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Title:
A Study of Professional Development for Arts Teachers: Building Curriculum, Community, and Leadership in Elementary Schools

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Abstract:
<p>This study was conducted in a large urban school district. Fifty-nine elementary schools, designated as Fine Arts Schools by the district, were organized as a Fine Arts School Network. The

school district partnered with an external arts organization to deliver research-based, consistent and collaborative professional development to art, music, dance, and drama teachers over three years. This government-funded professional development initiative explored the impact of network-based intensive professional development for arts teachers in four specific areas: 1) their role in building community in their schools; their roles as community builders in their schools, 2) their role in building curriculum with non-arts teachers in their schools, 3) their role in building their own leadership capacities. The final area for investigation focused on the impact of network-based professional development for arts teachers on their home schools. Quantitative data, including surveys of participating arts teachers, and qualitative data, including curriculum projects, student work, online documentation templates, interviews and focus groups were collected and analyzed. Results indicated that arts teachers spent more time with their principals and with their non arts teacher colleagues as a result of the professional development they received. They also developed a deeper understanding of the value of an arts integration curriculum in which their own arts expertise contributes to the design of learning and teaching, particularly in the literacy areas of story elements, analytical writing, creative writing, and critique of arts experiences. The study also demonstrated how professional development contributed to arts teachers' capacity to take leadership in their schools by serving on School Improvement teams, contributing to decisions regarding external arts partnerships, and implementing staff development. The study offered implications for schools districts regarding the importance of targeted professional development for arts specialists. Further, the study indicated roles for external arts partnership organizations in district-supported professional development, as opposed to a more familiar model of school-specific residencies. Finally, results indicated the potential for supporting arts teacher specialists in developing and implementing professional development and curricular projects in their own schools.</p>

Introduction

In 1999-2000, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) conducted a survey regarding arts education in public elementary schools in the United States (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss;publications/2002131/index.asp). The results indicated that music and visual arts instruction were available in most of the nation's schools, 94 and 87 % respectively. Dance and drama were available in one-third of the schools responding to the survey. In general, 72 % of schools that offered music instruction employed full-time music specialists and 55 % of schools that offered visual art instruction employed full-time art specialists. Twenty-four percent of elementary schools that offered dance employed full-time dance specialists, and 16 % of schools that offered drama employed full-time drama specialists at the elementary level. In the remainder of schools offering arts education, part-time teachers, artists-in-residence or volunteers served as instructors in these areas.

In the NCES Survey, 64 % of elementary school principals from moderate size schools and 65% of principals from large schools reported that arts specialists played a role in school improvement or site-based management teams. Just how their

contributions affected local school or district policies and procedures is unclear, although 45 % of schools reported that the arts were included in their mission statements or school improvement plans. Further, schools with the highest minority enrollment were less likely to report input from arts specialists into the curriculum offered with respect to allocation of arts funds than schools with less than 20 % minority enrollment.

The current study was conducted in a large urban school district in which 59 schools were designated Fine Arts Schools by the central office, although all remained designated as non-magnet neighborhood schools. The Fine Arts School Network offered the district the opportunity to explore the building of curricula in otherwise typical elementary schools by providing resources and support to incorporate the arts. All of these schools had two full-time arts teachers, and all were part of a three-year implementation project to build community, curriculum and leadership through the arts in their elementary schools. The three-year project was a collaborative, funded initiative that engaged the central office of the district and an external community arts organization.

Research Design

This study can be categorized as *collaborative inquiry* (Cousins & Whitmore, p. 92), in that the district staff and an external community arts organization actively participated in the design of the research questions. One of the goals for the project was to contribute new insights and actionable evidence to contribute to the design of large-scale arts education professional development networks for elementary arts teachers in the future. The goal of the research was to produce translational research results (Brabeck, 2008) in its most usable form for teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

The study focused on the following four research questions:

1) How does network-based professional development for arts teachers impact their role in building community?

2) How does network-based professional development for arts teachers impact their role in building curriculum with non arts teacher colleagues?

3) How does network-based professional development for arts teachers impact their role in building their leadership capacities?

4) How does network-based professional development for arts teachers affect participating schools?

The six case study schools were chosen for the research based on their geographical distribution throughout the city with all major areas (north, west, and south) represented, as well as their demographics. Two case study schools are primarily Latino, one school is predominantly Caucasian, two schools are predominantly African American, and one school is a 30 % Latino, 30 % African American, and 30 % Caucasian distribution, according to district report card data.

In order to address the research questions, the following data sources were collected and analyzed over three years: arts teacher focus groups; project staff (district and arts partner) interviews; agendas and other materials from professional development sessions; principal interviews; school walk-throughs; and process documentation of curriculum, including student work, teacher lesson outlines and online documentation templates.

Professional Development for Arts Teachers

Typically, "teacher professional development evaluation" consists of immediate feedback on exit slips completed by participants on their way out the door after a workshop. Professional development has also been widely perceived as

ineffective, inflexible, and lacking with respect to impact on classroom instruction (Elmore, 2007, Newmann, King & Youngs, 2000).

Professional development that includes arts specialists is often disconnected from what the specialists teach and how they organize their curricula for elementary students from age 5 to 12 who may only have an arts class once a week or less. Large districts that provide workshops addressing major student achievement goals, such as reading reinforcement or math proficiency, often cannot accommodate individual arts teachers who struggle to find the connection between the workshop content and their daily teaching in art, music, dance, or drama at the elementary level. Arts teachers often report that they do not feel they are an integral part of a faculty in elementary schools and are forced to participate in professional development workshops that have little or nothing to do with the arts.

The professional development in this project was focused explicitly on three goal areas and how they affect arts teachers: curriculum, community, and leadership. The project began with a rather traditional approach to professional development, consisting of monthly sessions in which presenters offered materials, resources, and facilitation of discussion of the basic

project goals, specifically curriculum, community, and leadership. During the first year of the project, the sessions offered the arts teachers the chance to set long-term goals and articulate their vision of these three aspects of the project for their schools. The sessions were large-scale and conceptually large.

For the 8 school calendar months of year three of the project, there were 702 total participants who attended voluntary, paid professional development sessions. Eighty-eight teachers, or 73% of eligible arts teachers, participated on average during each month, not including the summer. Eighty-two teachers, or 69% of the eligible arts teachers, participated on average during each month, including the summer. The data show that the case study schools' arts teachers attended professional development sessions at the same rate as arts teachers in non-case study schools.

It appears that the consistent, long term convening of the network was an essential component for learning among arts teachers in this district. Elementary arts teachers rarely, if ever, have the opportunity to plan, share, and reflect with other arts teachers. They are often the only teachers in their discipline in a school and often travel between schools in half time positions.

An arts teacher explained": I taught for 8 years in another school and I was like an island. Nobody knew or cared what I was doing. Now having this where we can be artists together, it offers so much. It takes that isolation away."

The 15 professional development topics for arts teachers in this study reflected the three project component areas: curriculum, community, and leadership. The topics included sessions on school improvement plans and arts teachers' involvement, working with literacy in arts classrooms, process documentation, and collaboration with classroom teachers. This project focused on professional development as the means of effecting improvement in 59 elementary schools in a large urban school district. The original design of the project grouped schools according to the degree of arts programming as: model (exemplary), laboratory (promising), and mentee (developing) schools. Those designations ultimately did not serve the project well, and schools were not so easily assigned to just one category. In the second year, the configuration changed to geographical divisions in order to provide greater convenience to the schools. The sessions began to offer a more focused, practical and immediate application for participants. The professional development moved, in other words, from whole to

part, from big picture to focused emphases that addressed the "how to" of the three project components: curriculum, community and leadership for arts teachers.

The project staff also began to realize that workshops could not provide sufficient support for change. They began a system of visiting arts teachers in their buildings, meeting principals, providing on-site professional development for schools as requested, and working with teachers one at a time. Expectations became clearer regarding how the arts teachers applied these professional development experiences to their work.

The vision for professional development was to address teachers *where they were as individuals to help them achieve their professional goals, while, at the same time, to help the group as a whole.* As the project progressed, the staff was able to *add more expectations, quality control, and critique.* This approach, in its incorporation of increasingly more demanding standards appeared to work well, but only when added to continuous encouragement offered by the district and community arts organization staff members. "Any time we plan something for professional development, we go to the list of schools and teachers, and we see how it will play with the

individuals--where they are as individuals, learners, participants and artists," noted one district leader.

This balance between attention to the individual and to the group has led professional development toward increasingly differentiated approaches for schools. There were schools that could be models; others that progressed with support; and still others that needed ongoing individualized mentoring.

Question #1: How Does Professional Development for Arts Teachers Impact Community?

The term "community" plays a role in this project on multiple levels. Arts teachers from case study schools interviewed for the study consistently underscored the value of the community that was built across the 59-school network. Some schools did cross-school projects and some arts teachers have worked collaboratively to lead shared professional development sessions at their schools. It was the large 59-school network that seemed to impress them the most. "Having those big workshops made me feel more comfortable in my art form and knowing that you are not alone," one arts teacher reported.

Traditionally, arts teachers rarely see themselves as part of such a large community. Only 2 of the 11 case study arts

teachers reported membership in a professional association. Only 5 of the 11 reported active involvement in the district arts specific professional development. This project offered these 100 + teachers in 59 schools the opportunity to be a community with visibility.

Wood (2007) investigated the nature and impact of teacher learning communities based on 2 ½ years of data in a mid Atlantic urban area.   The initiative was intended to create learning communities in order to contribute to student learning explicitly. Wood determined that, although the teacher participants engaged in collaborative work and felt that they were indeed part of a community of adult learners, most did not claim or acknowledge a connection between that collaboration and student learning. In addition, the high stakes testing climate and school/district culture related to increasing students' test scores did run counter to this learning communities initiative, despite the leadership's best efforts. Wood suggested that the learning communities initiative spent more time building community than on professional development aimed at critical inquiry and improving practice.

The data in the current study suggest that much time was spent on building the learning community with little attention to

the relationship between the professional development and student learning. This is an area for future investigation. How much should professional development with arts teachers focus on building community in order to support collective attention to student learning at their school sites? What practices among arts teachers and their non-arts teacher colleagues would promote that collective attention to students' learning?

In this project, the arts teachers were taught to document their planning, implementation and assessment of curriculum units on literacy designed with classroom teachers at their elementary schools. They indicated that the documentation began to help them pay attention to students' learning as it related to what teachers were teaching. Documenting the curriculum as it was enacted affected the pacing of the teaching and the learning.   Photographing, writing, and collecting student work redirected energy, slowed things down, and helped teachers to think while they are doing.

The use of process documentation in this project supplanted the customary lesson plans submitted by the arts teachers. The documentation consisted of panels for exhibit, as well as online templates, displaying student work, teacher reflections, planning and assessment tools, and allowing multiple

perspectives (Harvard Project Zero, 2001). It is possible that process documentation offers a more compelling way for arts teachers and their classroom teacher collaborators to systematically focus on student learning through arts integration; this approach may be an area for future research.

Community with Elementary School Principals

The data from this study indicate that arts teachers in case study schools spent much more time with their principals than they did prior to the project. Principals also noted the interaction they now had with their arts teachers, with the foundation provided by the network and the district. "That organization is really helping to shape and form that process.   If these teachers were just out here on their own, saying `This is what I think we need to do,' it probably wouldn't happen," explained one principal. The project also enabled principals to meet several times with the staff in order to further the network's goals. " I've been to a lot of principal meetings; I've been able to see what they are doing. They even did professional development for us about the SIPAA (School Improvement Plan) this year and that was very helpful for me as a principal."

Two principals of the six case study schools were new

principals this year; a third was in her second year as a school principal. The project staff realized the importance of induction and prepared special professional development opportunities for new principals, which were essential to the development of community. In fact, among the case study schools, the newer principals were the most knowledgeable about this professional development project, as distinct from other arts initiatives in their schools.

When asked how professional development for arts teachers can have an impact, one arts teacher suggested "To make sure that there's collaboration among all the stakeholders…and that it has an impact on the entire community. It starts in the classroom, spreads to the school, and affects the community… and it supports your [School Improvement Plan]."

"Community in the community."

One arts teacher in a school well positioned with arts partners and well known in the district for their high quality arts education proposed a surprising outcome of the project network. "When I first got there, I was on a cart. And one of my biggest challenges was to get the parents to understand the difference between arts and crafts and visual arts"

Another element of community noted by the arts teachers was the community that some were building with their partner high schools. "For our school, the idea of community means working with our high schools in our area. We began to network with area schools that have programs that we do. It's good for our kids to see that…band, violin…this made us focus on that community, made us step into it more. I kept saying, "We need a network." They've been there, but we never said, "Hi." And that's not easy, because high schools are not easy places. But they need places for their kids to perform and we need to see their kids perform." While these partnerships and exchanges were not a part of the project programming, and it's not clear to what extent those partnerships are part of what would happen in any case in those schools, the leadership of arts teachers continues to be important to such planning.

Question #2: How Does Professional Development for Arts Teachers Impact Curriculum?

The project initiative explicitly asked the arts teachers to build community through a literacy arts integration unit that they designed and taught with participating volunteer classroom teachers. The professional development sessions offered the arts teachers the opportunity to share their curricular work through

documentation panels they had produced. The units required the creation of display panels that were shared and critiques by peers using observation protocols at facilitated cross- site meetings.

Curriculum development is discussed in the professional development research literature as a central aspect of teacher learning and growth (Gordon, 2004; King & Lawler, 2003). Despite this, arts teachers are seldom expected to develop long-term, high quality arts curricula that are relevant, related to non-arts learning, and open to ongoing collaboration and dialogue with peers. Further, most "written" curriculum guides in schools are not actively used and referred to by teachers. There are few curriculum guides available for dissemination that explicitly reflect collaboration. Finally, most curricula developed by teachers have few or no examples of student work to demonstrate rich learning formatively or summatively.

In 2001, the Consortium of National Arts Education Professional Associations described the role of the classroom teacher and the role of the arts specialist with respect to arts education. While many elementary school teachers serve as a general source of instruction in their schools**,** the Consortium noted that classroom teachers should not be relied upon to serve

the role of arts specialists. Classroom teachers' training, the Consortium explained, should include instruction on how to work effectively with arts specialists when those opportunities arise. Similarly, the arts specialist teachers must learn to work with other curriculum specialists. This is a particularly salient affirmation for this project. The Consortium's statements hold particular weight, because they represent the major professional arts associations, which support and monitor arts education in this country.

The 6 case study schools all had histories of some kind of arts integration experiences with students, whether with external arts providers or in individual teachers' classrooms. The nature, quality, and extent of arts integration in these schools varied greatly across these local school contexts.

In one case study school, the classroom teachers integrated arts completely independently of the arts teachers. A classroom teacher commented: "I don't think a lot of people work with the art teacher. I don't really see a lot of interaction with other teachers. We've never really planned a lot of time, outside of this project, to collaborate with the art teacher. Whatever happens in art, happens in art; it doesn't happen in class." But the arts teachers understandably addressed the

importance of arts in arts integration: "It needs to teach the concepts of the arts…otherwise, it's not arts integration."

Where arts teachers did intentionally co-plan with classroom teachers, the challenge still remained regarding the perception of arts integration as a school wide practice rather than as an isolated project. All six case study principals perceived arts integration as a strategy to address content learning in and through the arts. One principal explained this quite directly, when asked what quality arts integration looks like in her building: "We count on their support in the other curricular areas. We've done a lot with curriculum mapping, so they know what the focus is and the arts teachers can plan accordingly."

And another: "It needs to be supportive of the content areas so that it's real integration. And that it's not just an arts enhancement activity. It supports instruction, assessment equally in the content areas being taught."

The project's professional development had an impact particularly on schools with less experience in arts integration. For some classroom teachers, the world of the arts teachers had been a mystery, as this focus group with classroom teachers revealed:

When I thought of the arts, I thought of crayons and construction paper.

I learned that they have their own curriculum.

I always thought that they just…they have things that they need to be working on, that they're supposed to   be working on. So I have to combine what I need with what they need.

We are now an example of co-teaching, team teaching in my school.

Because the units were so varied, there was little comparability regarding the nature of arts integration. One thing noted by the arts teachers, however, was that integration reshaped their schedules and significantly reallocated their time in their schools. The also had to spend more time with just a few teachers and less time 'covering' all of the grades and working with all of the teachers.

The Big Idea in Arts Integration: A Tool for Arts Teachers

In this study, the Big Idea was the major 'tool' for arts integration. The notion of a Big Idea, as a means of conceiving student learning goals, activities in the classroom, and assessments is often new to arts teachers, though not to classroom teachers. Big Ideas and Big Understandings act as umbrellas for content. They are both disciplinary and interdisciplinary: "They reappear in the curriculum at different levels and in different subjects" (Drake, 2007, p. 3). For this reason, such an organizer is ideal for arts specialists who work with students at different grade and ability levels. Moreover, a Big Idea gives an arts specialist a way to talk about curriculum with non-arts faculty – a goal of the project over the three years.

Big Ideas in the world of arts integration often work from the *concept* level; when curriculum is organized around concepts, there is room for multiple inquiry questions, multiple approaches to teaching, and multiple products in terms of student work in various disciplines and media. A concept is a mental construct that is timeless, universal and abstract (Erickson, 2007). A Big Idea or Concept was the basis for cross-network curriculum in the project and allowed teachers to plan across grade levels, content expertise, and schools.

A project staff member remarked: "A lot of fine arts teachers don't really work around Big Ideas. They are working on skills and things like that. If you were to evaluate the success, I'd say it would be to the degree that the fine arts teachers were able to connect their content with the Big Idea" Arts teachers do not have training in thinking at the larger–than–discipline level. The arts teachers had to see how the Big Idea related to their own arts discipline, a new challenge in planning arts integration curriculum.

<center>Arts Teachers and Literacies</center>

There are several research studies that point to elements of literacy and the impact of integrating the arts. Soundy and Qui's 2006-2007 study explored how American and Chinese children's drawings contributed to their ability to develop verbal literacy during picture book reading.   Andrzejcak, Trainin and Poldberg's (2005) qualitative study reported that visual arts engagement increased the quality of young children's writing. There are numerous texts in the field that describe how classroom teachers integrate the arts with literacy (Cornett, 2006; Cowan and Albers, 2006; Olshansky, 2006; Alejandro, 2005; Stevenson and Deasy, 2005; Coufal and Coufal, 2002; Blecher and Jaffee, 1998). Cornett (2006) uses the term "arts-

based literacy" to describe how the parallel processes of art, writing, reading, and science all employ similar approaches to creating "hypothesizing," revising and editing, and sharing/performing new understandings.

Other studies regarding literacy development and the arts focus on the impact of integration on *students' concepts of identity – their own and others' as individuals in community with others* (Russell and Zembylas, 2007, p. 293). Identity in community is a strong theme in almost all of the units in the current project, in part due to the emphasis on that Big Idea in the network professional development.

One of the project's goals was to encourage and support arts teachers to work with their partner classroom teachers. Literacy standards are at the core of classroom teaching throughout the country and in this district. The arts teachers received literacy professional development in several sessions during all three years of the project. Classroom teachers were not involved in these sessions. The visual arts teachers were especially eager for this literacy support. An arts teacher explained: "The project pushed me to get out of my little comfort zone teaching visual arts skills and techniques. This pushed me to go to classroom teachers and see what they are

doing and collaborate with them. By doing that, I think the kids really do understand better."

An analysis of the available student work from the six case study schools indicates that there were four basic categories of integration documented in the literacy units. Most of the literacy skills and concepts in these units were from the discipline of writing, although two units focused on the integration of a piece of literature, with assessment of students' reading comprehension as a focus. All literacy units incorporated the study of vocabulary.

These categories represent the types of literacy practices employed:

1. Literary Elements (plot, characterization, figures of speech) and Arts

The teachers and arts teachers who developed units focused on literature chose a novel for students in 4th or 5th grade to read. Classroom teachers, partnered with arts teachers in their buildings, were able to develop with their students an understanding of characterization in the novels and then assisted students to articulate their own character "traits" or identity, both in writing and in multiple arts.

2. Analytical Thinking Through Writing and Arts

In one 5th grade class, the visual arts teacher and classroom teacher designed a unit on Greek and Roman mythology, studying myths, visual art, and sculpture of that period. They then led the students in an investigation of the modern day contest for the host city of the 2016 Olympics. Next, students wrote essays about the socio-economic effects for a city chosen to host the games. An elementary dance teacher in a case study school worked with a 5th grade classroom teacher on a mapping dances unit in which students drew maps, translated the maps to movement, discussed, danced, and then reflected on them.

3. Creative Writing and Arts

There were several literacy units focused on poetry in the project case study schools. In one case, poems and watercolors were juxtaposed in order for peers and audience to examine how they relate or do not relate to each other with respect to style, texture, and descriptors. Teacher lesson plans in the poetry units focused on the personal nature of writing and reading poetry and listening to poetry performance. Teachers also helped students develop the vocabulary associated with poetry. The arts teachers then built upon the writing that students did, much as illustrators work with text from authors.

4. Critique of Arts Experiences

It may be that the area of critique remains the most promising intersection, especially for beginning collaborations between arts teachers and classroom teachers. When students were given the tools to examine each other's work and their own, they learned to discriminate, use arts vocabulary meaningfully, and practice their writing skills, according to both classroom teachers and arts teachers in the case study schools. Students involved in critique in the case study schools also learned to communicate with each other, articulate what they were seeing and hearing, and develop an awareness of audience. This practice, sometimes called the "Author's Chair" or "Writing Workshop Peer Conference," has long been an experience in Language Arts classes as well as Fine Arts classes.

Question #3: How does network-based professional development for arts teachersimpact their role in building their leadership capacities?

In 2000, Lord and Miller studied teacher leadership as part of a National Science Foundation project in six Urban Systemic Initiative sites. Their work underscored the importance of teacher professional development for systemic reform. It also highlighted the term "teacher leader" as a phenomenon to

watch. They claimed that when teacher leadership was a part of any strategy for district change, the potential for impact of that strategy was greater than if teacher leaders were not included (p. 2). They also noted that there was not much research on what teacher leaders did; how staff members reacted to leaders in their ranks; and what the impact was on curriculum, school culture, and student achievement.

In the current study, the "leaders" in this network were arts teachers who, in traditional schools, are already set apart by virtue of the subject they teach. Learning from the project experiment, then, with respect to teacher leaders who are also arts specialists, will be beneficial to arts education and teacher preparation, as well as future professional development initiative in urban school districts. In this network of arts teachers, leadership appeared to be fostered intentionally through curriculum and classroom practice, due to the emphasis on collaborative planning for arts integration in their schools. The *ability to articulate what one does* (Lieberman and Miller, 2004, p. 59) was a part of the project plan from the beginning as arts teachers learned – and then taught their peers – how to document what happened in their classrooms when the arts were integrated.

The arts teachers in this project clearly and repeatedly acknowledged that they could not have assumed the role of "leader" in their schools without strong support, encouragement and even co-leading offered by the staff, consultants, and district level administrators of the project. The project staff prepared principals for this new role of arts teacher; they offered their assistance in co-facilitating professional development sessions in schools with arts teachers (an offer that many in case study school sites accepted); they offered models within the network professional development for how effective professional development might look; and they critiqued and debriefed their own professional development sessions with arts teachers, in order to make the processes transparent and visible.

It appears that arts teachers assumed leadership roles in their own sites in two specific areas:

1. Leadership in Planning and Implementing Staff Professional Development

Professional development session agendas and minutes from the elementary schools in the network indicated that most arts teachers were planning and leading professional development sessions at their schools, despite the cutback in time allocated for professional development at the school site.

They had a desire to do it; they wanted to do it. The coordinators went out to talk to principals to be sure that it happened. The principals were enthusiastic about this aspect of the project; all 6 case study principals mentioned that their arts teachers were involved in doing workshops or brief professional development sessions with staff. All six noted that this practice would continue.

The results of an attitudinal survey administered to all faculty members in the 59 elementary schools confirmed that the non-arts teachers in case study schools learned more about what the arts teachers in their buildings did, with particular focus on arts integration. They reported learning more about collaborative curriculum planning and integrating the arts. Ninety percent of non-arts teachers surveyed in the 59 schools noted that they were more open to arts integration with arts teachers in the near future. Seventy-nine percent of the schools' non-arts teachers surveyed at the end of the three-year project viewed the arts teachers as curriculum partners and could see more possibilities for interdisciplinary teaching with the arts teachers than they could have before the arts teachers' professional development sessions. Eighty-six percent of teachers surveyed reported that they were interested in grade

level planning that integrated the arts and were ready to see how each grade level could integrate the arts for more coherent arts programming. These results suggest that cultures seemed to be emerging in the network regarding clearer and more specific roles for arts specialists as leaders and collaborators.

2. Leadership on the School Improvement Plan Committee

When asked what it takes to be a teacher leader in a school, one arts teacher was quick to respond: "It takes collaboration with the principal and a set of clear goals." The principals had the most to say about the role that arts teachers had played in the two-year School Improvement Plan required by the district.

One school divided the School Improvement Plan into sections, with all faculty involved in at least one section, including the arts teachers. Then, when a draft was completed, the principal sat down with the arts teachers to look at the whole document, checking for where and how the arts were presented and where/how the arts could be further integrated. Another principal emphasized the role that the arts teachers played in doing a needs assessment and forming/leading an Arts Committee.

All principals were conscious of the need for arts teachers to participate in planning for school improvement. They were also aware of the support and feedback in the district. The School Improvement Plan documents became a focal point for interaction between the project leadership and the school leadership, placing the project goals and emphasis at the center of the process.

Question #4: How does network-based professional development for arts teachers affect participating schools?

"The fundamental unit of accountability should be the school." (Elmore, 2007, p. 44) One intervention or innovation, narrowly prescribed from the central office, does not typically change the environment of a school. Individual teachers cannot change systems single-handedly. Teachers, who are the ones closest to the children and most likely to actually make a difference in children's learning, can comply with mandated structural changes and still avoid changing what they do and what children do in their classrooms. In other words, change can appear to be institutionalized in a school without changing the ways teachers teach and children learn. "The schools that succeed in changing practice are those that start with the practice and modify school structures to accommodate to it,"

Elmore proposed (p. 4).   In short, change the practice, which in turn can change the school.

For change to matter at the school level and for any impact to be measurable as a result of an innovative project, reformers and, in this case, professional development leaders, must begin "from the inside out" and work at the individual teacher level on the thing that matters most – how they teach. Elmore's "smallest unit" is the classroom, specifically the teacher/student interactions that happen there.

Typically, especially with the employment of external arts organizational providers, partners working with schools do not work with all teachers, but, rather, focus, sometimes over many years, working with just a few select, interested, and highly motivated teachers. In this project, the arts teachers were strongly encouraged to partner with each other and with their classroom teachers peers.

Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007) suggest the premise that in order for principals to change their school environment, they need to facilitate and support collaborative inquiry – both as a means to cultivate leadership among their staff members and as a means for professional development in their faculty. This collaborative inquiry, according to Byrne-Jimenez and Orr,

should focus squarely on content knowledge and the incorporation of effective teaching and learning strategies. This project initiated such a process among classroom teachers and elementary arts teachers and supported it at the district level in a network of 59 schools. How such collaborative inquiry and curriculum planning can be scaled up to include more classroom teachers without diminishing the quality of arts teaching by the school arts specialists is a crucial area for future study with respect to the impact of such initiatives on schools.

The current implementation study is built upon the U.S. Department of Education's current policy premise that, in order for schools to improve, government at all levels must invest in the professional development of teachers. That investment, to continue Elmore's argument, must be firmly grounded in the belief that teacher practice matters – not only for school change, but also for student learning. The evidence suggests that the arts teachers, supported by the project professional development network, did begin to support change in their schools, in the best case study scenarios, in three ways: 1) The systemic introduction of peer-led professional development at the elementary school level by arts teachers; 2) The introduction of process documentation as a means of making teaching (and

eventually learning) visible in school classrooms and hallways;

3) The support for collaborative curriculum planning that

incorporates high quality arts integration.

Implications for School Districts

In this project, central office support was recognized and

articulated by principals, arts teachers, the external arts partner,

and community members. The leadership staff of the project

was out in the schools regularly and often. During these on-site

visits, the staff coached, validated, responded to needs,

supported, and challenged the arts teachers as they investigated

the project goals of building curriculum, community and

leadership in their buildings.   Interviews with principals revealed

that they knew what the professional development in the

network was about and they knew what the teachers were

doing. Similarly, arts teachers knew what they were expected to

do to build curriculum, community and leadership. The tasks for

arts teachers were intentionally and systematically supported by

professional development. They experienced in professional

development sessions what they then tried in their own schools.

Arts teachers reflected with the district and arts partner staff on

what worked and what didn't. Research suggests that such

reflection as a method for change only works when senior

management endorses it (Hill, 2005). That was clearly working in the project and teachers knew it.

Policy Implications:

District Professional Development For Arts and Non-Arts Teachers

Results from this study may provide implementation and design considerations for districts with respect to professional development for arts teachers.   First, intentional inclusion of external partnerships with community organizations at the district, rather than the school level, may increase the capacity for schools to enhance teaching and learning in the arts and non-arts content areas. External community partnerships may do more than deliver services and may, instead, work with teachers to design replicable arts integration curriculum, and, simultaneously, reflect on their own classroom teaching practices. Second, skilled and consistent professional development should be two tiered, occurring at the workshop level and at the classroom/school level where the learning and the teaching really happens.   Third, district and community arts leaders might consider what would change in elementary schools if teachers regularly know that they will be working with each other and with arts specialists (art, music, dance, drama) to

build meaningful, connected content across classrooms. Finally,
districts might articulate clear and explicit roles for arts teachers
in leading professional development and curriculum design
experiences with non-arts peers, thereby raising the visibility
and accessibility of arts learning in their schools and in the
district.

Table 1

Case Study School Staff Attitudinal Survey Results: Arts
Integration and Working with Arts Teachers After Peer-Led
Professional Development

65% of school staff surveyed said that they would arrange a time to meet with the arts teacher(s) to continue the conversation regarding collaborative arts planning.
72% of school staff surveyed said that they could see the arts teachers as teacher leaders in their school.
79% of school staff surveyed said they more clearly saw the arts teachers as curriculum partners and could see more possibilities for interdisciplinary teaching with the arts teachers than they could before the arts teachers' professional development sessions.
86% of school staff surveyed said they were interested in grade

level planning that integrates the arts and were ready to see how each grade level could integrated the arts for more coherent arts programming.
90% of school staff surveyed said that <u>they would be open</u> to a grade level initiative involving the art teachers and an arts integration unit some time in the near future.

58% of school staff surveyed said that <u>they could describe</u> the connections between the arts and literacy strategies.
52% of school staff surveyed said that <u>they could describe</u> how an art concept or skill related to what they were teaching their students.
50% of school staff surveyed said <u>they could describe</u> more clearly what it means to be an arts magnet school.
47% of school staff surveyed said <u>they were ready to share</u> with the faculty what they were doing with the arts teacher in co-planning and integrating arts with their classroom teaching.

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