

# TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE ARTS: GENERALIST TEACHERS AS ARTS ADVOCATES

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## ABSTRACT

*This research study was designed to determine the effectiveness of four well-established North American professional development programs designed for generalist teachers to teach the arts in their classrooms. Personal and professional changes in beliefs and practices, along with ways in which institutional factors helped or hindered professional development were analysed. The evidence suggests that the impact of arts-based educational programs and art-making on teachers' private lives results in both positive and negative outcomes, such as increased self-confidence, greater levels of creativity, self-expression, and co-operation, as well as moments of intense frustration and struggle. Current notions of effective professional development were used to frame the study, including reflective practice, administrative support, funding, and community support of teachers' professional growth. The paper concludes with implications for arts advocacy in elementary education through effective professional development in the arts for generalist teachers.*

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## **TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE ARTS: GENERALIST TEACHERS AS ARTS ADVOCATES**

Countless programs in a dizzying array of forms have been developed to support teaching in the arts, and teachers' experiences of professional development programs in the arts vary greatly. It is important to analyse the effectiveness of such programs, especially at a time when the generalist elementary teacher is expected to teach the arts, often in the absence of specialist teachers and in contexts where an education rich in the arts is not highly valued. The overarching goal of the present research study was to examine four North American professional development programs, all well established and respected, to determine how teachers experienced those programs over time, and whether any sustained changes occurred for the teachers taking part in the programs. Unlike some other work on teacher professional development, we focus both on personal and professional learning, because adult learning occurs on a multitude of levels, and because there are times when profound changes in one's personal beliefs and practices can serve as a catalyst for an equally profound effect on professional practice and advocacy. In keeping with current trends in professional development, our research highlights programs that are collaborative and encourage reflective inquiry and learning on the part of the teachers involved.

The present study has been designed to explore the following research questions:

1. What changes in teachers' professional and personal lives are attributed to taking part in each of the four programs?
2. Is there an approach, as exemplified by the four programs, that appears most successful in terms of teachers' self-reported experiences of positive change?
3. What role does institutional support play in each of the programs?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review describes three related areas. The first of these is the area of adult change theory, focusing on Mezirow's theory of how personal transformations occur in adult learners. The second section of the literature involves an examination of professional development programs for teachers, using studies related to professional development in the arts wherever research data are available. The final section describes institutional factors that have been identified as having an impact on professional development programs for teachers, not only in the area of arts education, but in other disciplines as well.

#### **Personal Learning and Transformation**

Arts-based educational programs for adult learners may well offer a context in which transformative learning is achieved. For this reason, Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1997), which describes processes of adult learning and the impact that education can have on adults, is of relevance to the present study. According to Mezirow, when people experience something once, they tend to expect the same thing to happen again (Cranton 1994). Through this process people develop a frame of reference that encompasses two dimensions: habits of mind and points of view. In the process of daily living, people absorb values, assumptions and beliefs about how things are without much thought. Sometimes they discuss this process with others, and engage in discourse over

the processes that they have encountered (Cranton 1994). Transformative learning can occur when such processes lead people to open up their frames of reference, discard a habit of mind, seek new alternatives, and consequently, act differently in the world. Acting differently may include becoming an advocate for the transformative learning that has occurred.

Often this process of transformation begins with a disorienting dilemma. This dilemma may be followed by critical reflection about the assumptions on which one's beliefs and habits of mind or points of view are based. People may be critically reflective of assumptions when reading a book, hearing a new point of view, or self-reflectively assessing their own ideas. Such self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations.

There is compelling evidence indicating that art-making can serve as a disorienting dilemma for adults, leading to new patterns of life and new frames of reference (Patteson 2004). Cranton used Jung's notion of individuation to analyse whether the critical reflection could fully address the needs of all adult learners in Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (Donlevy & Donlevy 1998). The individuation idea is a process that leads an individual through a voyage of self-discovery, to actualise all that he/she is capable of achieving. Such a voyage might occur by means of art-making, because artistic activities can provide a fertile ground for creativity and self-discovery (Patteson 2004; Terehoff 2002).

In addition to the concept of 'self,' there is also a concept of 'other' and the individual's relationship with those with whom they are interacting. It is often within this interaction and cooperation that learning happens (Bennetts 2002). Bennetts examined the impact of transformative learning on individuals, families and communities in the Second Chance Trust program in South West England. The program provided academic, personal, and career training for adults who wanted to change their lives not only for themselves but also, ultimately, for the benefit of the wider community. Transformational learning was gauged by the extent to which major changes in thinking, feeling, acting and being occurred. The significant transformations fell into the categories of self-transformation, coping and instigating change in self and others, transformed relationships, increased educational drive, career improvement, and better quality of life. This study supported Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, and also suggested that arts-based educational programs could similarly lead to such transformations. In the present study, we expected that the kinds of transformation identified by Bennetts might occur, given that similar conditions were present, in varying levels, in the professional development programs we examined.

### **Effective Professional Development in the Arts**

There are several key issues concerning current professional development programs in the arts. To begin with, many of these programs have been implemented because schools do not have the specialist arts teachers that are required (Vagianos 1999). Over the past several decades, there has been a steady decline in the number of full-time art specialists in North American schools and in other Western countries (Abril & Gault 2006), and thus, in many regions, comprehensive arts education has now largely fallen on the shoulders of the regular classroom teacher. This shift has brought with it a concomitant increase in professional development programs for generalist teachers. Professional development opportunities created for generalist classroom teachers' need to acknowledge generalist teachers' lack of experience with specific art forms in order to be effective. All four programs examined in the present research were designed to acknowledge the particular needs of generalist teachers, which are different in nature to those that would be required for specialist arts teachers. Some scholars have questioned how teachers are to carry out what is often seen as the extra burden of professional development in a field that is not their own, in addition to the pressures of keeping up with the national and state

standards of education (McKean 2001). McKean also queries whether the people providing professional development do more than just stimulate an initial interest in the artistic experience. Do professional development programs really work, or are they a poor substitute for addressing the paucity of full-time arts specialists in schools? That is, McKean asks whether professional development in the arts for generalist teachers offers compromise solution or simply a weak substitute for specialist teaching.

But while there are challenges in providing professional development in the arts for generalist teachers, there is an opportunity as well. Specialist teachers already understand the importance of the arts. By reaching generalist teachers, in deep ways, these generalist teachers may also become arts advocates for the students they teach as well as in the broader school and local communities.

This leads to an examination of what defines effective professional development in general. Virginia Richards (2003) has identified several features that a wide body of research has demonstrated to be important for effective professional development. These include creating programs that are school-wide, providing experiences over a period of time with long-term follow-up, generating situations that encourage collegiality, fostering agreement among participants on the overall goals and vision of the program, obtaining the support of administration, procuring access to adequate funds, acknowledging participants' existing beliefs and practices, and making use of outside facilitators. Morrow (2003) endorses Richards' view that professional development should be continuous and long-term, and adds several other features to those identified by Richards. These include the creation of opportunities for teachers to be reflective, the encouragement of teachers to work towards establishing a professional community for mutual support and collective expertise, and learning about research-based strategies and pedagogy.

The notion of teacher as learner dovetails with the plea for professional development to be one of reflection in the context of a professional community. Models of professional development that view the teacher as learner encourage teacher inquiry and reflective practices in conjunction with the improvement of technical skills and discipline knowledge in a collaborative context (e.g. Cochran-Smith 2006; Fullan 1993; Jay 2003; Loughran 2006; Lowden 2006; Park et al 2007; Robinson & Carrington 2002). The importance of improving technical skills and subject knowledge is in keeping with the findings of Hutchens and Pankratz (2000) who claim that professional development should deepen subject matter knowledge, and that professional development is most effective when it occurs in the context of the classroom. Despite these agreed upon features, much of the professional development, at least in the United States, is usually short-term, pays no attention to what is currently happening in the classroom, and provides no long-term follow-up (Richards 2003). The decontextualized nature of many professional development activities has been criticised by other researchers and practitioners as well (Atherton 2009; Baron 2008; Hargreaves 2007; Kelchtermans 2004), not only in terms of being removed from classroom and disciplinary foci but also because of the lack of connection to other teachers in the community.

### **Institutional Factors**

As noted by Richards (2003), professional change is usually most successful when it is supported by institutional factors such as policies, funding, and principal and school board administrative support. Mentoring and collaboration are crucial aspects of teachers' professional development programs, and they have been illustrated to be more successful with adequate administrative support. Principals' awareness of their teachers' progress in professional development programs, general awareness to the needs of teachers, open communication, and

adequate, fair and impartial allocation of funding are all demonstrated to be important for assisting teachers' professional development.

Mentoring is an important element for producing and maintaining effective professional development, and it is the responsibility of school administration teams to ensure effective implementation and ongoing support for such a program (Honaker 2004). Hauserman espoused a similar perspective, noting that, 'teachers learn best from other teachers as their interactions "provide for technical and psychological support as well as personal reinforcement" ' (p. 17). Although mentoring is very important, 'the full responsibility of initiating a new teacher into the profession... cannot rest on his or her mentor' (Hargreaves & Fullan 2000, cited in Honaker, 2004 p. 17). The impact of administrative policies on mentoring can support personal and professional changes for the teacher as well as positive changes in morale and community atmosphere at the school level. Teacher mentoring, in particular, has been shown to work best when administrative support is provided to ensure teachers are receiving what they need, and are adequately provided with time away from their work to reflect and discuss.

A close relation of mentoring as a form of professional development is that of peer observation. Peer observation has been lauded as a way of addressing many of the internal forces important in motivating adult learners, and there is considerable recent research indicating how peer observation of teaching can improve teachers' professional practice and lead to greater self-confidence (e.g. Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond 2004; Kohut, Burnap, & Yon 2007; McMahon, Barrett & O'Neill 2007; Peel 2005). In her research on the Teacher Development Program at an Australian university, Bell (2001) found that teachers who had been involved in peer observation in the classroom context changed their teaching practices by, for example, 'increasing student involvement in the learning process, rather than my previous style which saw the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge' (p. 34).

Collaborative teaching is also considered very important for a teacher's professional development and, like mentoring and peer observation, works best when supported by a school administration team. Indeed, an impressive array of research studies has indicated the need for more collaborative models of professional development that promote teacher inquiry (e.g. Cochran-Smith 2006; Peery 2004) as well as models promoting reflective practice (e.g. Argyris & Schön 1974; Jay 2003; Osterman & Kottkamp 2004). Administrators can foster an environment where collaboration is encouraged by providing adequate planning time for teachers, training in team teaching, and giving such programs high visibility within both the educational and wider communities (Lehr 1999). One of the benefits of collaborative teaching was outlined well over a decade ago by Hauserman (1993) who claimed that teachers learn from one another through the transfer of knowledge that occurs in the context of these programs.

Many scholars and practitioners have argued that principals and administrative staff need to be aware of the professional development progress of all their teaching staff. Marshall (2003) makes the observation that many principals spend little time in classrooms. As a result, many principals do not know whether the teachers are on track, either with the curriculum, or with the level of development they may require. Effective discourse on curriculum between teachers and principals is essential to a successful educational institution. 'Administrators who engage in reflective discourse with experienced teachers about such issues as curriculum, instruction, and classroom management create a leaning community and empower all of its members' (Laboard Brown 2002, p. 424).

Administrative staff and principals who are particularly aware of teachers' needs are more likely to provide the structure and support needed to sustain feasible professional development programs. A study commissioned by

the Chicago Teachers Union showed that 68 percent of teachers felt they had no real power to make changes within the school system (Cholo 2003). Administrators also need to hear about teachers' problems and provide personal encouragement. As Kruger noted, 'Previous research indicated that when administrative support is provided with a primary focus on increasing teachers' sense of worth, their problem-solving skills and feelings of self-efficacy in planning and evaluating their interventions are enhanced' (Kruger, 1997, cited in Yoon & Gilchrist 2003). Although administrative staff must be aware of the requirements and abilities of teachers to enhance their professional development, it is also the case that they need to strike a careful balance between providing support and being perceived as too dictatorial or top-down in guiding professional development (Strucchelli 2009).

The literature also emphasises equitable allocation of resources on the part of administrators (Hart 2003). In times of budgetary restrictions, it is not unusual for the arts to suffer, and often, to a greater extent than other disciplines. The popular belief, supported by the research literature, is that 'Every time there's a budget cut, they look at the arts' (Applewhite, as cited in Renfro, 2003). In music and the other arts, budget cuts not only mean that there are fewer curriculum materials and resources, but also, often, inadequate facilities as well. Krueger (2000, 2001) discusses the reasons why beginning music teachers are leaving the profession, and quotes one interviewee as saying: 'Our facility was small, and we had lots of sound problems between rooms. There was almost no budget for music... getting materials and music was a big challenge.' Poor budgets and facilities were common factors in music teachers seeking alternative employment (Krueger 2000). But even more important in terms of the present discussion is that interviewees not only cited diminished budgets and poor facilities as reasons for leaving the profession, but also, the lack of open communication between teachers and their administrators over these issues. This lack of communication left the teachers feeling unsupported overall. As Butler (1994) observed: 'Administrators act as problem solvers... although solving any one of these problems may not seem monumental, when problems accumulate it is overwhelming' (p. 45).

The literature on institutional factors confirms that administrative support is necessary for maintaining effective and satisfied teachers. Without the support of administration, teachers are likely to become disheartened in their work and leave the profession or change to another discipline area or school. Effective communication is essential, and opportunities for maintaining communication are required to provide the foundation of self-worth for teachers and ongoing professional development.

### **Literature Summary and Research Questions**

Most researchers and practitioners agree that institutional factors play a significant role in promoting and assisting sustainable professional development, and without them such programs are not likely to succeed. The literature also indicates that professional development with a focus on collaborative work within a contextualised professional learning community is more likely to be successful than single session or short-term programs divorced from the classroom setting. Moreover, the literature suggests that professional development programs can be designed in a way that helps adults to find new patterns for their private lives, with parallel changes in their professional practices.

## METHODOLOGY

### Program Selection and Description

All four of the programs selected for the present research shared the broadly stated aim of enabling teachers to bring more arts experiences into their classroom teaching and their personal lives. Teachers as Artists (TAA) was developed in Kingston, Ontario in 1996, and was conceived as a school-wide program for professional development in the arts, involving both classroom teachers and community artists. TAA has remained a regional program. The aim of TAA was to help teachers become beginning musicians and artists so that they would, consequently, bring more arts-based experiences into their classrooms, both in the teaching of the arts themselves and in integrating the arts into other subject areas. Because of the emphasis on personal artistic development in TAA, it was also expected that teachers might experience personal changes in their views of the arts and their own connection to the arts (<http://www.educ.queensu.ca/~arts/>).



*TAA classroom teacher creating mixed media collage*



*Kentucky teachers involved in a dance and movement workshop*

The Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) program was established in 1994. By 2009, it was in operation throughout Canada and in sites in twelve other countries, including the United States, Italy, Singapore, and Sweden (<http://www.rcmusic.ca/>). Learning Through the Arts helps teachers find ways of using the arts to introduce and reinforce learning in other subjects, such as mathematics and the sciences. Like TAA, LTTA is a school-wide initiative, with a minimum commitment of three years, and it runs through the course of a regular school year, with professional development meetings involving artists and teachers scheduled just prior to the beginning of each school year.

The Creative Arts Learning Partnership (CALP), like TAA, is a regional program that takes place in the Greater Toronto area. It is not school-based, but rather, draws teachers from across the region to take part in workshops that are conducted by members of various creative arts organisations. The workshops were designed to help teachers with the Ontario Arts Curriculum, as well as to infuse the arts into other aspects of their teaching.



*LTTA teacher working with researcher on joint mixed media painting*

In 1983, the Kentucky Center for the Arts was established as a center for the performing arts in Louisville, Kentucky (<http://www.kentuckycenter.org/>). From its inception, it had a strong educational focus, and by using both its own extensive arts facilities as well as those facilities offered by partnering organisations throughout the rest of the state, the Kentucky Center has embarked on a number of professional development initiatives, including the Kentucky Institute for Arts in Education and the regional Arts Academies which are offered in six regions throughout the state. Summer institutes and academies are available to teachers who volunteer to take part in such professional development opportunities and these teachers, as in CALP, come from a variety of schools and together, work with artists and arts organisations. By taking part in various arts activities, teachers and artists examine ways of bringing the core arts curriculum to the classroom settings.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to beginning the research, the study received ethical clearance from the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) of Queen's University. After receiving information about the study, participants who had registered for the various professional development programs who were interested in taking part in the research signed consent forms, agreeing to take part in the study and to having still photographs taken for the purposes of reporting the research.

Data were collected from teachers and administrators involved in all four programs through a combination of surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. In each case, the participants had been involved in the particular professional development program for at least two years, and in some cases, as many as six. Data collection occurred over an eight-year period.

Data from LTTA participants were collected from 1999-2005, with the focus of the present research on the data collected from teachers and administrators in 2004, who had all been involved with the project for at least three years. TAA data were collected 1997-2003, and, as for LTTA, the documents used in the present analysis represent teachers and administrators who had been involved with TAA for at least three years. Kentucky data were collected in 2004-2005, and represent the views of participants who had at least two years experience with

the program, and in some cases, as many as five. CALP data were collected over a two-year period, from 2002-2004, and all participants had been involved with the program for two years. In all cases, participants were assured that the results would be reported anonymously.

Some closed-ended survey questions dealt with teacher demographics and practices and beliefs about the teaching of the arts, and have been analysed elsewhere (Patteson, Smithrim & Upitis 2005; Smithrim & Upitis 2005). Open-ended survey questions about teacher beliefs and practices, as well as the results of individual and focus group interviews, are analysed in the present paper. In the interviews with teachers and administrators (including principals, school board officials, and program directors) teachers and administrators were encouraged to reflect on the processes associated with teaching and learning in contemporary classrooms, to talk about how the provincially and state-mandated curricula affected their work, to describe both the pressures and enabling features of institutional and political factors, and, in the case of teachers, to speak about their own art-making. See Appendix A for a sample interview guide for teacher focus groups and Appendix B for a sample questionnaire for teachers.



*Kentucky teachers in a movement and music workshop*

## **Data Analysis**

Text files containing responses to open-ended survey questions and transcriptions of interviews were imported into Atlas.TI software to facilitate the coding and analysis of the data. For LTTA, there were 17 interviews with individual teachers, 4 focus group interviews with teachers, and 6 interviews with administrators, including the LTTA program director. In addition, the data set included 68 teacher surveys. For TAA, there were 13 individual teacher interviews, 27 teacher surveys, 4 focus groups with teachers, and 5 interviews with school board administrators and principals in the data set. The data set for Kentucky was comprised of 5 individual interviews

with administrators and artists, 20 teacher surveys, 6 individual interviews with teachers, and 4 focus groups with teachers and teacher-artists. CALP data for the present study were comprised of 9 individual interviews.

The data were initially coded using an open coding (or free coding) approach. After the first level of analysis, open codes were modified in that some codes were collapsed or eliminated, and the remaining codes were grouped into families. In this manner, three independent analyses, by three of the four authors of this paper, were completed. Inter-rater reliability was high (agreement ranging from 89-95%), and the analyses were merged in the present paper. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion amongst all four authors.

Some of the initial open codes were related to collegial support received by teachers, views of the arts (e.g. art as a hobby vs. art as a vehicle for social expression), artistic skills of teachers, guidance from artists, self-expression through the arts, departmental support, teacher inhibitions, and quality of student work. When the 75 open codes of the three separate analyses were grouped into families, three broad categories emerged: the personal impact of art-making on teachers, changes in professional practices as a result of taking part in these programs, and institutional factors that both enhance and inhibit the presence of the arts in schools. The results reported in the next section are organised according to the three families of codes that were created.

## **RESULTS**

### **Personal Impact**

While data from all four professional programs were used for this portion of the analysis, many of the comments pertaining to personal changes that appear below came from the interviews of teachers and administrators who had been involved in the Teachers as Artists (TAA) program over a period of several years. This is not surprising, given the emphasis on personal development in the program. Based on interview and survey questions dealing with the effects of art-making in teachers' private lives, as well as teachers' perspectives of the value of art-making, three general issues emerged as salient for those teachers who reported changes in their personal lives: (a) increased confidence and creativity, (b) overall personal development and self-expression, and (c) deepened views of the arts. For some teachers, there were negative experiences associated with the professional development in terms of frustration and feelings of inadequacy.

### **Increased Confidence and Creativity**

Teachers agreed on the favourable impact of the professional development program for building their own confidence and creativity, as well as increasing students' confidence. Teachers identified the learning of new skills and artistic techniques as central to this confidence building. According to one of the school administrators of the CALP program, teachers reported increased confidence in teaching through the arts in their classrooms, and many of them signed up in successive years because they found the programs so beneficial (CALP supervisor, 2004, p. 5) One of the TAA administrators similarly noted:

*I think there was a lot of [initial lack of confidence in people's own artistic abilities], but in workshops people were very supportive of each other. And that was part of the fun too, and seeing what other people did, and just a different way... and getting ideas from other people. But also, support each other by your comments. Because, you know, there's the feeling that your time after school for something like*

*this, you want to feel good about it, so it's nice to get complimented and to give compliments too. (TAA administrator 2002, p. 8)*

Another teacher made a similar comment, stating that she/he had 'taken the ideas and used them [in the classroom]. Seeing the artists use them first has helped me take the risk of trying those things in class' (LTTA teacher 2004, p. 6). Furthermore, one of the administrators noted: 'It has reinforced the importance of spending time doing creative things as opposed to school work or other things.' (TAA administrator 2004, p. 1)

### **Overall Personal Development and Self-Expression**

A considerable proportion of teachers mentioned that the workshops had played a vital role in their personal development and their self-expression. In addition to the joyful and interesting activities of the workshops, experiencing art-making by themselves, being students for a while, learning more for their own sakes without any sense of duty, stress or compulsion, seemed to be compelling reasons to participate in the workshops and seek more personal development:

*I think that one of the greatest gifts of the arts is that it causes you to be such a remarkable observer of the world. You see things differently. You see how people move, you see textures you didn't see, and you watch expressions. It makes for a richer, more compassionate person, I think (TAA administrator 2004, p. 1).*

### **Deepened Views of the Arts**

In their discussions of the TAA program, many teachers and principals agreed on the importance of using the arts in teaching, and mentioned that they had noticed an overall improvement in the students as a consequence of the program. One administrator believed that the students' abilities in organisation and planning were enhanced, and that the program had shown therapeutic benefits as well:

*I think so. Definitely. It's therapeutic for many kids. Those that have a hard time describing something with words or even verbally. Art allows them to express their ideas in a different form (TAA administrator 2002, p. 1).*

Although there were some teachers who considered the workshops stressful and did not enjoy the art-making, many found them to be great fun, with a level of enjoyment on a par with their hobbies. One of the Teachers as Artists participants stated:

*We had a lot of fun with it, you know. I think in a different sense... it was just everyone had to sing at different tones or different pitches, and a lot of laughing and a lot of giggling. So I thought it was pretty cool. I really enjoyed that (TAA teacher 2003, p. 12).*

A teacher who took part in the Kentucky program had something similar to say. 'As a kid, everything that gave me joy was arts-related... So, for me it's personally inspiring to be here' (Kentucky teacher 2004, p. 7).

Participants in the programs also challenged the common belief that artistic ability is confined to a talented few. For many participants, actual involvement in art-making led them to revise existing stereotypes about art and artists.

Notwithstanding the positive impacts, there were some teachers who indicated that the programs had no special effect on them – they were reminded of the inherent value of artistic expressions, but the program did not result in life-style changes. A few teachers believed that the program had a negative effect. Some of these noted that they were intimidated at the prospect of making art, and found the process frustrating: 'It made me more aware of how talented some people are...' (Kentucky teacher 2005, p. 8). Pressure of time was another factor: 'We are all stressed and this was another thing to do' (TAA teacher 2002, p. 9).

### **Professional Development Issues**

These four programs together highlight many of the characteristics of what research has shown to be effective professional development. All programs had some effect on teachers professionally, though to different degrees. The following analysis examines the teachers' experience of professional development, and issues that arise from this.

### **Increased Confidence in Arts Teaching**

Almost all teachers gained confidence in one of two ways; firstly, confidence in teaching the art curriculum and secondly, the confidence to use the arts as a vehicle to assist in teaching the core subjects. As noted earlier in the literature survey, '[t]he challenge is to give teachers materials and information they can use to teach the arts while, at the same time, providing them with the knowledge and experience in the arts so they can create their own lesson plans' (McKean, 2001). One question that was asked about TAA was: 'Has the program had an effect on you personally and/or professionally?' and a typical response was 'I think it's been great. At least for me, when you're involved in artistic things, it increases your tolerance level and compassion and understanding of risk takers' (TAA Teacher 1999, p. 122).

### **Forming a Collegial Community**

From the teachers' point of view, artistic workshops provided a fertile ground for cooperating and feeling like a community, as well as being fun. Several administrators said that the sense of partnership and teamwork was enhanced; it was good for the teachers' morale and encouraged them to participate in a social activity. For example:

*We get a lot of support to do professional development and to me that's important and to see other staff members also participating – to be like a community – working together as opposed to individuals. Getting a wide range of specialists in as opposed to generalists (Administrator Interview TAA, 2004, p. 113).*

## **Inhibitions Regarding Artistic Abilities and Working With Artists**

One negative effect of bringing in professionals to assist in teaching art was that some teachers felt inhibited about their own abilities. McKean (2001) refers to this phenomenon: 'When the arts are viewed too much from the perspective of requiring special talents found only in certain few individuals, teachers acknowledge feelings of inadequacy and inaccessibility.' These feelings were echoed – at least initially – by many of the individuals involved in the programs. One teacher from the Kentucky program felt quite inadequate: 'Alas, I'm not particularly gifted in art... artists are lucky people who have been given a gift – I was not' (Teacher Survey, Kentucky 2004, p. 225). Similarly one teacher from LTTA said '[I] sometimes have to get past the block of thinking I'm not creative' (Teacher Survey, LTTA 2004, p. 205).

As noted earlier, the perception of creativity as a special ability inhibited some teachers' participation in the arts. The Teachers As Artists program aimed to do away with this perception through personal development in the arts. The program was not focused on teaching the art curriculum or using art to assist in teaching core subjects. It was more concerned with helping teachers see themselves as artists – a level of personal change that would, in time, have an impact on professional practice and arts advocacy. There were instances of some teachers' personal struggles to view themselves as artists, but in time most changed the way they thought about themselves and their teaching. One administrator from school involved in TAA came to the conclusion that 'I think culturally, the general population and even myself – we have this idea that it's this amazing gift, right, that only the select few have rather than realizing that we're all actually artistic' (Principal Interview, TAA 2004, p. 116).

## **Changes in Teachers' Professional Practices and Student Learning Outcomes**

Teachers reported how their use of art in the classroom – either as a subject or integrated into core subjects – had a positive impact on their students. There were many improvements noted, especially from the TAA program:

*'The way they [the students] encourage one another, it was such a neat atmosphere of co-operation and I guess it's the co-operation and that stuff carries over into other things. That's how they treat themselves... each other in class generally, most of the time anyway. That's the kind of class I want, anyway, and this really enhances... promotes all the other things I try to do' (Teacher Interview, TAA 2004, p. 113).*

The same teacher who reported increased co-operation in the children also noted improvements in other areas of their work, and made it known to her colleagues as well – one of several examples of teachers beginning to serve as advocates for the arts.

*'It's really helped their fine motor [skills]. I have kids who have difficulty writing. I've seen a noticeable improvement in their written work, I think because of their work with the different brushes. Organization [as well], I would say is better. [For example] their story writing [and] their story planning because they have to plan [and] organize their art work. It all fits together. I've talked to some of the other teachers in my division about this—we really didn't expect that painting would improve writing!' (Ibid, 2004).*

From these results it is clear that that the programs affected teachers professionally in a variety of ways. Effective professional development should result in positive student learning outcomes, and based on the interview data, this appears to have been the case, particularly with the TAA program.

## **INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS**

The data from all four professional development programs resonated with many of the themes in the literature regarding the importance of administrative support. Although funding was identified as an area of concern for all four programs, both the data and surrounding literature support the idea that administrative support is more important than extra resources or funding. Indeed, wider community support was considered essential by teachers and administrators alike in order to sustain teacher development programs.

## **SCHEDULING**

Scheduling was one facet of administration that had a big impact on the amount of time teachers could spend on development. Whether that includes planning collaborative teaching programs, mentoring, peer observation or simply group discussions about the benefits of teaching or evaluating teaching styles, administrative support nevertheless plays an important role. Understanding, flexible principals who were aware of the demands of arts educators were perceived to be the most accommodating, allowing teachers to take their development at a pace relative to their needs. Administrators have the capacity to allow for a certain level of release time for their teaching staff, and one teacher from the TAA study emphasised the importance of this: 'I think that if there was somebody who was designated to do art, you could pull that class to do it at that time... if that were a release time... I think that you would have teachers who have more time to do things they need, you know, as a release' (Teacher Interview, TAA 2000, p. 50).

## **FUNDING**

Funding was perceived by teachers to be a significant factor in the support of their educational program. Teachers in all four programs stated that resources were essential to ensuring a successful arts program: 'Resources—you need to buy them, must have them. Parent involvement [is] necessary to help buy other resources' (Teacher Interview, CALP 2004, p. 66).

One teacher noted: '[We need] more money for supplies' (Teacher Interview, TAA 2000, p. 42). and another claimed 'I spent a lot of my own money' (Teacher Interview, CALP 2004, p. 69). Although a certain amount of funding is required for arts teachers to continue their programs, it is not necessarily the exclusive reason why many teachers believe they cannot continue. '[In] the beginning the reasons that the arts couldn't be more prevalent in schools was resources, and at the end, the LTTA principals said it was either lack of support from administration or teacher, but not resources' (Principal Interview, LTTA 2004, p. 91). The above quotes show how, although they may express dissatisfaction with the funding level of arts programs, teachers are able to see past this problem when provided with other forms of support.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

Administrative support is often considered to be the single most important factor in successful programs and professionally satisfied teachers. Accommodating principals allow teachers time off for professional development; they lend moral support, are aware of the demands on teachers' time, and provide funding, flexibility and

professional support. One principal in the TAA study attempted to provide the necessary administrative support for their arts teachers: '... I appreciate what they're doing and the time they're giving it, I'm aware of the time commitments this is taking, I'm also probably trying to protect them or ease up on other areas so that they can focus more on this as much as they can' (Principal Interview, TAA 1998, p. 46).

Principals are crucial for deciding what occurs on professional, administrative and therefore educational levels in schools, and one teacher from the TAA study stated the importance of this very clearly. 'If a principal doesn't support things in elementary school they don't happen. If the principal doesn't value it then it doesn't happen.' (Teacher Interview, TAA 2000, p. 42).

Not all principals provide sufficient support for their teaching staff. In contrast to the supportive principal described above, a teacher in Masden and Hancock's study provided an insight into the negative bias of their administrative staff regarding their arts education program: 'Administration told me that the only reason that we have a general music program is to give classroom teachers a preparation period' (Masden & Hancock 2002). Not surprisingly, this view was not encountered by any of the teachers from the four programs examined in the present research, as their administrators were actively supporting professional development in the arts. However, the teachers were nevertheless aware of the importance of such support, and recognised that it was very much based on the particular administration in place. As one teacher commented regarding an upcoming change of administration in another school, 'And you have a new principal coming in so you'll have to be persuasive, I suppose' (Teacher Interview, TAA 2000, p. 50). Support of the school administration is an essential element in successful professional development in all areas, but particularly in the arts, as they are often more vulnerable than other core subjects. It is apparent both from the present study and the literature that principals need to be aware of the personal and professional needs of teachers of the arts, and willing to provide time and support for essential and ongoing professional development.

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

While there were some similarities in teachers' experiences across all four professional development programs, in some ways, TAA could be seen as the most effective program. Not only did it indirectly provide teachers the means to use the arts in their classroom, it also developed teachers' knowledge and skills, providing them with a deepened understanding of the arts, and new ways of looking at the world. The outcomes of the TAA program also showed the development of positive personal attributes, such as a willingness to take risks, the ability to accept mistakes, and an attitude of constructive self-criticism. These positive attributes were then re-directed into the professional realm.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Professional development initiatives need personal, collegial, and institutional support to be effective. This is clear from the literature, and evidence from our study supports this claim. It is also the case that support for teachers both in terms of their professional and personal growth is necessary for sustained professional development. Without personal change – including the very real desire on the part of teachers to learn new skills and competencies, especially in the arts – professional development programs have limited opportunities for long-term success. This notion of the centrality of personal change receives far less attention in the literature than

that of professional change. Yet, judging from the results of the present study, it is personal change that is often the most significant. Those teachers who became engaged in the arts in such a way as to lead to personal transformations also moved beyond, for example, the notion that only those endowed with artistic gifts were capable of excelling in the arts – teachers and students alike. These teachers also communicated the idea to parents, students, and other teachers, that every child's education should include meaningful engagement in the arts.

This research has also shown that professional development programs can have a lasting impact upon both personal and professional aspects of teachers' lives, both in terms of reported changes in practice and in terms of the long-term commitment that many of these teachers made to professional development in the arts. However, this was most likely to occur when the professional development program itself had been in place over a sustained period of time, and when institutional supports were present. These supports included principal support and recognition, equitable access, incentives from a variety of education stakeholders for professional development to take place, and a school environment that supported professional development in the arts. With these supports in place, generalist teachers are able to do much more than infuse their teaching with the arts: they become advocates for the arts as well.

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## APPENDIX A: TEACHER FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

This focus group is designed to assist us with better understanding how you feel about the arts in schools and about professional development programs in the arts. It will also provide us with information about how the arts affect your community. Please keep this conversation confidential, taking care not to disclose the information that might be revealed over the next hour, and taking care, also, not to reveal the identities of the people participating in this discussion.

- Have you seen any changes in the schools, teachers, or students over the past few years that you would attribute to arts programming?
- Since your involvement with [NAME OF ARTS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM], has your use of the arts in the classroom changed? If so, how?
- Do you believe that using the arts is an effective way of reaching the hard-to-educate student? Can you share an example?
- What is the most obvious way that the arts enhanced learning for your students?
- How do you feel about your involvement in the program?
- Has the program given you new arts skills? If so, which ones?
- Are you using the skills you have developed in your teaching? How?
- As individuals, we often resist new experiences. Was resistance an issue for any of you?
- How important is the final product to you in artwork? Why?
- How important is the process to you in artwork? Why?
- What do you need to sustain your work in the arts?
- Has this experience changed your life in any way?

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY FOR TEACHERS

This survey is designed to assist us with understanding how teachers feel about the arts in schools and about other more general issues regarding teaching and classroom practices. Thank you for taking the time to fill out the questionnaire. Some of you will have filled out a similar questionnaire in a previous year; the reason for asking many of the same questions again is to see if there have been any changes in your beliefs and/or practices over the past year. Upon completing the questionnaire, please return it to the liaison responsible for assessment.

1. I believe that arts in the classroom are fundamental to quality learning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

2. I try to schedule at least one hour of arts activities in my classroom every day.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

3. I believe students can express knowledge and skills in many subjects through the arts.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

4. I believe that the arts are an effective way of teaching math, science, and language.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

5. I frequently use the arts in the classroom as a teaching tool.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

6. I believe that the arts are an effective way of increasing parental involvement in schools.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

7. I believe that using the arts is a particularly effective way of reaching the hard-to-educate student.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

8. I believe students can learn knowledge and skills in many subjects through the arts.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

9. I am involved in the arts as an artist.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

10. If you are active as an artist, in which art(s) discipline do you work?

- a) Visual Arts
- b) Music
- c) Dance
- d) Drama
- e) Literary Arts

11. How long have you been involved in [THE NAME OF THE ARTS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM]?

12. Has your involvement in the program altered your school community? If so, how?

13. Please circle the words that best describe your initial reaction to the idea of being involved in the program.

- |              |              |                               |
|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Happy        | Negative     | Motivated                     |
| Cautious     | Resentful    | Interested                    |
| Curious      | Apprehensive | Other (please indicate below) |
| Enthusiastic | Excited      | _____                         |

14. Please circle the words that best describe how you feel now about your involvement in the program.

- |           |              |                               |
|-----------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Enthused  | Discouraged  | Hopeful                       |
| Motivated | Unsure       | Encouraged                    |
| Uncertain | Reluctant    | Other (please indicate below) |
| Confused  | Joyful       | _____                         |
| Inspired  | Disheartened |                               |

15. What is the most obvious way that the arts enhanced learning for your students?

16. Think back to your image of artists before you began the program.

How does that fit with what you think now?

Why did your views change?

17. What is your assessment of your own artistic abilities?

18. How important is the final product to you in artwork? Why?

19. How important is the process to you in artwork? Why?

20. Please complete the following:

My program experience has changed my beliefs in the following ways:

My program experience has changed my abilities in the following ways:

My program experience has changed my actions in the following ways:

21. What conditions/factors made the changes you have described possible?

22. In your opinion, what, if anything, makes experiences with the arts different from other kinds of experiences?

23. What do you need to sustain your work in the arts?

24. How might what you have gained from your involvement in the program be transferable to other areas of your personal and professional life?