writing that

A man is the history of his breaths and thoughts, acts, atoms and wounds, love, indifference and dislike; also of his race and nation, the soil that fed him and his forebears, the stones and sands of his familiar places, long-silenced battles and struggles of conscience, of the smiles of girls and the slow utterance of old women, of accidents and the gradual action of inexorable law

(*Possession: A Romance*, 1990, p. 9)

Our history permeates us, to the extent that we may not be aware of its influence. Such influence tends to form a near invisible screen through which we observe and experience the world. If we should notice this screen, one would think it possible to remove it. MacIntyre (2002) negates this possibility by alluding to one of Gadamer’s key theses which claims that

... to have become aware of the historically conditioned character of our philosophical enquiries and interpretations is not to have escaped from it. There is no standpoint outside history to which we can move, no way in which we can adopt some presuppositionless stance, exempt from the historical situatedness of all thinking.

(p. 158)

Grondin (1994) also notes that “Effective history is never entirely under our power or at our disposal. We are more subject to history than it can be subjected to consciousness” (p. 114).

Gallagher (1992) wonders “to what extent are traditions (and various authority or power

structures) necessarily assimilated or *reproduced* in understanding, thereby lending themselves to forces of domination, or to what extent are traditions ... *transformed* in hermeneutical experience?" (p. 19). Gadamer acknowledges that awareness of our historical situatedness can change our relationship to that history and Dostal (1997) suggests that the "task of coming to terms with our past is at the same time the task of self-understanding and finding our way" (p. 302).

It was a Grade 1 student who, in my third year of teaching, helped me to understand myself differently. I was facilitating a "practical" learning experience with the students. In this particular physical education lesson, I was insisting that all students try the rudimentary steps in performing a gymnastic movement. It was a shy student who stood quietly watching that caught my attention as he brought his hands up to his face and started to nervously scratch his red cheeks. His scratching caused me to stop and think about what I was asking of students and to realize that some students may need to observe others first and reflect upon such observations before deciding when and how to participate. I was horrified that I was proceeding blithely along without questioning why I was insisting that every student participate in the same way. The learning I gained from this student was like a breeze moving the invisible screen of my effective history so that I saw my actions in a new light. I realized, for the first time, that I was teaching in ways that I like to learn and not thinking about the diverse learning needs of the students.

I am painfully aware that the effective history of each teacher in my study, whether I notice it or not, is shaping her interpretation and practice. For example, a teacher with limited arts experience to draw upon may interpret the curriculum differently than someone who experienced a variety of arts activities in her own schooling and subsequent teaching practice. For my study,

it is important to “uncover” and “illuminate” for examination the historical conditioning that is affecting the interpretations of the participating teachers.

In Gadamer’s hermeneutics, the past places parameters around any present or future understanding as “one’s life within a community and its traditions necessarily limits one’s range of vision – what one can possibly see or understand in a text” (Feldman, 2000, p. 55). Grondin (1994) also points out that “it is history that determines the background of our values, cognitions, and even our critical judgements” (p. 114). Wachterhauser (1986) argues that if “history determines our possibilities for understanding ourselves and our world”, it is important to focus on the “possibilities” (p. 9). In summary, we are conditioned by our past affections, understandings, and practices within particular cultural heritages and such conditioning predisposes or prejudices us to interpret experiences in particular ways.

Prejudices

Such “prejudices” (Vorurteile) are not necessarily irrational biases, but prejudgements that constitute a standpoint in terms of which the objects of our knowing are approached. The fact that we almost always occupy a standpoint (perhaps even multiple standpoints) from which the world discloses itself to us in a great variety of ways needs not be imagined as a situation where our vision is blocked by our perspective, but rather made possible by it.

(Wachterhauser, 2002, p. 72)

By prejudices, Gadamer is referring to “the assumptions and expectations that provide our initial orientation to that which we are trying to understand” (Warnke, 2002, p. 315). In Gadamer’s view, all understanding requires “an anticipation of the meaning that is immanent to the situation” (Kertscher, 2002, p. 148). For Gadamer, “tradition inculcates an interpreter with prejudices that enable her or him to understand a text” (Feldman, 2000, p. 52). Our prejudices focus our attention so that we can form anticipatory notions about a text or event. These notions are verified, refuted, or adjusted based on our experience. In the case of arts education, these

notions or prejudices inform our understanding of curriculum. Such prejudices, however, while allowing us to perceive salient aspects of the curriculum may cause us to ignore strange or unfamiliar aspects that do not fit with our assumptions regarding arts education.

Hess (1993) describes this phenomenon as prejudices serving “variously as lenses or blinders [where] they can provide the necessary focus for informed learning and understanding, or they can fix the gaze so that only certain things are attended to and only certain interpretations are allowed” (p. 191). As a young teacher, my interpretation of arts education (based upon my previous experiences) was one that “fixed my gaze” on the creation of objects (e.g., paintings or dioramas). This prejudice guided my teaching of arts education and caused me to focus on the creative/productive component of arts education while ignoring the critical/responsive and cultural/historical components. Nonetheless, my prejudices provided a framework or paradigm within which I could relate, and come to understand (through a particular lens), new texts or experiences in arts education. In describing philosophical hermeneutics, Feldman (2000) notes that “an interpreter always is situated in a communal ‘tradition’ that inculcates the individual with prejudices and interests, which then constrain and direct the understanding of any text” (p. 55). Consequently, aspects of texts or experiences that did not fit into my particular paradigm or way of viewing arts education tended to remain unnoticed by me.

My notion of arts education when I was teaching was to engage students in activities that resulted in products which could be taken home and recognized by their family (as a vase or a flower). In order to support student “success”, I provided patterns or templates for my students (such as tracing one’s hand to make a turkey). I did not find it unusual that all 25 construction paper turkeys proudly displayed on the bulletin board (before being taken home) were exactly the same. My particular lens or paradigm did not leave room for the possibility of creating art to

express oneself where, perhaps, the bulletin board might display 25 “quirky” turkeys – some with large beaks and some without, some with fat tummies, and others with lop-sided heads.

Gadamer explains further, “The prejudices and fore-meanings that occupy the interpreter’s consciousness are not at his free disposal. He cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding from the prejudices that hinder it and lead to misunderstandings” (1999/1975, p. 295). Gadamer contends that every interpretation is controlled to some degree by prejudices that are not fully conscious and that reflect the perspective of the interpreter rather than the interpreted experience. Any interpretation, then, may or may not correspond to how others make sense of the same text or event. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer cautions, “The important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings” (1999/1975, p. 269). Through becoming conscious of our fore-meanings or prejudices, we may be able to revise some of them and come to understand texts and events in new ways. For example, I recently experienced an arts education activity where I was asked to portray my favourite hobby (e.g., gardening) in four different ways on a large sheet of paper folded into quarters. I was to use a different medium such as paint, pastel, charcoal, or magazine collage in each quadrant. Through this activity, I discovered the intellectual challenge of creative problem solving to express my ideas in the way I wanted. This experience (which did not match my “pattern” teaching described previously) contributed to a different understanding of arts education which led to new interpretations of the curriculum.

In Gadamer’s words, “Insight is more than the knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive” (1999/1975, p. 356). He also asserts that “our prejudices can vary in the extent to which they leave us open to

confront the texts that we read more or less fruitfully and our own individual relationships to our prejudices also varies” (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 169). For example, because arts education is often considered a “frill”⁸ in our society, it was easy for me to focus my teaching attention on reading, writing, and mathematics rather than on arts education. If I needed to find more time for mathematics on a particular day, I simply removed the arts education lesson from my timetable with no fear of parental or peer repercussions. If, however, I moved to a community where the arts were valued and began to feel pressure to teach arts education, then my assumption that the arts are not important would be challenged. For Gadamer, understanding consists in this “continuous interplay between what we already know and expect and what surprises and challenges us” (Kerdeman, 1998b, p. 31).

Robert Sokolowski (1997) reminds us that “prejudgments are harmful only when they are frozen” (p. 227). Typically, our prejudgements or prejudices tend to be affected by our environment. They are not necessarily a fixed set of beliefs; for example, we might become aware of particular prejudices when we find ourselves in situations where our paradigm appears unjustifiable or does not help us understand a situation. By bringing our prejudices to reflective consciousness, we put them into play and risk our current understanding. Bernstein (1982) describes such play as “a to-and-fro movement that occurs in all understanding in which both what we seek to understand and our prejudices are dynamically involved with each other” (p. 828). For Gadamer, “play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play” (1999/1975, p. 102). Gallagher (1992) describes this notion of play as “something that draws the player out of herself, a force into which the player is lured and in which she is lost” (p. 48). Understanding is achieved through putting our prejudices into play as we make sense of new texts or experiences.

⁸ The Arts Education Curriculum Evaluation Report (1998) found that “Many administrators do not consider Arts Education equal in importance to other Core subjects; most teachers say it does not enjoy equal status” (p. vi).

In the early 1990s, I had the opportunity to work closely with a provincial reference committee in revising the kindergarten curriculum. One of the kindergarten teachers on the committee shared a story of a Grade 1 teacher coming to talk about the students who entered her classroom from this particular kindergarten teacher's previous class. The Grade 1 teacher noted that some of the students, upon entering Grade 1, could print their names while other students could not. Some of the students were able to sit in desks while other students kept falling out. Some of the students could recite the alphabet while others could not. The litany of differences among the students was substantial which caused the kindergarten teacher to respond (somewhat facetiously), "When those students first came to me, they were all exactly the same and I spent the whole year making them different!"⁹ This story highlights a common prejudice in the education system that children, upon leaving kindergarten (or some other grade), need to be "ready" for the next level as opposed to the system being ready to accommodate the range of student interests, needs, and abilities. Such stories helped us to focus, as a committee, on the "in between" space where expectations for helping students make sense of and shape the world around them are balanced by the reality of the diversity among students, teachers, and communities.

While appearing to be limiting, our prejudices are also indicative of our openness. In Gadamer's words, "Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us" (cited in Ramberg, 1997, p. 460). When we attempt to understand something, we always begin with preliminary expectations of what the text or event might mean. As we engage with the text or experience, our encounter might surprise us and bring our prejudices into play. Each

⁹ Eisner (1990) believes that "schools should aim at developing the student's productive idiosyncrasy" and that teachers should work to increase rather than suppress differences across students (p. 62).

of the teachers participating in my study brings prejudices which guide her interpretations of the curriculum in particular ways while, at the same time, placing those prejudices into play, thereby risking her current understanding.

Detmer (1997) claims that our prejudices:

... are *necessary* conditions of all instances of genuine understanding, without, however, being ever *sufficient* fully to determine the outcome of any instance of real understanding. ... It is only through this dialectical back-and-forth process of now consulting the phenomenon in the light of our prejudices, and now revising our prejudices in the light of the phenomenon, that genuine understanding can ever emerge.

(p. 279)

Genuine understanding requires that we risk our prejudices by recognizing them and allowing them to be challenged. Challenging our prejudices or assumptions, however, does not mean we release them. "Rather, the familiar is modified by the new understanding it makes possible, even as new understanding always is conditioned by the assumptions that it questions" (Kerdeman, 1998b, p. 31). This new understanding, far from being conclusive, is tentative and forms a particular horizon through which we view the world. Prejudices that we hold shape our horizon of understanding which entails both limits and possibilities.

Horizon of Understanding

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "*horizon*." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.

(Gadamer, 1999/1975, p. 302)

Gadamer describes his concept of "horizon" as expressing "the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion" (1999/1975, p. 305). He acknowledges that our "present horizons stand as limits as well as conditions of the possibility of understanding" (Kertscher,

2002, p. 147). Our horizons predispose us to interpret events from particular standpoints. Figal (2002) notes that "The horizon is a limited openness ... which changes as soon as one changes one's vantage point" (p. 120). As our understanding shifts so does our horizon, thereby allowing us to interpret events differently.

In Gadamer's view, "A horizon is not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further" (1999/1975, p. 245). Our perspectives change over time and "what was at one time at or near the horizon may always become part of the foreground" (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 160). Our horizon tends to shift to accommodate new understanding. This shifting reflects the unstable nature of our understanding which can be influenced by others. It is worth noting that "understanding is seen as, in every instance, an *immanent* process, since there can be no horizon-independent criterion of correct understanding" (Kertscher, 2002, p. 152).

Palmer (1969) states that

... a fundamental problem in hermeneutics is that of how an individual's horizon can be accommodated to that of the work. A certain preunderstanding of the subjectivity is necessary or no communication will happen, yet that understanding must be altered in the act of understanding.

(p. 25)

While our horizon of understanding allows us to make sense of experiences, it also may shift due to the new understanding that arises from these experiences.

For Gadamer, to interpret a text requires one "to understand the horizon of meaning or of questioning within which the direction of meaning of the text is determined" (Palmer, 1969, p. 200). In Gadamer's words, "every statement has to be seen as a response to a question and ... the only way to understand a statement is to get hold of the question to which the statement is an answer" (cited in Lucas, 1997, p. 175). Chamberlain (1982) notes that "a question is always asked from a point of view within tradition, no question can be neutral; it will be motivated by

the reader's historical and social conditions, which define her interests, her passions. This is the reader's prejudice" (p. 8). Gallagher (1992) states that "asking the questions, that is, interpretation, always opens up possibilities of meaning" (p. 147). An example of opening up such possibilities follows.

When my middle child was about four years old, he started to question the existence of the Easter Bunny. To celebrate Easter, my three children usually received gifts such as skipping ropes or rubber balls from the Easter Bunny. Searching for the truth, my son asked me how the Easter Bunny knew what he and his brother and sister liked and, through other questions, he limited the likelihood of such a magical creature and caused me to admit that I was, indeed, the Easter Bunny. This new information caused my son's eyes to widen as his horizon of understanding expanded to include the realization that he was lucky enough to have a mother who was also the Easter Bunny for the world! During this conversation, I realized that I had contributed to the creation of new possibilities of meaning within my son's continually expanding horizon of understanding.

The teachers participating in this study interpreted arts education with particular questions built into their approach. These questions were shaped by individual experience, and "such experience is embedded in traditions which find their way into interpretation in the form of authoritative prejudices" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 89). Gallagher (1992) concludes that "an inescapable condition of any interpretation is that it is biased in some way" (p. 12). These biases, however, will be "constantly at stake, right up to the moment of their surrender – which surrender could also be called a transformation" (Gadamer, 1986a, p. 295). Such transformation can be achieved by being truly open to the meaning of the other person, text, or experience. Through openness, we expand our horizons and come to new tentative understanding.

Openness

In human relations the important thing is ... not to overlook his [i.e., the other's] claim but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. But ultimately this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond.

(Gadamer, 1999/1975, p. 361)

According to Gadamer, openness requires a belief that others (including texts) have something worthwhile to say to us and that “to understand is above all ... to listen to each other” (Grondin, 2003, p. 83). In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes, “A person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something” (cited in Moss, 2005, p. 268). Gadamer entreats us to adopt a hermeneutic virtue where “one must always be aware that everything, including every text, wants to say something different, for which one should open oneself” (cited in Hahn, 1997, p. 130). In the hermeneutic process, Gadamer insists that “an interpreter should presume that the text is intelligible and complete, that it can communicate some ‘unity of meaning’” (Feldman, 2000, p. 59). Gadamer’s point is that “an *openness* to the *possible* truth of the object is the condition of understanding, that one must at least provisionally concede authority to one’s object, even if this concession may ultimately be rescinded” (Warnke, 1987, p. 89). In Gadamer’s view, “the soul of hermeneutics consists in recognizing that perhaps the other is right” (Grondin, 2003, p. 100).

In this spirit of openness, Gadamer would often strengthen an opponent’s argument in order to understand it more fully before responding. For Gadamer, “one seeks ... as far as possible to strengthen the other’s viewpoint so that what the other person has to say becomes illuminating” (Risser, 1997, pp. 167-8). Deetz (1976) supports this notion and writes that “one listens with the desire to bring out the strength rather than the weakness of what is said – to find that which is

different yet applicable to one's own position" (p. 16). Palmer (1969) suggests that the task of the interpreter is to find

...viable modes of interaction of his own horizon with that of the text. ... this is the question to which Gadamer gives considerable attention: how we can achieve, within the admitted use of our own horizon, an openness to the text which does not impose in advance our own categories upon it.

(p. 121)

This has implications for me, as researcher, and for the teachers participating in my study. Am I, as researcher, able to observe events and interact with others in ways that do not predetermine the outcome? Am I able to place my prejudices into play and open my understanding to question by what I see and hear? Similarly, do the participating teachers demonstrate an openness that may also place their understanding at risk? In essence, Gadamer asks an interpreter "to risk herself or himself in order to open to 'the voice of the other' embodied in the text" (Feldman, 2000, p. 58). Feldman explains that

... while one anticipates or fore-understands a particular meaning for a text at the outset of interpretation, the dialogical process of hermeneutics can lead one to arrive eventually at a different meaning. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, in short, asks an interpreter to contemplate changing as she or he opens to the meaning of a text.

(p. 59)

Openness to the distinctness of a text is an openness "to the possible challenge the text presents to one's own views" (Warnke, 1987, p. 86). For Gadamer, "the role of openness is not to lose yourself in assuming the role of the other but to find what the prejudice of that which is spoken calls into question of your prejudice" (Deetz, 1976, p. 13).

As part of my work, I am often in situations where opposing or differing viewpoints are raised (usually by my colleagues). Such conflicting viewpoints tend to challenge my assumptions, whether implicit or explicit. If I am able to appreciate this dissonance and tolerate some ambiguity, I find that these differing viewpoints illuminate my prejudices. My reflection is

supported if I am able to turn my attention to the position of the other and try to understand the particular viewpoint being raised and the assumptions or prejudices behind that viewpoint. Concomitantly, I end up examining the prejudices I hold that make this viewpoint unfamiliar or strange. It is my experience that within such differing viewpoints, there often lies a kernel of "truth" that informs my work if I am willing to open my prejudices to question and risk my understanding.

Such openness requires bringing one's prejudices into play and, in Gadamer's words, "recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so" (1999/1975, p. 361). Risser (1997) writes that "the openness to experience, as the willingness to listen, means accordingly not to consume and assimilate the other but to suffer what is beyond oneself" (p. 94). Such openness requires a willingness to confront "one's deepest beliefs ... [and] to tolerate ambiguity and self-doubt. We can say that for Gadamer, the person who understands always is a little uncomfortable; he or she is never quite at home" (Kerdeman, 1998b, p. 32). For each of us in this study, whether as researcher or participant, our ability to be open to new experiences causes us to go beyond ourselves. It is at this point where possibilities are presented. Such possibilities may cause us to revise our prejudices so that we view arts education differently. This openness allows for new interpretations of curriculum to emerge.

Grondin (1997) notes that "we don't learn anything through positive experiences because they only confirm what we already know. Hermeneutic insight only sinks in when we have been contradicted by events, when we have to change or adjust our perspectives" (p. 165). According to Gadamer, the types of experiences that tend to "break the spell of our own foremeanings" are those that challenge or resist our assumptions about what is familiar (Kerdeman, 1998a, p. 7).

Finding oneself unable to accept the other's claim causes our prejudices to emerge where they can be examined. Gadamer claims that "Reflection on a given pre-understanding brings before me something that otherwise happens *behind my back*" (1986a, p. 294). Our prejudices, when brought into view, are not necessarily abandoned but are challenged or revised. As the teachers participating in this study and I engaged in exploratory conversations, we unearthed prejudices that previously were hidden and had the opportunity to examine the efficacy of these prejudices. The willingness to open these prejudices to question and place understanding at risk caused a new view of arts education. See Chapter 4 for a description of these shifts in the participating teachers' horizons of understanding.

In Gadamer's view, "true experience is that which surprises us, which knocks us back, which confounds our expectations. This experience leads us to revise our expectations and opens new horizons to us" (Grondin, 2003, p. 117). New horizons are formed through dialogue with others if we are open to considering alternative interpretations and to questioning our assumptions. Warnke (1987) writes, "In confronting texts, different views and perspectives, alternative life forms and world-views, we can put our own prejudices in play and learn to enrich our own point of view" (p. 4). For Gadamer, such enrichment occurs through dialogue with others (including texts). He believes that the moment we let something be said, we open ourselves to new understanding.

Dialogue

Real conversation has an unpredictability, danger, and resonance; it can take a turn anywhere and constantly borders on the unexpected and on the unknown.

(O'Donohue, 1997, p. 111)

Dialogue figures prominently in Gadamer's hermeneutics. According to Gadamer, a "distinctive human characteristic is that we are conversational ... beings [for] we are 'thrown

into a world' ... with a deep need to understand and interpret our experience. This quest for understanding or meaning is our 'primordial mode of being what we most essentially are'" (Wirth, 1988, p. 3). In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer emphasizes "the importance of hermeneutical dialogue in order to come to an understanding with the other" (cited in Arnsward, 2002, p. 34). In Gadamer's view, we need to enlarge our personal borders to accommodate new understanding and this enlargement occurs through dialogue.

For Gadamer, "dialogue was not just a means of passing the time in pleasant but aimless conversation; it was an intense, restless, and unending quest for truth" (Palmer, 2001, p. 10).

Grondin (1994) describes the truth achieved through dialogue as "participatory truth":

The truth that can be achieved and experienced in dialogue has nothing to do with taking possession. Describing it as participatory truth seems nearer the mark, for in dialogue with others and oneself as we are thinking, we arrive at truths that enlighten us without knowing what is happening to us or how. We can hardly be said to dominate these truths. Rather, we are possessed by them, as it were.

(p. 136)

Conversation, then, is a way of knowing – a way of accessing knowledge – and understanding is reached through discourse and negotiation about the meaning of the lived world with others.

Grondin (1994) speaks forcefully to this idea, "Only in conversation, only in confrontation with another's thought that could also come to dwell within us, can we hope to get beyond the limits of our present horizon. For this reason philosophical hermeneutics recognizes no principle higher than dialogue" (p. 124). It is through dialogue that I came to understand the interpretation of arts education that each of the teachers participating in the study brings to her own practice.

By considering what others (including the provincial curriculum) say, we allow our prejudices to be questioned. Through such questioning, new understanding emerges. Garrison (1996) explains, "The listener is not simply 'open to what the other means' so that he or she can reproduce it; instead, the listener is open to the meanings that are being developed between

oneself and one's partner" (p. 437). The meanings developed through dialogue in this study arose in the space between the interlocutors. According to Gadamer, in conversation we open ourselves to others while focusing on common subject matter or *Sache*. Hahn (1997) describes this process in the following way, "In a conversation, ... one seeks to open oneself to him or her, which means holding fast to the common subject matter as the ground on which one stands together with one's partner" (p. 36). Such common ground allows entry points for each partner to contribute to the dialogue. In this way, the *Sache* takes on a life of its own and draws the participants into its life. For Gadamer, "dialogue is mediated by the *Sache*" (Hoy, 1997, p. 116). By using arts education as the *Sache*, it provides a common ground for the participating teachers to converse with me and with each other. As we talked about arts education, we brought differing perspectives which led to new interpretations. It is this difference that attracted our attention and prolonged the dialogue to explore the *Sache*. During this exploration, the *Sache* also influenced our dialogue and understanding. For example, when one of the participating teachers, Rachel, and I were discussing a classroom collage activity, our conversation moved to the process of collage and various ways of introducing students to this process which neither of us had considered before.

While most would "consider what each person has to say about the subject matter, Gadamer focuses on what the subject matter 'says' to each" (Deetz, 1990, p. 231). Deetz (1976) notes that "the genuine conversation is characterized more by giving in to the subject matter and allowing it to develop in the interchange" (p. 16). I have observed this phenomenon when teaching young children. As they engage in a task (at the water table, for example), their initial discussion focuses on the "common ground" of the water and the containers for pouring. At some point, the children are drawn into a discussion of volume and water flow as the materials pull the students

into new exploratory activities, dialogue, and subsequent understanding. The dialogues about arts education with the participating teachers in my study led us in differing and informative directions depending upon our ability to remain open not only to each other but also to the *Sache*.

In Gadamer's hermeneutics, dialogue is mediated by language. Grondin (2003) explains:

The unsayable, the unnameable, everything that is outside language, from the time it is evoked or invoked, even if it has to remain voiceless, is at least capable of being said. Gadamer can maintain that in this sense, and in this sense alone, "the being which can be understood is language". What cannot become language is what cannot be understood, as putting into language is parallel to putting into understanding.

(p. 128)

Not only do we encounter the world through our prejudices based on our historical context but these prejudices are embedded in language. Wachterhauser (1986) suggests that "we always understand in terms of some historically shaped language, and long before we control any sphere of discourse it has already shaped our understanding" (pp. 10-11). Gallagher (1992) explains that language both "conditions our interpretations [and] makes possible our interpretations of the world" (p. 107). He suggests that language along with our historical tradition are enabling "because they provide the context of familiarity by which we can approach the unfamiliar" (p. 123). He also acknowledges that language can carry "us outside of ourselves [and open] up a world which is already structured with meaning, and [present] us with ... possibilities which both transcend and belong to each of us" (p. 182).

Usually, our intentions or "wanting-to-say" go beyond what we say. As noted by Montana, one of the participating teachers, regarding our conversations, "It is still hard sometimes to find the right words and to be able to put what you are thinking into words" (Journal Entry, April 2003). In Gadamer's view, "The supreme principle of philosophical hermeneutics ... is that we can never fully say what we want to say" (cited in Grondin, 2003, p. 130). Palmer (1969) notes that:

It takes a great listener to hear what is actually said, a greater one to hear what was not said but what comes to light in the speaking. To focus purely on the positivity of what a text explicitly says is to do an injustice to the hermeneutical task. It is necessary to go behind the text to find what the text did not, and perhaps could not, say.

(p. 234)

Hermeneutics, then, requires one to look behind what is said to find what lies hidden. For Gadamer, "every spoken word has an infinite, unspoken background of meaning" (Pannenberg, 1986, p. 132). Therefore, it is important to look for that which is implicit and unsaid in an account. The hermeneutical approach of this study supports both researcher and participants in reflecting upon our conversations and experiences together, and noting additional thoughts that may arise later (through the technique of journaling, for example¹⁰). This approach also supports me in exploring what remains unsaid as I am able to continue the dialogue with the text of the conversation transcripts and the participating teachers' journal entries.

For Gadamer, an important aspect of dialogue is questioning. He claims that we are able to move beyond the narrow confines of our interpretations "by questioning and opening up" the *Sache* (Gallagher, 1992, p. 167). In Gadamer's view, "The real nature of the sudden idea is ... that a question occurs to us that breaks through into the open and thereby makes an answer possible.... Hence we say that a question 'occurs' to us, that it 'arises' or 'presents itself' more than that we raise it or present it" (1999/1975, p. 366). Weinsheimer (1985) reiterates this view, "Genuine questions, like genuine doubts, occur to us. They happen to us and are not something we do" (p. 208). For Gadamer, "The essence of the *question* is to open up possibilities and keep them open" (1999/1975, p. 299). This does not mean that we necessarily set aside our prejudices but that we risk them by bringing them into play. Maguire (1991) notes that "the very fact that we question ... suggests that we are trying to transcend our own prejudices" (cited in Byrne,

¹⁰ For Adler, keeping journals is a way of "examining one's previously unexamined assumptions" (1994, p. 55).

1998, p. 5). Every question, however, has a horizon that is limited by prejudices and subsequent interpretations are shaped by “the nature of the questions the interpreter brings to the text” (Moss, 2005, p. 266).

Verene (1997) asserts that “the question is natural to language as a form of thought that presumes ... the possibility of dialogue” (p. 146). In tracing the historical development of philosophical hermeneutics, Grondin (1994) notes that “Hermeneutics rests upon dialogical foundations: To interpret a text means to enter into a conversation with it, direct questions to it, and allow oneself to be questioned by it” (p. 74).¹¹ Weinsheimer (1985) asserts that it is important for one to remain “open so that questions can still occur to answerer and questioner alike. Openness to this occurrence, to the event of the question, is hermeneutic consciousness” (p. 208). Each of the participating teachers in the study and I, as researcher, had different questions occur to us as we dialogued about the *Sache* of arts education. It is this difference, and the willingness to explore it, that provides the possibility of broadening horizons.

Gadamer claims that

The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter ... Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well. (1999/1975, p. 296)

The interpretation of curriculum, then, is influenced by the intention of the author(s) and by the situation of the teacher as interpreter. The distance between these two allows for something new to emerge if one is open to the other and willing to let the *Sache* speak. For Gadamer, the purpose of engaging in dialogue is to develop a shared understanding of the *Sache*. This

¹¹ For Gadamerians, a text questions us by surprising us.

understanding goes beyond the views of the text and beyond the interpreter's initial assumptions and prejudices. Warnke (1987) explains:

At the conclusion of a conversation, the initial positions of all participants can be seen to be inadequate positions on their own and are integrated within a richer, more comprehensive view. ... In confronting other cultures, other prejudices and, indeed, the implications that others draw from our own traditions we learn to reflect on both our assumptions and our ideas of reason and to amend them in the direction of a *better* account.

(p. 170)

The successful conclusion of a dialogue results in one's position being informed by others and reaching new understanding (and not solely reproducing the partner's knowledge). This newly informed position is achieved through what Gadamer calls a "fusion of horizons" (1999/1975, p. 306).

Fusion of Horizons

Where two horizons fuse, something arises that did not exist before ... and this happens continuously. Horizons are not rigid but mobile; they are in motion because our prejudgments are constantly put to the test.

(Gadamer, cited in Dutt, 2001, p. 48).

Gadamer claims that understanding is achieved through presenting one's view, thereby placing it at risk, and opening oneself to what the other says. This makes new understanding or a fusion of horizons possible. When horizons fuse, something new arises that neither interlocutor knew before. Such fusing of horizons is only achieved if we are open to the possible truth of others. By engaging in dialogue with others, we develop new understanding that enlarges our horizons. In Gadamer's words, "by sharing, by our participating in the things in which we are participating, we enrich them; they do not become smaller, but larger. ... the whole inner store of our lives is always extending by participating" (cited in Risser, 1997, p. 116). Warnke (1987) suggests that by "coming to an understanding with others we can learn how to amend some of our assumptions and, indeed, how to move to a richer, more developed understanding of the

issues in question” (p. 4). Garrison (1996) states that “the fusion of horizons occurs when the prejudices of ... ourselves and others, creatively blend to yield something new, a new horizon, a new vantage point” (p. 437).

Palmer (1969) notes that “the horizon of meaning within which a text or historical act stands is questioningly approached from within one’s own horizon; and one does not leave his own horizon behind when he interprets, but broadens it so as to fuse it with that of the act or text” (p. 201). Gadamer asserts that reaching an understanding “is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (1999/1975, p. 379). This idea resonates with me as I have seen how conversations with others can change people.

Alexander (1997) further explains this phenomenon:

Through the text, we engage our dialogical imagination, trying to recreate its horizon and allowing ours in turn to respond to it. In this manner the text itself can come to teach us, allowing us, as strangers to its world, to become members. If such an attempt succeeds, then there is that fusion of horizons in which a new community is created.

(p. 337)

Gadamer (1986b) describes this process as dissolving “the tension between the horizons of the text and the reader ... [where] the separate horizons enter into one another” (p. 396). By fusing horizons to produce new understanding, we begin to interpret life events from different standpoints. According to Warnke (1987), “What we experience is the error or partiality of our previous views and we experience this in such a way that we are now too experienced or sophisticated to re-live the experience of believing in them” (p. 26). As teachers’ horizons fuse with others, their understanding shifts in ways that cause them to think about teaching and learning differently.

I have witnessed this phenomenon with teachers who participate in curriculum development projects. The questions and concerns raised at the beginning of a project differ significantly from those raised partway through or near the end of a project. For example, at the beginning of a science curriculum development project, teachers requested that each activity in the curriculum be aligned with one particular textbook (to support teacher planning). Partway through the project, teachers thrived on the freedom to design lessons that drew upon available resources in the community as a way of addressing the diversity of students' learning needs and interests. By the end of the project, the field test teachers were reluctant to have the curriculum tied solely to one textbook in the fear that this might limit the future experience of their colleagues and respective students.

It is not surprising, then, that the teachers participating in my study interpreted the curriculum differently in their practice. Their interpretations, developed through fusing horizons with others, supported each of them in understanding the curriculum in new and particular ways. Any new understanding "of any particular thing adds to or reshapes our knowledge of the whole and will go on to condition our subsequent understanding" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 60). While the whole is understood through the meaning of the parts, the parts are only understood within the context of the whole. This circular movement of understanding from parts to whole and from whole to parts is known as the hermeneutic circle. For Gallagher (1992), "The more movement in this circle, the larger the circle grows, embracing the expanding contexts that throw more and more light upon the parts" (p. 59). It is this movement within the hermeneutic circle that allows us to fuse horizons.

Hermeneutic Circle

... in order to understand something, one needs to begin with ideas, and to use terms, that presuppose a rudimentary understanding of what one is trying to understand.

Understanding turns out to be a development of what is already understood, with the more developed understanding returning to illuminate and enlarge one's starting point.

(Crotty, 1998, p. 92)

The hermeneutic circle "acquires its movement on the basis of an always prior interpretation" (Risser, 1997, p. 95) and consists of "a circular tension between the familiar and the strange" (Kerdeman, 1998a, p. 5). As I encounter new texts and experiences, my horizon of understanding provides a familiar context which influences my interpretation of these new or strange encounters. Within the hermeneutic circle, I am constantly playing off this overall contextual understanding against the understanding of the new parts or encounters. If the new or strange texts or events can fit into my contextual understanding of the whole, then my prejudices are supported and continue to shape my interpretations. If the new or strange events do not fit my contextual framework, then my understanding of the whole needs to be adjusted to accommodate this new or strange part. This adjusted contextual framework, then, begins to inform my interpretations in new ways.

Kerdeman (1998a) suggests that there is a "continuous interplay between 'the whole' we already comprehend and the 'new parts' that surprise and challenge us" (p. 4). The hermeneutic circle provides a space for the familiar 'whole' to embrace the strange 'parts'. Feldman (2000) notes that "the hermeneutic circle underscores the interrelationship between a text and its constituent parts: an interpreter can understand a whole text only by understanding its parts, yet an interpreter can understand the parts only by anticipating an understanding of the whole" (p. 56). This whole-to-part-to-whole activity occurs when young children learn to read.

In the classroom, I often read stories (i.e., the whole) aloud to young children and encouraged them to think about what might happen next or why certain events occurred as they did (i.e., the parts). After the reading, the children expressed their understanding of favourite parts of the story through painting (or an alternative activity) and talked to each other about their expressions. On a second reading of the same story (usually on the following day), the children brought their contextual knowledge of their favourite story events (i.e., the parts) which further influenced their understanding of the 'whole' story. On this reading, I might ask the children to think about why the characters acted the way they did and to dramatize different scenes from the story. A third reading of the story, on the next day, allowed for this additional contextual information about the characters (i.e., the parts) to shape further understanding of the 'whole' story. The children were supported in thinking and talking about how these characters were similar to or different from people in daily life or in other stories. This discussion contributed additional contextual information to enlarge the children's understanding of the 'whole' story. During a fourth reading of the story on a subsequent day, I might draw the children's attention to the rhyming words or nonsense words or repetitive words (i.e., the parts), and provide scaffolds for the children to create their own 'whole' stories using a similar technique. Each iteration of the 'whole' story with a focus on some 'parts' allowed the children to make sense of the parts within an ever expanding understanding of the whole story.

The participating teachers in my study and I each brought a 'whole' picture of arts education to our conversations. Each 'whole' picture was comprised of parts which shaped the current understanding of it. As new parts came to light through our conversations, understandings of the whole shifted to accommodate these new parts. Each accommodation required an acknowledgement and perhaps a recasting of a prejudice to support the new understanding of the

whole. These new understandings then coloured future interpretations of new information or parts that our conversations uncovered related to the *Sache*. For Cary, one of the participating teachers in the study, who “learned a lot” from her involvement with a colleague’s drama, Cary’s understanding of the ‘whole’ of drama shifted to accommodate the new ‘parts’ “about body language and using expressive voice” (Conversation #4, p. 4).

Understanding new or strange parts is dependent on our understanding of the larger structure or whole. Concomitantly, the whole becomes evident to us as we make sense of the parts. Palmer (1969) describes this phenomenon:

... an individual concept derives its meaning from a context or horizon within which it stands; yet the horizon is made up of the very elements to which it gives meaning. By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular, then.

(p. 87)

Gadamer scholar Georgia Warnke (2002a) notes that the hermeneutic circle is where “we test our prejudices by retaining only those that allow an understanding of the whole in terms of the parts and the parts in terms of the whole” (p. 320). In this way, the hermeneutic circle is an opening process as it is continuously renewed through new information. For Aoki (1987b), a hermeneutic circle re-enters “home always at a different point, thus coming to know the beginning point for the first time” (p. 242). Hunsberger (1992) finds that “out of the circularity emerges a richer, fuller interpretation” (p. 87). The hermeneutic circle, while constraining the possibilities of interpretation, also has the potential to transform understanding. Such transformation occurs through the application of the new or ‘strange’ information to one’s ‘familiar’ local situation.

Application

... the text ... if it is to be understood properly ... must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.

(Gadamer, 1999/1975, p. 309)

According to Gadamer, “all understanding contains an irreducible temporal, historical condition ... the situation” (Grieder, 2001, p. 112). Our situation provides the context which informs our interpretations of new texts or events. In describing Gadamer’s view, Connolly (2002) notes that “genuine understanding always involves both explication of the text and its application to the reader’s own situation” (p. 84). Through this process, meaning “comes into being” (Feldman, 2000, p. 55). For Gadamer, “In order to understand, [one] cannot disregard himself and the concrete hermeneutic situation in which he exists. He must relate the text to this situation if he wants to understand at all” (cited in Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 192). As I interpret events or texts, I make sense of them by applying them to my own situation or what I already know. Hence, my interpretation of a physics text will not be very productive as I bring little, if any, contextual information to this *Sache*. Whereas my colleague, who loves science and is very knowledgeable about scientific principles and events, will interpret the same physics text differently (and more productively) by applying it to his broader knowledge and understanding of science.

Grondin (1990) explains that application is not a process that begins after understanding for “to understand a text or a meaning is always to know how to apply it to our situation” (cited in Byrne, 1998, p. 6). Each participating teacher in my study interpreted aspects or parts of the provincial arts education curriculum based on her respective ‘whole’ contextual situation. Each interpretation was shaped by the students, parents, and community; the principal, teachers, and others in the school; and the knowledge, dispositions, and abilities of the teacher. When teaching a class of rambunctious students in the late 1980s who liked to “pretend kickbox” at recess, I automatically “applied” a dance lesson on kicks, twirls, and leaps from the curriculum to this group of students through a lens of safety where my teaching colleagues no doubt interpreted the

same lesson differently when “applying” it to their particular teaching situation. In making sense of the “observing trees” activity in the curriculum, Chelsea (one of the participating teachers) “applied” her situation of student interest in penguins, and transformed the activity to develop students’ observation and other perceptual abilities through a salt clay project. (See Chapter 4 for photographs of two of the salt clay penguins that students created.)

For Gadamer, understanding is always applied understanding to a specific situation. In particular, his interest in meaning centres on such “conditions of understanding” (Chamberlain, 1982, p. 6). Because we “take ourselves along whenever we understand”, Grondin (1994) notes that in Gadamer’s view, “understanding and application are indivisibly fused” (p. 115). Connolly (2002) emphasizes this notion when he states that “to understand a text *is* to be able to explicate it and *thus* to apply it to oneself in one’s particular historical situation” (p. 77). Understanding occurs as I relate or apply new information to my situation in order to make sense of this new information. It is through such application that interpretation and understanding occur. For example, because I have taken formal music lessons, I understand the note system. When interpreting the curriculum’s expectations around beat and pattern in music, I intuitively apply and come to understand this information in relation to the formal note system that I know. This knowledge may be helpful in that I know where students’ current learning may take them in the future. Alternatively, this knowledge may be problematic in that I may move students toward a more formal level of learning which is neither age appropriate nor the intention of the curriculum.

Chamberlain (1982) relates this trio of application, interpretation, and understanding to dialogue and notes that “broadly seen, application involves being able to see what is at stake in a conversation” (p. 9). In any dialogue, I make sense of the *Sache*, the matter at hand, in relation to

my current understanding and my situation. Such sense making or application allows me to develop interpretations through fusing horizons which enlarges my horizon of understanding and shapes my future interpretations and practice. For example, listening to others and applying my situation when interpreting the ideas causes me to reflect on my own practices and evaluate whether they demonstrate the principles under discussion. This new understanding then supports me in re-evaluating my principles or in monitoring my practices more closely to ensure they adhere to my espoused principles.

For Gadamerians, “hermeneutics is best understood as the triunion of understanding and interpretation with application in one integral unit” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 185). This involves a tension between “remaining open to that which requires interpretation and tending to the claims made by the interpreter’s own circumstance” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 349). It is finding a “common sense between the strange and the familiar” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 184). To dwell in such ‘in between’ space allows new understanding to arise.

Summary of Conceptual Frame

It may be timely to remind the reader that the elements within this conceptual frame are not a complete or exhaustive description of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. Rather, I have chosen these elements as they provide key parameters for framing my study and coming to understand the conditions that influence teachers’ interpretations of curriculum. It is my belief that such conditions are the types of knowledge and truth that are “only available to us through hermeneutical understanding” (Wachterhauser, 1986, p. 96). I acknowledge that the description of the elements in my conceptual frame could be ordered in any number of ways. I have nonetheless attempted to choose a sequence that flows for the reader while knowing that alternative orderings may be more illuminating for some readers.

In summary, then, I use Gadamer's work on hermeneutics to investigate how teachers interpret the provincial arts education curriculum and how these interpretations are reflected in teaching practice. Gadamer contends that all understanding is historically situated and that we understand through the prejudices that comprise our ways of making sense of our experiences. Through these prejudices, we develop a horizon of understanding which shapes our view of the world. It is possible, however, to revise our prejudices and expand our horizons by being genuinely open to new experiences and to others through dialogue. By being open to others, we raise our prejudices for questioning. Gadamer describes this as "putting one's prejudices into play ... and writes ... 'Whoever wants to understand a text is rather prepared to let it say something to him. Hence a hermeneutically schooled consciousness must be sensitive to the otherness of the text from the beginning'" (Warnke, 1987, p. 87). For Gadamer, dialogue with others (including texts) is a way to move beyond our prejudices and develop shared interpretations of the *Sache*. These shared interpretations and new insights are developed by fusing horizons of understanding. Each shared interpretation or agreement contributes to a broader conversation and tends to last

... no longer than the community of thinkers who create it, which means that the agreement reached might endure only a moment or might be sustained by like-minded thinkers for a much longer duration, perhaps centuries, or even eras, as the ancients might put it.

(Sullivan, 1997, p. 237)

As we come to understand new texts or events (even in limited ways), such understanding has the potential to inform the broader context of our horizons which, then, influence our interpretations of future experiences. These new experiences are interpreted by applying them to our own situation. For Gadamer, we cannot separate understanding from application and interpretation.

I am interested in how teachers make sense of curriculum, how they understand arts education and teaching it, and how they act in consequence. In Gadamer's view, our understanding is always in process and "on the way". Hoy (1979) claims that "Understanding is also both theoretical and practical, so hermeneutics must give an account of the conditions of both knowledge and action" (p. 89). My study is intended to provide such an account.

Weaknesses of Conceptual Frame

Weaknesses of this conceptual frame relate to three main charges that are leveled at Gadamer's hermeneutics: the fear of relativism, the significance of the interpreter, and the conservatism of tradition. The basis for each charge with some explanatory remarks follows.

A relativist charge presupposes that there are no differences between positions that illuminate meaning or those that distort meaning. Such critics argue that if, according to Gadamer, all understanding is historically situated, then all positions are valid. Further, Kristeva (1983) maintains that interpretations reflect hidden desires which make the meaning of a situation secondary (p. 92). In Gadamer's view, relativism is mitigated by the text itself. As Gallagher (1992) observes, "No matter how we read Plato, for example, we never end up with Milton; the text itself constrains our interpretation" (p. 10). Dworkin (1983) notes that interpretation is always interpretation of something which permits interpretations that attempt to explain it but not those that attempt to change it (p. 253). Gadamer also claims that meaning occurs between partners engaging in dialogue. In order for such dialogue to be successful, each partner must consider the other. An openness to engage in dialogue with others (including texts)¹² allows us to learn from differing perspectives and, perhaps, to reach common understanding or agreement.

¹² Gadamer understands a text to function like a partner in dialogue.

The accusation of emphasizing the significance an interpreter brings to a text over the meaning of a particular text is founded in Gadamer's hermeneutic circle. Through this circle, an interpreter understands a text through applying it to her own situation. This application, then, colours the meaning of a text with significance being determined by the interpreter. For critics, this places too little emphasis on the meaning of a text. Gadamer, however, sees the hermeneutic experience as a dialogue between the text, with its own horizon, and the interpreter, also with her own horizon. There is, then, a productivity of interpretation that results between the author and the reader. Gadamer claims that the distance (whether temporal or cultural) between the original author and the current reader is "a positive and productive condition enabling understanding" (1999/1975, p. 297). This distance between the intentions of the author and the subjectivity of the reader is where new understanding emerges.

For Gadamer, coming to agreement with others "involves more than either a knowledge of what an author's intentions were or a capacity to reconstruct them" (Warnke, 1987, p. 47). The aim of dialogue is to uncover the truth of the *Sache* or subject matter. As Gadamer states, the thinking involved in dialogue "means unfolding what consistently follows from the subject matter itself" (1999/1975, p. 464). Although the aim is to understand the *Sache*, it does not determine the direction the conversation will take; rather, the *Sache* provides a "loose boundary" (Hostetler, 1993, p. 44). By being open to what the other has to say about the *Sache*, the partners enter into a tension with their respective understandings. It is in this tension that new understanding arises. Such understanding emerges out of the dialogue instead of being brought into the dialogue by either partner.

The conservatist charge argues for the need to be able to stand outside the influence of tradition. One of the most famous and influential critics of Gadamer's philosophy is Habermas

(1986) who warns that Gadamer's understanding of tradition can be used to legitimate indoctrination (p. 269) and ignores the political and economic forces of society that influence our thought and communication (pp. 272-273). Michaels (1983) affirms that interpretations are often influenced by political interests (p. 335). Booth (1983) notes the importance of resisting power and distinguishing between "*freedom from* external restraints and the power of others to inhibit our actions, and *freedom to* act effectively when restraints disappear" (p. 52).

Critics who reject Gadamer's claim regarding the influence of tradition argue for the possibility of "objective" or neutral knowledge. Dilthey (1989) claims that objective interpretations are possible and insists on interpreters "suppressing at least *some* kinds of practical interest and prejudgement prior to beginning research" (Harrington, 1999, p. 496). To Gadamer, knowledge is found in specific contexts and is not neutral or context-free. He argues that traditions initiate "us into the way of life of a culture [and] that we could not conceive of ourselves and the culture without depending on them" (Misgeld, 1979, p. 225). For this reason, Gadamer considers tradition to be a partner in any dialogue. He claims that tradition brings a horizon to the dialogue and presents its "truth", similar to other partners in the dialogue. For Gadamer, understanding is always rooted in experience and notions of truth are formed by our historical situatedness. In this sense, no truth is unalterable or valid forever.¹³ Our prejudices together with our temporal horizons cause the meaning of texts to be indeterminate. This "indeterminacy of a text opens up the possibility for ... new experience. Thus Gadamer says, 'the very idea of a definitive interpretation seems to be intrinsically contradictory. Interpretation is always on the way'" (Chen, 1987, p. 189). This interpretation is influenced by our history and our openness to others (including texts).

¹³ For Wiehl (1990), truth "is not more than a state of affairs that is particularly worthy of questioning" (p. 35).

To respond to such criticisms regarding potentially problematic aspects that are inherent in my conceptual frame, I suggest that there are sufficient checks embedded within it. Such checks include a focus on the *Sache* and on an openness to engage in critical dialogue. For Gadamer, the “only means that we have for reaching clarity about our situation ... lies in continued dialogue about it” (Warnke, 1990, p. 157). By focusing on the *Sache* of arts education (as expressed in the provincial curriculum) through critical dialogue with the participating teachers, I hope to mitigate the weaknesses raised in this section.

Concluding Remarks

Shkedi (1998) asserts that teachers are the primary source for understanding their knowledge and thinking. Although teachers are creating knowledge about teaching and learning in their work, we rarely find their voices in research (Johnston, 1993; Jenne, 1994). My conceptual frame allows me to explore this knowledge and to make a space for the voices of teachers. Olson (2000) asserts that “until teachers’ narrative knowledge of curriculum is valued more widely by themselves and others ..., this narrative knowledge will continue to implicitly drive teachers’ curriculum decision making in unexamined ways” (p. 174). The conceptual frame for my study, based on Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, allows me to explore teachers’ understanding of curriculum and supports me in identifying “both the barriers to ... understanding and the conditions that make it possible” (Chambers, 2003, p. 227). The hermeneutic approach of my study also makes a space for my interpretive presence, as researcher. The next chapter describes how I designed the study to provide this space for the participating teachers and myself.

CHAPTER 3: EXPLORING HORIZONS

The design of my study facilitates the exploration of the participating teachers' understanding of curriculum and supports them in sense making and in speaking for themselves. As Schwandt (2000) succinctly states, "The goal of philosophical hermeneutics is philosophical – that is, to understand what is involved in the process of understanding itself" (p. 196). For Jardine (1992), a hermeneutic approach is "concerned with the ambiguous nature of life itself. It does not desire to render such ambiguity objectively presentable ... but rather to attend to it, to give it a voice" (p. 119). This approach involves an interpretive process. Mason (1996) advises that

... explorations involve selective viewing and interpretation; they cannot be neutral, objective or total. The elements which a researcher chooses to see as relevant ... will be based, implicitly or explicitly, on a way of seeing the social world, and on a particular form of explanatory logic.

(p. 6)

My way of seeing the world predisposes me, as a researcher, to be interested in and to look for how others make sense of their environment. Gubrium and Holstein (1997) describe this approach as "'worlding' ... shifting the focus from the substance of reality to reality construction practices" (p. 39). Such constructions of reality are shaped by horizons of understanding. A hermeneutic approach allows "access to the horizons from which different interpretations arise" (Warnke, 2002, p. 307). This approach supports me in paying attention to the participating teachers' experiences and in coming to understand the sense making that occurs within their horizons of understanding. My ability to understand increases as I open myself to the possibilities offered by the teachers' vantage points.

Further, my sense making centres on experience and is "an attempt to express how things *already stand* with us in the world, how we are *already living*" (Jardine, 1998, p.21). Jardine's statement is reassuring as it reminds me that I am exploring something that already exists and

that my role as researcher is to make sense of what is already there. In his view, the goal of a hermeneutic approach is “to educe understanding, to bring forth the presuppositions in which we already live” (1992, p. 116). Grondin (2003) describes this process as “being awakened to something” (p.97). Such awakening occurs when horizons fuse.

My exploration in this study used Wolcott’s (1994) “three major modes” through which qualitative researchers generate empirical materials: classroom visits (experiencing), conversations (enquiring), and “studying materials prepared by others (examining)” (p. 10). I chose these modes as they complement my conceptual frame and lend themselves to exploring the participating teachers’ lived worlds, to supporting the generation of varied empirical materials, and to developing a credible account.

A Hermeneutic Approach

The hermeneutic approach of this study entailed spending time with a small group of teachers, taking on a participant-observer role, engaging in conversations related to curriculum, visiting classrooms, and studying materials such as school newsletters and teachers’ journal entries. A description of my approach follows. Through this description, the delimitations of my study are shown. I conclude the chapter by acknowledging the limitations of the study.

Participating Teachers

... researchers should be guided by the objectives of the study and should recognize that while “representativeness” may at times be a crucial requirement, at other times kneeling before the gods of randomness impedes rather than facilitates understanding.
(Palys, 1997, p. 139)

This exploration, during the 2002-03 school year, focused on four teachers at the Elementary Level (grades 1-5). These teachers were in the same school division but taught in different schools. (See Appendix A for a copy of the request letter that was sent to the school division central office.) Typical of most Elementary Level teachers in Saskatchewan, the participating

teachers in this study are female. They were identified by their school division central office administrators as attempting to make sense of curriculum.¹⁴ Figure 3.1 below provides a list of criteria that were used to select the teachers. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993), such criteria need to be clearly defined so that the chosen participants can inform the particular research to be undertaken.

Figure 3.1. Criteria for Selecting Participating Teachers.

Number of teachers = 4

To include:

- each grade at the Elementary Level (grades 1-5)
- four different schools
- generalist teachers rather than specialist teachers (i.e., no arts education majors)
- varied teaching experience (i.e., less than 5 years to more than 10 years)
- varied educational background (e.g., special education, early childhood education)
- teachers *attempting* to make sense of curriculum (i.e., successful experience is not a prerequisite).

The criteria for selecting the participating teachers were intended to support the generation of varied empirical materials among a group of typical teachers within Saskatchewan schools. Most of the criteria were focused on providing a range of teachers according to their educational background, teaching experience, school location, and grade level being taught. For Stake (2000), “building in variety” within a design that promotes “opportunities for intensive study” strengthens qualitative fieldwork (p. 446). By including a criterion for non-specialist teachers, my purpose was to explore their interpretations based on little or no prior educational experience in arts education (which is typical of most teachers in Saskatchewan). The most important criterion for my study was to work with teachers who were attempting to make sense of the arts education curriculum.

¹⁴ There is anecdotal evidence, along with results of provincial assessments, which shows that aspects of curriculum are not embraced by all schools/school divisions. Therefore, it was important for my study that I spend time with teachers who *are* attempting to interpret the curriculum for their practice.

This group of participating teachers was not intended to be representative of *all* teachers but to provide insights into the experiences of four teachers who are attempting to make sense of the Elementary arts education curriculum. Grondin (2002), however, claims that “the limited case allows us better to apprehend the universal” (pp. 106-107). According to Mason (1996), such “theoretical sampling” allows the researcher to select participants based on their relevance to the research question, to the theoretical position and analytical practice of the researcher, and “most importantly to the explanation or account” being developed (p. 94). Palys (1997) notes that exploratory researchers “favour a more *strategic* sampling of insightful informants or revealing situations” (p. 79). Similarly, Stake (2000) leans toward “cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn [as the] potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness” (p. 446). Further, Jardine (1998) describes the “fecundity of the individual case” as having implications for the “old growth” from which it has erupted (p. 42). This fecundity implies that the complexity and richness of detail from individual cases has the potential to inform general practice. Including only four teachers in the study allowed more time to be spent with each teacher but did not overwhelm any particular teacher with unreasonable time demands.

The arts education curriculum (and its philosophical stance) is new to most teachers in the province. It was introduced at the Elementary Level (grades 1-5) in the early 1990s. While most teachers have experienced learning and have some models for teaching in areas of study such as English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies, most teachers have not experienced all four strands of arts education (i.e., dance, drama, music, and visual art) in their own K-12 schooling careers. It follows, then, that the paradigm of arts education for most teachers in Saskatchewan schools would not necessarily have been developed from experiences

in all four strands or with all three components (i.e., creative/productive, critical/responsive, cultural/ historical). I chose the Elementary Level as this is where most of my teaching experience occurs and where I bring the most contextualized understanding.

I chose one area of study at one level (i.e., Elementary Level) as I planned to bring the participating teachers together near the end of the study to discuss their ideas related to arts education (which would provide the *Sache* or common ground for the group discussion). Consistent feedback from teachers involved in field testing curriculum is that teachers prefer to share ideas with others teaching at the same grade levels. Conducting the study over a school year allowed the participating teachers to become comfortable with me, to gain additional experiences to inform our conversations, and to reflect upon their practice. In my experience, understandings gained through reflective practice cause horizons to shift so that students, teaching, and learning are no longer viewed in the same way.

The teachers for this study were teaching in a rural school division. The reasons for the selection of this particular school division follow. First, most of the school divisions in Saskatchewan are rural. Thus, the selected school division is typical of many of the school divisions in the province. Second, the central office school division personnel support teacher risk taking in addressing various aspects of curriculum. Third, the selected school division is within two hours driving distance from where I live. This allows me reasonable access to the participating teachers and their schools. Finally, the central office personnel are knowledgeable about, and have visited the classroom of, each teacher in the school division. I was confident that they would be able to select four teachers for my study, and would continue to support these teachers after I left the research site.

Participant-observer Role

Through participant observation ... you learn firsthand how the actions of research participants correspond to their words; see patterns of behavior; experience the unexpected, as well as the expected; and develop a quality of trust with your others that motivates them to tell you what otherwise they might not.

(Glesne, 1999, p. 43)

My role in this study was that of a participant-observer. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) argue that "*all* social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it" (p. 249). In Glesne's (1999) view, "The main outcome of participant observation is to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behavior" (p. 45). With these perspectives in mind, I set about finding a research site and some participants. As Palys (1997) notes, the first problem for the participant-observer is "access" (p. 200). I thought that access would be relatively easy as I came with connections (i.e., I knew the central office school division personnel), an account (i.e., I had a description of my proposed research), a need for knowledge (i.e., I wanted to explore how teachers make sense of curriculum), and courtesy (i.e., I attempt to behave in respectful ways). According to Lofland and Lofland (1984), such criteria are effective in gaining access. While they were effective in gaining access to the school division central office personnel, it was a different matter finding the teachers. As it turned out, one of the four teachers chosen for the study became scheduled for surgery in early Fall so a replacement teacher was sought. The replacement teacher had a new grandchild in the family and wanted to devote her energy to the new baby. The next two replacement teachers felt that they did not have time to dedicate to my study. It was at this point that I hearkened back to the words of colleagues in my doctoral cohort who had cautioned that finding teachers to work with me (i.e., an employee of the Ministry of Learning), in the lengthy type of study I was proposing, might be difficult. I now understood what my colleagues were talking about! In the

end, a teacher was found who was willing to participate in my study which rounded out the group to four participating teachers.

My initial entry to the field involved “casing the joint”. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993), this includes “getting acquainted with participants, learning where they congregate, recording demographic characteristics of a study group, mapping the physical layout of a site, and creating a description of the context of the phenomenon under consideration” (p. 113). Early in the school year, I visited each school to meet the participating teacher and the respective school principal to discuss the purpose, and subsequent plans for, my study. In some cases, I was introduced to the students of the teacher and in all cases, I engaged in walk-about in the community to get a sense of the local school environment.

Erickson (1973) notes that the task of the researcher is to make the familiar strange. I attempted to observe the teachers and their environments similar to how twelve-year old Jonas (in *The Giver*) viewed the world when he ventured outside of his community for the first time:

All of it was new to him. After a life of Sameness and predictability, he was awed by the surprises that lay beyond each curve of the road. He slowed the bike again and again to look with wonder at wildflowers, to enjoy the throaty warble of a new bird nearby, or merely to watch the way wind shifted the leaves in the trees. During his twelve years in the community, he had never felt such simple moments of exquisite happiness.

(Lowry, 1993, p. 172)

Notwithstanding my intentions, I was keenly aware that my horizon of understanding would allow me to observe some aspects of the teachers and their environments while leaving other aspects unnoticed. Palys (1997) suggests that

Invariably, we begin by relying heavily on existing knowledge, whether derived from the more formal literature or from our “common sense.” We never enter a situation devoid of theoretical constructs: there’s no such thing as immaculate perception.... New knowledge can’t be created unless we trust a good portion of the knowledge we already have.

(p. 304)

My goal was to remain open to seeing situations and events as they occurred and making sense of them through a circular tension where each new or strange “part” would inform my larger, familiar “whole” or theoretical construct. Making sense of each “part” occurred through applying the new information to my own situation.

Each school environment provided a new array of sights, sounds, smells, and tactile experiences for me. I was particularly interested in the students, staff, entrances, hallways, bulletin board displays, principal’s office, washrooms, and playground space. I noted as much as possible in my field notes even if I was unsure of the potential usefulness. Lofland (1971) suggests that one ought to write everything down, no matter how unimportant it may seem. For Wolcott (1994), “the better observers are those who do not reflexively make sense out of what they see and hear when they are engaging in formal observation” (p. 169). My intention was to treat each situation as if it was new and to ask myself, as suggested by Wolcott (1994), “What might another observer notice in this setting?” (p. 169).

As a participant-observer, and similar to other researchers, my role was to learn and to be aware of how my assumptions might shape how I went about such learning. Throughout the study, I made a point to pay attention to what the participants *did* know (Wolcott, 1994, p. 289). That is, to note what *was*, rather than looking for some predetermined aspect that *was not*. I also thought it was my responsibility to develop trusting and respectful relationships with the participating teachers and to ensure their comfort and confidence throughout the study. My goal was to contribute to the classroom and school environment in a constructive manner so that my presence would not be perceived as a burden by the students or school staff.

Curriculum Conversations

“Talk” is essential for understanding how participants view their worlds. Often, deeper understandings are developed through the dialogue of long, in-depth interviews, as interviewer and participant “co-construct” meaning.

(Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 124)

Hermeneutics is concerned with meaning – with ways to explain and interpret perceived reality. To some extent, every interpretation involves some creativity, although hermeneutics aims at obtaining a valid and common understanding of the meaning of something. This understanding is developed through a communicative process with both the researcher and participants learning through dialogue. The meanings of the conversation belong to neither, but exist between them. Further,

The intentions of the conversing partners give way to what Gadamer calls “the law of the subject matter.” When one enters into a dialogue with another person and is then carried further by the dialogue, it is no longer the will of the individual person that is determinative. Rather, the law of the subject matter is at issue, and it elicits statement and counterstatement and in the end plays these into each other.

(Kvale, 1996, p. 21)

Clearly, the researcher and the participants act in relation to each other and reciprocally influence each other. What may not be seen as clearly is that, at some point, the *Sache* or subject matter under discussion takes on a life of its own and orchestrates those involved in the dialogue in a search for meaning.

The original Latin meaning of “conversation” is “wandering together with”. As researcher, I wandered together with the participating teachers (through dialogue) in search of meaning. According to Kvale, structured dialogues or interviews “are particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world” (p. 105). Further, Glesne (1999) notes that participating in processes such as dialogue “propels

participants to become more reflective on aspects of their lives” (p. 198). Conversations were used in this study to support the development of shared meaning through fusing horizons. These conversations allowed me to tap into the participating teachers’ historical situatedness, and allowed us to explore ideas through a hermeneutic circle where new information was interpreted within a larger context while also informing this context. The conversations provided an opportunity to see how each teacher made sense of the curriculum through applying it to her own situation.

The dialogues were somewhat structured in that I developed a tentative set of questions to guide the conversations. They were open in that I was prepared to follow “unexpected leads” that arose (Glesne, 1999, p. 93). Each conversation typically lasted between forty minutes and one hour, and was held at a location of the participant’s choosing. Appendix B contains an excerpt from the Conversation Records Chart (based on Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) that I developed to record dates, times, and notes related to the conversations with the teachers. These conversations were audiotaped and then transcribed.¹⁵ Anderson and Jack (1991) note that such audiotapes

... preserve a living interchange for present and future use; we can rummage through [audiotapes] as we do through an old attic – probing, comparing, checking insights, finding new treasures the third time through, then arranging and carefully documenting our results.

(p. 11)

I coded the transcripts manually by identifying themes that arose during the conversations. As a theme arose for the first time, I developed a corresponding code. These initial themes, although provisional, generated ideas and questions for the subsequent conversation with each

¹⁵ I used ViaVoice software for the first transcription but found the voice recognition slower than my keyboarding. The software misunderstood words even though I had worked through 6 “training” hours. Hence, I only used the software to transfer the audiotaped conversations to the computer where I could vary the rate of speech for my own transcribing.

participating teacher. As noted by Strauss (1987), coding “fractures the data [yet] moves toward ultimate integration of the entire analysis” (p. 55).

I engaged in four in-depth conversations with each of the participating teachers and then brought them together for a culminating group discussion. Due to urgent seasonal farming demands and the responsibility of raising a young family, one of the teachers was unable to attend the group discussion. She provided her responses on the group discussion transcript instead. According to Madriz (2000), “group participants find the experience ... more gratifying and stimulating than individual interviews” (p. 835). She claims that the group “empowers participants to take control of the discussion process, moving the conversation toward areas of the topic relevant to *them*, sometimes encouraging and even compelling the researcher to reconsider her views on a certain subject” (p. 847). Belgrave and Smith (1994) assert that “a potential strength” of group discussion is that the participants “themselves might bring up issues the researcher would not think to raise” (p. 244). For example, in the group discussion, the teachers directed the conversation to areas of concern such as the pressure of teaching young children to read and the low status accorded to arts education by parents, in general. Palys (1997) notes that group discussion “places opinions ‘on the table’ where differences among perspectives can be highlighted and negotiated ... [and] allows participants to embellish on positions, discuss related dynamics, and articulate the rationale(s) underlying their perspective” (p. 157). Fontana and Frey (1994) note that group discussions have the advantages of “being data rich, flexible, [as well as] stimulating” for participants (p. 365). Rossman and Rallis (1998) emphasize the importance of creating an open and permissive environment in order “to encourage discussion and the expression of differing opinions and points of view” (p. 135). The discussion group can also minimize the influence of the researcher by providing the opportunity for participants to talk

to each other, thereby heightening the opportunity for them to wander through the *Sache* in ways that allow for the application of particular contexts (as the teachers engage in sense making) and the exploration of particular interests.

Appendix C lists the questions used to stimulate conversation during the initial dialogue. These questions are adapted from a set of questions that I field tested during a previous qualitative research class in which I was enrolled. For maximum flexibility, some qualitative researchers prefer to list key issues rather than develop a script of questions. Other researchers “use props such as card sorts or pictures as stimuli for specific information” (Glesne, 1999, p. 31). Mason (1996) reminds us, however, that it is not “possible to ‘collect’ data in a wholly unstructured way through a qualitative interview, because the decisions and judgements the researcher makes give some form of structure and purpose to the data generation process” (p. 47). Gubrium and Holstein (1997) suggest that “questions can be viewed as a form of *narrative incitement*” (p. 154). Further, Hammersley and Atkinson (1996) remind us that conversations, “like any other kind of social interaction, are structured by both researcher and [participant]” (pp. 151-152). Mishler (1986) notes that the researcher’s presence “as a coparticipant is an unavoidable and essential component of the discourse [and a researcher’s] mode of questioning influences a story’s production” (p. 105). As a novice researcher, I thought I needed a somewhat structured way to initiate conversation and teacher storytelling.

The initial questions focused on the personal and professional backgrounds of the participating teachers. Anderson and Jack (1991) suggest that “if the narrator is to have the chance to tell her own story, the ... first question needs to be very open-ended. It needs to convey the message that in this situation, the narrator’s interpretation of her experience guides [the conversation]” (p. 24). In their view, such conversation “offers possibilities of freedom and

flexibility for researchers and narrators alike. For the narrator, [it] provides the opportunity to tell her own story in her own terms" (p. 11). Hess (1993) claims that telling personal narratives "is an indispensable means for uncovering the prejudices that make us who we are [and that] only through such narrative telling [can] the complex mixture of intentions that guide our actions ... begin to be sorted out" (p. 59). Mishler (1986) suggests that "telling stories is a significant way for individuals to give meaning to and express their understandings of their experiences" (p. 75).

He also notes that

We are more likely to find stories ... where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses. Nonetheless respondents may also tell stories in response to direct, specific questions if they are not interrupted by interviewers trying to keep them to the "point."

(p. 69)

The questions I generated for each conversation were designed to support the participating teachers in telling stories. I did not worry about keeping the teachers to the "point" as I wanted to know about *their* experiences and ideas. I used extended wait time (i.e., 10-15 seconds) to allow the teachers to tell their stories in their own way. When the wait time expired, I offered prompts and followed leads to facilitate extended storytelling.

Because of the influence of historical situatedness in shaping horizons of understanding, I thought it was important to interpret the participants' responses within the contexts of their personal and professional lives. In Goodson's (1985) view, "the analysis of subjective perceptions and intentions is incomplete without analysis of the historical context in which they occur" (p. 123). Further, Carter (1993) states that

... teaching events are framed within a context of a teacher's life history. As a result, the central themes are often moral and philosophical, having more to do with feelings, purposes, images, aspirations, and personal meanings than with teaching method or curriculum structures in isolation from personal experience or biography.

(pp. 7-8)

These claims support Gadamer's position that hermeneutical understanding is shaped by our historical situatedness. For Gadamer, understanding is a process in which past and present are constantly mediated. In a sense, the hermeneutic circle is a way of making sense of the present within the context of the past. Because I believe that teachers' life histories shape their lived experiences with curricula, I explored this aspect in the initial conversation with each participant.

After the initial dialogue, I drafted a subsequent set of questions related to the ideas raised (by each participating teacher) to continue the respective discussion during a second conversation. A similar process was followed in developing the third and fourth sets of questions to support dialogue, and in designing a set of questions for the culminating group discussion. In some cases, ideas introduced by one participating teacher were considered useful areas to explore with the other teachers. I did not necessarily use the same questions to engage in these subsequent conversations with each participating teacher. Instead, I chose questions that allowed me to pursue "unusual and intriguing points" raised by the particular teacher (Shank & Villella, 2004, p. 52). Although the questions and flow of discussion differed with each teacher as we progressed through the iterative process of the four individual conversations, my attention was centred primarily on her interpretation of the arts education curriculum in her practice and the conditions that influenced this interpretation.

A typical conversation tended to focus on the recent classroom visit, follow-up questions generated by the previous dialogue and participant's journal writing, new areas for exploration in the current conversation, and any additional questions that the participating teacher was interested in discussing. I asked each teacher to bring questions about ideas that occurred after our conversations and about areas participants were wondering about and wanted to explore together in our upcoming dialogue. Hess (1993) suggests that "sharing questions are a useful tool

for helping persons bring to consciousness some of the important preunderstandings that they bring” (p. 60). Such questions also allowed the participating teachers to direct the flow of the conversation. My intention was to shift “from information gathering, where the focus is on the right questions, to interaction, where the focus is on process, on the dynamic unfolding of the subject’s viewpoint” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 23).

These conversations occurred bi-monthly. (See Appendix D for a schedule of events.) Extending the study over the length of a school year comfortably allowed for four individual dialogues with each participant as well as a culminating group discussion. Engaging in four individual conversations with each participant was helpful in supporting the participant-researcher relationship. This iterative process also provided additional opportunities for exploring and facilitating participants’ thinking as Toma (2000) finds that “sharing ideas and thoughts ... [helps participants] to make new and deeper connections between aspects of their experiences” (p. 180). In discussing factors that influence dialogue or interview processes, Measor (1985) suggests that “the quality of the data is dependent on the quality of the relationships you build” (p. 57). One of my purposes for engaging in four individual conversations with each teacher, over a school year, was to build the teachers’ comfort level with me, thereby developing trusting relationships in a thoughtful and respectful way. I believe that I was successful in this regard as the teachers (and their students) were always happy to see me and commented frequently, often in their journals, about the benefits of being involved in this study.

In the schedule of events (Appendix D), I built in time for each teacher to respond to the respective transcript of the audiotaped conversation and to the initial themes that I noted in our discussion. This ongoing analysis throughout the study was an attempt to honour the perspective

of each participating teacher, support me in reflecting upon and organizing my learning, and determine areas for further exploration. Palys (1997) suggests that, when engaging in research (particularly with people who are different from ourselves), we need to seek input from “those who will be most affected and whose perspectives we seek to represent” (p. 206). Sharing my analysis of the emergent themes with the participating teachers throughout the school year was a strategy I used to acknowledge the importance of the teachers’ ideas, identify any omissions along with researcher biases, and flag potential flaws in analysis.

Measor (1985) stresses the importance of teachers reviewing the research that concerns them. Lather (1991) asserts that “persons, as autonomous beings, have a moral right to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them” (p. 55). Kvale (1996) argues that such analysis is an issue of ethics, and of the right and power to attribute meaning to the statements of others. In respecting the participating teachers’ knowledge, understanding, and rights, I forwarded each transcript with the preliminary analysis to the respective teacher and asked her to: 1) verify that my initial analysis reflected her perspectives accurately, 2) inform me of transcript sections that could be problematic for any reason, and c) alert me to new ideas and meanings (Glesne, 1999, p. 152). I synthesized the teachers’ responses regarding my interpretation of each conversation to determine direction and focus for the next conversation.

I transcribed the audiotaped dialogues myself. In this way, I was able to figure out muffled words (that a transcriptionist might not), learn how to facilitate conversation better (by listening to and transcribing my interactions), and note my initial thoughts and analysis while listening to the audiotapes during the transcribing process. Glesne (1999) observes that transcribing allows “you [to] gain some idea of ... what you need to improve, what you have learned, and what points you need to explore further” (p. 80). Rossman and Rallis (1998) argue

that there is no substitute for transcribing as it “familiarizes you with the data, provides leads for further data gathering, provokes insights, and stimulates analytic thinking” (p. 178). I was able to insert wait times, laughter, and other aspects of our conversations into the transcripts to provide additional context for review and analysis. In my experience, transcribing is a worthwhile activity that prompts thinking and is not solely a technical task. The resultant transcripts allowed me to continue the conversations by asking questions of pertinent sections and being open to questions that these texts might ask of me (by surprising me). These conversations were further informed by classroom visits.

Classroom Visits

One characteristic of qualitative study is its iterative nature....The process is iterative to the extent that as one visits and re-visits the research site ... each repetition comes with an increasing backlog of understanding, and should be designed to take you closer to an increasingly well-defined goal.

(Palys, 1997, p. 298)

During the 2002-03 school year, I visited each classroom three times (for a total of 12 arts education lessons among the four classrooms). For Palys (1997), supplementing conversation with classroom visits “allows you to compare what people *say* with what they *do*” (p. 212). The participating teachers chose the date and time of each visit, and the particular arts education strand within which they would teach. All of the teachers focused on the visual art strand with two of them including a drama lesson. One of the teachers, in addition to focusing on the visual art and drama strands, also chose to focus on the dance and music strands (as she wanted me to experience all four strands in her classroom). In most cases, but not all, the classroom visit occurred on the same day as the dialogue. The length of time for each classroom visit was determined by the particular lesson, which ranged from 40 minutes to 75 minutes. My observations were unstructured as they were not “constrained by checklists and coding schemes”

(Palys, 1997, p. 207). In this regard, Palys (1997) cautions that "Any observation involves some degree of selection from all that occurs, and the danger with more unstructured schemes is that some portion of this selection may be unintentional and hence unacknowledged, implying unrecognized bias" (p. 207). During the lesson, I looked for who was in the classroom, what was happening, and how the classroom and lesson were organized (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). As LeCompte and Preissle (1993) forewarn, my focus during these visits shifted from participant meaning to participant behaviours.

I assumed that the teachers would require some comfort level with me before I visited their classrooms where students would be involved in arts education activities. Therefore, the first classroom visit occurred during my third visit at the school. During my first visit, I engaged in informal individual discussions with the participating teacher and her respective principal to clarify the purpose of my study, respond to any questions, and provide an opportunity for the school staff and students to meet me. During my second visit, I met with the participating teacher for the first dialogue (which I audiotaped) where we focused on her personal and professional background – an area where I thought each teacher was comfortable and could be confident even during our first in-depth conversation (where I would still be somewhat of a stranger).

The first classroom visit did not occur until after each participating teacher had reviewed the respective transcript and my preliminary interpretation of potential themes arising from the first in-depth conversation. I wanted the teachers to have some confidence that their words would be accurately recorded and the ideas summarized in ways that they could either concur with or alter. I assumed that such confidence would build enough trust to allow some comfort with me visiting their classrooms. Providing time for these visits, conversations, participants' reviews of transcripts and interpretations, and follow-up participant journal writings along with time for

additional reflection and practice determined the number of classroom visits that could reasonably occur during the school year. As shown by the Schedule of Events in Appendix D, I visited each school bi-monthly for classroom visits. Each visit, as noted in the opening quote by Palys, provided new information which further informed my context for each teacher through a hermeneutic circle which expanded to embrace this new information.

In my experience with curriculum development processes, I find that teachers describe particular classroom practices that indicate, in my view, informal theories about teaching and learning. Spradley (1979) suggests that we need to be concerned about "the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand [as] some of these meanings are directly expressed in language [but] many are taken for granted and communicated only indirectly through word and action" (p. 5). Other researchers (Johnston, 1993; Kruse, 1997; Shkedi, 1998) discuss the importance of tapping teachers' tacit knowledge related to the informal theories that guide practice. Schön (1983) acknowledges the relationship between tacit knowledge and practice, "I begin with the assumption that practitioners usually know more than they can say. They exhibit a kind of knowing-in-practice, most of which is tacit" (p. viii). I used the classroom visits to tap into participants' tacit knowledge and to provide additional experiences and ideas for the conversations and participant journal writings.

When visiting the schools, I dressed casually, entered the classrooms as unobtrusively as possible, and sat quietly at the back of the room out of the flow of classroom traffic (usually in a child-size chair). My placement, at the back of the room, varied with each visit depending upon the classroom activity. This provided me with a somewhat different vantage point for each visit. The participating teachers and their students would smile at me as I entered but would continue with the lesson, as I had already been introduced to the students and they knew that my purpose

was to learn. I recorded by hand and noted teacher and student talk and behaviour. I did not move or initiate any dialogue throughout the lesson but would respond to individual students who spoke to me while they were walking by to retrieve materials or coming to show me how their art work was progressing. Depending upon the lesson, two or three students might approach me once (as individuals). For many visits, no students approached me as they were busy in a large group lesson, small group activity, or individual creative endeavour. For the most part, within the first five minutes of my arrival, the participating teachers and their students would become engrossed in the lesson and my presence seemed not to be important.

Engaging in walk-about in the schools and the surrounding communities also provided opportunities for additional observation, conversation, and learning. Goodson and Mangan (1996) encourage observation of participants' environments as participants may take their contexts for granted and critical contextual information may not necessarily be introduced into the dialogues. Field notes were recorded for all observations, conversations, and researcher reflections. As suggested by Lofland (1971), I took notes regularly and tried to be as inconspicuous as possible in the note taking. The field notes are arranged in two parts: 1) a descriptive running record of events with simple maps of each classroom, and 2) researcher comments about the process including questions about meaning, emotional reactions, insights, ideas for exploration, and thoughts regarding the study design.

It is worth noting Wolcott's (1994) caution that "In the very act of constructing *data* out of *experience*, the qualitative researcher singles out some things as worthy of note and relegates others to the background" (p. 13). In his view, what is singled out provides important clues about our observing and he suggests that researchers need to "uncover [our] observing and recording habits, and ... expand [our] gaze" (p. 161). Palys (1997) suggests that "our observations say as

much about us (the observers) and about the social context in which we operate as about the behaviour we observe” (p. 20). I was aware that my horizon of understanding would help me to see some things while limiting my view of others. With this awareness in mind, I made every effort to remain open (thereby placing my understanding at risk) to views and understandings that differed from my own, and to record all events no matter how insignificant they seemed.

Materials

Because material evidence endures, it can continually be reobserved, reanalyzed, and reinterpreted.

(Hodder, 2000, p. 712)

Materials selected for examination in this study include artifacts such as school newsletters and student art works. Such artifacts, according to Hodder (1994), are “mute evidence” of a cultural group. Although the materials cannot necessarily speak, they tell us about an individual’s (or group’s) understanding and practice. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) note that studying such materials can offer new understandings and generate new areas for study. The materials used to inform this study include the dialogue transcripts, participants’ reflective journal entries, researcher field notes and memorandums, the arts education curriculum guide, bulletin board displays, school newsletters, and student art works. For her fourth individual conversation with me, one of the teachers brought two samples of her students’ art works to show me the results of the creative problem-solving processes that the students had begun to engage in during my previous classroom visit. This prompted me to include photographs of student art work, generated during the study, as additional empirical materials for examination. These photographs appear in my thesis. In general, any material that was generated during the study was included for examination.

During the initial school visit, I gave each participating teacher a hard cover journal in which to record reflective entries throughout the study. I reminded the teachers that I would be asking for five journal writings throughout the school year but the teachers should feel free to write in their journals as much or as little as they pleased (in addition to my request). Craig, Dalton, and Davies (1992) recommend the process of journaling to explore how professional knowledge becomes part of teachers' personal practical knowledge. Spalding and Wilson (2002) believe that reflective writing can promote reflective thinking. They found that journals provide a record of thoughts and experiences, and support internal dialogue (p. 1396). Brown and Roberts (2000) note that reflective writing

... can provide a snapshot of an individual's concerns, their way of seeing things and the way in which they see themselves ... and that meaning is derived from the succession of pieces of writing, where no individual piece has meaning in itself but rather depends on its relation to other pieces.

(p. 655)

This iterative process of journal writing throughout a school year allows new information to be explored within an expanding context. Through this hermeneutic circle of understanding, the larger context is further informed through the application of one's local situation in shaping the possibilities of interpretation. The purpose of including journal entries in this study was to support the participating teachers in reflecting upon their practice and in exploring ideas that did not necessarily arise during our conversations or the classroom visits.

I followed the advice of Glesne and Peshkin (1992) by completing pre-study tasks such as developing a tentative schedule of events, writing a "cover story",¹⁶ and developing a draft set of questions for the initial in-depth conversation. I also made field notes of items from class

¹⁶ For Glesne and Peshkin (1992), a "cover story" addresses twelve points including: who I am, what I am doing and why, what I will do with the results, and "how the study site and participants were selected" (p. 32).

discussions, my readings,¹⁷ and personal reflections to inform my study. I included when and where the note was made, who was present, and particular events that occurred (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I also left margins on both sides of my notes for “afterthoughts” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 49). Memorandums were written throughout the study to explore notions, clarify thinking, and flesh out ideas. Miles and Huberman (1994) observe that “Memos are typically a rapid way of capturing thoughts that occur throughout data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, conclusion testing, and final reporting” (p. 74). I kept the field notebook throughout the study, “including the final stages of data analysis and writing” as advocated by Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. xiii). For Palys (1997), such notes create a “personal archive” to allow review and see “how your knowledge and understandings of the situation have changed over time ... or to discover any discrepancies or inconsistencies that might have become evident over time” (p. 211). Palys (1997) also cautions that it is important to allow the research question to

... *guide* the research, lest one be seduced into believing that the *available* data are necessarily the most *important* or *relevant* data. Researchers must be sensitive to the ways in which data availability constrains their conclusions and the range of theory that can be developed.

(p. 218)

The claim I make for this thesis is that it is a credible account of what I was able to observe, record, and make sense of during the study.

Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data.

(Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 176)

¹⁷ In addition to including “casual encounters” in my field notes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 50), I also noted quotes from my personal reading that captured ideas related to my study in novel ways. Some of these appear in my thesis.

To make sense of the empirical materials, I initially read each dialogue transcript and related field notes, school newsletters, and participant journal entries looking for themes. I did not use a pre-determined typology or set of themes within which the participating teachers' responses would be categorized as I did not want to limit the teachers' "unique understandings, positions, and perspectives" (Shank & Vilella, 2004, p. 52). Instead, I used Crotty's (1998) levels of interpreting text to guide my reading: 1) *empathic*, where I seek to see things from the author's perspective; 2) *interactive*, where I undertake a running conversation with the text; and 3) *transactional*, where something new emerges due to my engagement with the text. For Gadamer, one reads to produce new understanding. This new understanding is created in the space between the intentions of the author and the perspectives of the reader through a fusion of horizons.

The themes generated through my initial reading were content and context specific. They arose from the nature of the topic being discussed as well as from a hermeneutic approach to meaning interpretation. That is, I made sense of new content within the larger context of my experience through a hermeneutic circle of understanding. This sense making was enabled by applying my own situation to the new content. Borland (1991) notes that "when we do interpretations, we bring our own knowledge, experience, and concerns to our material, and the result, we hope, is a richer, more textured understanding of its meaning" (p. 73). I used an initial strategy of theme finding (and manually coding these themes) to help me think about the ideas being discussed in the conversations and to provide a transparent process for engaging the participating teachers in the preliminary analysis. For Miles and Huberman (1994), such qualitative analysis, where empirical materials are "reduced or transformed ... through selection, ... summary, ... [or] being subsumed in a larger pattern" is known as "data reduction" (p.11) and themes or codes are "hunches" (p. 72). Reviewing these themes with the participating teachers

allowed us to reflect upon the conversations in different ways, to arrive at new understandings separate from the themes, and to challenge prejudices or assumptions. In a sense, these themes were a way of “lifting up” our conversations to a different level that subsequently allowed us to explore the *Sache* more deeply (Conversation, Dr. Sharon Friesen, January 16, 2007). I wrote theoretical memorandums to summarize some of the themes and to note “questions raised by the codes” (Strauss, 1987, p. 75). I also wrote analytic memorandums to flesh out areas for further exploration in future conversations and to reflect upon my role as the generation of empirical materials progressed (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

In this initial reading, I completed a cross-sectional and categorical indexing of the themes found in the conversation transcripts. Appendix E shows an excerpt of the theme categories from my analysis codes table (based on Glesne, 1999). This initial cross-sectional indexing allowed me “to *take stock* of [my] progress in the research process, and assess what to do next” (Mason, 1996, p. 113). It also provided me with an overview of the breadth and depth of the empirical materials, showed me the consistencies and inconsistencies within and across the participating teachers, and allowed me to locate topics in a straightforward manner. More importantly, it gave me a way into the materials so that I could continue the sense making that emerged during the conversations with the teachers. I treated the indexed materials “as *unfinished resources* for a variety of further uses, rather than end products” (Mason, 1996, p. 115). Notwithstanding the tentative nature of this indexing, it was this initial analysis that guided me in making decisions about areas to explore in further generating empirical materials. Appendix F (based on Glesne, 1999) provides an example of how I grouped illustrative responses from the transcripts to reflect particular theme categories. Appendix G shows a summary table (based on Rossman & Rallis,

1998) of how I related the conversations, field notes, and materials to these particular theme categories.

Upon completion of the initial analysis, I reread the transcriptions, field notes, memorandums, and participant journal entries (and reflected on the student art works) relative to each participating teacher through a holistic approach. This approach, coupled with a review of the contact and material summary forms, allowed me to generate thematic conceptual matrices that informed the development of the descriptive summaries of the participating teachers. (See Appendix H for examples of the questions, categories, and concepts used in these forms and matrices, based on Miles and Huberman, 1994.) Such visual displays of the empirical materials allowed me to see patterns, make comparisons, develop a fuller understanding of each participating teacher, and consider possible interpretations. I forwarded the initial descriptive summary to each participating teacher to verify if I had captured her respective horizon of understanding accurately. (Appendix I provides a sample review form that I sent to the teachers with the initial descriptive summaries.)

To support further analysis of the materials, I used Gubrium and Holstein's (1997) "analytic bracketing" which

... amounts to alternately bracketing the *whats*, then the *hows*, in order to assemble a more complete picture of practice. The objective is to move back and forth between constitutive activity and substantive resources, alternately describing each, making informative references to the other in the process. Either the activity or the substantive context becomes the provisional phenomenon, while interest in the other component is temporarily deferred but not forgotten.

(p. 119)

This process allowed me to alternate between focusing on *what* was occurring under *what* conditions (i.e., the substantive resources) and *how* that was being accomplished (i.e., constitutive activity). Moving back and forth in this in-between space allowed me to raise *why*

questions “while remaining situated at the lived border of reality and representation” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 211). Immersing myself in subsequent reviews of the empirical materials allowed me to engage in dialogue with the materials searching for what might lie hidden. It was only through such multiple reviews, questioning, and discussing with others that new understandings emerged through a fusion of horizons. Risser (1997) claims that “Every reading that attempts to understand is only a first step and never comes to an end; we need the continuing effort to find the common ground” (p. 172). He suggests that “Attending to the work in this way allows for what is in the work to come out” (p. 203). For Gadamer,

... any linguistic account is never entirely clear and univocal but carries within it unspoken meanings and possibilities of understanding and critique to be explored and articulated. This implies that one way that knowledge advances is by looking for that which is implicit and unsaid in an account, whether as a source of criticism or as positive continuation of what was said.

(Wachterhauser, 1986, p. 34)

Rossman and Rallis (1998) posit that “Immersion, incubation, insight, and interpretation are the phases of creative insight involved in analyzing qualitative data” (p. 188). Pinar and Reynolds (1992) observe that “Dwelling in difficulty, in ‘the inner tension between illumination and concealment,’ there is a possibility of authentic understanding” (p. 10). The multiple reviews and varied analysis strategies were attempts to remain suspended in this inner tension.

Understandings tended to emerge from questions that I posed to a dialogue captured in the transcript or to the thoughts shared in a participating teacher’s journal entry or to an idea expressed in a memorandum or demonstrated by a student art work. According to Rossman and Rallis (1998), “analysis requires that the researcher approach the texts with an open mind, seeking what meaning and structures emerge” (p. 184). In a sense, the analysis of the materials was a continuation of the dialogue that began in the conversations, classroom visits, and creative art making processes. My analysis was supported by writing, rewriting, and more writing.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a qualitative research project is judged by two interrelated criteria. First, does the study conform to standards for acceptable and competent practice? Second, has it been ethically conducted with sensitivity to the politics of the topic and setting?

(Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 43)

Standards for practice that guided the design and conduct of this study included the use of strategies to help establish its truth value, rigour, and usefulness. The strategies are discussed in relation to each of these standards. Ethical considerations are also addressed in this section.

Truth Value

The truth claims of this study are supported by five strategies: investigative depth, sharing interpretations with participants, drawing from several sources, interpretive sufficiency, and checking with a critical friend.

Investigative Depth

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest that "For in-depth understanding, you should repeatedly spend extended periods with a few respondents and observation sites" (p. 27). Shank and Vilella (2004) assert that the "first duty of qualitative researchers is to investigate" and that the purpose of such investigation is to "see things that were previously obscure [and] shed light on things [to] understand them better" (p. 48). It is this careful scrutiny to discern matters or issues below the surface that defines investigative depth. With only four participating teachers, it was possible to spend significant time with each teacher during the study. This allowed for intensive generation of empirical materials with each teacher in respective areas of interest (within the parameters of the study). According to Cresswell and Miller (2000), "Being in the field over time solidifies evidence because researchers can check out the data and their hunches" (p. 128). Using an iterative process of several conversations and classroom visits promoted in-depth investigation

with each teacher while generating empirical materials over time. As I am interested in the conditions that influence teachers' interpretation of curriculum, I anticipated that such conditions might be illuminated over a school year (which reflects the natural cycle within a teacher's work life).

Sharing Interpretations

Audiotaping the conversations and verbatim transcriptions of these audiotapes were used to provide credible documents for analysis. Sending the transcripts with the preliminary themes (of what I thought we were talking about) to the participating teachers allowed them to comment on my initial interpretations as well as to elaborate on their own original statements. Sharing my interpretations with the participating teachers provided an opportunity for them to question my account or "confirm the credibility of the information" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127), thereby contributing to better interpretations. Subsequent conversations with the participating teachers also provided opportunities to test the validity of any new interpretations or knowledge claims (Mishler, 1990). Providing opportunity for the teachers to review and respond to the transcripts (and subsequent interpretations) honoured the teachers' involvement, valued their contributions, and supported a process of reaching mutual understandings.

Several Sources

I drew upon several sources for empirical materials as I experienced different schools, teachers, and events. I also reviewed research by others and, where applicable, note this in my thesis. Due to the limited number of teachers in this study, the results cannot be generalized to all teachers. In fact, St. Clair (2005) makes a strong argument that "there is no logical basis for believing that it is possible to transfer empirically based knowledge between education settings" due to the existence of factors that cannot be anticipated (e.g., human disposition) (p. 436).

Hammersley (1990), however, notes the possibility of research producing “cumulative knowledge” where over time research can move us closer to “truth”. For this study, my claim is that the results are representative of the experiences of these selected teachers and do contribute to our collective understanding of conditions that influence teachers’ interpretation of curriculum.

Interpretive Sufficiency

Christians (2000) defines interpretive sufficiency as “taking seriously lives that are loaded with multiple interpretations and grounded in cultural complexity” (p. 145). Shank and Vilella (2004) believe that, for interpretive adequacy, “richer explanations [are required] to provide insight into the complexity” of the question under study (p. 50). Cresswell and Miller (2000) also note that a “procedure for establishing credibility in a study is to describe the setting, the participants, and the themes of a qualitative study in rich detail” (p. 128). Wachterhauser (1986b) suggests a guideline of comprehensiveness which “insists that a true account of some aspect of experience address all *essential* aspects of [a] phenomenon or realm of experience” (p. 234). Taylor (2002) asserts that “The more comprehensive account ... fuses more horizons” (p. 289).

Further, Gergen and Gergen (2000) maintain that including multiple voices within research studies removes the hegemony of the single voice of the researcher and is a significant means of contributing to the credibility of the account. Lincoln and Guba (2000) note that *fairness* requires acting “with energy to ensure that all voices in the inquiry effort had a chance to be represented in any texts and to have their stories treated fairly and with balance” (p. 180). By using excerpts from the transcripts in my thesis, participants’ voices are included along with my voice as researcher. These multiple voices contribute to the richness of my descriptions which Maxwell (1996) suggest need to be “detailed and complete enough that they provide a full and revealing

picture of what's going on" (p. 95). The descriptions of the participants in Chapter 4 of this thesis are intended to provide sufficient context for the reader so that my subsequent explanations in Chapter 5 are both understandable and reasonable.

Critical Friend

Throughout the design, generation of empirical materials, and overall sense making related to the study, I engaged in regular discussions with a critical friend. Rossman and Rallis (1998) highlight the benefits of using a colleague or peer as a critical friend to test preliminary ideas and formulate what is being learned from the study. Eisner and Powell (2002) find that checking one's work with others "yields fresh insights and new considerations for refinement" (p. 157). I found that testing my ideas with others helped me to synthesize what I was learning and forced me to express my current thinking in clear and succinct language. These discussions opened up avenues for thought that I had not previously considered and allowed me to interpret aspects of my study differently.

Rigour

The rigour of this study is supported through three strategies: making my position clear, using multiple modes, and participatory accountability.

Clear Position

I have attempted to make my position clear by articulating my way of being in the world, my assumptions, and the conceptual frame that shaped this study. I have also tried to show how these aspects supported my hermeneutic approach. Schwandt (1997) defines the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases and theoretical predispositions as part of reflexivity. Gergen and Gergen (2000) note the emphasis of reflexivity in qualitative research:

Here investigators seek ways of demonstrating to their audiences their historical and geographic situatedness, their personal investments in the research, various biases they

bring to the work, their surprises and “undoings” in the process of the research endeavor, the ways in which their choices of literary tropes lend rhetorical force to the research report, and/or the ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view.
(p. 1027)

Kleinsasser (2000) also suggests that “Without collecting more data, reflexivity enables the researcher to present a more passionate, wise, and rich account” (p. 157). I will let the reader judge both the richness and clarity of my account.

Multiple Modes

Multiple modes for generating empirical materials were selected for this study. The conversations, classroom visits, and materials were chosen for their potential to shed light on the conditions that influence teachers’ interpretation of curriculum. Palys (1997) cautions that such empirical materials might be “fraudulent in the sense that [participants] may distort the representation of their beliefs or behaviour” (p. 306). As each of these teachers agreed to participate in the study, I am confident that they shared their ideas and practices with me to the extent that was possible. I felt it was my responsibility to ensure the teachers’ comfort and confidence in my intentions and abilities in order to support the teachers’ participation.

The use of multiple modes allowed me to see how well they corroborated each other as well as to generate new empirical materials. According to Mason (1996), several modes can be “used to verify or contextualize or clarify personal recollections and other forms of data” (p. 73). Olson (2000) notes that “supplementary data sources ... add breadth and depth to ... stories told in conversation” (p. 174). The hermeneutic approach of this study allowed me to use various modes to get a sense of the conditions that influenced the participating teachers’ interpretations of curriculum and how these were enacted in classroom practice.

Participatory Accountability

Shank and Villella (2004) describe participatory accountability as “the actions of researchers as they conduct and reflect upon efforts” (p. 49). These actions are to be conducted in an ethical manner and documented “to ensure that readers understand [the] actions, stances, and efforts” of the researcher (p. 51). Therefore, I carefully documented my participation, how and why I made particular decisions, and the various processes that I used to generate and examine the empirical materials. Much of this documentation is captured in my field notes and memorandums, and described in this chapter. I also developed various forms, figures, tables, matrices, and charts to record my findings, and to support my interaction with and analysis of the empirical materials. In this chapter, I have attempted to describe as precisely as possible the specific steps, procedures, and decisions taken to support readers in judging the rigour with which I designed and carried out my exploration.

Usefulness

In Firestone’s (1993) view, results from qualitative research can be generalized through “case-to-case transfer [which] occurs whenever a person in one setting considers adopting a program or idea from another one” (p. 17). Schofield (1989) suggests that “studies in one situation can be used to speak to or to help form a judgment about other situations” (p. 207). Cresswell and Miller (2000) claim that “Rich description ... enables readers to make decisions about the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts” (p. 129). For Denzin (1997), such descriptions “should possess that amount of depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, and coherence that will permit a critical consciousness to be formed by the reader” (p. 283). To support the reader’s determination of potential usefulness, I have attempted to provide clear and

detailed descriptions to facilitate decisions about the possible transferability or appropriateness of the results of this study for one's own situation.

Further, the teachers participating in this study are typical of most teachers in Saskatchewan in that they are not arts education specialists. Schofield (1989) notes that "typicality provides the potential for a good 'fit' with many other situations" (p. 210). It is hoped that teachers and others will note the results of this study which are a good 'fit' for their respective situations. Shank and Villella (2004) propose that illuminative fertility occurs when we can "look at a topic in a fresh way [and when] our findings make [a difference] in practice" (p. 50). It is the reader who will determine if I have been successful in this regard.

Ethical Considerations

As this study was conducted with human participants, I secured the approval of the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board (see Appendix J). Approval by the respective Saskatchewan school division was also obtained. Fontana and Frey (1994) note that

Traditional ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of *informed consent* (consent received from the subject after he or she has been carefully and truthfully informed about the research), *right to privacy* (protecting the identity of the subject) and *protection from harm* (physical, emotional, or any other kind).

(p. 372)

In the following paragraphs, I describe how I addressed these three areas of ethical concern in my study.

Informed Consent

The participating teachers were informed in writing of the purpose and procedures of my study. I also spoke to each of the teachers about the purpose of the study before I visited them at their respective schools and, again, when I visited each teacher for the first time. I emphasized that participation was voluntary and that withdrawal was an option at any time during the study.

In gaining access to the schools, all proper procedures were taken including writing a letter of request to the Director of Education of the school division, meeting with the principal of each participating school, and the signing of appropriate release forms by the participating teachers.

Right to Privacy

For the conversations, classroom visits, and walk-about, individual responses are confidential and noted with pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the participating teachers, their schools, and surrounding communities. In each case, the teachers were invited to create their own pseudonyms. Empirical materials that are stored electronically are password protected and those that are stored as print text are kept in a locked filing cabinet. All audiotapes will be erased five years after this thesis has been completed.

Protection from Harm

The participating teachers were not subjected to any hardship due to their participation in the study and no compensation was required. My intention was to leave the situation better for having been there (Palys, 1997, p. 116). To mitigate emotional harm, research results in the form of the preliminary interpretations of verbatim transcripts (of the in-depth conversations) and preliminary drafts of thesis material that describe each participating teacher (based on subsequent analyses of the empirical material) were made available to the respective teachers for their review. (See Appendix I for a sample form that accompanied this review material.) The review of this material generated through an iterative process was designed to prevent any potential exploitation as Finch (1984) finds that there is "easily established trust between women, which makes women especially vulnerable as subjects of research" where a woman researcher is involved (p. 174). Such review also supported *accuracy* which Christians (2000) notes as a

“cardinal principle” in social science codes of ethics where “fabrications, fraudulent materials, [and] omissions” are unethical (p. 140).

Schön (1983) also provides some cautionary remarks that bear consideration for this study:

When a member of a bureaucracy embarks on a course of reflective practice, allowing himself to experience confusion and uncertainty, subjecting his frames and theories to conscious criticism and change, he may increase his capacity to contribute to significant organizational learning, but he also becomes, by the same token, a danger to the stable system of rules and procedures within which he is expected to deliver his technical expertise.

(p. 328)

It is possible that some instability may be caused in the school division with four teachers having worked through such a reflective process over a school year. I am confident, however, that the central office administration in this particular school division will welcome any potential constructive upheaval and will support the participating teachers and their colleagues in further reflecting upon their practice.

Limitations of the Study

Potential limitations of this study relate to at least four areas: the low number of participating teachers, the influence of the research process, the researcher's horizon of understanding, and the initial coding of themes from the dialogues. A brief description of each limitation follows.

First, working with four participating teachers (who were chosen because they were attempting to make sense of curricula) allowed me to explore my question with individuals who had the potential to inform my study. The low number of participants also allowed me to work intensively with each teacher. These teachers taught in situations which are typical of many teachers in Saskatchewan. Although it can be argued that these teachers represent a portion of the teaching population in Saskatchewan, they do not represent all teachers. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all teachers.

Second, talking to the participating teachers about their experiences may have influenced how the teachers interpreted curriculum for their practice. In Gadamer's view, however, understanding the experiences of others requires dialogue in order to share one's horizon of understanding (and open it to revision) and to understand others' horizons (in an attempt to arrive at new understanding through fusing horizons). It is difficult to determine to what extent participants' involvement in the study shaped their interpretations. Certainly, the initial conversations were based on participants' prior knowledge and experiences, and not on any previous experience with the researcher. What also can be ascertained is that the interpretations that are mutually attained (between the researcher and participants) in this study are credible accounts of these four teachers' experiences.

Third, my horizon of understanding (as noted in the first chapter) influences my research. Westphal (1986) notes that language is "the medium in which we live" – that it surrounds us and defines "a limited horizon for our thinking" (p. 80). Craig (1995) cautions that we select and order experiences of what we see or hear because of what we consider to be important. In describing such experiences, Eisner (1991) believes that "the aspiration to be 'neutral' is inherently flawed; there is no neutrality, even when one decides to be descriptive. One *chooses* what to describe." (p. 176). Further, Richardson (2000) finds that 'sense making' is "always value constituting – making sense in a particular way, privileging one ordering of the 'facts' over others" (p. 927). LeCompte (2000) notes the influence of tacit and formative (or formal) theories. Tacit theories guide researchers' daily behaviour and formative theories guide our "development of research questions, ideas about what data to collect, and which units of analysis should be used in investigations" (p. 146). Palys (1997) finds that "prior knowledge is certainly a constraint ... (even though it's simultaneously empowering), since current understanding imposes modes of

thinking and articulation that can be difficult to rise above” (p. 109). In essence, my historical situatedness which includes my language, culture, and prior knowledge form my prejudices that, in turn, provide the conditions for understanding as well as the limits of understanding. Crotty (1998) notes that “The historically derived worldview of authors constrains what they are able to produce and cannot be discounted in hermeneutical endeavours” (p. 95). Certain aspects of the conversations, classroom visits, walk-about, and journal entries (all mediated through language) easily captured my attention whereas other aspects potentially may have remained unnoticed. Gadamer argues that such preconceptions of prejudices on the part of the researcher are required in order to understand events. Where possible, throughout the study (and within this thesis), I note my preconceptions and how they shape what I observe. I also compare my observations with the participating teachers and others in efforts to develop better interpretations of the events that occurred throughout the study.

A final limitation relates to the initial coding of themes from the conversations. Mason (1996) notes that “organizing and sorting are not conceptually neutral activities, and that you must be aware of the kinds of analytical and explanatory possibilities not only that you open up, but also that you close off, by organizing your data in certain ways” (p. 133). Atkinson (1992) cautions that a disadvantage of coding is that it provides “a powerful conceptual grid” which is difficult to ignore. Such coding can also produce categories so broad as to be of limited use. To mitigate this limitation, I chose specific theme categories. See Appendix E for a sample of the specificity of these categories. Where a particular piece of qualitative text addressed more than one category, I chose the dominant category or included the text in both categories. I also treated the codes as transitory and as catalysts to promote further dialogue and new understanding.

Despite these limitations, I believe this study sheds light on conditions that influence teachers' interpretation of curriculum in their practice.

Study Redesign

As a novice researcher, I designed my study to accommodate my inexperience. In future studies that explore conditions that influence how teachers interpret curriculum, I would engage in open-ended collaborative conversations with the participating teachers rather than relying on the somewhat structured conversational approach that I used. In reading over the transcripts at the completion of my study, I found lost opportunities to explore ideas where I neglected to probe more deeply. Extending the study over a longer time frame, such as two or three years, and engaging more teachers may also yield more fruitful empirical materials.

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIBING HORIZONS

How teachers interpret curriculum in their practice is shaped by their horizons of understanding. To understand the participating teachers' horizons, it is important to know something about their backgrounds, their students, their schools, their communities, and the provincial curriculum; therefore, the descriptive account in this chapter begins with the broad context of the provincial arts education curriculum and moves in for a close-up view of how each teacher interprets the curriculum in her practice within her particular historical and social contexts.

Pseudonyms are used for the teachers, the schools, and the communities. The description of the classroom visit with each teacher, while based primarily on one lesson, is a composite developed from the three classroom visits with the particular teacher. Where possible, I have used the words of each teacher in expressing her ideas and feelings to provide a credible account of her particular horizon of understanding. In striving for readability, I have edited spoken words as necessary while attempting to retain the essential meaning.

Following Wolcott's (1994) advice, I assigned a maximum number of pages to be devoted to the contextualized description of each teacher to portray her interpretation of curriculum in her practice (p. 404). While there are some similar categories of descriptions among the teachers, there are also some different categories and emphases. This is due to the individual nature of the particular teacher's interests, theories, resources, and practices. I freely acknowledge that my descriptions are one possible "telling" of the stories of these teachers. These stories, however, provide a shared view as each teacher responded to my initial descriptions and authenticated the veracity of my account.

Saskatchewan's Arts Education Curriculum¹⁸

The aim of the K-12 provincial arts education curriculum is to enable students to understand and value arts expressions throughout life. This aim is achieved by developing students' abilities to: 1) respect the uniqueness and creativity of themselves and others; 2) express themselves using the languages of the arts; 3) understand the contributions of the arts and artists to societies and cultures, past and present; 4) gain a lasting appreciation of art forms experienced as participant and as audience; and 5) recognize the many connections between the arts and daily life (adapted from *Arts Education: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level*, p. 2, October 2002 draft). These five goals, introduced in the previous 1991 curriculum, are still considered to be foundational in arts education. Some evidence of this continuing foundational importance follows.

Regarding the first goal of uniqueness and creativity, researchers continue to see innovation and originality as important qualities of work in the arts (Schwartz, Bransford, & Sears, 2005; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). In many ways, originality is seen to be synonymous with creativity. The second goal of expressing meaning also continues to be important in the arts (Stevenson & Deasy, 2005; Wootton, 2005). The arts support students in using languages other than spoken and written, or in combination with them, to explore and share ideas. Partway through the study, one of the participating teachers writes in her journal that "Most of the children enjoy dramatizing. ... there are three or four who are kinaesthetic learners. These are the children whose faces light up and who are very animated" (Cary, March 2003). Such opportunities allow all students to participate and some students "to shine" in arts education – a quality that was also noted by the participating teachers in this study, "It's something that if the student isn't

¹⁸ This section draws heavily from *Arts Education: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (Saskatchewan Learning, October 2002 draft).

necessarily a strong math student or English student or science student, this gives them an opportunity to shine through at what they are good at" (Montana, Conversation #2, p. 9). The third goal of understanding the contribution of the arts and artists is supported by galleries, post-secondary arts programs, and educators such as Dewey (1934). Dewey believed that the arts allow us to see and make meaning through interpreting as well as creating. To support interpretation and understanding of the contributions of the arts and artists, background information along with responding processes are described in the provincial curriculum and often included in gallery programming for students and the general public. The fourth goal of gaining a lasting appreciation of art forms contributes to one's aesthetic experience within a community. This contribution, however, is difficult to assess. As noted in an action research project conducted by a Saskatchewan teacher, although students' appreciation for the arts developed steadily over the year of the project, it is not known if such appreciation becomes lasting (Little, 1997). Regarding the final goal, researchers continue to find an important role for the arts in connecting to students' daily lives (Landay, Meehan, Newman, Wootton, & King, 2001). In my study, each of the participating teachers considered this goal to be important and their practice demonstrated this importance.

At the Elementary Level (grades 1-5) of arts education, student learning is guided by broad foundational objectives for each of the four strands (i.e., dance, drama, music, and visual art). The breadth and depth of each foundational objective is expressed through a range of specific learning objectives (e.g., conceptual, procedural, expressive) to be addressed at a particular grade level. In Little's (1997) action research project, the collaborating teachers use the foundational objectives to provide direction for their teaching in arts education. In many cases, the lessons

were designed and then matched against the potential objectives that could be achieved (which is a similar practice for two of the participating teachers in this study).

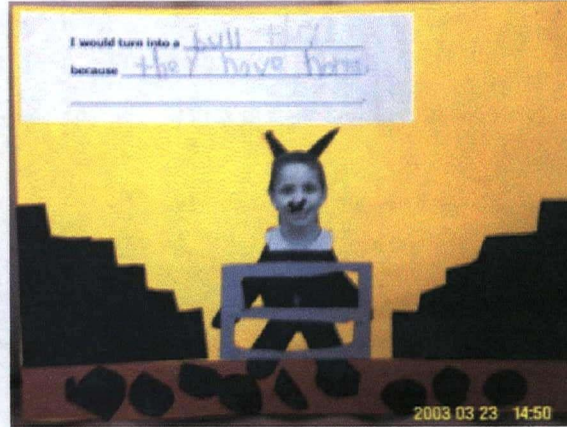
The arts education curriculum is structured, through three components, to achieve a balance in focus. These components are: the creative/productive, the cultural/historical, and the critical/responsive.¹⁹ The creative/productive component includes the exploration, development, and expression of ideas in the language of each strand. The cultural/historical component deals with the role of the arts in culture, the development of the arts throughout history, and factors that influence both the arts and artists. The critical/responsive component enables students to respond critically to images, sounds, performances, and events in the artistic environment, including the mass media.

Although the Elementary Level arts education curriculum was introduced in 1991 with various supports,²⁰ a provincial curriculum evaluation conducted in 1997-98 reveals that most Saskatchewan teachers find the curriculum difficult to implement. Little's (1997) action research project notes that even after using the curriculum for a full school year, the collaborating teachers in the project "still did not feel fully comfortable in planning lessons from it" (p. 47). As a response to the provincial evaluation recommendations and other data, the arts education curriculum was in the midst of revision during the time frame of this study; therefore, the participating teachers in my study used the draft October 2002 version of the revised Elementary Level curriculum to support their interpretation and practice. A description of each participating teacher follows.

¹⁹ These components were recommended by the Minister's Advisory Committee on the Fine Arts in Education in their Final Report (1981, p. 24) based on three domains noted by Eisner (1968).

²⁰ Supports include an audiocassette of Saskatchewan musicians, videos for teaching dance and drama, a slide set of visual art works by Saskatchewan artists, and four professional learning days offered over three years.

Finding a Balance: Rachel



(Bull collage created by student in Grade 1, 2003)

Rachel: This little guy didn't look at anyone else. He did something totally unique. He had his idea in his head and he went with it. I was really impressed with the creativity ... with the little gate so the bull had to stay in before it was his turn in the rodeo. Here are the bleachers and these are the rocks. He made sure to tell me, "This is the rocks in the dirt". He was really making the details (laughter).

This little boy is really, really, really struggling in school ... really struggling ... in his reading and his math. But you look at this collage of himself as a bull and ... he just shone when he did this. I just got to see another side of him and ... I saw his confidence. It was nice to see him feeling good about what he was doing ... feeling more confident. And even his sense of humour ... you know, the ring in the nose. I just thought it was great.

(Conversation #4, pp. 1, 6-7, 14)

The Community: Spruce Rivers

As I drive into Spruce Rivers to meet Rachel, I notice the stately stone and brick heritage buildings. A major fire in 1891, which destroyed 17 businesses and a church, caused the town to make brick or stone construction mandatory. This decision and the subsequent community support for preserving heritage buildings explains why Spruce Rivers is often described as a "heritage-rich" city. It is nestled in a picturesque valley where two rivers meet, situated on a rail mainline, and connected to three major highways. Spreading across uplands and valley, Spruce Rivers provides a mix of urban development on the uplands, and park and open space in the valley. Originally, Spruce Rivers was a winter encampment for both Cree and Assiniboine

Nations as it provided plenty of water and game for food. The juncture of the two rivers was the best place to cross the river valley and provided an abundant water supply for steam locomotives; hence, the decision was made to locate the rail mainline at Spruce Rivers. The construction of the railway with 7,600 men and 1,700 teams of horses proceeded west from Manitoba in 1881 and reached Spruce Rivers in 1882. At the end of 1882, Spruce Rivers' business centre consisted of five ragged tents. By the spring of 1883, there were six stores, five saloons, one drugstore, two blacksmiths, three hotels, and 40 houses. By 1885, Spruce Rivers was a major settlement. In addition to the homestead population and railway workers, there was an adjacent Sioux village. The village was small, about 115 people living in 28 lodges. These Sioux had returned with Sitting Bull from Montana and the battle with General Custer.

The rapid settlement after the turn of the century brought Spruce Rivers to prominence and ushered in a commercial and industrial boom period. The Town Council sought and gained City status in 1903. As the homesteads spread south and west, Spruce Rivers became the wholesale distribution centre for a large trading area and began processing agricultural products. At that time, Spruce Rivers was Saskatchewan's largest city and leading industrial centre. Today, this community has a population of 35,000 and boasts a magnificent library connected to an art gallery, numerous hotels, and six schools.

Springfield School

Springfield School, where Rachel teaches, is located on the uplands of Spruce Rivers. Springfield is an independent Christian school that opened in 1999 for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 students. Tuition is \$1700/family plus \$265 for each child in the family that attends the school. Families are also expected to find some way to be involved in their child's education. The school raises funds through activities such as extracurricular drama productions. As 60% of

the students' families live in poverty, money raised through fund raising activities is used to help many families cover the cost of tuition. There are 317 students, 25 teachers (21.34 FTE), and 25 teacher aides/support staff at the school. In some cases, the teacher aides are parents or former students who have graduated. Most of the teachers have a Special Education background as Springfield has five times the number of students designated with special needs compared to other schools in the school division. To address the diverse needs of these students, the school provides financial support for the teachers to enrol in special education classes. The school is supported with additional funding from the school division and from provincial organizations such as Mental Health Services to provide accommodations such as specialized personnel or equipment to address the needs of particular students. The teachers network every Friday afternoon to share ideas and solve problems related to the special needs of the students.

On my arrival at Springfield, I park on the street across from the school and walk up the concrete steps. Inside the school, I notice that the bulletin boards in the entrance highlight student activities (e.g., newspaper clipping of school awards) and activities for parents (e.g., adult bible study). I can hear the band practising. On the bulletin board by the main door is a poster announcing an After School Homework Program for students in grades 7-12, from 3:30-5:00, on Mondays to Thursdays in Mrs. Yelland's room with Mr. Curtis supervising. Parents need to sign a permission slip in order for their son or daughter to participate in this program.

The school newsletter (available outside the business office) announces the Fall supper fundraiser, a case of whooping cough reported in the school, the school's participation in SaskEnergy's Share the Warmth Recycling Project (i.e., recycling winter outerwear and books), the city's hazardous waste collection day, the upcoming Walk for Life, an opportunity to take

drum lessons, the school concession opening (hot lunches available Monday to Thursday), and dates in October to remember (e.g., picture day).

I walk down the stairs to Rachel's Grade 1 classroom and hear a lesson on 10s, 1s, and 100s from a neighbouring classroom. I stand by the hallway water fountain which is low; two-thirds of the height of my leg. There is a smell of putty or glue, or some other kind of adhesive construction material, due to the renovations in progress at the school. Lockers line one side of the hallway – some have locks, others do not. I can see papers, clothes, plastic bags, and an instrument case poking out of the partially open lockers. There is a sign on the wall advertising last year's school T-shirts and jerseys – all sizes, \$10.00. I hear the end-of-day announcements, "Wednesday is slipper day. Girls' volleyball practice from 3:30 to 5:30 on Tuesday; boys on Wednesday. Band and vocal practice today." Outside Rachel's classroom, there is an All About Me hallway bulletin board display of paper plate faces with coloured yarn for hair – yellow, red, and brown. There are also students' handprints made with paint on the same bulletin board along with supported writing (that was completed on the second day of school):

I am _____.
Come read about me!
I was born _____.
I was a cute baby!
I have a friend named _____.
We play in all kinds of weather.
I like _____.
I really do.
I don't like _____.
How about you?

Two Kindergarten students stop in front of the bulletin board and one student points to the writing and asks the other student, "What does that say?"

Rachel's Background

Outside Rachel's doorway is a poster about her. It includes a book jacket cover of *The Last Sin Eater*, her grade 1 photograph, a magazine picture of a piano, several magazine pictures of the outdoors and traveling, and photographs of her sister, her nieces, and her boyfriend. When asked to describe herself, Rachel shares the following:

Teaching is an important part of my life. Being a single woman (laughter), that's a big part of my life. My family is also important to me – my mom and my dad, and my younger sister and brother. He's married and has two beautiful daughters – so I have two lovely nieces. I love just spending time with family. My boyfriend has been a big part of my life for the last two years as well. We're just talking about marriage right now. So that could be a possibility – we're not sure (laughter).

(Conversation #1, p. 1)

Rachel is single (and becomes engaged during the study), is 29 years old, and describes herself as an introvert. She spends a lot of "down" time reading, playing the piano, and being outdoors.

She has been teaching for four years and has her special education certification. Rachel describes the reason for her interest in special education:

I actually went back and took some more classes in the area of special education. I've always had an interest in that area as I'd see how many kids have needs in the classroom. I just wanted to be better equipped to meet some of those needs, even as a regular classroom teacher. ... There's so many kids that I want to reach out to or help ... that have sort of slipped through the cracks. So I like the fact that there are those kids here. Although it's a challenge some days, it's rewarding to me that I have this opportunity to maybe help this child who, for whatever reason, has not made it somewhere else.

(Conversation #1, pp. 2, 5)

This is Rachel's third year teaching Grade 1. She has an intern for the Fall semester. There are 24 students (15 girls and 9 boys) in the class and one student with speech problems. The teacher aide spends most of her time with this particular student. Rachel enjoys teaching language arts and finds teaching science to be a struggle as she wants to make it "interesting and hands on" but is not always sure how to accomplish this. With her limited background in arts education, she

appreciates the introductory drawing activities and other skill development sections in the draft curriculum.

Challenges in Arts Education

When describing challenging aspects of teaching arts education, Rachel observes:

I do find it challenging. Sometimes I find it hard just to build arts education in. There are a set number of minutes to fill the week and I wonder how I am going to fit everything in. I try to do as much as I can along themes and that helps a bit. So for the month of September, I do stained glass apples for the windows and that sort of thing. It helps a bit to do arts ed along with a theme. I just find it challenging to know where to start. I especially find dance to be the most challenging for me. And drama, I find somewhat challenging as well. I find it challenging figuring out how to present it to the students and have them take part.

(Conversation #1, p. 6)

It is difficult for Rachel to find time in her day for arts education amid competing priorities related to reading and mathematics. She partially solves this dilemma by integrating arts education into themes related to other areas of study. Other challenging aspects of arts education for Rachel include its open-endedness where there is no “one right answer”, less structure as students engage in exploratory activities, and more potential for classroom management issues. Rachel prefers structure in her classroom and finds that arts education is not as structured as she likes:

I’m a person who likes structure ... which means I’m a teacher who likes structure. I work well under structure and for the most part, my class operates with structure (laughter). I do struggle with arts ed because it tends to be just a less structured time and it is harder to keep control. There are days where I think (laughter), “I don’t know if I’m prepared to do this because I know it’s gonna’ be a little less easy to manage and ... it’s the end of the day. With arts ed, I find it’s harder to keep the structure that I like. That’s why I think I struggle with it a bit because I don’t have the control that I like to have (laughter) sometimes. Maybe I need to look at having arts ed at different times [of the day].

(Conversation #4, pp. 4-5)

Rachel schedules arts education for the end of the day. As she is more tired at that time, she finds she has less energy to “manage” the open-ended activities related to arts education. She is unsure

of how these activities will turn out or of how students will respond. She concedes that the open-ended nature of arts education requires risk taking on the part of the teacher and the students, and acknowledges that the presence of the teacher aide (who is also a parent of one of the students in the classroom) inhibits risk taking and exploring new activities on Rachel's part. Due to the itinerant music teacher at the school, Rachel does not teach music but finds the lack of space (both in her classroom and in the school) to be problematic for housing the available piano even though she would like to use it with her students.

Reflections on Participating in the Study

In reflecting upon the first classroom visit, Rachel writes in her journal about my presence:

As I taught my lesson, I was very conscious of the fact that I was being observed. I felt slightly uncomfortable (as I always feel when someone is watching me!). After the lesson, I felt OK. The students seemed to enjoy the activity and met my objectives of identifying the primary colours. ... Although some reflection naturally occurs after a lesson, our conversation helps me think about aspects of the lesson I might not otherwise consider. I did find that I felt more comfortable during our second conversation. I had a better idea of what to expect, and my lesson was a good springboard for discussing arts education.

(Journal Entry, November 2002)

As anticipated, Rachel's comfort level with me increased throughout the study. I assured her that I was interested in her regular classroom practice and that she need not do anything differently. I also assured her that I would try to be as unobtrusive as possible during my classroom visits. I emphasized that the purpose of these visits was to provide additional material for our conversations. After one of our conversations, Rachel writes in her journal about an "imbalance" in her arts education practice due to focusing mainly on the visual art strand, and expresses an interest in expanding her practice in the drama strand.

Later in the study, Rachel makes a connection between feeling uncomfortable and teaching something new:

Before the classroom visit, I was feeling quite confident about the lesson I was going to teach. This was a lesson that I had taught last year and the students did some really creative work and had a really good time. They were very enthusiastic about what I was asking them to do. Because this was a lesson I had taught before, I felt more at ease. If I am preparing to do a lesson I have never taught before I am usually more uncomfortable as I am anticipating things that could go wrong or things go wrong that I hadn't anticipated!

(Journal Entry, April 2003)

This excerpt also hints at the notion that a successful arts education lesson is where students have "a really good time". Later in this section, I suggest that this notion is part of Rachel's informal theory which guides her practice in arts education.

As the study progressed, Rachel continued to find our conversations about her lessons (that occurred during my classroom visits) to be informative:

I find it interesting how I am able to analyze my lesson as I talk through the whole process with another person. When I am able to see things through another person's eyes, it helps me to pick up on things that I would not have otherwise noticed or paid much attention to. After [our conversation], I felt like I had new insight into my lesson and ... some new ideas that I could take and use in other arts ed lessons.

(Journal Entry, April 2003)

This excerpt demonstrates the critical role that talking with teachers about their practice can play in supporting further thinking, new understanding, and related practice.

Rachel's Informal Theory

As the school employs an itinerant music teacher (75% secondment), Rachel does not teach the music strand of arts education. She teaches the other strands of arts education through seasonal themes or themes from other areas of study such as language arts, social studies, or science. She uses arts education to help students understand topics from other areas of study and to develop language, confidence, and creativity:

I think one of the important aspects of arts education is just the creativity that it allows. ... Another aspect, I think, is confidence. If I look at the drama strand, I think that's important for Grade 1 because you're developing language and confidence ... getting

them comfortable and free to take on the role of another character. I think that's important. ... I think building confidence and creativity is really important.

(Conversation #2, p.6)

For Rachel, it is important that her students are willing to try new things and "take a risk", and not just copy what she makes or models. To this end, Rachel tries to stay away from "cookie-cutter" projects although evidence of such products is seen in the classroom and on the hallway bulletin board.

Supporting Creativity

Partway through the study, Rachel questions whether her interest in supporting creativity is a way of "copping out" instead of teaching skills and techniques:

While it is important to me that students explore their own creativity and uniqueness, I realized that I may need to balance this with more direction and instruction. While some areas lend themselves well to giving students creative "license", there are times when it is appropriate to guide and instruct students. Perhaps because of my own insecurity in the whole area of arts education, it's easier to allow students to always be "creative" so that I don't need to instruct them and guide them in certain areas.

(Journal Entry, February 2003)

In Rachel's view, providing students with too much direction or instruction may hamper their creativity. She is hesitant to overly guide students' creative processes for fear that students may copy her models rather than express their own ideas. Later in the study, Rachel further reflects on the development of students' "uniqueness and creativity":

As I reflected on [our conversation], I had to ask myself if I really did allow the students to exercise their creativity as much as I said I did. While I think it is important to me, I don't know if I really provided them with a lot of opportunities to truly express their creativity and be unique. There were times that I did ask them to produce "cookie cutter" type work. ... This is one theme [uniqueness and creativity] that really caused me to reflect on my belief/philosophy and how that translates into actual teaching practices.

(Journal Entry, April 2003)

In this excerpt, Rachel acknowledges the dissonance that can occur between one's philosophy and one's practice. Such reflection is indicative of how Rachel responded throughout the study.

As she reflected on the rewarding aspects of teaching arts education, Rachel revealed more of her informal theory by noting that all students (even those with disabilities) are able to participate in arts education and to “shine” (as demonstrated in the opening quote accompanying the photo of the student artwork). Other rewarding aspects that she highlighted are that students enjoy arts education and are able to create products.

Creating Products

In our first conversation, Rachel emphasizes the importance of product when she states, “I think what excites me about arts education is the finished product ... when the kids see it. They enjoy the end product ... especially with visual art. I think that’s sort of what motivates me as well ... to see that finished product” (pp. 6-7). Most of my conversations with Rachel about arts education centre on the creative/productive component and the importance of the end product, and the process used to achieve that product (see sample transcript excerpt in Appendix K).

An excerpt from Rachel’s first journal entry illustrates a shift in her horizon of understanding regarding the importance of product and process in arts education:

I found it interesting to read over what I said [in our first conversation] and to see myself through someone else’s eyes. The theme categories from our conversation that got me thinking the most were those of: Arts Education as Product and Arts Education as Process. These caused me to stop and reflect on how I view and teach arts education. I don’t think I was even aware of how much I focused on the product versus the process. While the product is certainly important, I have neglected the importance of the process taken to complete the product. As a result of this conversation and becoming aware of my beliefs and thoughts on arts education, I have begun to think more about the process, not just the product.

(Journal Entry, October 2002)

This entry typifies Rachel’s reflective abilities as well as her stance as a lifelong learner. She is always looking for new ideas and new ways of doing things. Being a lifelong learner is important to her. She accesses the Internet and visits other teachers’ classrooms to learn from what others are doing.

Partway through the study, Rachel's understanding regarding the importance of product shifts again. By reading the curriculum, she discovers the emphasis on the experiential aspect of arts education and uncovers her hidden assumption that all arts education lessons must include the creation of products:

As I looked through the curriculum, I thought, "There's a lot of times where students are just looking at the world around them and from different points of view. There's not always a product. It might just be having students look at things in a new way or having them experience something." Looking at the different ideas in the curriculum helped me to see that I had an idea in my head of what I think arts ed is – I always thought that I had to produce something.

(Conversation #3, p. 7)

Rachel is intrigued by the idea of engaging students in observing, exploring, and talking about the ideas that arise as part of learning in arts education. This shift in her understanding of arts education has implications for her classroom practice. She begins to focus more on the processes that students engage in during arts education lessons. Although she adopts this focus, a key role of arts education in Rachel's program is to support learning in other areas of study.

Integrating Arts Education

Where Rachel's visual art program is strongly influenced by the seasons (as she has a book of teachers' ideas, divided into seasons, "that all the teachers borrow"), her drama and dance lessons are based on content from language arts, health education, or social studies:

I usually base my arts ed lessons on themes that I'm doing. So, a lot of times, it's related to teaching something else. Like, when we study a country which we'll be doing in the next week for a cultural fair, a lot of arts ed will be drawn into that whether it's through dramas or learning a cultural dance or visual art or whatever it is. So, I tend to use art to teach other things.

(Conversation #2, pp. 2, 6)

For Rachel, integrating arts education with other areas of study helps students to make connections while introducing students to different ways of learning:

Today's lesson is actually an extension of sort of a mini-unit that I do right after Christmas. I take the book, The Mitten – the folktale. The kids love it and I do language arts and math activities. So I was just extending that further into arts ed. We developed masks for the different animals and were acting out the story – you know, retelling story. Drama is great to do with this story! ... The kids just loved it! They were right into the story.

(Conversation #3, p. 1)

This excerpt also highlights part of Rachel's informal theory where arts education is intended to be fun for students. This criterion of "fun", however, does not appear to be important for other areas of study.

Although the principal in the school has strengths related to drama, Rachel has not accessed his expertise nor has she accessed the local arts community to support her arts education program. Similar to other Grade 1 teachers, Rachel feels tremendous pressure to teach her students to read and admits that arts education is often not taught in her classroom. In Rachel's words, "If something has to go in my day, it's arts ed". As Rachel tends to teach arts education at the end of the school day, other priorities such as language arts can easily take up the day leaving no time for those lessons scheduled for later in the day. Rachel is curious about how other teachers find time to teach arts education and wonders if they might, similar to her practice, "push arts ed aside". As arts education tends to get "left by the wayside", Rachel admits that she is not as familiar with the arts education curriculum because there is little need to plan activities for lessons that do not occur. There is one occasion, however, where arts education takes "center stage":

Each year, our school puts on a cultural fair and each classroom is asked to choose a country to study. For one afternoon/evening, we invite parents and the community to come through our classrooms to experience that country's history, art, food, dance, geography, etc. It is always the highlight of the year for many students and teachers. ... Because the students played such a huge role in the planning, they were extremely motivated and excited about this project (parents would tell me that all they could talk about is the country we are studying!!). ... These experiences allowed students to

experience a variety of aspects of arts ed. Too often (in my classroom) arts ed would get pushed aside. During this project, it took center stage.

(Journal Entry, April 2003)

Large integration projects such as this cultural fair serve to heighten awareness and build understanding of various cultural traditions while offering rich opportunities for student learning in all four strands of arts education (i.e., dance, drama, music, and visual art). As with all projects, it is important to know the objectives for each area of study that one hopes to help students achieve through this “integration”. Otherwise, these types of projects become limited to memorizing the steps to a cultural dance or eating foods traditionally associated with a particular culture without further developing students’ understanding of the cultural traditions and their significance.

Parental Expectations

Notwithstanding the success of this cultural event, Rachel finds that parents do not value arts education as much as other areas of study:

I think for arts ed, it’s not as big a deal to parents. Parents aren’t usually going to call me on something I’ve done in arts ed. So I can take more leeway than in math because parents want to know what’s happening in math. There’s an arts ed curriculum but do any parents today care? Like, really, do they care about arts ed? So I feel like I have a little more freedom to veer off a little bit [from the curriculum] whereas in reading or math, I wouldn’t dare do that. I feel like I have more freedom in arts ed ‘cause that’s never an area where parents come in and question.

(Group Discussion, p. 6)

The preceding excerpt, although focusing on arts education in particular, demonstrates the low status of the arts in general, in the broader community. Parents have expressed their concern to Rachel, regarding the school’s extracurricular drama program, that “other things are being left behind for drama” and that they do not want their children to “lose the basic skills because of this drama” (Conversation #4, p. 9). Ironically, while parents may be concerned about the arts taking time away from the “basics”, parents still expect a product for each arts education lesson. Rachel

often meets these expectations through seasonal art projects or through integrating with other areas of study.

Rachel's Classroom

Inside Rachel's classroom, the students are seated in paired rows (i.e., three rows of 8 students):

Front of classroom

XX	XX	XX ²¹	
XX	XX	XX	
XX	XX	XX	$\frac{1}{2}$ size lockers
XX	XX	XX	

Teacher's Desk

Small Table

Small Table

Rachel is reminding the students of a book they read that morning, "Remember this book? What kinds of colours did she colour herself?" (Students have paint brushes and containers of glue on their desks. Students raise their hands before responding to Rachel.) Rachel continues, "Do you remember primary colours? ... Blue is called a primary colour. Red is called a primary colour. Yellow is a primary colour – good memory!" (In the classroom is a poster of *Rules for Good Listening*. There are half-size lockers on one side of the room.) Rachel asks, "What colour does red and blue make? Remember when Mrs. E__ [the intern] had the food colouring? ... What about red and yellow? What about blue and yellow?" (A teacher aide helps in the classroom. She is helping the student with the speech problem.) Rachel describes the activity, "We're going to make suncatchers. ... You want these pieces of [primary colour] tissue paper to go over top of each other on your plastic glass. Watch while you're doing this ... see if you get any green."

One student turns to the student seated behind her and says, "I thought we were going to paint our desks with glue". A second student informs the student beside him, "I've tasted glue before".

²¹ The symbol "X" refers to a seated student.

A third student exclaims, "I made purple!" Rachel walks around the classroom monitoring, bringing materials, asking questions (e.g., "Are you seeing any orange?"), and offering prompts (e.g., "Try and get different colours together"). Students are sharing glue in pairs. They are working on large sheets of paper to prevent the glue from sticking to the desks. One student is singing softly to himself. Generally, students are working or talking quietly to each other:

Student: "I made orange!"

Rachel: "Good for you. What two colours made orange?"

Student: "Red over yellow. It looks cool inside [the plastic glass]."

When done, students move to individual activities at their desks, on the carpeted floor, or at the two small tables (with chairs) at the back of the room. As students complete their suncatchers, the teacher aide takes the "gluey" paint brushes to clean them in the washroom because there is no sink in the classroom. The classroom is not ideal for visual art or other "mess-making" activities as the floor is fully carpeted.

In discussing the lesson, Rachel expresses surprise that the students did not remember how the primary colours can be used to form secondary colours:

I was surprised with what the kids didn't remember. I guess I forget they're in Grade 1. I know they learned about the primary colours with the intern earlier this Fall. Mixing colours was part of their science unit with the five senses. They didn't do a lot of it on their own so that's why I thought I would give them the opportunity to play with the colours. I thought they would remember a lot more. It took a lot for them to remember that yellow and blue make green. I guess it was a good review for them because they had forgotten some of that.

(Conversation #2, p. 1)

Rachel notes this exploratory aspect that she deliberately incorporated into her lesson. As students were not able to discover the secondary colours (by playing with mixing them) during the previous science lesson with the intern, Rachel designed this activity to engage students in a

discovery process. Relevant to most visual art activities, Rachel comments on the preparation required for the lesson:

Normally, I would like to have everything ready to go and prepared beforehand. I was doing a lot of it as I went. I was supervising both recesses and lunch today. I had no prep. It was just one of those days where there was no opportunity for me ... I couldn't put the glue out at 8:30 this morning. It was rushed that way and I don't like feeling like that. Usually, if I do a lesson like this, I like to have everything laid out ... ready to go.

(Conversation #2, p. 1)

This excerpt reflects Rachel's busy life as a teacher and the difficulty she experiences in preparing for arts education lessons on student supervision days. During each classroom visit, I observe that Rachel consistently includes anticipatory activities, draws on students' prior knowledge, provides guided practice, prompts student thinking, monitors students throughout the lesson, and provides follow-up activities.

Rachel's Horizon of Understanding

Rachel asserts that participating in this study prompted reflection on teaching in the area of arts education – an area she considers to be weak. Her stance as a reflective practitioner, however, supported her reflection in thoughtful and probing ways. Reflecting on the transcripts of our conversations and the initial theme categories related to these conversations shifted her awareness to processes in arts education (in addition to products), to the cultural/historical component (in addition to the creative/productive), to the elements of visual art (e.g., texture, line, and shape), and to potential drama activities:

Being a Grade 1 teacher, I often think, "I don't think I can do that with Grade 1 students" and then I see it in the Grade 1 section of the curriculum and I think, "Maybe this would work". One idea I saw was doing a whole class role play. I've done little role plays in health lessons ... but with my zoo unit, I could have a role play where maybe I'm the zoo keeper and the students take on the role of an animal and tell me what they like and don't like about being in the zoo.

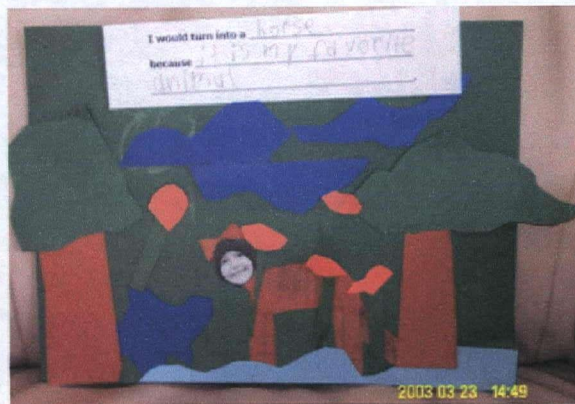
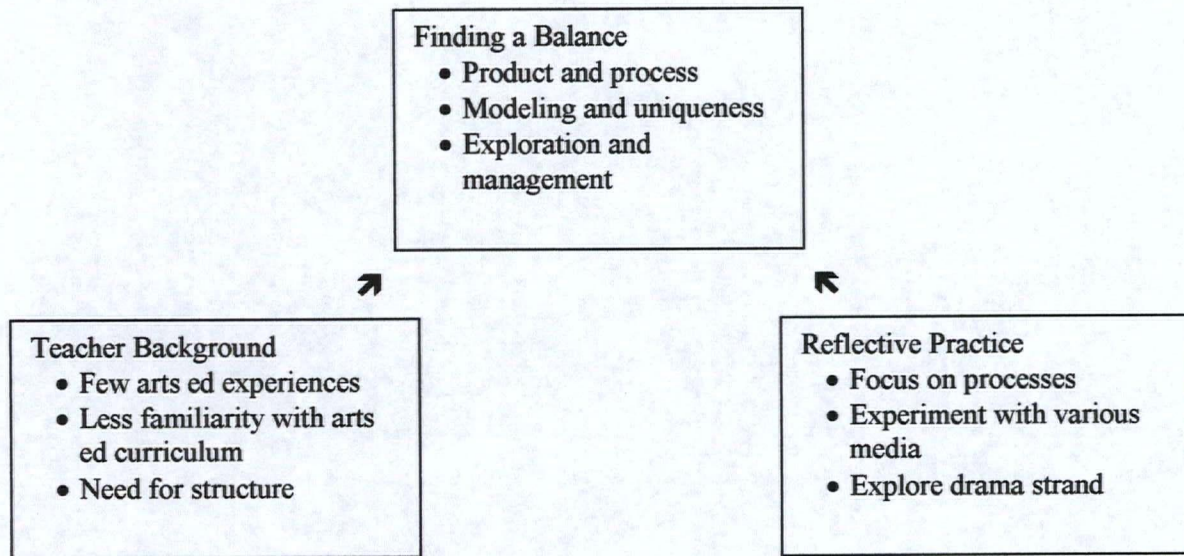
(Conversation #4, p. 9)

Rachel is also interested in experimenting with different media (e.g., pastels, clay), helping students recognize connections between the arts and daily life, and drawing on particular sections of the curriculum (e.g., sample units, objectives, instructional guidelines, assessment forms).

Rachel's horizon of understanding and her related practice is shaped by her background, her informal theory of arts education, the lack of space and time for her arts education program, some favourite resources, and the natural disposition to reflect on her practice. Due to her limited background in arts education and her belief in the importance of teaching children to read and compute (which is further supported by parents), her arts education lessons (if taught) are used to support learning in other areas of study such as language arts. To conserve her energy (due to her introverted nature) and support her need for structure, she plans her arts education lessons to minimize risk. In her journal, partway through the study, she writes, "I would say, however, that I am not a risk taker, and this may be why I struggle in the area of arts ed. I find it hard to step out of my comfort zone and risk failing (i.e., risk having a lesson not go well or not turn out as I had planned)" (December 2002).

Her practice can be described as one of "finding a balance": between developing a product and focusing students' attention on the process, between providing a model for students yet encouraging their unique responses, and between engaging students in exploratory activities while keeping classroom management issues to a minimum. Figure 4.1 (on the following page) illustrates how Rachel's background and her reflective practice contribute to her need to find a balance. The student art works shown in this section demonstrate the results of finding this balance.

Figure 4.1. Finding a Balance.



(Horse collage created by student in Grade 1, 2003)

Rachel: This little girl's collage is of herself as a horse ... Here she cut out some flowers to put on instead of colouring them on. And instead of colouring the water, she used blue paper for the water ... more of a collage effect.

(Conversation #4, p. 1)

Finding Resources: Chelsea



(Salt clay penguin, leaning to left, created by Grade 1 student, 2003)

Chelsea: I just wasn't sure how the students would handle their excitement. They had known about this project for a few days and we had endless discussions about it.

I am quite proud of my students. They did a wonderful job with the salt clay and the penguins actually looked like penguins with a lot of character. We have received many compliments and comments about the character of each bird. The students all started out with the same medium and had the same instructions but the results were very unique ... a satisfying class.

(Journal Entry, February 2003)

Meadowvale School

Chelsea teaches at Meadowvale School which is located in the northwest area of Spruce Rivers. Meadowvale is a public school that opened in 1962 for Kindergarten to Grade 8 students. The school has recently implemented standards for neat classrooms. There are 265 students, 14 classrooms, and 17.27 FTE staff members. Matching the current trend of declining enrolments throughout the province, the school tends to lose approximately a classroom a year. The school draws students predominantly from the surrounding rural community and, according to the principal, the teachers are seen as extensions of the family.

An example of this extension includes various activities, hosted by the school, where community members are invited. In the fall, the school held a Thanksgiving dinner that fed 550

people. The parents donated the food and the Grade 8 students prepared the vegetables. At the Remembrance Day commemoration held at the school, 400 people attended along with 15 war veterans. Extracurricular sports, especially basketball, are important activities at the school. Performing arts groups are brought in regularly to give performances or workshops for students.

To provide equitable opportunities for all students, there is a "dignity fund" that is used to purchase runners, to pay the cost of hotel rooms for overnight school trips, and to address other school-related activities for those students whose families cannot afford such expenses. Lunches (for \$2.50) are held once or twice a month at the school. Fundraising efforts include hosting steak nights at the community golf clubhouse to pay for the annual week-long Grade 8 field trip to the historical Hiking Hills in the province.

As I enter Meadowvale School, I see Grade 8 graduation pictures mounted and framed in the hallway. The principal, wearing a bandana and cycling shorts, has just returned from biking with some students. I approach Chelsea's classroom and find that the door is closed. There is a small table with a chair, against the hallway wall, outside the classroom. On the wall, above the table, is a timetable chart which shows arts education scheduled in four days of the six-day week. Over the door is a Welcome Back to School sign. On the bulletin board in the hallway is a display of trees with student photographs (and their families) on the branches. The display is titled Meet Our Families.

Chelsea's Background

It is the end of the school day. Students are filling their backpacks and lining up to leave as Chelsea welcomes me into her classroom. When asked to describe herself, Chelsea shares the following:

I have five children – my oldest is in grade four. They keep us very busy. We farm northwest of Spruce Rivers. Sometimes it's good to farm and sometimes it isn't

(laughter). ... I love to be outside. We camp. My kids and I bike. ... We love animals. We now have three cats and a dog. ... I love to read. I read all the time. Computer is kind of my thing right now. I'm into software and figuring out different things with the computer ... to use with the students.

(Conversation #1, p. 1)

Chelsea plays the piano and likes to draw. She had an "awesome" art teacher in grade school who taught her "all kinds of skills" related to visual art. In a recent chance meeting with this teacher, Chelsea was able to tell her how she has "influenced my teaching". The teacher was "moved to tears".

Chelsea has been teaching since 1990 (with two years off for maternity leave). Her educational background includes additional classes in physical education, reading, and special education. She describes the benefits of her special education certification:

At this age [grade 1], it's so hard to tell whether they have a learning disability. You can't tell when they first come in until halfway through grade one or even into grade two. Then you realize, "Ohh ... that looks like a learning disability". I find it makes a big difference to have a special education background. It really helps. I think it would help anybody but it really helps with these little guys.

(Conversation #1, p. 2)

This is Chelsea's third year teaching Grade 1. There are 17 students (10 boys, 7 girls) in the class. They have reading buddies in Grade 6 and take field trips with the Grade 2/3 classroom.

Chelsea teaches all of the arts education strands except for dance which is taught by the physical education teacher. Chelsea plans lessons for the week and sometimes changes plans to capture teachable moments. Starting points for lessons are often activities that she finds on the Internet.

(See the sample transcript excerpt in Appendix K for an example of how Chelsea uses an activity as a starting point for lesson planning.) She also takes arts classes through the local museum and uses this learning to plan new activities for students.

Chelsea's Informal Theory

According to Chelsea, arts education “keeps people’s minds open”. In Chelsea’s view, the purposes of arts education are to help students: explore ideas and express themselves, learn “arts skills”, be open to new ideas, respond to art works in sensitive ways, develop confidence, and take risks. To achieve these purposes, Chelsea shows students models and engages students in prior activities to build background knowledge and to connect art making to daily life. She focuses on problem solving and skill building even when engaging students in craft making. She enjoys the arts and plans activities to support student enjoyment, as well. She believes in taking risks and supports students in risk taking. She is aware of the three components of arts education and focuses on each to the extent that she believes is possible with young children. These beliefs shape her practice which includes modeling and building background knowledge, supporting student problem solving and skill building, incorporating art elements during craft making activities, encouraging the enjoyment of arts education, taking risks, and focusing on particular components of arts education.

Modeling and Building Background Knowledge

Chelsea often completes a project first so she knows how it will work and has a sample to show the students. She believes that modeling is important along with building background knowledge for students:

I find that the more background you can do ... that makes a huge difference, I think, with these guys. To just walk in and say, “Okay, let’s make something.” They look at you and don’t know where to start. They don’t know what shape to make first. They have no ideas at all. I think just because they’re six and seven years old. I find the more background knowledge and the more involved they are in the activities that they do, the easier it is to actually create something. Then they can let their imagination go because they know what the main task is.

(Conversation #3, p. 2)

Supporting students in using their imagination to express themselves in unique ways is an important part of Chelsea's arts education program.

In her journal, near the end of the study, Chelsea writes about her personal vision in teaching arts education:

My personal vision as a teacher of arts ed is one of exposure and support. I am not the expert and the kids don't look to me for the "how to" manual on drawing or singing or whatever. They do not try and copy me. ... They no longer say "What colour should this be?" or "What can we use to build it?" They are proud of their "knowledge" at being able to make their own decisions.

(Journal Entry, June 2003)

This excerpt hints at Chelsea's belief in the importance of student problem solving.

Problem Solving and Skill Building

During each classroom visit, I observe that Chelsea involves students in decision making throughout the art-making process. To support this creative problem-solving approach, Chelsea believes that it is important to develop students' skills in arts education. In our first conversation, she explains, "It's neat showing the kids the different techniques. You need to teach them how to do it properly so it looks the way they want. You show them how to do the techniques but they still do it themselves" (p. 6). As part of skill development with various media (such as pastels, plasticene, and watercolour), Chelsea engages students in exploratory activities. She also focuses on the development of students' perceptual abilities through activities such as taking students outdoors to look at colours in leaves before bringing students back into the classroom to try and "make those colours" by blending different shades of pastels. Vocabulary development is an important part of her arts education lessons, as well:

We've talked about the different textures and what texture is. Students knew what it was but they didn't know the vocabulary so we had to do a lot of review related to terms such as "bumpy" and "smooth". That's what we worked at this morning. It was an introduction to this lesson on texture.

(Conversation #2, p. 1)

Chelsea tends to integrate arts education with other areas of study but, unlike Rachel, thinks that she probably ends up doing “way more arts ed” than is required.

“Upping” Crafts

During our conversations, Chelsea emphasizes the importance of taking a craft and “upping” it by bringing in art elements. Her second journal entry reveals her thinking about the relationship between arts and crafts:

To me, arts and crafts are two very separate things. A craft can be duplicated and is generic ... maybe a different colour, shape, or position but still identifiable as the same craft. Art is totally unique. The only quality it has in common with the other students’ work is possibly the medium or the initiating point such as a story, field trip, or movie. I feel that crafts are done WAY too much, especially in elementary classes. ... I have done crafts. The kids like them but not to the same degree as when they create a piece of art.
(Journal Entry, January 2003)

Chelsea’s classroom practice reflects her belief in the importance of supporting students in creating unique works of art. In a journal entry related to a classroom lesson where students were using a mixture of flour, cornstarch, and salt to make three-dimensional penguins, Chelsea explains, “I have tried to encourage students to be unique – different from others – and to really think of ways, other than the norm, to express themselves. I think that I have succeeded, to a large extent, in that area” (June 2003). The student art works pictured in this section demonstrate the uniqueness that Chelsea encourages.

Chelsea is not interested in “cut and paste” activities and wants to do something “more creative” with the students. In her view, “When you create something, regardless of what other people think it looks like, it means something to you. You can create something that touches you personally and express yourself” (Conversation #2, p. 12). Her classroom practice demonstrates this belief as she encourages creative exploration and unique expressions with different textured

materials even while using photocopied templates of bug shapes (found on the Internet) to glue these materials on, for example.

Enjoying Arts

Chelsea enjoys teaching arts education, science, language arts, and mathematics but finds, similar to Rachel, it is helpful to have “all the materials prepared ahead of time” for arts education lessons (Conversation #2, p. 2). Chelsea has more ideas for teaching older students as most of her teaching background is with students in grades 4-6. She uses these ideas by facilitating Art Smart Cafe, an extracurricular activity for students in Grades 4-8:

We have Art Smart going right now. My big task for Art Smart is finding activities that these kids like to do. I try and pick ones that aren't what you would normally do in your art class. So that's why we made masks. We also do a lot of clay. We've even painted murals on the ceiling. We've done different kinds of things. We also use pastels because lots of kids don't tend to go into pastels. And I love them. So we just finished up a project with that. Pastels and glue ... it's really a neat project. I found it on the Internet.

(Conversation #3, p. 4)

This excerpt touches on another aspect of Chelsea's informal theory which includes a belief in the importance of finding activities that are fun for students and that engage them in creating art works. In a journal entry completed at the end of the study, Chelsea lists three questions that guide her choices for arts education projects:

I ask three questions to help me figure out the value of a project. Did the kids have fun doing it? Can they remember it? Would they like to do it again? These three questions I ask myself constantly. If the answer to them is “yes”, then the project is successful. Our salt clay penguins, our community drama, our “find the beat” music games are some that come to mind that the kids still talk about and would like to do again.

(June 2003)

These questions provide further evidence of Chelsea's belief that arts education is intended to be fun for students (which is similar to Rachel's belief).

Taking Risks

Chelsea is comfortable taking risks and finds teaching arts education to be “more fulfilling than risky”. She involves students in projects and the process is jointly shaped by her and the students. She supports students in individual problem solving throughout the creative art-making process so that each student can achieve his/her purpose. Where possible, she turns the decision back to the student and encourages reflection on individual choices and subsequent results. In her experience, arts education is a “much freer time” where everyone has the “right answer”. She notes the freedom that drama offers students:

In drama, students can get up and move. It's more free. It's creative. The students made the puppets for this drama themselves. And, I'm not giving them a script that they have to read. They're making up the drama themselves. They're very proud of those puppets. They hand sewed them.

(Conversation # 4, p. 8)

As Chelsea has many years of teaching experience and this is her third year of teaching Grade 1, she expresses comfort in taking risks in her classroom practice. Chelsea also affirms the importance of supporting student risk taking and accepting their efforts in one of our early conversations, “I think if you're not willing to take a risk or to have somebody ... how would you say this? You have to be willing to take what the students give you” (Conversation #2, p. 6).

It is possible that Chelsea's comfort in risk taking is supported by the attitude of parents who, according to Chelsea, do not consider arts education to be important. During one of our conversations, she notes that, “Parents don't care what students' marks are in arts ed”. When discussing the possibility of changing the school division report card from focusing on marks and effort to focusing on objectives, Chelsea becomes quite animated:

Do it (laughter)! Do it right now! Change our report card! ... effort is so ... subjective. How do you say you're having a good effort or you're not showing a good effort? ... But ... are they doing what the objectives say? ... [By focusing on objectives], it would give parents more of an idea of what you were doing well.

(Conversation #3, p. 12)

Such complacency on the part of parents leaves the teacher free to explore and innovate without fear of negative repercussions. Although Rachel's situation regarding the parental lack of interest in arts education seems similar, her lack of background in arts education coupled with the presence of the teacher aide and Rachel's need for structure makes it difficult for her to take risks. For Chelsea, the risk taking involved in arts education contributes to her enjoyment.

Choosing Components

Chelsea tends to focus on the creative/productive component of arts education because "kids like to do things". Further, she believes that everyone can create/produce. Even though the production of art works is the focus, Chelsea believes that creativity in arts education is demonstrated through art-making processes. Consequently, she supports her students in contributing ideas through creative problem-solving processes, in reflecting upon the processes when the art works are completed, and in thinking about follow-up projects. The following excerpt illustrates how one student thinks about a potential texture project upon completion of the "textured bugs" activity:

I had one little boy say, "I'd like to make a sponge man and use different textures. I could put nuts in for eyes and that would be 'smooth'. I could use sandpaper shoes and that would be 'rough'." I thought that would be kind of a cool culminating activity. Instead of just telling me, the students could problem solve and show me their understanding of texture.

(Conversation #2, p.2)

Chelsea uses the critical/responsive component of arts education to strengthen students' perceptual abilities and to guide their responses regarding their own art works. With the cultural/historical component, she brings in a book or a film and talks about "peoples' stories". With the age of the students, Chelsea does not "do much cultural/historic because it's hard to find pictures of a sculptor from the 1800s, for example".

Resources

You will note in a previous dialogue excerpt regarding Art Smart that Chelsea found a particular project idea on the Internet. She does “a lot of research on the Internet” and finds “not just little crafty activities” but lesson plans. In most of our conversations, Chelsea raises the challenge of obtaining resources (including materials for art projects):

... resources are a big problem. They're really hard to find and they're expensive. Can you afford to buy water paints? Can the school afford to buy good brushes that don't come apart the first time you stick them in a tempera block? Can you afford to buy tempera paints or pastels? A lot of schools can't. It has to be a special request through a special budget. It's a lot of work to get this stuff. So maybe people think it's just not worth the effort.

(Conversation #2, p. 11)

Although instructional resources such as slide kits, videos, and music cassettes were specifically developed and distributed to schools to support the Elementary arts education curriculum in 1991, Chelsea has not seen these resources. She also notes the spontaneous nature of arts education which further contributes to the difficulty of finding resources:

Any resistance to growth or change in teaching arts ed is mostly related to resources. (I am not worried about a project “flopping”. My kids and parents are very supportive and have loved everything we have done so far.) I buy mostly everything I need myself as it is just easier but can get very expensive. As I said before, I tailor the projects to the units, lessons, and kids and very often, the ideas come up spontaneously and there is not time to wander around stores looking for supplies or music samples.

(Journal Entry, June 2003)

A human resource that seemed to have the most influence on Chelsea's interpretation of, and subsequent practice in, arts education was a young teacher who was an arts education major that taught briefly at Meadowvale. In describing the impact of this teacher, Chelsea observes, “Spending time with a colleague that was an arts ed major really made a difference in the way I teach arts ed. She was incredibly supportive and full of resources. I still have a couple of her binders and have passed them around many times” (Group Discussion, p. 2). It was this teacher

who encouraged Chelsea to try activities in arts education and not to be so concerned about controlling the process. In Chelsea's words,

The arts ed major really encouraged me to let the students make the choices. She was the one that really pushed me in that area. She would ask me, "Why are you making these decisions? Why not let the students decide?" Now, I'm amazed at what the students come up with and how they engage in the creative problem-solving process.

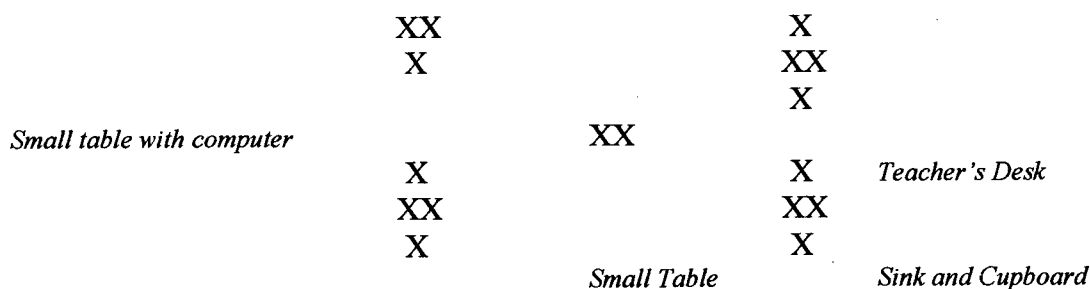
(Conversation #4, p. 12)

Due to her involvement with the arts education specialist, Chelsea's understanding and subsequent practice related to arts education shifted from making the decisions for students to supporting students in decision making and creative problem solving.

Chelsea's Classroom

Inside Chelsea's classroom, the student desks are arranged in small groups:

Front of classroom



There is a morning message with missing letters on the language experience chart:

K_n _nd his famil_
 went t_ _ b_s_ball
 g_m_.

On the bulletin board are several charts: Our Birthday Graph with student handprints by each month, Our Numbers chart, and two pocket charts. One pocket chart has the following rhyme:

Wednesday Wednesday
 Wednesday is here.
 Wacky Wednesday
 But have no fear.
 Wednesday Wednesday
 Wednesday is here.

The students are in two self-selected groups working on the floor around two large hand-drawn community maps related to an upcoming drama. Some students are lying down to draw while others are kneeling or sitting around the map to work on it. There is movement, talking, and sharing of pencil crayons. The first group (8 boys, 2 girls) has drawn a zoo, library, skate park, water slide, tennis court, LaCrosse field, baseball diamond, and bank with a falcon loft on their map. The idea for the falcon loft was contributed by a new student from England. One student asks, "How about if we make a sidewalk here? Then people can go across the road to the skate park." Another student points to a green figure on the mural and says, "I'm the green guy with the skates". The second group (5 girls, 2 boys) has drawn a park with a bike path, a beach and campground, a shopping mall, a hospital, a railroad, and purple birds on their map. One student is devoting herself to drawing the beaks for the birds. A second student is carefully completing details for the campground. A third student announces, "We forgot a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool elevator". Chelsea asks the group if they can find a spot for the elevator.

When the maps are completed, Chelsea guides the students through a responding process which helps students to notice that their communities are missing a fire station and a police station. By encouraging students to make connections with their parents' occupations, Chelsea supports students' discovery of missing parts of the communities which students set about adding to their maps. In discussing the contextual drama that will flow out of these community maps, Chelsea observes:

The next step is for each student to choose to be somebody in that community. Then we're going to have a meeting where I'm the mayor and they're all the members of the community. We've received some money [for the community] ... and we need to decide what we're going to spend the money on. So we're going to see if we can come to consensus. ... It's going to be interesting to see what happens. I want to see if they're going to be in role – if they can act as if they are that particular person from the community. They haven't done a lot of drama so it'll be very interesting to see how they do and if they stay in role.

(Conversation #4, p. 2)

Chelsea admits that this involves “huge risk taking” but that she’s not afraid to take such risks. Further, she believes that you do not require artistic talent to teach arts education – just “love for” teaching it.

During each classroom visit, I observe Chelsea’s love for teaching art. She consistently includes introductory activities, draws on students’ prior knowledge, guides students through creative problem-solving processes, and provides follow-up activities. To enhance her practice in arts education, Chelsea would like a support person in the school division to help with arts education resources and instructional approaches. She would also like a sharing time where teachers could get together and share arts education ideas. Similar to Rachel, helpful aspects of the curriculum for Chelsea include the one page checklist of objectives for each strand and the sample units including, in particular, the teacher note boxes.

Reflections on Participating in the Study

Chelsea acknowledges that participating in this study causes arts education to be on her mind more than usual and that she finds herself “doing extra thinking in the area of arts ed”. She expands on this idea in her journal:

Because of participating in this study, the topic of arts ed seems to be on my mind more than usual. I find myself thinking differently about my lessons. A simple seasonal craft takes on a new dimension when we discuss the texture, shape, or colour. I likely would not have done this before.

(October 2002)

Near the end of the study, Chelsea shares her surprise regarding the students’ abilities to express themselves using the “languages” of the arts:

One idea that I would say that I have really learned and that has surprised me is the capacity of a 6-7 year old child to express themselves through art. Be it visual, drama, music, or dance, it amazed me this year.

(Group Discussion, pp. 8-9)

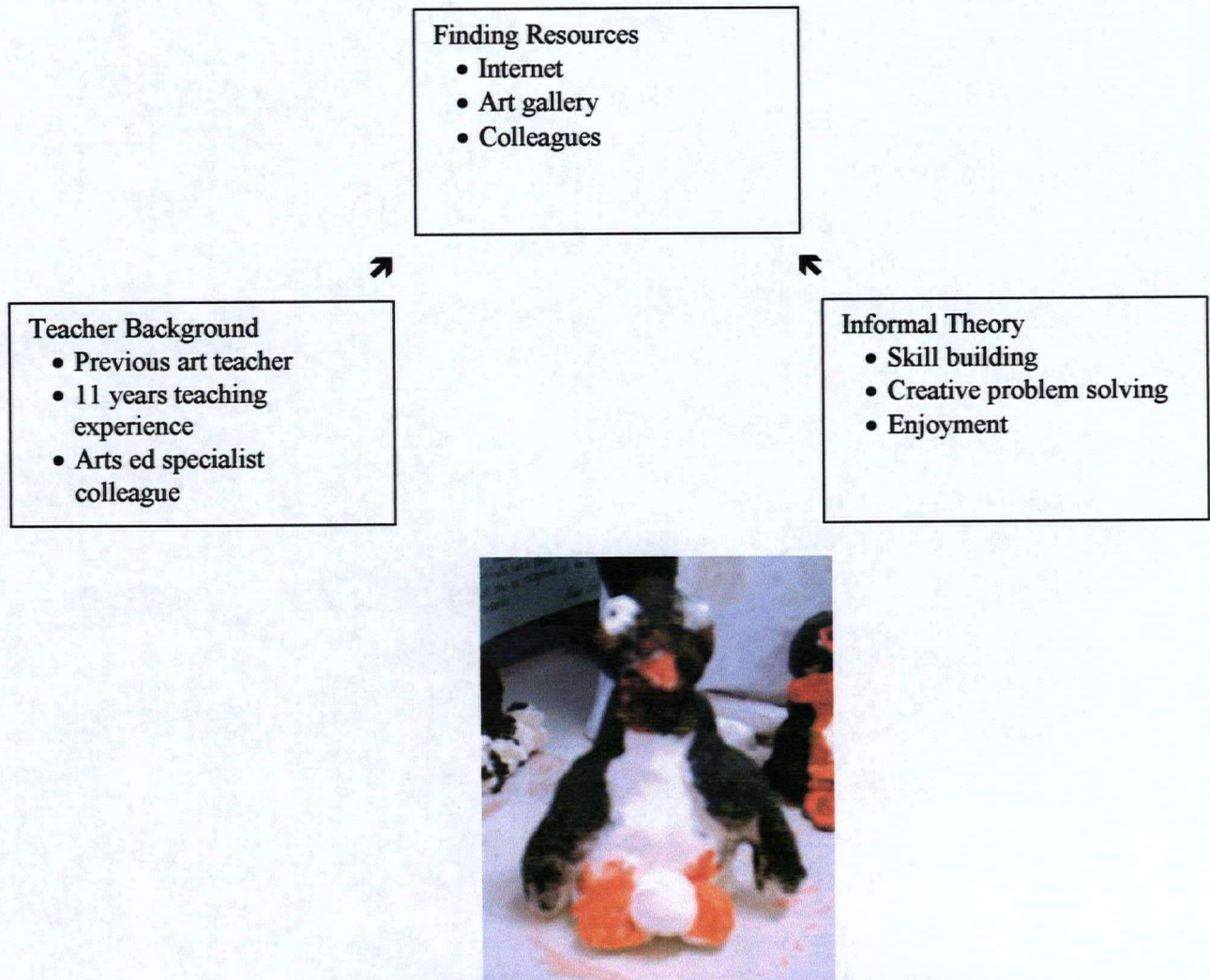
Chelsea's understanding of arts education shifted to include this new learning about the ability of young children to express themselves in the "languages" of arts education. This shift has enlarged her horizon of understanding.

Chelsea's Horizon of Understanding

Chelsea's horizon of understanding and related practice is influenced by her background, her informal theory of arts education, the challenge of finding lessons and art materials, and reflection upon her own practice. Her background includes more than 10 years of teaching plus she is becoming more comfortable with teaching Grade 1. Her previous experience in her own K-12 schooling with an art teacher who believed in skill development continues to exert an influence on Chelsea's interpretation of arts education in her practice. Teaching with a colleague who was an arts education major also shifted Chelsea's understanding and subsequent practice. This background along with her informal theory of arts education allows her to appreciate the open-ended nature of arts education and to support students in building skills, exploring various media, and solving problems related to creating and responding in the arts.

Her love for teaching the arts motivates her to find new ideas through attending professional learning opportunities offered by the local art gallery. Her comfort with technology supports her in accessing new ideas and lessons over the Internet. She also draws upon her network of teaching colleagues to glean ideas (including recipes) which she adapts for her own purposes. In many cases, it is the resources that Chelsea finds that influence her classroom practice. Although somewhat limited in this study, evidence of Chelsea's reflection on her practice was observed and has been noted in this thesis. Figure 4.2 (on the following page) illustrates how Chelsea's background and her informal theory related to arts education shape her interest in finding particular resources.

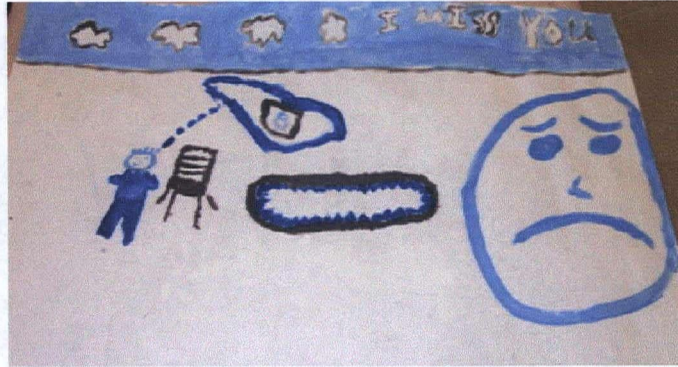
Figure 4.2. Finding Resources.



(Salt clay penguin, with egg on feet, created by Grade 1 student, 2003)

Student to Researcher: The daddy penguin carries the egg on his feet. Do you want to come and see my egg? I put it under his foot. I even made a mouth. I don't know how I did it. Look at Nelson's [another student's] egg. It's bigger than mine. It must be an Emperor Penguin.

Finding a Starting Point: Montana



(Blue Period painting created by student in Grade 5, 2002)

Student: We started learning about Picasso and we painted a Happy Period and a Blue Period. My Blue Period picture is about when my grandpa died and I was sad.

Montana: I have a lot of books about Picasso and we've learned different things about his life. We discussed his Blue Period of being sad and the students were to think about different ideas or pictures that they have in their minds when they're sad.

I showed them pictures of Picasso's paintings and I had them sketch what they were to draw first. It was the Blue Period so they could only use a couple of different shades of blue and grey, and some black. The kids liked doing that because they could mix paint and make a big mess over everything (laughter). The kids are very proud of their pictures and happy to see them displayed on the hallway bulletin board.

(Conversation #1, pp. 16-17)

The Community: Barley Flats

It is Fall. I am driving to Barley Flats to meet with one of the participating teachers, Montana. Barley Flats is a small village in southern Saskatchewan with a population of approximately 150 people. The road to Barley Flats is a single-lane paved highway with signs designating the speed at 50 kilometres an hour. The road has many dips and potholes (which explains the reduced speed limit). I pass farm houses, both old and new, with well-developed shelter belts of trees. These look like large farm operations. I discover later, in chatting with the principal, that these farm operations are owned by five large families.

Upon entering Barley Flats, I mistake the elevator entrance road for the main street as the three large elevators obviously receive a lot of traffic and the road leading to them is well

developed. It turns out that the village of Barley Flats bought the elevators from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool when the Pool was closing elevators across Saskatchewan. Typical of many small towns in Saskatchewan, the school is named after the community.

When asked to describe the community, Montana observes that

It is a very small town. When a new teacher comes, the community is very inviting and would like to get to know you personally. They want to know where you're from and who you're related to. They're very interested in you as a person. ... All of the businesses in town are very welcoming and want you to be a part of them. They leave the skating rink open and unlocked so you can take your students there during the day ... and there's no fee. If you want to go to the hall to have a bigger space, you can go in and use it. There's also a kitchen in there so you can cook or bake with your students. My friends can't believe that everybody in the community knows who I am and even knows my Mom when she comes to the Christmas concert.

(Conversation #1, p. 4)

Montana's description reflects the experience of many teachers (including my own) who teach in small communities in rural Saskatchewan. These small communities need the contribution of each community member to organize and host such events as Thanksgiving Dinners in October and Curling Bonspiels in January. In Montana's words, the community is "like a family". She is one of the few teachers who lives in Barley Flats as the others commute from larger neighbouring centres.

Barley Flats School

Barley Flats School is a K-12 school with approximately 80 students. Two-thirds of the students arrive on the bus. Some board the bus as early as 7:30 in the morning to arrive at the school by 8:45 a.m. Many of the students are related to each other (i.e., siblings or cousins). Fifteen students graduated in the previous school year and 18 students enrolled in the school this Fall. There are seven teachers (two males and five females) and the age range is from 22 – 50 years. In addition, the principal carries a half-time teaching load. There is also a half-time kindergarten assistant, a half-time special education assistant, and a school secretary. The special

education assistant was hired six years ago when a student in Grade 1 was diagnosed with a brain tumour. This assistant continues to work with the student who is now in Grade 7. The classrooms are grouped according to the following grade levels: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-10, and 11-12.

The school houses a computer lab (with 23 computers) of which the community is very proud. The computers are networked to the school division office with a "deep freeze" at the school level so that when the computers are turned off, any material that has been downloaded is deleted. The school hosts many extracurricular sports events such as volleyball and golf tournaments. In the past, when student enrolment was higher, the school was known for its strong sports teams. With the current low enrolment, students join sports teams from other schools as there are insufficient numbers of students to form Barley Flats School teams.

Upon entering the school, I notice a poster on a hallway bulletin board advertising a school dance on September 13th. The cost is \$6.00. There is a large bulletin board of graduation photographs, beginning with the class of 1970 up to the class of 2001, with room available for more photographs. On the opposite side of the hallway, in a glass-covered shelving unit, plaques and trophies are displayed for: congeniality, most improved student, floor hockey, curling, honourable mention (academics), best all around student, service award, mathematics, English, and oratory. Further down the hallway, there is a poster profiling the services of the school division guidance counselor; a bulletin board describing post-secondary education information with a sign above it that reads, "Don't just do enough to get by ... do enough to get ahead!"; a scholarships bulletin board; and a high school bulletin board with photographs of students and information regarding intramural events. Another bulletin board in the hallway displays local community information with news clippings about 4H, Barley Flats Grain Ltd Opening, and a local family of four generations portrayed in a recent photograph.

There are lockers in the hallway with doors partly open. There are also two boot rooms – one at the North end and the other at the South end of the school. There are student-made posters of the teachers, the assistants, the secretary, and the janitor beside their respective rooms. As I approach Montana's classroom, I see a six-foot long fish tank against the hallway wall with five piranhas and one lone goldfish (still swimming around from the breakfast feeding). Directly across the hallway from the fish tank is a lounge (for students in grades 6-8) which has a sink, three microwaves, and a ping pong table (that I see through the open door).

Montana's Background

When asked to describe herself, Montana shares the following:

I grew up in a family of five. My Mom and Dad both farm. My Mom now works out of the home but as we were growing up, she was a stay-at-home Mom. I have an older sister and a younger sister. My older sister is a teacher and my younger sister works at a grain elevator where her husband works too. ... I enjoy working with livestock. We show cattle and ride horses.

(Conversation #1, p. 1)

Montana's rural roots influenced her decision to intern and teach in a rural school division close to her parents' farm. She is 27 years old (and will turn 28 later in the Fall). She is single and becomes engaged during the study (similar to Rachel). In addition to her education degree, she has an early childhood development diploma from the post-secondary institute of applied science and technology in the province. She enjoys spending time with friends, reading, participating in sports, playing the piano, and quilting.

Montana started teaching in February of 1998. She has 16 students in her current Grade 3/4/5 classroom. All six students in Grade 5 have special learning needs but are no longer taken out of the classroom for additional learning support. Three of these students have been held back a year (at some point during the previous grade levels). Montana enjoys teaching language arts and science, and sees lots of integration possibilities between arts education and language arts. She

teaches the visual art and music strands of arts education to her students, and the K-2 teacher teaches the dance and drama strands to Montana's class. Montana likes "alternating the strands" so that students "can try new things" (Conversation #3, p. 8).

Challenges in Arts Education

Montana finds arts education to be challenging due to its open-endedness and is not sure how her lessons will proceed, "I don't feel confident teaching arts ed because maybe I won't know the answer if my students ask me something or I won't exactly know where the lesson will go. Usually your lessons go a lot better if you know what's going to happen" (Conversation #2, p. 7). For this reason, she likes the "concrete" nature of science as "it gives you a specific topic" (Conversation #3, p. 9). Her advice to other teachers regarding arts education is that "until you get to know your students, start off with activities that are a little bit more under control (laughter)" (Conversation #2, p. 5). She often finds that she starts an activity in arts education and it mushrooms into something larger than anticipated.

The open-ended nature of arts education requires teachers to be comfortable with some ambiguity as students actively shape each process while responding or creating. In her journal, after my first classroom visit, Montana writes about her nervousness in not knowing how her students will react:

I think that any time you have a visitor in your classroom, there is a heightened level of awareness and expectations. I was nervous before the class started because I did not know how some of my students were going to react to the lesson. It was nice that Jane [the researcher] came before recess so that we had a chance to visit before the class started. Once I began teaching and the students were engaged in the lesson, my nerves lessened. ... All in all, I found Jane's first classroom visit very positive and the students are looking forward to seeing her again.

(November 2002)

It is interesting to speculate whether such nervousness would occur prior to a mathematics lesson where students are engaged in activities in which teachers often know the "right" answer and can

successfully guide students in finding it. In arts education, teachers need to be accepting of varied student responses and ready to guide the further development of these responses to support student learning and their achievement of particular curriculum objectives (e.g., staying in role). This guidance is not what Montana experienced in her own arts education schooling which tended to be “cut and paste” without necessarily exploring different media or ideas through arts expressions and responses.

A critical factor for Montana in supporting her students’ exploratory processes, within the ambiguous milieu of arts education, is the development of appropriate grade level responses:

I think my first problem with the Blue Period paintings was that this is the first time I let the kids paint this year. So they were just excited to be able to paint (laughter). They weren’t worried about what they were painting. They were just happy to be painting, I think. And once they did their paintings, I was a little disappointed because I thought, “Some of this doesn’t look like Grade 3/4/5 work.” ... Maybe I shouldn’t have so much in my head of what I want my kids to do ... when what they actually do doesn’t match up with what I think, then I’m quite disappointed. I know that arts education is supposed to be a lot more open and free to express what students want to express. It’s funny that I think I know what they should express (laughter).

(Conversation #1, pp. 16-17)

To promote the development of grade appropriate work, Montana builds in activities to support students’ prior thinking such as having students write about or draw what they plan to paint before they begin painting. (See the sample transcript excerpt in Appendix K for an example of such activities during the culminating Cubism painting project of the Picasso unit.) In spite of the challenge of not knowing how students will respond, Montana appreciates that the open-endedness of arts education allows all students to participate at their particular level and to be successful to some degree. The photographs of student art works at the beginning and end of this section demonstrate different levels of participation by a student in Grade 5 and a student in Grade 4, respectively.

Another significant challenge for Montana in arts education is one of finding a “starting point”. This is a theme that arose several times in our conversations. In discussing the curriculum, Montana observes that she understands the objectives but does not necessarily know the activities to use to support student achievement of the objectives:

I think one of the objectives I read in the grade 3 curriculum for music was: Students will be able to hear beat/rhythm in music ... or something like that It's easy enough to read but then it's harder to come up with some kind of an activity to go along with it.

(Conversation #2, p. 7)

In Montana's view, “having a place to start from” is her biggest challenge (Conversation #1, p. 16). She uses resources, such as large posters of art works, to provide a “kickstart” for her lessons (Conversation #3, p. 6). She also finds the starter lists in the curriculum to be helpful (including the types of questions to ask students). She uses the sample units in the curriculum for a starting point as she finds them “really easy to use” and confides, “I just kind of need a starter and then once I have that, I can usually go from there” (Conversation #3, p. 5).

Another challenge relates to assessment and evaluation. Montana finds the checklist of objectives for each strand in the curriculum to be useful for multi-grade planning and for monitoring what students achieve each year. She claims that the objectives in the curriculum “take your thinking to a different level” and admits that, “If I didn't have the curriculum to go from or didn't use the curriculum, I know I would teach totally differently or wouldn't take it to that level” (Conversation #3, p. 7). The “less structured” nature of arts education, however, makes it “a lot harder to evaluate and come up with a mark on the report card” (Conversation #2, p. 5). She comments on the school division reporting system:

On the report cards I use, there's a letter grade and then there's an effort mark. ... it's the letter grade that's more difficult. ... We had done the blue period and the rose period and ... a lifeline for Picasso and a few things like that that they handed in and I marked. I had told them before what I was looking for but it's still quite subjective.

(Conversation # 2, p. 5)

In the culminating group discussion, Montana talks about her participation in writing benchmarks for language arts and how the students appreciated the rubrics and exemplars. In relating this experience to arts education, Montana observes that “I don’t know how you would even start to do that for arts education (laughter)” (Group Discussion, p. 5).

Montana’s Informal Theory

For Montana, arts education provides opportunities for teachers and students to take risks, to engage in creating processes, to relax, and to broaden arts-related knowledge. An important goal, however, of Montana’s arts education program is for students “to respect the uniqueness and creativity of themselves and others because they’re still at very much the age where they’re quick to judge people and where it’s not cool to do certain things” (Conversation #3, p. 10). Further, she hopes that arts education will help her students to

... realize that different people are usually good at different things ... and that they should try and be involved in things ... being able to audition for parts and having the confidence to do that ... just to be more involved, I guess, in what’s going on at the school ... as far as extra-curricular things. Hopefully, they’ll get more from arts education than just making or doing things that they feel comfortable doing ... and that they’ll be willing, maybe, to take chances.

(Conversation # 2, p. 10)

This excerpt reflects the performance aspect of arts education that many schools promote, often through extracurricular drama clubs or choir groups. While such activities address the interests of some students, arts education is intended for all students and not solely for those with particular performance abilities. Where drama productions include all students and allow them to shape the course of the drama and experiment with taking on roles, the intention of the creative/productive component of arts education is realized. The previous excerpt also illustrates part of Montana’s informal theory regarding the prominent role of risk taking in arts education.

Risk Taking

Montana believes that students are willing to take risks in arts education where they would not necessarily do so in other areas of study. She also finds that arts education allows teachers to take risks:

Teaching arts education also allows me to take chances and try new things. ... It is usually the times that you take risks that turn out being most rewarding. I feel that my students really enjoyed my arts education program this year. They had the opportunity to experience all four strands and now have a taste of the "Arts". It worked well sharing the time with Miss Brighton [the K-2 teacher who taught the dance and drama strands] and the students had the opportunity to see more than one teaching style. I am looking forward to trying new things next year!

(Journal Entry, May 2003)

Montana also expresses an interest in exploring dance more "just because I haven't done a whole lot of it". One of the influences on her interpretation of arts education was a young teacher, an arts education major, who was at the school during the previous year. It was this teacher who "got the kids doing a lot of really neat things [in dance]".

Creating Processes

Montana comments on the perception that many people have of arts education which is to focus on the development of products where her classroom practice tends to focus "more on the process". She finds that "by talking to the students about the process they went through in creating, they probably learned more ... and I learned more ... by doing that" (Group Discussion, p. 4).

Relaxing

Montana also engages her students in craft making. The students enjoy the activities and know what to do as most craft-making activities in Elementary classrooms include little, if any, creative problem solving. Similar to Rachel, Montana used to plan arts education lessons for the end of the day as, in her view, "students don't need to be as focused" in this area of study.

Instead, it is an opportunity for students to relax. This assumption supports another aspect of her informal theory which is a belief that arts education is “usually one of the more fun things that you can do together as a class” (Conversation #2, p. 9). This view of arts education as fun or as enjoyment is shared by both Rachel and Chelsea (as noted in the previous two sections of this chapter).

Building Knowledge

In her practice, Montana focuses more on the creative/productive and critical/responsive components than on the cultural/historical component although the unit on Picasso incorporated the cultural/historical component in a significant way. In our first conversation, she speaks about this artist study:

... the first lesson we're doing this year ... or unit ... is on Picasso (laughter). It's kind of funny because ... the kids are excited about learning about him because they think he's really neat. I have a lot of books and some pictures of his paintings and things like that that the kids like to look at ... before we even started really learning about him.

(p. 16)

For Montana, and similar to Chelsea, building students' background knowledge is critical so that she can “draw on” this understanding as the artist study progresses.

Resources

Montana acknowledges that she does not feel comfortable teaching arts education because she does not have enough background knowledge or experience upon which to draw. In her first journal entry, she notes that “I would like to be more creative in teaching arts ed but often I have trouble coming up with ideas. My experience in arts education is a limited one so I often ‘ask for help’” (September 2002). Consequently, Montana accesses local community people and gallery programs from Spruce Rivers to support her arts education program, and uses the services of the

Resource-based Learning consultant and of the school division librarian to access resources from the school division resource centre:

In our school division, we have a lot of really good resources that we can use. It's just knowing what's there and getting them. I was really surprised with how much the division had because I hadn't really gone into the division office and looked to see what was in the resource centre for arts ed. There is a lot of stuff. Dana [the central office superintendent] is very good at finding out what's new, ordering it, and making it available for teachers.

(Conversation #2, p. 6)

These resources support Montana in focusing on both the process and the product in her arts education lessons. Of the four participating teachers, Montana was the only one who took advantage of the school division resource centre.

Montana's Classroom

Outside Montana's classroom is a bulletin board display of paintings titled "Picasso's Blue Period". I am drawn to these paintings with their sparse use of colour (only blues and greys) and their individual interpretations of sadness. On a neighbouring bulletin board, there is a display titled "As Time Goes By" which includes a timeline for the school year and pictures of different students taken during each month. Another bulletin board display beside Montana's classroom door is titled "The Royal Agricultural Fair" which displays student craft work of small paper pie plates with green tissue paper around the edges and yellow tissue paper placed strategically over the green (to look like sunflower plants) with unshelled sunflower seeds glued in the centre of each plate. On the same bulletin board are large posters made by students which describe a seed planter, combine, crop sprayer, disk harrow, and plow. There are also Grade 3 student posters titled "Made from Flour" which include drawings of cookies and doughnuts.

The classroom door is open. There is a scarecrow face on Montana's door surrounded by leaves. One of Montana's students comes into the hallway, says "hello" to me, and pulls a paper

turkey (with hands for a tail) out of a hallway locker. The special education teacher comes to take a student out of the classroom for an individualized lesson. Through the open door, I can see that the Grade 4 and 5 students face north and the Grade 3 students face east. Both the north and east walls have large blackboards while the west wall is comprised mainly of windows. I sit at the back table by the teacher's desk in front of the south classroom wall.

Inside Montana's classroom, the students push the desks aside and sit on the floor in a semi-circle. The students have just come in from recess. Most of the boys have muddy pants as it has rained recently and is currently drizzling outside. One student reminds the group that "We've got to sit in our spots" in the semi-circle. Another student jokes about having water in his lungs and gives a fake cough. With prompting from Montana, the students describe the process that they used to develop their Stomp sound/dance piece which included watching a video and brainstorming ideas of what they could use to make different sounds. The students brainstormed 57 words and chose three of them (including the words "sticks" and "body"). The students created a sound/dance piece based on those three words, and made their own instruments. The students practised to co-ordinate the sound pieces with the dance phrases. During this creating process, the students learned about beat and rhythm. In describing the process, the students talk about how they made decisions to determine the sound/dance phrases (with teacher questioning and prompting) and how they engaged in creative problem solving to make the rainsticks (of which some fell apart initially when too much wet paint was applied to the cardboard rolls).

The students (still seated on the floor) begin their Stomp sound/dance piece with a few students shaking tins, with plastic lids, that hold loose grain. A few more students add to the rhythm by tilting their rainsticks back and forth. Within a set number of beats, a few more students beat wooden sticks on the floor. After a similar interval, the remaining students use

wooden sticks to hit tin cans held in their hands. On a pre-determined beat, the students set down their instruments and clap the floor for a set number of beats, then clap their hands for a set number of beats, then clap a sequence on the floor, their knees, and their hands for several 8-beat phrases. Then half the students stand and stomp their feet for a set interval after which all of the students stand and stomp their feet in unison. The students end the piece by snapping their fingers in unison and inviting us (i.e., Montana and me) to participate.

Montana introduces the idea of crescendo and the students discuss how to incorporate this idea into their piece. The students repeat the piece incorporating the idea of crescendo by slowly getting louder throughout the piece and yet ending quietly. With teacher support, the students reflect on their piece and what they learned in creating it. After the lesson, Montana observes:

I've talked to the kids a bit about their Stomp piece and today they seemed to be even more willing to talk about it. We'd talked about the process they went through and then what the final product was but I hadn't really pointed out to them ... and I didn't know if they had thought about ... how they had spent all this class time [i.e., several classes] working through the process to come up with a two-minute piece.

(Conversation #4, p. 1)

Montana consistently facilitated such discussions so that all students (even those in younger grade levels) had opportunities to contribute.

During each classroom visit, I observe that Montana involves students in background activities to build understanding, encourages students to participate and contribute ideas for lessons, and engages students in active learning processes. She uses whole class instruction in arts education with anticipatory sets (that draw upon students' prior knowledge), direct teaching of concepts, guided practice and monitoring, and follow-up. She believes in mastery learning and wants students to show her that they understand something before she moves on to new areas of learning. Although she finds that, in arts education, parents are not as concerned and teachers in the following year are not as likely to criticize what students learned in arts education the

previous year (whereas teachers generally are concerned about what students learn in mathematics or language arts during a previous year).

Reflections on Participating in the Study

In her journal, Montana reflects on how “being part of this study makes me take the time to look through this curriculum and think about objectives” (February 2003). In one of our conversations, she ruminates on how arts education is “... something that you just have to keep figuring out for yourself almost. The more you try things and see what works and ... depending on the class of kids you have too ... makes a big difference ... and to have the time and resources to do it” (Conversation #3, p. 11). Participating in the study served as a catalyst for Montana to dedicate time to reading the arts education curriculum and to access resources that were readily available from the school division resource centre. By referring to the curriculum objectives and teaching different strands, Montana observes that her understanding of arts education shifted to include new ideas which informed her subsequent practice. In the group discussion, Montana emphasizes how the curriculum “opens up” her picture of arts education:

When I started teaching, based upon past experiences, I don't even know if I was aware that there are four strands to arts ed or that it was more than just doing crafts and things like that. If a teacher is using the curriculum, it just opens it up and makes it a much bigger picture. (p. 3)

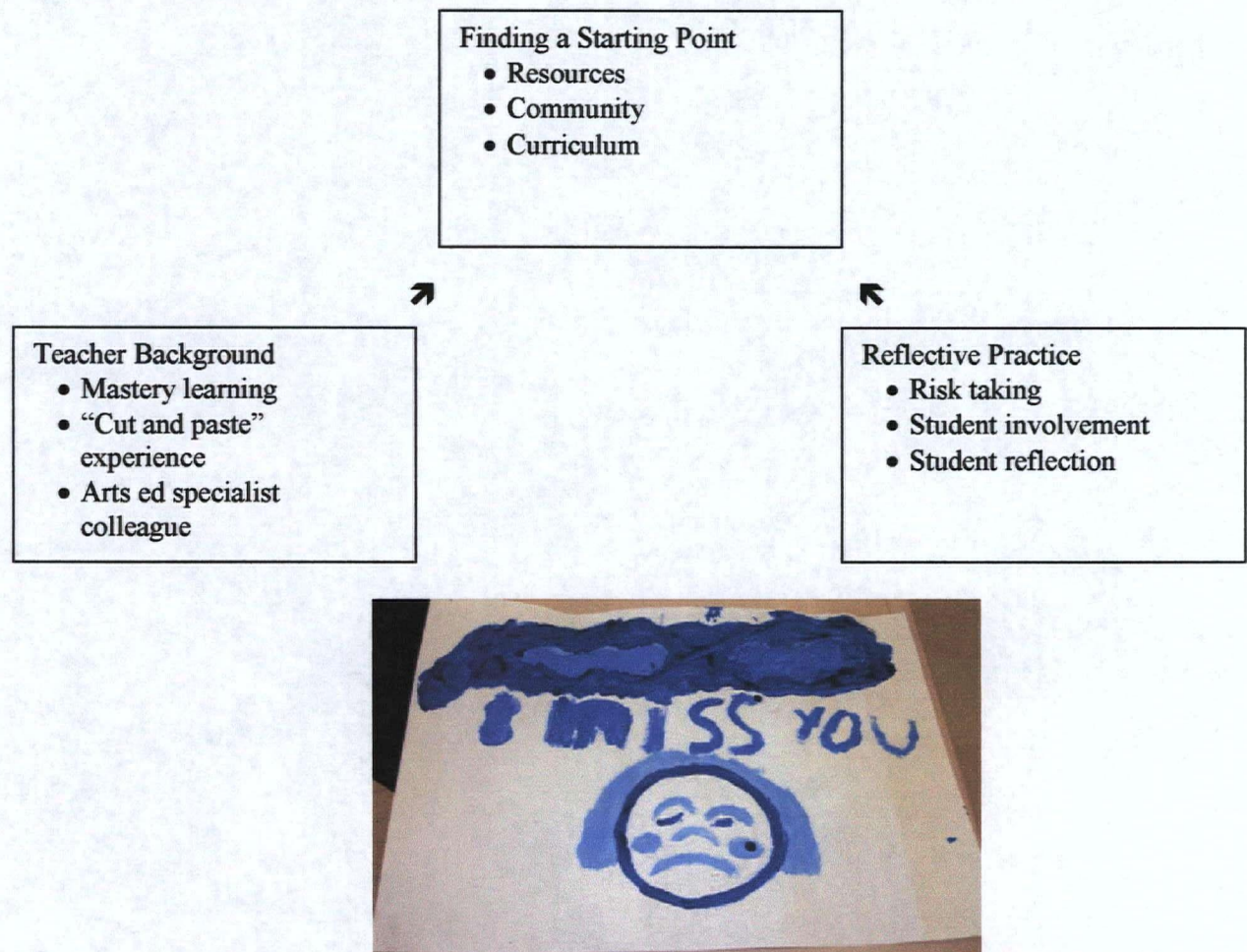
Through reading, thinking, and talking about the curriculum, Montana's understanding of arts education shifted to embrace a “bigger picture”. Her journal reflects her interest in continuing to learn when she writes, “I am happy that I agreed to participate in this study. Arts ed is an area that I struggle with, so the more time spent thinking, planning, and reflecting about it can only be beneficial” (February 2003).

Montana's Horizon of Understanding

Montana's horizon of understanding is shaped by her background, her informal theory of arts education, her use of a range of resources, and her ability to reflect on and learn from experience. Although Montana has some background in music, her previous experience in arts education has been limited to "cut and paste" activities. Her focus on mastery learning along with her overall lack of background in the arts causes her to look for starting points (so she can determine what students will need to know and be able to do before moving on to new learning). She finds these starting points in resources from the central office, in human resources found in the community (i.e., local watercolour painters), and in the starter lists from the curriculum. In her experience, reading an activity in the curriculum is more easily understood if she can observe someone doing the activity with students.

She notes that she has developed her understanding of arts education by watching other teachers, going to workshops, and participating on committees where arts education resources were reviewed. In her view, she has built her understanding, practice, and comfort in teaching arts education incrementally each year. Her experience in teaching with a colleague, an arts education major, coupled with her previous professional learning experiences contribute to Montana's interpretation and subsequent classroom practice. For Montana, her reflection on her practice highlights the critical aspects of risk taking, involving students in decisions, and supporting student reflection on arts experiences. Her background causes her to search for starting points that accommodate these critical aspects of arts education. Figure 4.3 on the following page shows how her background and reflective practice contribute to her need for finding a starting point.

Figure 4.3. Finding a Starting Point.



(Blue Period painting created by student in Grade 4, 2002)

Student: My painting is about a man named Picasso. His friend had just passed away. As you can see, Picasso is so sad that he thinks the clouds say, “I miss you”.

Montana: This year with my Grade 3/4/5 class, I enjoyed teaching the Picasso unit. The students enjoyed learning about his different periods he painted. They enjoyed painting and I learned a lot from watching them paint and discussing their paintings with them.
(Journal Entry, May 2003)

Finding Inspiration: Cary



(Blue Dinosaur painting created by student in Grade 1, 2003)

Student: We were learning about dinosaurs. We had to choose a dinosaur and paint it. We could do the background however we want. We could do the paper tall [vertical] or like this [horizontal]. I painted a Long Neck Dinosaur.

The Community: Wheat Hills

Cary lives on a farm close to the village of Wheat Hills where she teaches. Wheat Hills came to life in 1904 when the Canadian Pacific Railway's new line became operational. By the spring of 1905, many homesteaders began building. At one year of age (in 1905), Wheat Hills already had a board of trade with a strong business section that included three general stores, lumber and coal suppliers, a post office, a livery, a hotel, a meat market, and an implement and harness dealer. There was also a school and an elevator. The first Royal North West Mounted Police were stationed here in 1905 and the first doctor arrived. At that time, Wheat Hills was a popular place to visit.

In 1906, a railway station was built to go with the section house. 1907 saw many additional businesses including a tinsmith, a real estate and insurance agent, and a hotel with a restaurant. This was also the year of a smallpox epidemic so a new house was turned into an isolation hospital. Wheat Hills incorporated as a village in 1909 with about 700 residents. A theatre was built in 1910 and soon there were many more businesses in the community including a Red and White Store, two restaurants, a blacksmith, two cobblers, a butcher, a baker, an undertaker, an

embalmer, a flour miller, an electric repair shop, a laundry service, a veterinarian, a Beaver Lumber store, Imperial Lumber, a Bank of Toronto, a photo studio, a newspaper publisher, a livery stable and auto garage, and an implement shop.

Today, Wheat Hills has approximately 300 people in the community. Many commute to work in the larger neighbouring city of Spruce Rivers. Most of the farmers are over the age of 40 and hold another job (or their spouse does) to support their farming venture. The community has a restaurant, a general store with bakery and coffee shop, a hair salon with tanning beds, a hockey/curling rink, and a 9-hole golf course. With assistance from the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association (PFRA), residents have planted a three-acre plot of land with fruit trees to become a community orchard.

Wheat Hills School

Wheat Hills School is a K-12 school with 119 students, 10.4 FTE teachers (which include a full-time special education teacher and a .4 speech therapist), and a guidance counselor who comes to the school for one day within each 6-day cycle. A commemorative plaque on the outside of the school announces the 1994 dedication of the new addition to the building. The school secretary proudly informs me that the school has kept records dating back to the 1930s. The entrance to the school is an inviting open rotunda space.

There are many sports trophies along with a certificate of appreciation for a Terry Fox Run displayed in the glass-covered shelving unit on the hallway wall (next to the gym) that leads to the wing of Elementary Level classrooms. There is a large pepsi cooler in the hallway outside the gym with a skylight outside the gym door. Fountains in the hallway are at two levels – one is at hip height and the other is 2/3 up my thigh. The washrooms are wheelchair accessible with wide open doorways. Down the hallway, there are posters on the wall with the following statements:

This is a positive thinking area, Today is the day you make your choices for tomorrow, and Never settle for less than your best. There are also posters in the hallway about Cooperation and Friendship. There is a “clean” smell in the school. It smells something like wet paint or new ceiling tiles.

Cary's Background

When asked to describe herself, Cary shares the following:

I've been married for 33 years and we have three daughters who are all married ... and three grandchildren. They are a total joy. Last night, our youngest grandson who is in kindergarten phoned. He was the kindergarten student of the month and he was just totally thrilled and his sister was just as thrilled as he was. She was so happy for him.

(Conversation #1, p. 1)

After graduating from Grade 12, Cary attained her Standard A teaching certificate through a two-year post-secondary educational program. She taught for two years before staying home to look after her children until they were in their teens. She took classes and completed her B.Ed. in 1991 and began to teach again. Cary enjoys golfing, reading, and crocheting although she finds it difficult to make time for these activities.

Cary enjoys teaching language arts and finds that much of her teaching integrates with this area of study:

We have to make year plans, so ... in my case, I'd be integrating with language arts mainly ... because my science comes from my language arts as well as my social studies. So once I have my language arts themes for the year, then everything else just kind of falls into place.

(Conversation #3, pp. 4-5)

In arts education, she focuses on the arts education objectives “while still being in the framework of the [language arts] theme” being taught.

Cary's love of reading and mathematics supports her in achieving her goal of teaching children to read (and write) and to do “basic math” (see the sample transcript excerpt in

Appendix K where Cary describes her main teaching goal). Similar to Rachel, Cary feels pressure to ensure that her students learn to read and takes it personally if they are not “strong readers” by the end of June. To achieve this goal, she focuses on language activities throughout the day.

Cary makes yearly plans and finds the arts education curriculum to be helpful for her planning:

It's a great guide for the year plans ... for writing the year plans ... to determine the units of study that are required and the objectives. It has checklists as well. ... I think the curriculum is laid out really well. It's easy to find each of the strands. I think the curriculum is very workable ... easy to find things. It's good to have the sample forms ... even for assessment.

(Conversation #3, p. 5)

For all three classroom visits, Cary used the lesson planning form from the curriculum (to plan each visual art lesson) and a sample assessment form from the curriculum (for one of the visual art lessons).

Student Diversity

Cary has been teaching for over 12 years and finds teaching in a split-grade situation to be difficult:

Grade 1 is my main grade and sometimes I've had kindergarten/grade one and sometimes grade one/grade two. K/1 is with a teacher aide so that works really well because I only have kindergarten every other day ... so that day in between, you can have the grade 1s totally to yourself and then give them a lot of individual help. Whereas grade 1 and 2 is difficult because there's nothing you can combine basically and they're still ... the grade 2s are doing really well but they're still not independent workers. So, it's hard to be in two places at once and to make sure everyone's getting the extra help they need. It's really hard, I find.

(Conversation #1, p. 1)

Cary attempts to provide each student with the support required to be successful but finds this difficult to achieve, to the extent that she desires, in a split-grade classroom. As provincial

enrolments continue to decline, more teachers are experiencing split-grade or multi-grade teaching situations in Saskatchewan schools.

Cary finds that meeting the diverse needs of students is a challenge for schools and teachers.

Early in the school year, she writes in her journal:

Teachers' responsibilities have greatly increased in the past decade. We are expected to teach not only academics but also social skills, work education, wellness, etc. Many children come to school hungry and fatigued. The responsibility for children's physical fitness is also being passed on to the schools. I think that there is a growing awareness that schools and teachers need support and assistance in meeting the needs of children.

(November 2002)

The combination of diverse student needs and a split-grade teaching situation further contributes to Cary's need for planning time.

Challenges in Arts Education

Much of Cary's professional reading has "something to do with language arts". She has taken one art class as part of her teaching degree and a Physical Activities Studies class with a "dance element". When commenting on the dance portion of this class, she observes:

It was very free... and open and creative. It wouldn't be that difficult to teach but you want to have it all planned in your mind ... when you're doing something you're not comfortable with.... And it takes time. I think the time's a big thing. You have to have the basic lessons planned and then sometimes you're exhausted when it comes to something extra.

(Group Discussion, pp. 5-6)

This excerpt reflects how the open-ended nature of the dance strand requires some risk taking on the part of teachers and more energy for classroom management. Cary's self-described inhibited nature makes it difficult for her to take risks in the strands of arts education that are not so "safe", such as dance and drama. In Cary's view, planning for activities in these strands feels like "something extra".

Time for planning is critical, particularly when teachers have a limited background in this area of study. Cary makes the following observation:

I'm sure it would be helpful [to have background in the arts]. I don't know. I love to read and I love teaching reading. I think you tend to go where your strengths are. Or, it's easy to go where your strengths are. I love math, too. I'm pretty much self-taught as far as teaching art.

(Conversation #2, p. 3)

Cary's reference to being "self-taught" is due, in part, to the fact that she missed the implementation workshops that introduced the Elementary arts education curriculum in 1991 (as she returned to teaching in 1992). Although these provincial implementation workshops were offered over a three-year period, beginning in 1991, it is clear that her school division did not take advantage of these professional learning sessions (i.e., by supporting Cary's attendance). Cary would like time to network in grade-alike sharing meetings and believes that time dedicated to in-service in arts education would promote professional growth. A specific challenge for Cary in teaching arts education is "finding projects or lessons that young children can do and feel successful with" (Conversation #2, p. 5). Chelsea shares this same challenge.

Cary's Informal Theory

In Cary's view, all five goals of arts education are important. She believes that arts education provides students with

... the opportunity to develop their creativity and explore ... to try different processes and media, and different art forms ... to be introduced to artists ... and even be introduced to art as a possible way of something that could be a life work for some of them.

(Conversation #2, p. 6)

Both the process and the product are important to Cary. She builds students' background knowledge through various activities, and uses visualization techniques to tap into students' imagination. An example of some of the students' imaginative work is demonstrated in the

photographs of two paintings included at the beginning (i.e., a blue dinosaur) and end (i.e., an orange, yellow, green, and red cat) of this section.

The informal theory that guides Cary's practice is formed by her love for literature and her belief in the importance of strengthening students' perceptual abilities through a variety of experiences. She also believes it is critical to guide students in creative problem-solving processes so that students can create unique works of art. Her limited background in arts education causes her to look to outside sources, such as performing arts groups, to support her arts education program.

Integrating Arts Education

Cary often uses children's literature as a springboard for visual art lessons:

I try to introduce students to the art in children's literature. We always talk about the author and the illustrator of each book. I try to expose students to a variety of different types of art form. ... I enjoy teaching art. I enjoy connecting it with whatever things I'm doing. I think children's literature (laughter) ... here I go again ... but I think it's a wonderful source of art. Some of the illustrators are just marvelous.

(Conversation #2, pp. 3, 6)

Because Cary believes that it is an expectation to integrate across areas of study, the use of children's literature allows her to address arts education objectives within themes from language arts. Earlier in the school year, when reflecting on how her arts education teaching has changed over time to rely on children's literature for inspiration, she writes, "I rely less on lesson plans in unit or theme plans and more on my own inspirations from children's picture books. I have more self-confidence to choose picture books that will be appropriate resources for the learning objectives I am focusing on" (Journal Entry, February 2003).

In Cary's view, the use of children's literature allows students, who may not have the opportunity to visit art galleries, to experience the work of artists. Cary also finds ideas in language arts teacher guide books and in resources such as the *Arts and Activities* journal for

teachers. During the classroom visits, Cary focuses on the creative/productive component and incorporates the critical/responsive and the cultural/historical components by drawing students' attention to the work of artists and illustrators in children's literature. In the culminating group discussion with the other participating teachers, Cary observes that "the arts are an opportunity to introduce students to other cultures" (p. 8).

Music and dance activities are integrated with other areas of study or related to seasonal themes or celebrations such as Spring or St. Patrick's Day, and to performing arts groups that the school invites to work with students. Drama activities are also addressed through these visiting performers and through activities such as role plays in health education or acting out stories in language arts.

Strengthening Perceptual Abilities

Cary believes that it is important to connect what students are learning in school with their daily life. To this end, she has students focus on both the natural and constructed environment. An example of how Cary supports students in observing the natural environment is when she takes the students outside to look at and touch a tree, and to draw it during each of the four seasons. Such activities develop students' perceptual abilities in relation to visual art while helping students observe how trees change throughout the seasons in their science studies.

Cary further strengthens students' perceptual abilities through responding activities such as comparing the use of colour and line in the works of Ted Harrison and Eric Carle. During this particular activity, she was pleased that students "picked out" that both artists' works are "very bright and ... that Ted Harrison's lines are wavy ... and Eric Carle's lines are more geometric and straight" (Conversation #2, p. 1). Cary tends to use both the creating process and the responding process to support students in drawing on all of their senses.

Guiding Creative Problem Solving

Part of the informal theory that guides Cary's classroom practice is her belief that there are problem-solving processes in which children need to engage in arts education and her role is to guide students in these processes to create unique art works:

Children need the opportunity to problem solve and use their creativity... and try to be individual.... You know, using their own ideas and imagination. ... They need guidance as well as the freedom to be creative. We need to help children think through what they are trying to accomplish. ... I try and let the art work be theirs. I give them a few ideas but try not to dominate. Like, I don't agree with photocopied colouring.

(Conversation #2, pp. 5, 1; Conversation #4, p. 3; Conversation #1, p. 5)

Although Cary's last statement in the excerpt above expresses her philosophical stance with regard to the use of photocopied illustrations in arts education, her practice includes such activities as a way of managing students' completion of art projects within differing time frames (e.g., when students had completed drawing their bunny pictures, they coloured photocopied illustrations of Easter baskets while waiting to use the painting centre).

Arts Groups and Exhibits

Cary believes that it is her professional responsibility to provide the students with a wide range of experiences in all four strands of arts education and that arts education is part of "a well-rounded education". To support her in addressing the four strands, she takes advantage of performing arts groups and gallery outreach programs that visit the school and community:

Well, I think whatever subject you're studying, if you can bring real life experiences into it, it helps the student to learn. So if you can bring real artists into the school or take the students to a museum or gallery, I think they're learning.

(Conversation #3, p. 4)

Although travel costs prohibit the students from visiting the gallery in nearby Spruce Rivers annually, they usually visit the gallery every second year. During the 2002-03 school year, Cary's students experienced a drama production with a traveling drama group, enjoyed a musical

performance by a singing group, and made cement stepping stones with glass inlays under the guidance of a local craftsperson:

A craftsperson was invited to our school to show the children the process of making stepping stones. Each student from kindergarten to grade nine made a stepping stone to give to his/her mother for a Mother's Day gift. The students experimented with various designs and patterns using brightly coloured pieces of glass. Each design was unique. The creativity and imagination of each child were the inspirations for each stone.

(Journal Entry, May 2003)

This journal entry signifies the influence of seasonal events such as Mother's Day, Easter, and Christmas on arts education programs in general and on Cary's program, in particular. Cary typically attempts to address arts education objectives through themes related to English language arts (that may also incorporate other areas of study such as science or social studies) or to the seasons.

Risk Taking

Cary believes in introducing students to a variety of techniques and media in visual art. She notes that students are "feeling secure enough to take risks" with both in her arts education program. Even though she feels confident to take risks with the strong, supportive administrative leadership at the school, Cary admits that she has "probably not" taken any risks in her arts education program this year. Further, she acknowledges that dance and drama require risk taking by her (more so than the other strands):

I think my arts teaching is a progression of developing and changing as I learn and grow. Well, I guess the drama and dance is something I'm doing more of than I did before ... even though they're not quite as safe. ... I'm too inhibited (laughter) ... so dance and drama are not safe for me to do. I think it's because of my personality. ... I just feel more comfortable with visual art.

(Conversation #3, p. 6; Conversation #4, p. 6)

Within this safe and steady approach to arts education, Cary's learning shifts her understanding in ways that allow her to change her practice in incremental steps.

Cary's Classroom

Outside Cary's Grade 1/2 classroom is a row of student lockers with anagram poems (using the letters of students' names) on the locker doors. A student opens his locker to reveal two hardened, yellow socks and says to me with a mixture of glee and awe, "See! My socks are solid." Another student tells me with surprise and pride, "Hey, I have a lot of green today" (referring to her jacket, hat, and sweater). There is a student-painted mural of a green hill with a blue sky on a large hallway bulletin board beside the classroom door. There are dabs of sponge painting throughout the mural. As students come out of the classroom with hand-drawn, crayon-coloured pictures of themselves, Cary asks where they would like their self-drawings stapled on the mural. One student asks for his drawing to be put on the hill.

Inside the classroom, I see a poster with the question, "How many teeth have we lost this year?" The "lost" paper teeth are displayed per month on a vertical bar graph. Words on the blackboard include: *nail*, *nails*, *nailing*, and *nailed*. Other charts in the classroom include: A Sea of Birthdays, Seasons, and Our Classroom Rules. There are four classroom rules: 1) Be kind to others, 2) Be a good listener, 3) Work quietly, and 4) Walk. I smile at the reminder to "walk" and think how rarely my colleagues and I are inclined to run in our workplace. The classroom door is open and students are working quietly at their desks.

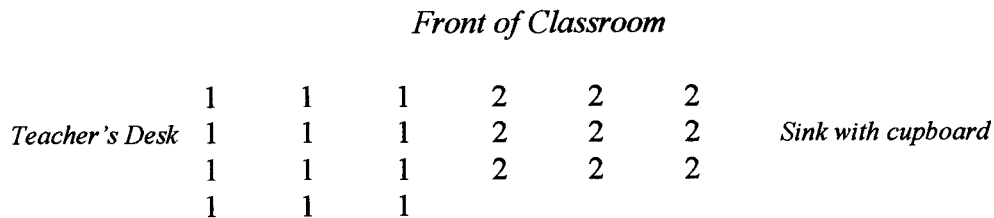
There are 21 students in Cary's classroom this year. Nine of the students are in Grade 2 and the remainder in Grade 1. One of the Grade 2 students has a hearing disability so Cary wears a microphone that amplifies her voice for the student's hearing aid. She describes her students as a "typical class" with

... all levels of academic abilities. ... Some of them, their homes are unsettled and they're coming to school tired and just ... lacking in structure maybe is the way [to describe these homes]. They're not getting the help at home

(Conversation #2, p. 3)

Cary organizes her classroom and structures her lessons so that students can learn in a quiet, orderly environment which is further supported with clear direct instruction. The excerpt above hints at her wish that similar supportive structures were available in students' homes.

The students (see Grade 1s and 2s in diagram below) are seated in rows facing the blackboard at the front of the classroom:



Small Table with Computer

There is the life cycle of the butterfly on the bulletin board. There are white tissue paper peace doves hanging from the ceiling. There are family word charts such as "at" and "all" on the classroom walls. As I walk into the classroom, a boy says to me (with excitement), "We're going to paint bunnies". Cary begins the lesson by having students look at the stuffed rabbits that they have brought from home and holds one up asking, "What shape is this bunny?" The student who brought the bunny starts to tell the bunny's name. Other students respond to the question with observations such as "sphere" and "oval". Cary asks what shape the bunny's ears are. The students note that the ears are in the shape of a curved triangle. Cary asks, "Do we see any pointed lines?" The students respond that the bunny has "rounded curve" lines. Cary asks what shape the bunny's head is and the students note that it is round. Cary reminds the students that "when you're drawing these bunnies, you need to think about shape and we need to remember our lines are ...?" A student responds, "... curved like a road".

Cary encourages the students to think about where their bunnies will be (as the class has been focusing on "setting" in language arts stories). She reminds the students about Peter Cottontail

(whom they read about in the morning) and asks where he was in the story. Students respond that Peter was in a forest, a field, a garden, a park, and some grass. Cary reminds the students, “You also need to think about proportion” while holding up a stuffed bunny. A student responds, “I never heard of proportion”. Cary explains the meaning of proportion and encourages the students to look carefully at the stuffed bunny that they are trying to draw. She prints the instructions on the blackboard and tells students that, “We’ll be using colours we’ve never used before” for painting the bunnies. She asks the students to close their eyes and imagine where their bunny is going to be.

Students are looking at the stuffed rabbits in the room and drawing. Cary walks by a seated student and asks about his drawing, “Where is your rabbit?” The student responds, “In the forest. I draw him so big that he looks like he’s far away from the trees.” A female student approaches me with her drawing and says, “Look at my bunny. He’s smelling a flower. I’m good at drawing bunnies.” The students trace around their bunny drawings with black markers so that it is easier to paint within the lines – an idea that Cary found in an *Arts and Activities* journal. When the students are finished drawing, they move to the back table to paint. Eight students are painting and sharing the containers of pastel paint colours:

Student 1: “Ooh, I need a thin brush.”

Student 2: “Yours [pointing at painting] is nice.”

Student 3: “Uh, oh. I painted over the eye by accident.”

Student 4: “Brown is cool.”

Student 1: “I have a small brush. That way, I won’t paint over the eyes.”

Student 4: “This is a nice colour.”

Student 5: “This is only the green water.”

Student 6: "This is what my cousin's bunny looks like."

Student 7: "Look at mine [bunny in painting]. I have a pink tail."

Students who have finished drawing and are waiting to paint are colouring in photocopied illustrations of Easter baskets. When the students are finished painting their bunnies and colouring the Easter baskets, students find a book to read.

In discussing the lesson, Cary refers to how she expands the seasonal focus through the use of children's literature:

Of course, the kids were enthused about doing rabbits this time of year. And they were quite thrilled with the pastel [paint] colours. ... I read them Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit to get them thinking about rabbits. I also wanted them to get the idea of not necessarily the Easter Bunny but ... Peter Rabbit in the garden. ... Having the object there to look at while drawing is probably the first time we've done that this year.

(Conversation #4, p. 1)

The development of students' perceptual abilities, by focusing on the shape of the stuffed rabbits, is a critical part of Cary's arts education program. This is evidenced by the use of real objects for students to look at when drawing, both inside and outside the classroom.

During each classroom visit, I observe that Cary consistently builds students' background knowledge and uses the instructional technique of visualization to help students focus their ideas and to encourage unique and creative responses. She prints the instructions for the activity on the chalkboard and monitors students as they create their art works. Prior to the first classroom visit, she

... felt nervous before the lesson. I relaxed a bit as the lesson progressed. I felt that the students responded well to the story. They were able to identify similarities and differences between Carle's and Harrison's paintings. The students were attentive to the instructions. They eagerly worked on their stars.

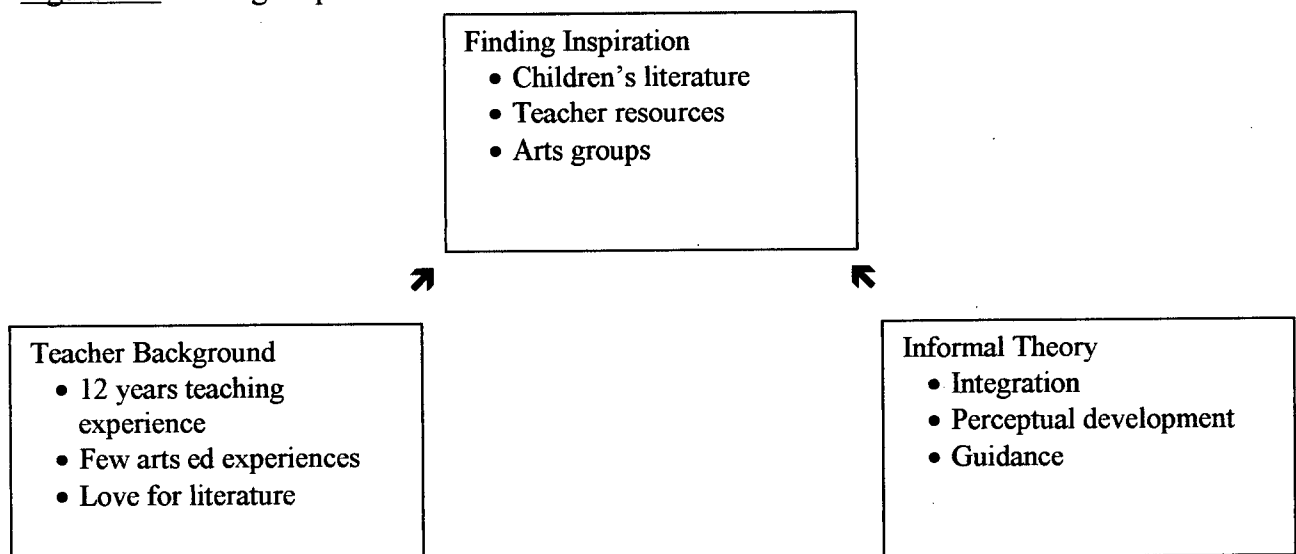
(Journal Entry, December 2, 2002)

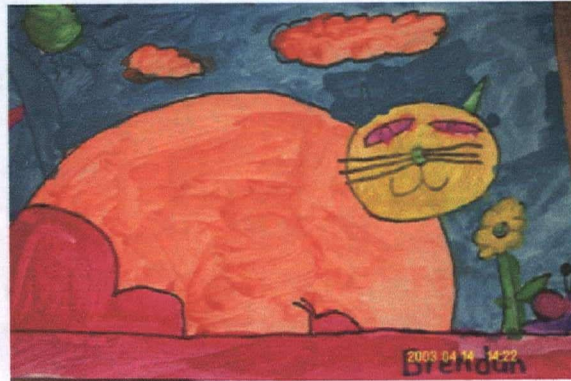
This excerpt typifies how both the students and the teacher found my presence to be less intrusive as the lesson (and the year) progressed.

Cary's Horizon of Understanding

Cary's horizon of understanding is shaped by her background, her informal theory of arts education, her reliance on literature and other favourite resources, and her ability to reflect on her practice. Her limited background in arts education along with her love for literature causes her to seek inspiration in children's literature and other resources related to language arts (see Figure 4.4 below). She is also inspired by performances in the arts that are directed by colleagues or by visiting artists. Her belief in her "professional responsibility" to engage students in "a wide variety of experiences in all four strands of arts ed" (June 2003) is operationalized through integrating with other areas of study, relating arts experiences to the seasons, or relying on the expertise of visiting arts exhibits, groups, or individuals. In our third conversation, she comments on her expectation of being required "to integrate across the curriculum" (p. 4). She also believes in developing students' perceptual abilities in the arts. Her practice reflects these "prejudices" along with the belief that students "need guidance as well as freedom to be creative" (Conversation #2, p. 1). Although Cary supported her students in shaping ideas and using various media for art works, signs of substantive risk taking in her arts education practice were noticeably absent.

Figure 4.4. Finding Inspiration.





(Orange Cat painting created by student in Grade 2, 2003)

Student: I put a dog catching a Frisbee on the side. I accidentally painted over the ear and tail of the cat. And I called it Sam. The teacher said to paint it whatever colour we wanted. So I made it orange, yellow, and green, and red. It's like my cat at home.

Researcher: You have an orange cat (in amazement)?

Student: No, I'm just kidding. He's gray (laughs and shows two missing front teeth).

Summary

For each participating teacher, her historical situatedness and “prejudices” shaped her horizon of understanding which contributed to particular interpretations and practice related to arts education. For example, Rachel’s need for structure coupled with her prejudice or prejudgement that arts education lessons need to culminate in the creation of products causes her to focus on products (to the exclusion of process) and to design lessons with predictable outcomes. Chelsea brings a broader historical context due to her involvement with her grade school art teacher and with a colleague who was an arts education major. This context, complemented by her assumption that a purpose of arts education is to express oneself, predisposes her to focus on skill building while supporting student problem solving in expressing their ideas. Although Montana’s prior experience included teaching with a colleague who had an arts education background, this experience was insufficient to overcome Montana’s belief that she does not have enough background to draw upon. For this reason, she uses a wide variety of resources to

provide needed contextual information along with a starting point for lessons. Although Cary had the most years of teaching experience, she had no memorable arts experiences to draw upon. It is her love for literature that influences her classroom practice and reflects her "prejudice" of teachers tending to go where their strengths are.

Through exploring the horizons of understanding of these four teachers, some conditions which influence the interpretation of curriculum were illuminated. With each participating teacher, the influence of historical contexts such as previous schooling experiences and social contexts such as parental demands led to prejudices that allowed particular informal theories to flourish. These informal theories were either supported or further shaped by the availability of resources such as time, space, people, and materials. The reflective practice of each teacher tended to raise these informal theories for examination. The next chapter provides an explanation of these conditions which was developed through fusing the horizons of the participating teachers with the horizons of other researchers, including my own.

CHAPTER 5: FUSING HORIZONS

Following Denzin and Lincoln (2000), I do not claim that there is only one way of interpreting the events in this study. I do claim, however, that the explanation in this chapter fits with the descriptions in the preceding chapter (which are developed from a shared understanding with the participating teachers) and is based upon the empirical materials generated during the study. This explanation arises from a fusion of horizons – the horizons of the participating teachers, my horizon as researcher, and the horizons of other researchers (as noted in this chapter). Within this fused space, new interpretations arise.

Wachterhauser (1986) contends that in any interpretation, “there is always a surplus of meaning never entirely captured and exhausted in the interpretation” (p. 51) and that any analysis will never provide “a complete or otherwise final vision of things” (p. 13). I freely acknowledge that a hermeneutical analysis provides a “finite” understanding and that my account is also selective in what it emphasizes. Based on the explorations undertaken in this study, my account does, however, reveal conditions that influence these four teachers’ interpretation of curriculum in their practice. These conditions are clarified in the sections that follow.

Teachers’ Lived Situations

My own experiences were rather limited in school. So, generally, I think that is what has shaped my teaching – my own experiences.

(Rachel, Group Discussion, p. 1)

This section describes the contextual “wholes” used by teachers in interpreting curriculum; that is, their limited prior knowledge in arts education, their students, and the low status of arts education. These factors combine to narrow the curriculum-as-lived. For Gadamer, “interpretation always occurs in a current context that is conditioned by the history of the prior interpretations leading up to it and giving it a particular perspective” (Hoy, 1990, p. 121). Both

personal backgrounds and surrounding social environments shaped each teacher's interpretation of curriculum. Such influences included the prior knowledge of each teacher, whether it was gained through her own schooling or years of teaching experience, along with particular practices, priorities, and pressures within each teaching community. Influenced by these contexts, each teacher brought her preconceptions of "prejudices" to bear as she interpreted the arts education curriculum from a particular vantage point within her horizon of understanding.

Teachers' personal backgrounds are known to shape their understanding of curriculum (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly 1996, 1998; Craig, 1995, 1999; Grant, Peterson, & Shojgreen-Downer, 1996; Wallace & Braunger, 1998; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1996). In this study, teachers' interpretations of curriculum were influenced by drawing on previous teaching models in their own schooling experiences; taking music or visual art lessons; reviewing arts education instructional resources; relying on particular instructional resources; teaching with a colleague who was a specialist in arts education; and learning from performing arts groups. Figure 5.1 summarizes how the participating teachers learned to be arts educators.

Figure 5.1. Learning to be Arts Educators.

Name of Teacher	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Years of Teaching	4 years	11 years	4 ½ years	12+ years
Previous Teacher	drama	visual art skills	drama, choir	
Musical Training	piano	piano, band	piano	
Professional Learning		visual art classes	instructional resource review committee	
Favourite Instructional Resources	seasonal book of activities	Internet	posters, kits, videos, and books from resource centre	literature, <i>Arts and Activities</i> journal
Colleagues		arts education specialist	arts education specialist	extracurricular drama
Arts Groups		drama, music	community painters	drama, music, local crafts

Although Cary had the most teaching experience, she had the least arts background to draw upon. The other participating teachers were able to draw upon prior experiences in their own schooling careers along with private musical training. Chelsea and Montana also benefited from professional learning opportunities and teaching with an arts education specialist. This latter experience, while significant for Chelsea in shifting her horizon of understanding and subsequent practice, was not sufficient for Montana who finds it difficult “to come up with ideas” in arts education. In the group discussion, she observes that the arts education specialists

read the curriculum and ... understand what it means. We're trying to decipher everything and trying to make it make sense for us. They [the arts education specialists] just ... it's easier for them. Or they see it a different way or something.

(p. 2)

This idea of seeing things in “a different way” supports Gadamer’s notion of fusing horizons where new understanding arises between two horizons and we become “transformed” and able to see things differently. Cary was able to see things differently after being a prompter for a colleague’s extracurricular student drama performance. While the arts groups accessed by Chelsea, Montana, and Cary may have provided worthwhile experiences for students, it is difficult to know if these groups supported the philosophy of the curriculum or focused solely on rote memorization for performance purposes. In my experience, the latter focus tends to predominate.

Each teacher in this study made sense of the curriculum by making connections with her prior knowledge. This finding is supported by Shkedi (1998) who notes that teachers make sense of the “proposed curriculum” by connecting it to knowledge they already possess. Noble (1999) also concludes that teachers’ sense making influenced by their prior training and experience:

While viewing art is an inquiry process that can be full of exploration and discovery for both teachers and students, if teachers are to feel adequately prepared to guide the

students through that process they must feel comfortable with their own level of artistic knowledge, skills and abilities.

(p. 98)

In my study, I found that if teachers do not have the background or are uncomfortable with a particular strand of arts education, such as dance, they are reluctant to teach it and there is little social pressure at the school or community level to do so. As Rachel notes near the end of the study:

I don't remember a lot of drama or dance ever in my schooling ... I mean, other than maybe high school where we had the opportunity to be involved more extracurricularly. I don't remember a lot of that. ... I haven't had experiences with dance or drama. So I'm just going to stay with what I feel comfortable with.

(Conversation #4, p. 13)

With limited background, teachers rely on what they know and their practice reflects this knowledge; for example, Montana relies on her knowledge of music when introducing the treble clef to students. Such specialized knowledge, while helpful for musicians or singers, is not required for young students to create or respond to music pieces. At this age, students are encouraged to develop their own symbols to represent particular sounds or movements. In this way, young students come to understand the concept and purposes of notation systems before being introduced to the particular formal systems used in music or dance.

In areas such as language arts and mathematics, there is considerable social pressure that students learn to read, write, and compute. For arts education, the pressure (if any) relates to the creation of seasonal performances (e.g., musicals or concerts) or products to take home. For Montana, this pressure was significant at the beginning of her teaching career:

I did, when I first started teaching, do a whole bunch of seasonal art activities ... crafts for the kids to take home. A lot of it was pressure coming from the parents ... especially with kindergarten students, it happened a lot when I had a K/3/4 or even the last few years when I've had a K/5/6 [class]. Parents would question why ... if they [students] aren't bringing things home [from art lessons], why not?

(Conversation #2, p. 4)

These priorities and pressures at the school and community level shape teachers' practices and bound their knowing (Conle, 2000; Craig, 2000). Figure 5.2 demonstrates the low status of arts education in relation to other areas of study, as noted by the participating teachers in this study.

Figure 5.2. Status of Arts Education.

Name of Teacher	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Arts as means to other curriculum ends	<i>"I tend to use art to teach other things." "I use it [arts ed] more as a means to another end."</i>	<i>"As far as planning a unit ... for singing, I don't. To me, it has to fit into themes that you're already doing."</i>	<i>"Now we're doing a Christmas concert and basically I have to use arts ed time to do that."</i>	<i>"This lesson is pretty typical because I do use children's literature a lot. I integrate arts ed with what we're learning."</i>
Arts as frill	<i>"... it's [arts ed] not as much a priority as teaching kids to read."</i>	<i>"They [parents] don't really care what the mark is in arts ed. They really don't."</i>	<i>"I did when I first started teaching do ... crafts for the kids to take home. ... a lot of it was pressure coming from parents."</i>	<i>"I agree with Rachel's comments of how parents feel about arts ed [i.e., arts ed is not a 'big deal' to parents]."</i>

For Rachel, arts education was only taught if there was time in her day. Further, it was used to support learning in other areas of study. Chelsea, on the other hand, integrated arts education with other areas of study but also focused on arts education objectives related to elements of visual art such as texture or colour. Similarly, Montana used arts education to fulfill seasonal demands but also looked for particular objectives related to visual art or music that could be achieved. Cary saw language arts generally, and children's literature specifically, as a vehicle for achieving objectives in arts education. As arts education does not require particular topics, such as volcanoes or animals, it is relatively easy to integrate with themes from other areas of study.

The use of arts education for achieving other curriculum purposes is supported by the relatively low status that arts education enjoys in these four schools and in the larger surrounding

communities. While language arts and mathematics are important areas of study in each of the participating teacher's situations, sports also figures prominently in the extracurricular practices of each school. Only Rachel's school uses drama productions for extracurricular events. The purpose of these events is to raise needed funds as independent schools in Saskatchewan are only partially funded through the provincial Foundation Operating Grant structure. For all four teachers, arts education was used to fulfill particular seasonal expectations such as Remembrance Day events, Easter musicals, and Christmas concerts. These parental and community expectations influence how teachers interpret the arts education curriculum in their practice. Unless teachers are equipped with a background in arts education or consider this area of study to be a priority, the school and community expectations will narrow the curriculum-as-lived to consist of seasonal performances and crafts (or extracurricular fund raising events), if it exists at all.

The teachers participating in this study applied the curriculum to their teaching situation (i.e., brought their situation to bear when interpreting the curriculum). These situations included the environment within the classroom, school, and surrounding community. As noted previously in this section, within the broader school and community environments, I noticed a high priority placed on particular areas of study such as language arts and mathematics, a focus on extracurricular sports activities, and, in general, a low status accorded to arts education. Within the classroom environment, the students played an influential role as, in all cases, the participating teachers brought their situational context to bear when interpreting the arts education curriculum.

In Rachel's view, students "struggle" with finding "the right way" to do something in arts education. This struggle causes her to look for a balance between modeling for students and

supporting their own creative endeavours. As Chelsea involves her students in decisions around future art projects, she is often searching for particular media, materials, and other resources to use for these projects. When Montana has her starting point, "then depending on what happens, then I'm open to building on it. ... if the students think 'we could do this' or 'we could do this', then usually I will" (Conversation #2, p. 11). Because her students do not have easy access to art galleries, Cary believes that the illustrations in children's literature provide an opportunity "to expose them [students] to a variety of different types of art form" (Conversation #2, p. 6). Clearly, interpretations of curriculum are influenced by students (Grant, Peterson, & Shojgreen-Downer, 1996; Wallace & Braunger, 1998), by the expectations of the community, and by the individual teacher's personal background.

If interpretations are shaped by these contexts, then drawing attention to teachers' lived situations is a way to illuminate how they influence teachers' interpretations of curriculum. The results from my study indicate that the confluence of personal backgrounds and surrounding social environments creates strong contextual currents that move teachers toward particular interpretations of curriculum. These contextual currents cannot be ignored if the curriculum-as-plan is to be interpreted in ways that benefit all students.

Teachers' Informal Theories

... we had an art display of our own. We had the gym totally papered with the children's art work. Those ones [Harrison paintings] are beautiful to display. It was really great and a lot of community people came and grandparents and aunties. It was very nice. The kids were so proud. It's something that they all can do well at, at some project through the year. Sometimes the ones who aren't so academically [inclined] don't get to shine as often.

(Cary, Conversation #2, p. 2)

In this study, I found that the participating teachers' theories, whether implicit or explicit, were powerful influences on their interpretation of the curriculum and, hence, on their practice.

Usher, Bryant, and Johnston (1997) suggest that our intentions are embedded in conceptual frameworks of informal theory which are revealed in practice. Figure 5.3 illustrates the purposes of arts education noted by each teacher or demonstrated in her classroom practice.

Figure 5.3. Purposes of Arts Education.

Teacher	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Fun/Relaxation	<i>"They enjoyed acting out and being animals."</i>	<i>"Arts ed is more relaxed. You can tell."</i>	<i>"The kids loved making those sunflowers."</i>	<i>"They enjoy painting and the other activities."</i>
Creativity/Uniqueness	<i>"I encourage students to try new things"</i>	<i>"I'm trying to get them to do their own thing."</i>	<i>"... to respect the uniqueness ... of themselves."</i>	<i>"... use their own ideas, ... and creativity."</i>
Problem Solving	To students: <i>"Are you seeing any orange? Try and get different colours."</i>	<i>"I'm going to let them [the students] figure that out."</i>	<i>"The more you get them [the students] to do problem solving, you see growth."</i>	<i>"Children need the opportunity to problem solve."</i>
Perceptual Abilities	<i>"I want to help them to observe ... things."</i>	<i>"We're going outside and look at all the colours in the leaves."</i>	<i>"We looked at the pictures and talked about the vibrant colours."</i>	<i>"Having the object there to draw is the first time for us."</i>
Skill Building	<i>"I have to watch that I'm still teaching [skills], whether it's art techniques or ..."</i>	<i>"You show them how to do the techniques but they still do it themselves."</i>	Skill building activity to develop concept of "beat" (Nov. 22/02 field notes)	<i>"It's important for them to experience a variety of media and techniques."</i>
Arts-related Knowledge	<i>"I don't know that I've really thought about what I want them to learn in arts education."</i>	<i>"I think you can take a craft activity and 'up it' by bringing in art elements."</i>	<i>"We had talked about different shapes kind of portray different things."</i>	To students: <i>"I want you to think about Eric Carle's paintings compared to Ted Harrison."</i>
Confidence	<i>"I think building confidence is really important."</i>	<i>"So even getting confidence and risk taking ... especially in the arts."</i>	<i>"Arts ed allows students to try things and strengthens their self-esteem."</i>	<i>"They're feeling secure enough to take risks."</i>
Language	<i>"I think drama is important for Grade 1 because you're developing language."</i>	<i>"They knew what it [texture] was but they didn't know about the vocabulary term."</i>	Montana writes 'treble clef' on the overhead, reviews 'staff', and introduces 'bar'. (Nov. 22/02 field notes)	Cary introduces 'collage' and gives example of 'using yarn to make hair'. (Feb. 19/03 field notes)

For each of the participating teachers, arts education was an opportunity for students to have fun. Consequently, each teacher looked for ways to manage students' excitement in arts education lessons (which did not appear to be the case in other areas of study). Rachel managed through providing structure while Chelsea managed through choosing "calmer" activities:

It's nice sometimes to just have some ... you know, some calm time. So that'll influence the way I do things, too. I may have been a lot more animated in another sense. Even today, for example, we may have walked around like penguins before we made them. But I thought, today, it needs to be just calm. ... So it might have been a little bit more drama had it been a different type of day.

(Conversation #3, p. 4)

Montana managed through using mastery learning processes (e.g., having students write about what they planned to draw prior to the activity) while Cary managed through using "safe" practices. Each of the participating teachers engaged students in creative problem-solving activities to develop students' creativity, perceptual abilities, and skill with particular media or techniques.

As Rachel tends to use arts education to support learning in other areas of study, introducing arts-related knowledge is not a specific purpose of her program. In the group discussion at the end of the study, however, she ruminates on the possibility that

... arts ed really builds awareness in kids. I mean, with dance, it's awareness of their bodies and how they move. With drama, it might be awareness of how other people are thinking or what other characters might be feeling. ... awareness of the world around them with visual art. You know, awareness of shape and line and colour. So that when they're creating something ... just awareness. I don't know why that word came to me. But I think it ... goes with the process. I think focusing on the process hopefully will build awareness.

(p. 8)

In this way, Rachel's horizon of understanding shifted to accommodate a new purpose for her arts education program. All four teachers noted the importance of developing the confidence and

language of their students (perhaps due to the age level of the students). These purposes led to particular views of arts education which are shown in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4. Views of Arts Education.

Teacher	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Product\ Process	<i>"I was working at the process but I'm very proud of the product."</i>	<i>"They obviously wanted to end up with a product but getting there was a process."</i>	<i>"A lot of the things we do is a lot more on the process than some kind of a product."</i>	<i>"I think children need the process, and the product gives them a sense of pride."</i>
Inclusiveness	<i>"They could all take part in arts ed, probably moreso than some of the other subjects."</i>	All students participated in drawing the mural, at their particular level. (March 9/03 field notes)	<i>"It's kind of neat to see the kids shine in their own little areas."</i>	<i>"Each student made a stepping stone to give to his/her mother for a Mother's Day gift."</i>
Open-endedness	<i>"When you're looking at things like creativity, I'm not looking for one answer."</i>	<i>"It's a lot more open-ended as opposed to sitting and printing letters."</i>	<i>"Arts ed can be a lot more open ended and you can choose – it's not quite so laid out."</i>	<i>"The students experimented with patterns. Each design was unique."</i>
Risk taking	<i>"It is risk taking because you don't know what they're going to come up with."</i>	<i>"It's definitely risk taking. Huge risk taking. I like doing it."</i>	<i>"I don't feel confident because I don't exactly know where the lesson will go."</i>	<i>"Drama and dance is something I'm doing more even though it's not quite as safe."</i>
Expressing ideas	<i>"I like objects like boxes and cardboard rolls. I like to see what the students can come up with."</i>	<i>"You can create something that touches you personally and express yourself."</i>	<i>"Arts ed is supposed to be a lot more open and free to express what they want."</i>	<i>"When they express themselves in drama, you see a different aspect."</i>
Specialized knowledge	<i>"I'm uncomfortable teaching these techniques because I don't know what I'm doing."</i>	<i>"We were talking about different forms of music, fast and slow tempos and different pitches."</i>	<i>"In arts ed, if it's creating a dance or coming up with something, if I haven't done it, then I don't know how to teach it."</i>	<i>"... insecurity regarding knowledge of the material and/or my ability to model the procedure."</i>

For all four participating teachers, the focus on creating products with some attention to process (to varying degrees) was evident as was the belief that all students can participate in arts

education (as noted in the opening quote of this section). Rachel and Montana found the open-ended nature of arts education to be challenging, perhaps due to fewer years of teaching experience but also due to their willingness to take some risks and try new strategies in arts education. In her journal, Rachel writes about her struggle to take risks:

One theme that came through loud and clear was that of risk taking. It was no surprise to me that this was something that we discussed a fair bit. I've never been much of a risk taker and I dislike being out of my "comfort zone". I realize that in order to grow as an arts education teacher I need to take more risks. I need to give myself permission to try something new, knowing that it might be a total failure. In order to give the students an environment in which it's okay to risk and fail, I need to be an example to them by taking risks myself.

(February 2003)

Of the four teachers, only Chelsea expressed comfort with personal risk taking in arts education. Cary noted that she did not take any risks in her arts education program. Although all four teachers understood the importance of supporting students in expressing their own ideas, the guidance and opportunity for such expression varied among the four classrooms depending upon the personal and social contexts (along with the related informal theories) that each teacher brought to her interpretation of the curriculum.

Rachel's need for structure often led to "cookie cutter" projects where all student products tended to look the same. Montana engaged students in craft making "every once in a while" as the students enjoy "doing crafts" (Conversation #1, p. 14). Cary encouraged individual expression except when students coloured photocopied outlines of Easter Baskets, for example. Chelsea typically supported students in expressing their ideas in arts education projects aside from the series of lessons found on the Internet where students glued different textured material to photocopied outlines of bugs. For three of the four teachers, the inclusion of visiting artists or performers was seen as a way to gain specialized knowledge (e.g., elements, strategies, and processes related to each strand) in arts education.

The curriculum was also seen as a source for this specialized knowledge. For the participating teachers, helpful aspects of the curriculum are: the checklist of objectives, the instructional guidelines, the starter lists, the introductory drawing activities, the ideas for using voice and instruments, the model lessons, the sample planning and assessment forms, and most importantly, the professional freedom and responsibility to choose appropriate instructional methods, materials, and environments to support the learning of their students (see Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5. Curriculum as Source for Specialized Knowledge.

Name of Teacher	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Checklist of objectives	<i>"I like the checklist of objectives. I check what I've done and what I will focus on."</i>	<i>"I really like the one page checklist of objectives. You can see that I've used it already."</i>	<i>"When you're looking at the objectives, it takes your thinking to a different level."</i>	<i>"It's a great guide to determine the objectives. It has checklists as well."</i>
Model units	<i>"I found it helpful to look at the units in the curriculum to see the ideas and how they progress."</i>	<i>"I like the sample units. I found the teacher note boxes to be really helpful."</i>	<i>"The lesson came from the grade four dance unit. I've been adding to it, doing different things."</i>	<i>"You can use the sample lessons as a framework and build on it."</i>
Instructional guidelines	<i>"I even looked at the instructional guidelines. ... that was helpful."</i>			
Starter lists and activities	<i>"I like the drawing activities to help students think about different elements."</i>	<i>"The activity is from the curriculum. I changed it to match the season."</i>	<i>"The starter lists help. I also looked at the appendix for using voice and instruments. It had ideas."</i>	
Planning and assessment	<i>"The sample assessments are a springboard."</i>		<i>"Maybe I just paid attention but I see things helpful for planning."</i>	<i>"It's a great guide ... for writing the year plans."</i>
Freedom vs Restriction	<i>"I looked through the curriculum for something that I could springboard off of."</i>	<i>"I had the project and worked backward to see which objectives would fit."</i>	<i>"... the objectives are there. It's just figuring out what to do."</i>	<i>"The curriculum is broad. I don't think it's restricting."</i>

I also found that for both teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience, the need to refer to the curriculum was less than for the two teachers with fewer than 5 years of teaching experience.

Each of the teachers found the checklist of objectives to be helpful. For Rachel, it allowed her to see what she had already accomplished and what she might focus on next. Both Chelsea and Cary used the checklist to find objectives to align with particular activities or projects being considered. Montana appreciated how the objectives took her thinking "to a different level" and allowed her to see multiple grades so that she knows what "carries over" to the next grade. All four teachers drew upon the model units in the curriculum.

According to Putnam (1991), using such models or exemplars to gain experience is a way to become familiar with new practice. He suggests that such exemplars may be used, initially, within an "old" theory of practice. With further practice, however, attention focuses less on using the exemplar and more on noticing other aspects of the situation such as student responses. Kurz (1995) concurs and concludes that "Teachers need ready-to-use units and lessons as models and starting points for implementation. Teachers will change aspects of their teaching practices before they change their educational beliefs. Sample units make it easier for teachers to get started" (p. 130-131). While Kurz suggests that teachers will change teaching practices before they change beliefs, in my experience, such practices are short-lived if one does not examine *why* one would want to engage in such practice; for example, one may notice that a particular practice supports student learning. To my thinking, there is nothing more "practical" than a theoretical understanding of why I am engaging in a particular practice. Further, such understanding allows me to explore additional practices that may support my informal theory.

While considered to be helpful by the teachers in my study, the model units in the curriculum were not sufficient as demonstrated by Rachel's need for "finding a balance", Montana's search for a "starting point", Chelsea's difficulty in "finding resources", and Cary's strategy of "finding inspiration" in children's literature for her arts education lessons. The model units did, however, illuminate informal theories. This illumination was more intense if the ideas in the model unit did not fit with current understanding or practice. As Rachel notes in one of our conversations, there are times (in the curriculum) when students might look at things "in a new way" or "experience something" as a way of gaining ideas for future art making projects, instead of creating a product in each lesson. This helped Rachel to see that "I had an idea in my head of what I think arts ed is [i.e., producing something]" (Conversation #3, p. 7).

Rachel was the only teacher who commented on the Instructional Guidelines section of the curriculum. Although she found them to be helpful, she admitted that "I usually just skip over that stuff" (Conversation #4, p. 10). Chelsea was the only teacher who commented on the helpfulness of the teacher note boxes in the model units. As a teacher with many years of teaching experience, she appreciated the critical hints within these boxes. Based on these hints, Chelsea determined if she was going to use a particular model unit (or aspects of it). Montana was the only teacher who commented on the starter lists. As she is always searching for a starting point, she found the starter lists fulfilled this need to some extent. Cary was the only teacher who used the sample planning forms in the curriculum. In a sense, these forms were a way for Cary to match her chosen activity with the objectives in the curriculum.

All four teachers found the curriculum to be "freeing" in that they used it to find ideas but did not feel "tied to" the model lessons, sample assessments, or suggested activities for voice, instrument, or drawing. In this way, the curriculum served its intended purpose of providing the

mandated objectives while offering suggestions for those teachers who do not bring as much background knowledge in arts education. In each case, however, the informal theory of each participating teacher was a powerful influence on her interpretation of the curriculum. It is critical that these informal theories are unearthed so they can be interrogated in dialogue with other people or texts (such as the curriculum-as-plan).

Teachers' Access to Resources

I have some resources ... like, drama resources that I don't understand some of what they're talking about (laughter). You have to have a background in drama to know. So, I like those resources that are, you know, more simplified and ... for people like me that don't have the background or don't always understand the terms or whatever.

(Rachel, Conversation #3, p. 10)

For this study, the term "resources" encompasses teaching and learning materials available in audio/video/print including on the Internet; various media and other materials for creating and responding arts activities; time for reading, planning, gathering materials, and teaching arts education; and space for art making and responding activities. The availability of these resources had a significant impact on teachers' "prejudices" and practices related to arts education.

Of the four teachers participating in this study, only Montana drew upon the teaching and learning materials in the school division resource centre and accessed the services of the Resource-based Learning Consultant and the school division librarian. This practice, no doubt, emanated from her need for a "starting point" but also from her previous experience on a resource review team for the school division. The other participating teachers had favourite resources that were accessed. These resources tended to be related to seasonal themes and activities, easy to understand, and readily available. Chelsea, in particular, noted the challenge of finding projects, media, and other materials for art making. Time was noted as a barrier by three

of the teachers, and Rachel also noted the lack of space. Figure 5.6 on the following page shows the various barriers related to resources faced by each teacher in her arts education program.

Figure 5.6. Barriers Related to Resources in Arts Education.

Name of Teacher	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Audio/video/print teaching and learning materials	<i>"I have some drama resources that I don't understand what they're talking about. You have to have a drama background."</i>	<i>"A lot of the resources, I don't know where these are ... like Saskatchewan Art Works. I have absolutely no idea where these are."</i>	<i>"In our school division, we have a lot of really good resources that we can use. It's just knowing what's there and getting them."</i>	<i>"Another resource is the art museum in Spruce Rivers. They offer programs but for us, it's a huge cost for the bus."</i>
Media and other materials for art making and responding activities	<i>"I know some schools who have a set of musical instruments. And we don't have that. That's another thing I think would be nice to have."</i>	<i>"I think resources are a big problem. They're really hard to find and they're expensive. [For example,] can you afford to buy water paints?"</i>		
Time	<i>"I'm curious as to how other teachers find time for arts ed. How do they find time to do everything? It's so much to get done in a day with so many areas."</i>	<i>"The large amount of time allotted to arts ed in the weekly schedule is daunting unless you expand outside of 'arts ed' and theme things together."</i>	<i>"I think there are quite a few resources. It's just knowing what's there and being organized enough to book them ahead of time."</i>	<i>"Workshops and time [would support my practice]. Time to just study the curriculum and plan lessons, and time for grade alike sharing meetings."</i>
Space	<i>"For dance, I find the lack of space problematic. In my classroom, I can push the desks aside and I still don't have much space. It's a small room and in our school, there's not a lot of rooms free."</i>			

All four teachers identified the availability of instructional materials as a barrier. For Rachel, the specialized knowledge required by some of the instructional materials makes them inaccessible. Both Chelsea and Montana note the importance of knowing that these types of materials are available. Chelsea and Cary both acknowledge the additional difficulty of “finding projects that young children can do” (Cary, Conversation #2, p. 5). Cary also comments on the prohibitive transportation cost of accessing external resources, such as art galleries, in nearby communities.

Arts education is further complicated, as noted by Rachel and Chelsea, in that various media and materials for creating may not be available at the school. Such materials entail expenses that the school may not necessarily be able to accommodate. Regardless, materials need to be found and, in some cases, prepared before lessons can occur. Time for preparation of media and materials was noted as a requirement in teaching arts education whereas it is not necessarily required by other areas of study. Although Montana and Cary did not raise this issue, it was clear from their classroom practice that collection and preparation of media and materials was completed prior to each arts education lesson. For Montana, part of this preparation includes taking the time to book resources ahead “to make sure you can have them”.

Rachel struggled just to find time in her day for teaching arts education. For Descollonges and Eisner (2003), “The allocation of time to what schools teach is among the most important decisions policy makers can make” (p. 31). As found in my study, however, the decisions of policy makers are often overridden by the realities of competing priorities at the school level. While time is needed to plan, find instructional materials, and collect media and other materials for art making or responding activities, teachers also need time to reflect upon the curriculum (Kurz, 1995; Panko, 1996; Wallace & Braunger, 1998). For Cary, lack of time to study the

curriculum, to plan lessons, to attend workshops, and to share ideas with others was seen as a barrier for her practice.

As demonstrated in this study, time demands include planning for students' creating and responding activities in arts education along with collecting any required materials for these activities. Knowledge about, and access to, teaching and learning materials such as: visual art posters or overhead transparencies of art works, or interactive CD-ROMs that allow students to virtually "visit" artists' studios and learn about how artists find their ideas and express them; music instruments that allow students to create sound pieces or CDs that demonstrate particular patterns or rhythms; dance videos or DVDs that show teachers how to support students in creating dance phrases or provide dance performances for student responding activities; drama videos or books for generalists and for specialists; and other materials that address the diversity of teachers' and students' needs can influence teachers' interpretations in particular ways. Time for reviewing these materials supports teachers in relating the materials to curriculum through a hermeneutic circle of examining the "part" (i.e., the instructional material) against the "whole" (i.e., the curriculum). Such examination, while making sense of the part, also allows teachers to reassess their understanding of the whole. This reassessment has the potential to shift teachers' horizons of understanding.

At a basic level, teachers need to be assured that time dedicated to arts education in the school day is valued and considered to be an important part of students' education. Part of this valuing is demonstrated when schools make an effort to find space for arts education activities. For Rachel, space is a serious barrier in her arts education program. Having a fully carpeted classroom with no sink makes the mess-making activities in visual art problematic. Her

classroom is also too small to accommodate drama and dance activities comfortably, even when desks are pushed aside.

Addressing barriers related to the availability of resources whether audio/video/print/human instructional materials for teachers and students; media and materials for art making; time for studying the curriculum, reviewing instructional materials, finding media such as paint or clay, or sharing ideas with others; and space for arts education activities is critical if the curriculum-as-plan is to find expression in our schools.

Teachers' Reflective Practice

This research project has certainly forced me to do some extra thinking in the area of arts ed. I am realizing many things that I likely would have missed before.

(Chelsea, Journal Entry, February 2003)

Teachers' interpretations of curriculum, and their teaching practices, can be strengthened when teachers reflect on the relationship between "parts" and "wholes" in exercises of hermeneutic understanding. The hermeneutic approach of this study supported such reflection. In all cases, the participating teachers commented upon the benefits of participating in this study for their understanding and practice. As Chelsea notes in her journal near the end of the study, "I really enjoyed our time together. Your questions were really probing and made me take an active approach to teaching arts ed which I still use today" (March 2003). For Montana, participating in the study was "beneficial to me and my students to use the draft renewed curriculum. It is always helpful to have new ideas" (Journal Entry, February 2003). In the group discussion, Rachel comments on the role that our conversations played:

What prompted it [learning] was simply this [research process]. I mean, I think as teachers we always reflect. But not quite as ... I don't think that in depth usually or reflect that deeply. ... I learned a lot of different things just through that really deep reflecting that you don't often get a chance to do.

(p. 4)

The conversations coupled with journal writings and time for reflection over a school year allowed the teachers to explore their understanding and practice more fully. For Ross (1994), "Reflective practice is uncovering the taken-for-granted elements in our everyday experience and making them the target of inquiry" (p. 40). Figure 5.7 illustrates some of these taken-for-granted elements or prejudices that were raised for questioning during this study.

Figure 5.7. Prejudices Raised for Questioning.

Name of Teacher	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Product is important	<i>"I looked at our last conversation and how I focused so much on the product."</i>	<i>"We wanted to end up with something that looked like a penguin."</i>	<i>"Art's art and it's supposed to be making something."</i>	<i>"They have finished their product that we'll display for Christmas."</i>
Visual art is easier to teach than the other strands	<i>"I think for dance ... maybe not so much the materials, but the lack of space, I find hard."</i>	<i>"I'd like to do something with those songs and I don't know what to be doing with them."</i>	<i>"Make sure that you're not just sticking with the visual or what most people probably teach in arts ed."</i>	<i>"Dance and drama are not a safe thing for me to do. I just feel more comfortable with visual art."</i>
Props are required for drama	<i>"I thought, well, I'll try using the sheet for the mitten ... just another little prop [to] use."</i>	<i>"Well the kids love to act and talk with the puppets."</i>		<i>"The kids did an excellent job with props and costumes. There was a lot of work went into it."</i>
Creativity is innate	<i>"I think just the opportunity for students to exercise their creativity is important."</i>	<i>"Where they're using their own ideas, I think is a lot more creative."</i>	<i>"Basically, they could be as creative as they wanted to make their product."</i>	<i>"You don't want to suppress their creativity. You need to encourage their ... individuality."</i>
Young students are not capable	<i>"I don't think I can do that with Grade 1 students and then seeing it in the Grade 1 section of the curriculum, I think maybe this would work."</i>	<i>"One idea that has surprised me is the capacity of a 6-7 year old child to express themselves through art. It amazed me this year."</i>	<i>"Arts education is supposed to be a lot more open and free to express what they want. It's funny that I think I know what they should express."</i>	<i>"In his book, he has a ten-pointed star and I tried it at home and it was very difficult and I thought, well, I'm not going there with these little kids."</i>

For all four teachers, their practice demonstrated that the product was important in arts education even when creative problem-solving processes were paramount. In the group discussion, Rachel speaks to her new understanding related to product:

... we talked a lot about product versus process. And I learned ... to see things differently. Like I thought for arts ed, you always had to produce something. And I learned ... that the process is important, too. And you don't always produce something. It's just, you know, you're observing something or you're just discussing something.

(p. 4)

Through reading the curriculum and discussing her thoughts with others, Rachel's horizon of understanding shifted and she began to see arts education differently.

All of the teachers taught visual art while music or dance was typically the responsibility of other teachers in the school. Cary was the only teacher who had responsibility for all four strands. Drama was often addressed through language arts activities, through role plays in health education or social studies, through seasonal activities such as Christmas concerts, or through visiting performing arts groups. Props were considered to be a critical part of drama. Although Rachel observes, "I thought that would help them more and I think I was surprised that they did do better without it [the prop]" (Conversation #3, p. 2). As most teachers experience visual art in their own schooling careers, it is understandable that the participating teachers felt more comfortable teaching this strand than the other strands of arts education.

To a person, the participating teachers thought that creativity was a natural quality that all children could tap into and that the role of the teacher was to support students in "exercising" this creativity or expressing their individuality. Conversely, perhaps because of the age level of the students, the participating teachers were unsure of the capabilities of their students to tackle complex activities.

Although these prejudices were raised for questioning, I neglected to explore all of them fully with each of the participating teachers. In retrospect, this was a lost opportunity due, no doubt, to my inexperience as a researcher (which I have alluded to in the Study Redesign section of Chapter 3). Teacher reflection was, however, supported in my study through discussing the arts education curriculum, reflecting on classroom visits, examining the transcripts and initial theme categorizations of our conversations, and writing journal entries. These processes supported teachers in reflecting on the relationship between the new parts and the contextualized whole of teachers' understanding. This reflection illuminated implicit understandings for explicit examination. According to Hoy (1990), "this process of the implicit becoming explicit is one aspect of the hermeneutic circle of understanding" (p. 118).

As the study progressed, new information entering through the hermeneutic circle caused a shift in each teacher's understanding. For Rachel, the shift from a focus on product to a heightened awareness of process occurred along with a new interest in using a wider variety of media for art making. For Chelsea, the move from making all the decisions to including students in decision making and problem solving was a critical shift that occurred prior to the study due to her involvement with a colleague who was an arts education specialist. During the study, an awareness of the capacity of young children to express themselves through art making surfaced. In Montana's situation, teaching with a colleague who was an arts education specialist allowed Montana to see the possibilities in teaching arts education. During the study, however, she noted that it was the curriculum that moved her practice to a "higher level" and away from solely craft-making activities. Cary's horizon of understanding shifted when she worked with a colleague in an extracurricular school drama production and learned about using expression and body language in drama. If such reflection influences the interpretation of curriculum, as demonstrated

in this study and by others (Jadallah, 1996; Kent, 1993; Taggart & Wilson, 1998; Rosaen & Ruggles Gere, 1996; Schön, 1983; Shrader & Gomez, 1997; Udvari-Solner, 1996), then curriculum and related supports need to be designed to support such reflective practice.

As demonstrated by the group discussion in this study, reflective practice is supported by opportunities for teachers to network (Wallace & Braunger, 1998; Grant, Peterson, & Shojgreen-Downer, 1996; Kurz, 1995). According to Dueck (1992), teachers engaged in curriculum field testing find their involvement with others to be stimulating and challenging, and to contribute to "raising awareness of what they don't know and encouraging them to be comfortable with how much more there is to know" (p. 44). This finding reveals the critical nature of Gadamer's assertion that one's horizon of understanding is subject to revision if one is open to the meaning of the other. For Kerdeman (1998a), such risk taking "is difficult, because it compels us to acknowledge our limits" (p. 13). The challenge, then, is to provide an environment where teachers are supported in "making meaning, daring to take risks, and exercising the courage to commit themselves to tentative ideas" (Johnson, 1990, pp. 80-81). Networking with peers along with supportive administrative structures provides such an environment.

The results of my study suggest that reflective practice is supported through the complementary and interrelated activities of reading the curriculum, bringing one's own situation to bear in making sense of the curriculum, discussing tentative ideas with others, and writing about new ideas that arise. Such practice raises prejudices for examination, thereby risking one's understanding. If understanding is finite and unstable, reflective practice is a way to shift one's horizon of understanding.

Possibilities of Interpretation

Based on the results of this study, I am making the claim that there are at least four conditions that influence how teachers interpret curriculum in their practice. These conditions are: the context of each teacher including her personal background and surrounding social environment; the theories that emanate from these contexts; the availability of resources that support or further shape these theories; and the reflective practice of each teacher which raises these theories for examination. I believe that these conditions influence the possibilities of interpretation. Similar to Wachterhauser (1986), it is these possibilities that interest me. If illuminating particular conditions can allow interpretive possibilities to arise, it is worthwhile knowing what these conditions might be. I contend that these four conditions, while based on the experiences of only four teachers, are worth considering by those interested in supporting the generative possibilities that can occur in the space between the teacher, the students, and the curriculum.

In this study, I found evidence that teachers' personal backgrounds influence interpretations of curriculum. These contextual backgrounds lead to prejudices that are "offered tentatively before all the necessary evidence is available in order to provide a basis for further interpretation" (Warnke, 1990, p. 150). Teachers' informal theories, based upon these prejudices, lead to interpretations of curriculum that are shaped further by particular teaching situations and the surrounding social environments. For Thornton (1994), "teachers' work needs to be construed as ... always significantly shaped by a unique context" (p. 10). When arts education is seen as a vehicle for schools to raise funds or to perform rote music or drama for special occasions with no attention to supporting students' arts education knowledge or expressive abilities, particular interpretations of curriculum are reinforced. Such unique personal and social

contexts cannot be ignored when considering influences on teachers' interpretation of curriculum.

There is a tension created within each teacher's hermeneutic circle of understanding when new information regarding the curriculum enters the contextualized situation of the teacher. In some cases, this new information can be easily accommodated within the current horizon of understanding. In other cases, the horizon shifts to accommodate this new information. This enlarged understanding, then, permits different interpretations to arise. These different interpretations may contribute to the formulation of new theories or to the adjustment of current informal theories.

Such theories and related practice are influenced by the availability of resources such as teaching and learning materials, media and materials for art making, time for planning and other activities, and space for arts education lessons. In my study, readily available instructional lessons along with the related media and art materials formed the basis for much of the arts education programming. In most cases, the lessons and materials aligned with teachers' current interpretations and practices. In some cases, the materials engaged the students and teachers in new experiences which led to different interpretations of curriculum in practice. For example, Rachel explored drama with the story, *The Mitten* (where previously she had focused on visual art through mask making). This exploration allowed her to see how her students paid attention to particular expressive qualities of the story animals they were imitating:

... they [the students] really enjoyed it and they got into it and some of them were really acting out the part ... you know, the proud rabbit and then it was fun to watch ... you know, their glaring teeth and ... so I enjoy watching them and watching their excitement.
(Conversation #3, p. 1)

Chelsea used salt clay with her students (for the first time) and they produced penguins with "character". Montana and her students focused on the historical aspects of Picasso's life to

inform their art making related to his blue, rose, and cubist periods and students were able to express their ideas using these various periods as a vehicle. By bringing in students' stuffed bunnies, Cary focused students' attention on shape in new ways and helped students to make connections to daily life and the world outside the classroom through their individual expressions of bunnies in their paintings. These new experiences, based upon the use of particular materials and strategies, shifted each teacher's horizon of understanding.

Rachel's horizon of understanding shifted to allow her to see how props were not necessary for young children to take on the role of animals in drama experiences. Chelsea's horizon of understanding shifted to allow her to see her young students' ability to express themselves in unique ways. Montana's horizon of understanding shifted to allow her to see how she could support students' individual expressiveness in arts activities within her mastery learning framework. Cary's horizon of understanding shifted to allow her to see how students could create individual expressions that could still be contained within instructional parameters that were comfortable for her.

For each teacher, participating in the study provided time to reflect on the arts education curriculum and her practice. Although no additional time was allotted for the study, the research design (which included our conversations, the review of the conversation transcripts and themes, the classroom visits, and the journal writings) focused teachers' reflections on arts education. These reflections raised prejudices for questioning and allowed different interpretations to arise. Alternatively, the lack of time and space allowed particular informal theories to remain intact.

While contexts, theories, and resources influenced teachers' interpretation of curriculum in this study, the reflective practice of each teacher was a critical influential condition in raising prejudices for questioning. Although reflective practice was supported by the design of the study,

it was also supported by the disposition of each teacher. Rachel considered herself to be “a very reflective person” and this was demonstrated throughout the study. In her journal, partway through the study, she writes:

The idea of process vs product continues to show up in our conversations. I certainly have become more aware of the process throughout this experience and I consider it more when planning arts ed experiences. We also discussed the creative/productive component as well as the cultural/historical component. While these elements are present in the arts ed experiences I plan, they are not elements that I consciously consider. Through my reflections I realize that I need to be more aware of how I use these components in my planning.

(February 2003)

Through her reflections, Rachel raised prejudices for questioning and revised her informal theory based on such questioning.

Near the beginning of the study, Chelsea reflects on her students and her practice:

The kids also surprise me. They are very interested and keen to learn the techniques (not just cut and paste) and try very hard to achieve the goals of the projects. ... they ... come through the process successfully and are very proud of themselves. I now give feedback and comments very differently. I talk about process and not just how realistic something looks or how it compares to other projects.

(Journal Entry, October 2002)

This reflection shifted Chelsea’s horizon of understanding and her subsequent classroom practice.

Near the end of the study, Montana reflects on the benefits of arts education for her students:

I think arts education allows students to try things they normally wouldn’t have the opportunity to experience. It allows them to take chances and, most times, it strengthens their self-esteem. They may be nervous to try dancing or singing but ... it is amazing seeing quieter students come out of their shells.

(Journal Entry, May 2003)

These benefits are attributable to Montana’s efforts during the study to expand her arts education program to encompass more than craft making. In addition to reflecting on her own practice, Montana supports her students in reflecting on why arts education is important to them:

I had my kids do an entry in their journals about why they think we do arts ed at school. It was quite interesting to read what some of them said. Some of the grade 3s thought it was because some day they'll grow up and be an artist and now they'll have some background (laughter). And some of the grade 4s and 5s wrote that it gives them a chance to explore things ... like dance.

(Conversation #4, p. 6)

Although Cary found our conversations to be "relaxed and informal", in reflecting on our first conversation, she writes, "Later in the evening, I thought of more anecdotes I could have shared with Jane [the researcher]. My responses could have been fleshed out more" (Journal Entry, October 2002). Two months later, she expresses concern that "verbal response is certainly not my strong suit" (Journal Entry, December 2002). Notwithstanding this concern, she notes later in the school year, "I hope that my participation in this study is beneficial to you. I'm happy to be playing a small role in your research project. ... Participating in a study such as this is a new learning experience for me" (Journal Entry, February 2003). Cary's journal entries reflect her cautious, inhibited nature and her corresponding concern that I might not learn anything from her. As the study progressed, her reflections acknowledged that she did play a role in the study as well as develop new understanding.

The hermeneutic approach of this study through Wolcott's (1994) "three major modes" over a school year supported the reflective practice of the participating teachers. Such reflection generated possibilities of interpretation related to the arts education curriculum. These possibilities were also influenced by the historical and social contexts of the teachers, the informal theories in play, and the availability of resources. In the final chapter, I provide a potential heuristic to assist in discovering strategies that will illuminate these influential conditions. The purpose of such illumination is to support possibilities of interpretation.

CHAPTER 6: INFINITE HORIZONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how four teachers interpret the Saskatchewan arts education curriculum in their practice. I am gratified to discover that these four teachers' interpretations are fluid which allows their horizons of understanding to shift. I propose that the conditions that influence these interpretations can be illuminated for examination using various strategies. This examination allows for new possibilities to arise when interpreting the curriculum. These interpretive possibilities contribute to shifting horizons of understanding. In essence, knowledge of such conditions along with their potential for illumination contributes to a concept of infinite horizons of understanding; that is, given this potential, our horizons can continue to expand and shift in infinite ways and to infinite parameters.

To support this expansion and shifting of horizons, I have developed a heuristic to assist in discovering strategies to illuminate the conditions raised in this study. To demonstrate the efficacy of the heuristic, I suggest a number of strategies for illuminating each condition. Through the practical introduction of the "parts" (i.e., the strategies), the value of the heuristic as a "whole" contextual framework for illuminating conditions is examined through a hermeneutic circle of understanding. I contend that, through the illumination of these conditions, possibilities of interpretation increase and horizons of understanding shift to incorporate each new interpretation. It is up to the reader to determine if the results of my study warrant attention to this heuristic for his or her situation.

A Potential Heuristic

The heuristic described in this section is offered tentatively, as is all understanding. The heuristic is based on the results of my study and focuses on four conditions: contexts; theories; resources; and reflective practice. The purpose of the heuristic is to illuminate these conditions

so their influence on interpretations of curriculum can be examined. I suggest that this examination will bring the curriculum-as-plan closer to the curriculum-as-lived and blur the line between theory and practice.

The heuristic is comprised of four questions:

1. How does this strategy illuminate the teacher's background or social context?
2. How does this strategy illuminate the informal theories in play?
3. How does this strategy illuminate the barriers related to resources?
4. How does this strategy illuminate the reflective practice in place?

The following section uses the heuristic as a framework to consider strategies for illuminating these particular conditions. These strategies are not intended to be all-inclusive or prescriptive; rather, they are included to demonstrate the types of strategies that might be considered at the provincial, school division, or school levels to illuminate a particular condition in order to examine its influence on teachers' interpretations of curriculum in their practice. Approximately half of the strategies were suggested by the participating teachers either during our conversations or in their journal entries. In the end, however, it is not the strategy that is important. It is the illumination of the condition. If the strategy has the potential to illuminate the condition, it is worth considering.

Strategies for Illuminating Conditions

This section is organized by the four questions of the heuristic:

1. How does this strategy illuminate the teacher's background or social context?

As demonstrated by this study, interpretations of curriculum are influenced by teachers' backgrounds as well as by particular social contexts. Potential strategies for illuminating such contextual influences include:

- Providing opportunities for teachers to discuss personal experiences related to learning (e.g., how they learn best, what makes learning difficult), how these experiences are similar to or different from others, and what implications for teaching can be drawn from examining these experiences
- Providing opportunities for teachers to discuss various aspects of teaching (e.g., how teacher behaviours can compensate for differences between learners, or make learning easier for students)
- Providing opportunities for teachers to examine the student reporting system in relation to the philosophy of the curriculum. (As noted in Chapter 4, Chelsea becomes quite animated at the thought of changing the school division report card to reflect the objectives of the curriculum.)

The strategies proposed above work to increase teachers' self-understanding in ways that support student learning while increasing teachers' understanding of their school and community contexts. By illuminating such contexts, their influence on teachers' interpretation of curriculum can be examined.

2. How does this strategy illuminate the informal theories in play?

To illuminate teachers' informal theories, teachers need to be "surprised" by ideas that bump up against the prejudices which form the basis of such informal theories. Strategies for introducing new "surprising" information include:

- Providing opportunities (as part of teachers' personal-professional growth plans) to visit other teachers' classrooms to observe particular instructional strategies along with student responses, and to engage in follow-up practice sessions in their own classrooms

- Providing opportunities for professional learning where teachers participate in activities that reflect the philosophy of the curriculum and experience how students may feel and think
- Providing opportunities for partnering with peers and specialists where teachers can try out new ideas in a supportive environment.

The critical feature of the strategies suggested above is their experiential nature where teachers are able to observe how others engage students in learning activities, experience such activities for themselves, or learn from planning and co-teaching with others. In our third conversation, Rachel suggests:

I think I'd feel more comfortable if I was able to observe other classrooms and see what ... maybe, teachers who are comfortable with it [arts education] are doing. I'd like to have the opportunity to sit in and just see what others are doing and how they're doing it and ... you know, how the kids are responding. Because maybe it's normal that my kids respond the way they do (laughter).

(p. 8)

Montana would also like to observe others: "... in the curriculum, there [are] specific ideas. But unless you actually have seen somebody do it or you know exactly what you're doing, it's different than looking at [how someone else does it]" (Conversation #3, p. 9). For Rachel and Montana, the opportunity to observe peers and what they accomplish with students has the potential to raise particular prejudices for examination.

Cary missed the first round of workshops when the arts education curriculum was introduced in the early 1990s and would like the opportunity to attend such sessions. In the group discussion, she reminisces, "When I went back to complete my degree, I took a Physical Activity Studies ... the first class I took. And there was a dance element in that. And ... it was very free and open and creative and ... it wouldn't be that difficult [to teach]" (p. 5). Experiencing the activity unearthed Cary's informal theory and challenged her "prejudice" that dance is too difficult to teach.

Chelsea taught with an arts education specialist, who “was incredibly encouraging. If you wanted to do something, she’d say, ‘Go for it’ and a lot of ‘Let them [the students] make the choices’. She’s the one that really pushed me in that area” (Conversation #4, p. 12). Chelsea’s experience with the arts education specialist illuminated her “prejudice” regarding the inability of young children to make decisions. This prior experience with the arts education specialist may also have led to Chelsea’s request for “Having a support person somewhere in the division who will encourage me to try different things and help out with ... methods. A person is more valuable than books” (Journal Entry, June 2003).

Through observing others, participating in activities, noticing students’ responses, or teaching with specialists, new information enters each teacher’s hermeneutic circle of understanding. In some cases, this new information bumps up against the prejudices which form the basis of particular informal theories. As these prejudices are raised for questioning, informal theories are illuminated for examination. Such questioning and examination places teachers’ understanding at risk and may cause their horizons of understanding to shift. From these new vantage points, teachers interpret the curriculum differently.

3. How does this strategy illuminate the barriers related to resources?

In this study, resources include instructional materials, media and other materials for art making, and the availability of time and space. To illuminate the potential barriers related to resources, the following strategies are suggested:

- Making instructional materials available for teachers to use and review
- Examining school budgets to determine if sufficient funds are dedicated to support teaching and learning in each area of study

- Reviewing timetables at the school and school division level to determine if all areas of study are receiving the required time allotments and the space required.

As noted in Chapter 4, Montana valued the opportunity to review the instructional materials that were available in the school division resource centre. Due to this review, she knew what was available in the school division and booked a variety of these materials to support her arts education program. Chelsea would like to see the Internet used more, where teachers could “send in” ideas for activities and recipes, or where a list of artists in the community “who will come in [to schools] and do things” is available. Targeting funds for artists in schools supports artists in spending some of their time with teachers and students. Dedicating funds to purchase materials for each area of study allows teachers to request resources such as musical instruments, for example. Drawing attention to timetable requirements may support those teachers who, similar to Rachel, find it difficult to dedicate time to arts education due to competing priorities at the school level.

Although the provision of funding is important, a key piece of the strategies in this section is the provision of time – time for planning, for reviewing and finding resources, for teaching, and for reading, writing, thinking, and talking with others. Time is a precious resource that, ultimately, contributes to the illumination of all four conditions. While the allocation of additional time may be helpful, an examination of how the current time available is used becomes indispensable. It is important to note, as well, how the personal-professional initiative of teachers can mitigate some of the barriers related to resources; for example, Montana’s efforts to access a variety of materials from the school division resource centre complemented the few resources available in her small school.

4. How does this strategy illuminate the reflective practice in place?

To illuminate the reflective practice in place, the following strategies are suggested:

- Reviewing how administrative practices, such as staff meetings, support reflective practice in the school
- Examining how school or school division structures, such as joint planning time or grade level meetings, systematize reflective practice
- Reviewing how school division requirements, such as teacher personal-professional growth plans, engage teachers in reflective practice such as peer dialogues, networking, curriculum inquiry, or other action research related to teaching and learning.

In preparing for our third conversation, Cary notes the value of grade-alike meetings as they “provide an opportunity to discuss curricula, programs, challenges, etc. with other teachers [and are] an excellent opportunity to share ideas” (Notes from Cary, February 2003). While the school division organized such meetings for language arts and mathematics, arts education was not profiled to the same extent.

The critical features of the strategies suggested above for illuminating reflective practice are the inclusion of all teachers at the school or school division level, the focus on curriculum-related activities, and the “normalization” of reflective practice. These features require a school environment where risk taking is the “norm”, where teachers’ knowledge is valued, where student learning drives decision making, and where the school involves the community to support the learning of all children and youth.

Some of the strategies for illuminating the conditions that influence teachers’ interpretation of curriculum are provided best at the provincial, school division, or school level whereas other strategies can be supported across two or more of these levels. While the strategies listed in this

chapter may not be new, the purposes for engaging in such strategies may be. The purposes of these strategies are to remove barriers and to provide systemic supports to illuminate the personal and social contexts of teachers, the informal theories that guide practice, the availability of resources, and the reflective practice that is supported in schools. Such strategies are best determined by teachers and others at the school and school division level.

To complement these strategies, the provincial curriculum-as-plan needs to be inviting and draw teachers in to explore it. It needs to leave room for “an ecological space” where teachers and students are able to “breathe life into this space” (Conversation, Dr. Sharon Friesen, April 15, 2007). This ecological space requires the teacher, the student, and the curriculum as the *Sache* will change the space. As noted in my study, only one of the four participating teachers found the provincial curriculum easy to understand. By giving voice to teachers in the curriculum development process, the curriculum-as-plan can be designed to support teachers’ interpretations of curriculum so that the *Sache* has an opportunity to influence the curriculum-as-lived.

Conclusion

If the reader accepts the notion, even tentatively, that particular conditions influence teachers’ interpretation of curriculum, it follows that strategies for illuminating such conditions could contribute to different, and hopefully better, interpretations. I offer the heuristic in this chapter as a way to illuminate the four conditions found in this study. The purpose of this offering, as noted in the initial chapter of this thesis, is to contribute to the broader conversation of how curriculum theory relates to classroom practice.

Further research to complement this study and expand on its findings could focus on how a shift in teachers’ horizons of understanding affects student learning. As demonstrated in this

study, facilitating such explorations with teachers requires attention to the conditions that influence teachers' interpretations of curriculum in their practice; that is, future study designs need to allow for the exploration of teachers' personal and social contexts, the informal theories that guide practice, the availability of resources, and the reflective practices of each teacher. Exploring the connections to student learning will require attention to students' ways of knowing and the conditions that influence students' understanding. In a sense, there are an infinite number of horizons to explore if we are willing to engage teachers and researchers in conversations to create a shared understanding of how curriculum theory relates to classroom practice.

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APPENDIX A: REQUEST LETTER TO SCHOOL DIVISION

(Date)

(Name of Director of Education)

(Name of School Division)

(Address of School Division Office)

Dear (Director of Education):

This letter is a request for four Elementary Level teachers in your school division to participate in a study called "How Teachers Interpret Curriculum for Their Practice". The study will be conducted during the 2002-03 school year, during which time I will explore the experience of these teachers as they make sense of the renewed arts education curriculum for their practice. The results of my study will be used to inform provincial curriculum development and teacher understanding.

There are three aspects to the study. The first aspect involves conducting four in-depth interviews with each of the teachers and then bringing them together for a culminating group discussion. The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed. Transcriptions with initial analysis of themes will be forwarded to the teachers for review and feedback.

The second aspect of the study involves observing three arts education lessons in each of the four classrooms during the school year. Field notes will be recorded for all observations and informal conversations.

The third aspect of the study involves a document analysis of teachers' reflective journal entries, transcribed interviews, and researcher field notes and memos.

To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used in any documentation. All audiotapes will be erased five years after the study and the thesis has been completed. A copy of the completed thesis will be sent to your school division office.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Jane Thurgood Sagal
Educational Studies Doctoral Candidate, UBC

APPENDIX B: EXCERPT FROM CONVERSATION RECORDS CHART
(based on Glesne & Peshkin, 1992)

Number	Date and Time	Participant and Event	Date Transcribed and Sent	Time and Word Count	Lesson Activity	Notes
4	Oct 11/02 3:45 p.m.	Montana conversation #1	Nov 11/02 Sent Nov 15 17 pages	1:30:30 12,321 words	Grades 3-5	Met in Montana's home, got caught up in the conversation and talked longer than intended.
6	Nov 15/02 1:15 p.m. 2:15 p.m.	Chelsea visit #1 conversation #2	Nov 29/02 Sent Dec 5 14 pages	55:56 10,495 words	Grade 1 Visual art lesson – texture 60 minute lesson	Students are sitting in pairs facing each other. Chelsea introduces "texture" and students discuss different textures such as 'rough' and 'squishy'.
9	Jan 16/03 2:30 p.m. Jan 19/03 1:30 p.m.	Rachel visit #2 conversation #3	Feb. 1/03 Sent Feb 17 14 pages	56:19 9,660 words	Grade 1 Drama lesson – "Two Mitts" 40 minute lesson	While the story was read, students acted it out using paper plate masks made in previous art lessons. Students took turns in the audience.
15	Apr 14/03 1:00 3:15	Cary visit #3 conversation #4	Apr. 26/03 Sent Apr 28 7 pages	38:32 3,937 words	Grade 1/2 Visual art lesson – shape 75 minute lesson	As I walk in, a boy says to me, "We're going to paint bunnies". Cary supports the students in focusing on shape and size. Students take turns, in groups of eight, painting around a back table, sharing the paint.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE INITIAL CONVERSATION

Introduction: You know that I'm interested in exploring how teachers make sense of curriculum. Your experiences will help me understand this phenomenon. No one will hear this tape except me. We'll take about an hour for our conversation. You may stop any particular session or all future sessions. Do you want to ask me about any of this before we start?

1. I'd like to start by asking you to tell me about yourself – your family, personal interests, hobbies ...
2. I'm interested in your professional life. How would you describe your educational background and experiences?
3. Tell me about the community you teach in. If I was planning to move here, what do you think I should know?
4. Tell me about the school you teach in. If I was coming here to teach, what would you tell me?
5. Tell me about your colleagues ... their strengths ... their interests ... whatever you'd like to share.
6. Tell me about your students ... their abilities ... their needs ... whatever you'd like to talk about.
7. I'd like to explore what led you to become a teacher. How would you describe the path you took ... or the defining moment?
8. Tell me a story about a rewarding experience in your teaching.
9. Were you ever in a situation where you faced a dilemma in your educational practice? Talk about what you learned from this experience.
10. What are your favourite subjects to teach (and why)? Are there subjects that you are uncomfortable teaching or dislike teaching (and why)?
11. Tell me about an experience you have had in arts education or the arts. What was memorable about it?
12. Tell me about your experiences with teaching arts education. What do you find to be interesting or challenging?
13. Tell me about a recent arts education lesson that you taught and what challenges or excites you about it.

APPENDIX D: SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Task	Date
Conduct initial exploratory talks with Director of Education and others re: potential study	June - July 2002
"Case" the schools/communities and meet participating teachers to explore ways in which the study can be useful to them	Early September 2002
Engage in initial in-depth conversations with participating teachers and make first journal writing request	Late September 2002
Transcribe initial conversations	Late September 2002
Complete initial transcript analysis and interpretation of 1 st conversations	October 2002
Forward transcripts and preliminary analyses to respective teachers	October 2002
1 st classroom visit to be determined by each participating teacher	November 2002
Engage in second conversation with participating teachers (re: preliminary transcript analysis, journal entry, classroom visit, and other ideas) and make second journal writing request	November 2002
Transcribe 2 nd in-depth conversations	November 2002
Complete initial analysis of 2 nd conversations	December 2002
Forward transcripts and preliminary analyses of 2 nd conversations to respective teachers	December 2002
2 nd classroom visit to be determined by each participating teacher	January 2003
Engage in third conversation with participating teachers (re: preliminary analysis of 2 nd conversation, recent journal entry, classroom visit, and other ideas) and make third journal writing request	January 2003
Transcribe third in-depth conversations	January 2003
Forward transcripts and preliminary analyses of 3 rd conversations to respective teachers	February 2003
3 rd classroom visit to be determined by each participating teacher	March 2003
Engage in fourth individual conversations with participating teachers (re: preliminary analysis of 3 rd conversation, recent journal entry, classroom visit, and other ideas) and make fourth journal writing request	March 2003
Transcribe fourth in-depth conversations	March 2003
Forward transcripts and preliminary analyses of 4 th conversations to respective teachers	April 2003
Facilitate group meeting/discussion with participating teachers (re: 4th conversations, recent journal entries, and other ideas) and make final journal writing request	May 2003
Transcribe group meeting/discussion	May 2003
Forward transcript and preliminary analysis of group meeting/discussion to participating teachers	May 2003
Have teachers forward final responses, journal entries, etc.	June 2003

APPENDIX E: THEME CATEGORIES
(Excerpt from Analysis Codes Table, based on Glesne, 1999)

#	Code	Explanation	Transcript
3	REF	Teacher as Reflective Practitioner	Rachel 1, 2, 3, 4, GD Chelsea 1, 2, 3, 4 Montana 1, 2, 3, 4 Cary 2
5	INT	Integrating Arts Education	Rachel 1, 2, 3 Chelsea 2, 3, 4 Montana 3, 4 Cary 1, 2, 3, 4, GD
7	PROC	Process in Arts Education	Rachel 1, 2, 3, GD Chelsea 4 Montana 1, 2, 4 Cary 2, 4
11	RISK	Risk-taking	Rachel 2, 3, 4, GD Chelsea 1, 2, 3, 4 Montana 2, 3, 4, GD Cary 3, 4
12	MED	Different Media	Rachel 3 Chelsea 1, 2, 3, 4 Montana 2, 3, GD Cary 1, 2, 3, 4, GD
15	ELE	Elements of Art	Rachel 2, 3, 4, GD Chelsea 1, 2, 3, 4 Montana 2, 3, 4 Cary 3, 4
26	CURR	Curriculum Guide	Rachel 1, 2, 3, 4 Chelsea 3, 4 Montana 1, 2, 3, 4, GD Cary 2, 3, 4, GD
27	BKGD	Subject Area Background/Experiential Knowledge	Rachel 1, 2, 3, 4, GD Chelsea 2, 3, 4, GD Montana 1, 2, GD Cary 2, GD
28	START	Starting Point	Rachel 1, 2 Chelsea 2, 3 Montana 1, 2, 3, GD Cary 2, 3
44	GDE	Guiding the Creative Process	Rachel 4 Chelsea 2, 4 Montana 2, 4, GD Cary 1, 2, 4, GD

Note: GD refers to Group Discussion transcript.

APPENDIX F: EXCERPT FROM THEME CATEGORIES AND
ILLUSTRATIVE RESPONSES TABLE
(based on Glesne, 1999)

Category	Illustrative Response	Teacher (Pseudonym)
Purpose of arts education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hmmm ... I don't know if I should admit this (laughter). I don't know that arts education ... I mean, for me, it's always been sort of pushed to the side. If something has to go in my day, it's arts education. Also, I use it more ... I guess I don't think often about the different aspects of ... I use it more as a means to another end ... I don't know that I've thought often about it.</i> • <i>... I think building confidence and creativity is really important.</i> 	Rachel 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>... the opportunity to develop their creativity and explore ... explore their creativity ... to try different processes and media, and different art forms ... to be introduced to artists and even being introduced to ... that is a possible way of something that could be a life work for some of them ... that they be introduced and aware of art and appreciate various forms of art.</i> • <i>An appreciation for art and recognition that they have talent that they can produce worthwhile products ... the basic things about colour and line, the elements of art.</i> 	Cary 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I think that's something that arts ed really does ... keeps people's minds open ... and it transcends into everything.</i> • <i>They're going to learn arts skills, I suppose ... to be open to new ideas ... to make their opinion know without hurting other people. ... even getting confidence and risk taking ...</i> 	Chelsea 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I hope that they will realize that different people are usually good at different things ... and that they just want to try and be involved in things. ... being able to audition for parts and having the confidence to do that ... just to be more involved, I guess, in what's going on at the school, too ... as far as extra-curricular things. ... Hopefully, they'll get more from arts education than just making or doing things that they feel comfortable doing, I guess ... maybe taking chances.</i> 	Montana 2

APPENDIX G: EXAMPLE OF SUMMARY TABLE
(based on Rossman & Rallis, 1998)

Category	Conversations	Field Notes	Materials
Integrating arts education	Rachel #1: p. 6 Rachel #2: p. 2, 4-6 Rachel #3: p. 1, 13 Chelsea #2: p. 8, 10, 12 Chelsea #3: p. 6-9, 13 Chelsea #4: p. 14 Montana #3: p. 8 Montana #4: p. 5 Cary #1: p. 4 Cary #2: p. 2-3, 6 Cary #3: p. 1, 4 Cary #4: p. 2, 5 Cary (GD): p. 2, 6	Sept. 30/02: p. 2 Oct. 1/02: p. 30-31 Nov. 15/02: p. 14 Nov. 26/04: p. 32 Feb. 19/03: p. 35 Mar. 18/03: p. 11 Apr. 14/03: p. 39	Oct. 1/02: hallway bulletin board display (Cary) Nov. 15/02: student art works (Chelsea) Nov. 20/02: journal entry (Rachel #2) Nov. 26/02: student art works (Cary) Dec. 10/02: journal entry (Rachel #3) Feb. 19/03: student art works (Cary) Feb. 19/03: journal entry (Cary #4) Mar. 18/03: hallway bulletin board display (Rachel) Apr. 14/03: student art works (Cary)
Seasonal art	Rachel #3: p. 10 Chelsea #2: p. 8 Montana #2: p. 9 Montana #3: p. 6 Montana #4: p. 4-5 Cary #2: p. 2, 5 Cary #4: p. 5	Oct. 1/02: p. 31 Nov. 4/02: p. 3 Nov. 22/02: p. 24 Nov. 26/02: p. 33 Jan. 16/03: p. 5, 7 Feb. 19/03: p. 35 Mar. 19/03: p. 17 Apr. 14/03: p. 42	Oct. 1/02: hallway bulletin board display (Cary) Nov. 4/02: hallway bulletin board display (Rachel) Nov. 15/02: student art works (Chelsea) Nov. 26/02: student art works (Cary) Jan. 16/03: student art works (Rachel) Feb. 19/03: student art works (Cary) Apr. 14/03: student art works (Cary)
Status of arts education	Rachel #2: p. 5 Rachel #3: p. 5, 13 Rachel #4: p. 9 Rachel (GD): p. 7 Chelsea #3: p. 10 Chelsea #4: p. 12 Chelsea (GD): p. 7 Montana #4: p. 8 Cary #4: p. 3-4 Cary (GD): p. 7	Sept. 23/02: p. 1 Sept. 30/02: p. 2	Sept. 25/02: school newsletter (Springfield) Jan. 16/03: entrance bulletin board display (Springfield)

Note: (GD) refers to Group Discussion.

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE OF ANALYSIS FORMS AND MATRICES (based on Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Contact Summary Form

Contact type:

Site:

Date:

1. What were the main issues or themes in this contact?
2. What aspects of the research question did the contact bear on most centrally?
3. What other salient or interesting information arose in this contact?
4. What new (or remaining) questions need to be considered for the next contact?

* * * *

Materials Summary Form

Name or description of document:

Date:

Brief summary of contents:

* * * *

Holistic Analysis Form

(V=Classroom Visit, C=Conversation, W=Walkabout, M=Materials, P=Visit with Principal)

Pseudonym of Teacher:

Date: September 2003

1. Main themes, impressions, summary statements:
2. What explanations, speculations, or hypotheses can I make based upon these themes, impressions, and summary statements?
3. What alternative interpretations or explanations might there be?
4. What is puzzling, strange, or unexpected?
5. What is definitely *not* true of this case?
6. Tentative Pseudonym for School:

* * * *

Thematic Conceptual Matrix: Factors affecting Interpretation of Curriculum

Factors	Rachel	Chelsea	Montana	Cary
Background Knowledge				
Status of Arts Education				
Student Responses				
Teaching Style				
Planning				
Resources				
Open-endedness of Arts Ed				
Risk				
Research Study				

Participant-ordered Matrix: How Arts Education is Understood and Reflected in Classroom Practice

Teacher Participants	Arts Ed Goals (Considered to be important)	Strands (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Art)	Components (Creative/Productive, Critical/Responsive, Cultural/Historical)	Elements/Objectives (Demonstrated in conversation or classroom practice)	Informal Theory
Rachel					
Chelsea					
Montana					
Cary					

Participant-by-Time Matrix: Arts Education Understandings and Practices, by Phase

Teacher Participants	Sept-Oct 2002 1st Conversation	Nov-Dec 2002 2nd Conversation 1st Classroom Visit	Jan-Feb 2003 3rd Conversation 2nd Classroom Visit	Mar-Apr 2003 4th Conversation 3rd Classroom Visit	May-June 2003 Group Discussion
Rachel					
Chelsea					
Montana					
Cary					

APPENDIX I: REVIEW FORM
(excerpt from memorandum that accompanied descriptive summaries)

The purpose of this memorandum is to update you on where I am with the study. I have written a descriptive summary of our time together. Please review the attached draft summary for appropriateness and comprehensiveness. To keep the descriptions concise, I had to sacrifice some detail. From your perspective, I would like to know the following:

1. Does the descriptive summary (even though condensed) provide enough of a picture so that you feel it describes our time together? If not, please suggest some critical pieces that you think are important to include.

2. In particular, I am interested in your perspective on how I captured your “horizon of understanding”. Do you think I have captured your horizon? If not, what additions or alternatives do you suggest?

3. Please feel free to make any additional comments.

Thank you for taking the time to review this descriptive summary and provide feedback. Your feedback helps me to think about what, and how, to share from the study.

APPENDIX K: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT PAGES

Rachel

(Excerpt from Conversation #2, page 5, November 4/02)

Researcher: You talked about one of the challenges of teaching arts ed – dance and drama in particular – as one of not knowing where to start. Where did you start when you were planning today's arts ed lesson?

Rachel: I was trying to relate it [the lesson] to something that the students had already experienced. Normally, I might relate it to science or social studies or some theme we're doing. Basically, I looked through the arts ed curriculum guide (laughter) for something that I could springboard off related to ... primary colours. We did that a few weeks ago in science and the students were interested in it. When we dropped the food coloring in the water, the students were saying "Ooooh". That was exciting to them. So I used that idea of mixing primary colours because it was something that students had done recently. I could kind of relate today's lesson back to that. And I thought it would give students more experience and more opportunities to explore that area.

Researcher: You also talked about students' excitement around the finished product. In what way might you relate that idea (or not) to today's lesson?

Rachel: Well, I think when students saw it ... they saw the example sitting on my desk this morning ... when they saw it, they said, "Oh, that's really cool!" They were excited about ... the sample suncatcher. I don't know that they were as excited when theirs were finished (laughter). When I was showing the sample to them, they were excited about that. But, it's interesting ... I think today I even tried to focus more on the process than on the product. Because I looked at our last conversation and how I focused so much on the product. I had never thought about that until I said that during our conversation. Not that it's wrong to focus on the product, but there's also the process. I think the students are losing out, and I'm losing out, if I'm not focusing on the process as well. Now in this case, I was trying to think more about the process than I normally would. I wasn't even aware I was seeing things that way. It was very interesting to look at the transcript of our last conversation and see that I did that.

Researcher: Is there anything else that you want to talk about today related to the transcript or the description of themes from our first conversation?

Rachel: Actually, I think that what I just said is something that I really pulled out of that and I talked about it in my journal ... just being more aware and looking more at the process, and ways I can do that. And even ways I can discuss more of the process. I think a lot of times in arts ed, you do what you need to do to get the finished product but you don't really talk ... or I don't talk enough about what we did. You know, the process involved ... whether it's arts ed or whatever it is. Just to be able to debrief with the students more or as you go through ... talking about the process as you go along. I just focused on that because I thought it was interesting. I never would have said that about myself until it came out in our conversation and I articulated that. So I did focus on that in my journal because I found that interesting about myself.

Chelsea
(Excerpt from Conversation #3, page 1, January 22/03)

Researcher: Tell me about your lesson ... your purpose ... how you thought it went ... and anything else that comes to mind.

Chelsea: The purpose ... for this one was probably more of a ... [interruption by teacher walking into staffroom with students to retrieve dishes] ... I guess to be perfectly honest, I had the project and I worked backwards to see which curriculum objectives it would fit. I tend to do that a lot with arts ed because I see this really interesting project that I will get from anywhere ... a resource, the Internet, whatever ... and I end up moving backwards and looking at which objectives do I need to achieve or which ones will this project achieve? I have to be honest. That's what I did with this one.

Last night, I went through the Grade 1 visual art objectives on this page [points to page in curriculum guide] ... which I really like ... and was able to see that the salt clay penguin project achieved a lot of them. So, it turned into more of a shape lesson. We've already done texture and we've learned a lot already about penguins ... what shapes they are ... what they look like. You can tell the kids knew exactly what penguins look like. This is the first experience with anything besides play dough. They've built a lot ... with play dough so it's sort of the same idea. You don't have to make a slip like you do with clay for the salt clay to stick together. It just sticks together. So, I thought this would be a nice introduction to clay which we eventually will do. My purpose focused on shape – what does it look like? – and a lot with just feeling it ... the texture.

I thought the students had a ball. They really did well. I wasn't sure what to expect ... not ever having done this before. But they knew what penguins looked like and they knew what they wanted them to look like. I thought it went okay. They enjoyed it.

Researcher: Did you find anything interesting or surprising in today's lesson?

Chelsea: I was surprised with how quickly the students grasped the shape and the form of what they were trying to create. For example, nobody tried to make their penguin lying down. Everybody had them standing up. Maybe it was because they had Purdy, our little stuffed penguin, there for them to look at. We've also seen videos on penguins but I wasn't sure how well they would grasp that because we hadn't done a lot with form. But they had the shape of the flippers and the beak. And they had a lot of ideas how to make the eyes. The little boy that was new [from England] made little round balls. We hadn't talked about that at all. The one little girl came up to me at the end. I'm not sure if you caught it. But she said she stuck her finger in and made a hollow, and then she's going to paint it. Because then you can see it, she says. So that was kind of interesting too. That's what this class is like. They come out of left field. You don't expect them to grasp these things and then they take it beyond. So, that was surprising. I just had no idea what to expect ... not ever having used salt clay before. I thought they did very well. The whole idea of feeling the salt clay when it was cold and kneading it ... and letting the students play with it before they actually made their penguins ... that worked out well.

Montana

(Excerpt from Conversation #2, pages 3-4, November 22/02)

Researcher: In our first conversation, you mentioned that language arts is one area that students don't all have to be doing the same thing. What about arts education? Do students need to be doing the same thing in arts ed?

Montana: It would probably depend on what we're doing. Sometimes what students are capable of doing is very different. With those cubism pictures in the hallway, for example, there's some that ... they were all supposed to be doing cubism but some ended up ... it wasn't really what I was after but the students thought that was what they were doing. So, that was fine. Sometimes, when we're all doing the same lessons, the products are different. But going through the process ... and depending how that works, sometimes the products are different (laughter). With some students, I don't expect ... that is, I wouldn't say I expect the same thing from everybody.

Researcher: In comparing how you felt about their Picasso's Blue Period paintings, what do you think about their cubist paintings?

Montana: The Rose Period paintings were a little bit ... I don't know if I would say better ... but more ... they just looked like there was a little bit more effort. The students did have to do a little bit of a write up describing what they were going to paint for the rose period. When we did the cubism paintings, the kids by that time, I think, had gotten over the excitement of being able to paint and took more time. They actually sketched their drawings first. Then they painted them.

It was something that I was thinking about having them do but it wasn't something that I was going to insist on. Most of the kids wanted to sketch first because they said they knew what they wanted to paint but that it was more difficult to just paint it freehand. They wanted to be more particular with what they were doing. So I think everybody decided that they would sketch what they were going to paint first. Then we also used acrylic paints to do the cubism paintings because we had just been using the tempera paints for the Rose and the Blue Period paintings.

So for the cubism paintings, we looked at the pictures of Picasso's work and the kids were talking about how vibrant the colours were ... and things like that. So then we decided we would use the acrylic paints ... that the students could paint with acrylics. But I also told the students that they need to be very careful because acrylic paint doesn't wash out of clothes (laughter) ... and the painting actually went very well.

They all chose ... like there are different sizes of paint brushes ... most of the students chose a very small paintbrush so they could be very particular with what they were doing. I was quite happy with the results ... the paintings looked very bright and vibrant. When you read some of the students' descriptions, it is clear that some of the students understand what cubism is and what Picasso was trying to do ... and then with other descriptions, you can tell the students kind of understand but not really ... and then some of them were just wanting to paint a picture and ... to be able to say, "This is the picture I painted (laughter) and this is the description".

Cary
(Excerpt from Conversation #1, pages 4-5, October 1/02)

Researcher: What are your favourite subjects to teach (and why)?

Cary: Language arts. I love teaching literature. Because I think my main goal is to teach grade 1s to read. Of course, that's reading and writing ... like language arts ... plus basic math skills ... actually is my prime goal. So if I'm teaching science, it's because I'm doing something language arts. Or if I'm teaching social studies, it's actually something from the language arts. Grade 1 social studies is mainly "family" so I can do a family unit in language arts.

Researcher: Are there subjects that you are uncomfortable teaching (and why)?

Cary: I was uncomfortable teaching phys ed. So then when I had that surgery last fall, I thought "Once I get feeling better, I'm going to get a hold of this phys ed business". So I did spend a lot of time with the curriculum and with some phys ed books that I had ... and when I was finished, I felt a lot ... when I came back to work, I felt a lot better with the curriculum. Because my spare time, my professional reading is always something to do with language arts, pretty much.

Researcher: Tell me about an experience you have had in arts education or the arts. What was memorable about it?

Cary: (long pause) Sorry ...

Researcher: Tell me about a recent arts education lesson that you taught and what challenges or excites you about it.

Cary: Each year or ... most years, I do Leo Lionni ... a Leo Lionni unit in language arts. There are several stories about mice. And there's one ... Frederick, who ... all the little mice are busy gathering grain for the winter and Frederick sits there daydreaming. It comes near the end of winter and, of course, there's very little left to eat and they're cold and hungry. So then Frederick starts telling them stories that he'd been daydreaming. And he told them about the flowers with such vivid imagery that they could see them in their minds. And he talked about the rainbows and whatnot. And that took their minds off their cold and their hunger. So they found out he did have a purpose. He really was contributing. But, you know ... it really lends itself to some beautiful art lessons with chalk. And there's also a Lionni story about ... I think it's called "Alexander" and there's this wall ... no ... there's one about the magic pebble that I like. And so I do that with collage. They're in the garden and so the leaves we make out of tissue paper and the magic pebbles are purple ... purple foil. You can use a lot of different mediums with those kind of books. Eric Carle books are good too.

Researcher: (Comment re: mural in hall)

Cary: Yes, well ... the grade 1s Cornerstone reading program ... language arts program ... that we're just starting to use. The first book is Out on the Playground. Yesterday, we did the sponge dabbing of the background and today, they're each to do themselves.