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Arts Education in an Urban School District: Principals' Perspectives and Practices in a Standards-Based Environment Coupled with an Economic Downturn

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ARTS EDUCATION IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT:
PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES IN A
STANDARDS-BASED ENVIRONMENT COUPLED
WITH AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

by

Kristin A. Steinbach

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in
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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

August 2013

ABSTRACT

ARTS EDUCATION IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT: PRINCIPALS'
PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES IN A STANDARDS-BASED ENVIRONMENT
COUPLED WITH
AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

by

Kristin Steinbach

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013

Under the Supervision of Professor Latish C. Reed

and Professor Kimberly J. Cosier

This case study explored perspectives of urban principals towards the values of arts education within the context of accountability coupled with economic strain, which has worked to undervalue arts education, and has impacted urban students' access to quality arts education (Chapman, 2004 & 2005). Since differences in access to arts education has been drawn along differences in ethnic, racial and socioeconomic status,

this was understood as a social justice issue (Theoharis, 2007). Specifically, this research addressed the roles of principals and investigated the research question:

How do urban principals and school leaders perceive the value of the arts within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

Informed by critical theory, this question was supplemented by the following attendant questions:

1a.) How do urban school leaders make decisions about offering arts education at their schools?

1b.) What do urban school leaders consider when they make these decisions?

2a.) How are urban school leaders maintaining access to arts education within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

2b.) To what extent are urban school leaders who are maintaining this access aware of the relationships between arts education and social justice?

Qualitative sources of data were collected including transcripts, observation notes and analytical memos. Participants included six urban, high school principals and additional staff members from three of the high schools.

Findings revealed that principals believed that students who participated in arts education were engaged, were able to enjoy and escape from the rest of the school day, and finally, were able to express themselves. Principals who valued arts education were able to maintain access to arts education on limited levels. Their decisions were largely guided by evaluation requirements, available resources and tradition. Principals supported the accountability movement and felt their schools were improving; however, principals also revealed that providing quality arts education remained a major challenge

and indicated a need for more to be done. Although principals expressed a concern with social justice issues, most did not indicate an awareness of arts education curricula as a means to engage students in critical thinking or social activism that could challenge the status quo.

Keywords: arts education, school leadership, education for social justice, accountability movement, budget cuts, urban education

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work, first and foremost, to my husband and best friend, John, for encouraging me to keep going and to see this project through to completion. Throughout this process, he was a continuous source of support as he served as unofficial editor as well as my main cheerleader. As one of the smartest people I know, he spent countless hours talking with me, helping me to articulate the purpose of this research.

This work is also dedicated to my family, especially my parents, Gordon and Jackie, for their continuous support, friendship, faith and love. I thank my mom and dad for raising me in a way that has instilled within me a work ethic that has helped me not only to complete this project but to finish it with a sense of pride. I thank my father, who learned from his own father, that if the work you are doing is not worth your best effort, then it is not worth doing at all. In other words, he has taught me to do my best in all of my endeavors. I am equally grateful to my mother who has always believed in me and has helped me to see my talents and abilities when I doubted myself. My older siblings, Brian and Shelly, have also been great sources of inspiration as they have both lives as shining examples of hard workers, who approach their careers and lives with unwavering dedication and integrity.

I am honored and blessed to have such a great network of support. In addition to family, several good friends have helped me along the way. They have reminded me why I began this journey as a doctoral student in the first place. Without this network,

the energy and stamina needed to see this through to fruition would certainly not have been possible. My greatest and most heartfelt thanks goes out to all who have been here for me.

Finally, this work is dedicated to my research participants who were honest, open and willing to share their experiences with me. I am in awe at the work they, and countless others like them, do every day to help students reach their potentials. The world is a better place because of what they do.

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I could not have two better co-advisers for this project. Dr. Latish Reed and Dr. Kimberly Cosier joined forces to help make the final research clear, compelling and important. They have been professional and supportive during this process. I admire them for their brilliance, their expert knowledge and, mostly, for their commitment to social justice, made clear through their work in their respective fields. Dr. Reed came to this project halfway through, and has lead with enthusiasm and dedication, and even a bit of humor when necessary. She has been a constant “reality check” with her intimate knowledge of the challenges urban school leaders confront daily. From the beginning, Dr. Cosier has enriched my understanding of the arts and has introduced me to artists working as social critics, and to scholarship about arts education for social justice that helped to build and strengthen my own convictions. Without the inputs from these two admirable scholars, my work would be seriously lacking.

Dr. Leigh Wallace deserves special mention for the close work she did with me to clear up my research methods and design this study in a way that made the most sense. She treated me with kindness and respect during the infant stages of my scholarship, something that all budding doctoral candidates need. Her knowledge of qualitative research methodology helped me to create a study that has importance and validity that those in academia will recognize.

Expert scholars, Dr. Gail Schneider and Dr. Thomas Joynt also served on my committee and were integral to ensuring that this work could hold weight. As

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Chapter I: Introduction

Studies show that quality arts education and coequal arts integration has benefited students cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally (Upitis, 2003; Chessin & Zander, 2006; Gullat, 2008). Furthermore, many arts educators have been using their classes to engage students in social justice issues (Henderson, 2013; Bell & Desai, 2011; Medina, 2009). However, due in part to the current economic recession, all around the country, states have been cutting budgets by billions year after year, significantly decreasing the amounts of aid that the public schools receive (Singsen, 2010). Despite research that has demonstrated the benefits of arts education for students, significant financial strain on public schools coupled with a standards-based reform movement (SBR) that left the arts out of the tested areas, arts education has been allowed to dwindle (Wood, 2004; Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006). This economic condition meant that school leaders had to make difficult compromises in order to distribute limited educational resources and, at the same time, deliver educational programs that could offer students opportunities to develop academically.

This challenging economy had special meaning in urban districts, where funding for arts education was more likely to suffer from the effects of testing mandates originally instituted under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the subsequent demands of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals (Chapman, 2005). These demands forced many school leaders to cut arts education in order to afford services and materials aimed to boost achievement in the tested areas of math and literacy.

Urban districts have been more likely to serve higher poverty and higher minority populations than districts in rural and suburban areas (Miron & St. John, 2003). This has

been partly due to the fact that urban schools exist where there are densely concentrated populations (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus & Noguera, 2011). Schools in densely populated, urban areas have served student who are more ethnically and racially diverse, with larger numbers of immigrants and English language learners and have been more likely to serve student populations that show higher rates of poverty and student mobility than suburban or rural student populations (Kincheloe, 2010). This trend of cutting arts education in urban areas pointed to delineations in access to arts education, carrying with them issues of equity based on ethnicity and social-economic status. This discrepancy made it a matter of concern for school leaders who have valued social justice.¹

While policy demands and drastic budget cuts have, without a doubt, put pressure on all public schools, in urban schools that serve high poverty and high minority populations, principals and school leaders faced additional challenges in efforts to close a well-documented achievement gap that has existed between Caucasian students and their African American and Latino counterparts (Lee, 1999; Edley, 2002; Meier, 2004, Howard, 2010). Furthermore, this back-to-the-basics accountability movement should be understood as unjustly barring students from access to the arts and to quality arts education (Bollow-Tempel, 2010).

This inequality in terms of access to arts education raised concerns for advocates of social justice. A long line of educational theorists asserting an understanding of schooling as a mechanism for democracy has roots in the Progressive Era (Dewey, 1938/2005). More recently, theorists have begun to see schools as sites for social change (hook, 1994; McLaren, 1995, Henderson & Gornick, 2007). Some arts teachers have

¹ A more thorough discussion of *social justice* follows in the literature review. Here, social justice means interrupting practices that discriminate, marginalize, or exclude groups of people (Theoharis, 2007).

used their role to build students' awareness of and engagement with social justice issues through arts education (Anderson et al., 2010; Wynne, 2004; Whelan, 2008). By narrowing the curriculum and by overlooking arts education in urban schools to include only what is tested, national policy may have placed an alarming road block to the goals of education related to democracy and social justice.

Since principals and school leaders make decisions about school curricula, they have had valuable experiences that advocates for arts education can learn from. Advocates for arts education should be concerned about what educational research has revealed regarding how principals and school leaders perceived the value of arts education during these challenging times of economic strain and AYP demands as well as to what extent school leaders acted as advocates of the arts and social justice in their schools.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of clarity, here it is useful to introduce some operational definitions that were essential to this inquiry. *Art* referred to mostly the visual arts: drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, videography and other mixed media, and graphic art. *Arts* referred to both the visual and the performing arts: choir, band, orchestra, and other musical ensembles as well as theater and dance. *Art/arts education* refers to content that is delivered to students in schools by teachers (in most cases) certified in that content area. *Art/arts programs* refers to avenues through which students are exposed to or participate with art/arts through structured ways, including those other than via a traditional classroom; for example, after school activities with volunteers or

community-based or non-profit organizations may provide students with art/arts programs.

The research included in this literature review was focused mostly on art education (visual). It explored visual culture and, specifically, an understanding among scholars of visual literacy as a skill required for students to succeed in a globalized market where communication depends on digital media, symbols, and other visual signs (Goodman, 2003; Buchanan, 2008; Duncum, 2007). The term *arts education* was still used many times in the literature review because it is a more inclusive term and, in several cases, the information reported refers to the arts in general, not just the visual arts. Creative writing, for example, was included among the arts and, as the literature review will demonstrate, was often used in conjunction with visual art. When the term *the arts* was used, it was meant in the most general sense, referring to all encounters with the arts as a social, cultural component of communities.

Documentation of the Problem

In American schools, arts education has been drastically cut. A 2004 Council on Basic Education survey found that “25% of principals had cut arts education and 33% anticipated future reductions” (p.12). Additionally, 43% of the teachers had “decreased a great deal” the time they spent including the arts in their courses (p.12). Similarly, a 2008 national survey of K-8 schools from the Center of Educational Policy (McMurrer, 2008) reported that schools on average had decreased instruction time in art and music by 35% and that almost a fifth (18%) of the schools were spending less than 25 minutes a week on art and music (CEP, 2008). Long before Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker signed his controversial Budget Repair Bill, members of Milwaukee Public Schools

(MPS) budget committee were predicting that as many as 300 full-time jobs would be cut from the district by 2012 due to financial strain (Richards, 2010). According to a study on the effects of state revenue controls, nearly one out of every five (19%) public schools in Wisconsin reported eliminating arts classes or courses for the 2007-08 school year because of budget limitations (Allen & Leverich, 2006)

While this was the case, Superintendent Gregory Thornton initiated a way to bring the arts back to some schools within MPS that took effect at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. His proposal provided the district with \$13.4 million dollars to allow schools to hire at least one arts, music or physical education staff member, and has been referred to as the AMP fund. Schools were allotted different sums of money according to the size of their student population. The fund allowed the district to hire 126 art, music and physical education specialists. While some say that this was not enough, Thornton has defended his proposal as being a way to begin to bring these areas back to the students (Bruenlin, 2012).

In some states, arts teachers have been dismissed all together or have been serving several schools in separate buildings. For example, in Arizona the students outnumbered teachers of music, dance, visual arts, and theater by a ratio of 625:1 (Amerin-Beasley, 2009). In an urban Californian district of West Contra Costa, the time allotted to the visual arts and band programs was cut by 40% while drama, dance, and other music courses were cut completely (Holcomb, 2007). In another example, this trend of repeat budget cuts forced the Harlem School of the Arts in New York City to close after fifty years of service to mostly African American and Latino children (Lee, 2010). In Wisconsin, a 2008 study revealed that participation in arts education courses was

significantly lower in urban districts compared to more rural ones, especially in grades 9-12 (Music for All, 2008).

The National Center for Education Statistics published dismal findings in *The Nation's Report Card: Arts 2008 Music & Visual Arts* (Keiper, Sandane, Persky & Kuaung, 2009).² On average, there were differences of 20-30 points in responding scores and creating art tasks between Caucasian and Asian/Pacific Islander students compared with their Black and Hispanic peers. Nearly the same differences in average scores were evident between students who were economically secure and those who lived in poverty, as indicated by eligibility for free/reduced school lunch programs (Keiper et al., 2009). These discrepancies in access to quality arts programs impacted attained achievement levels based on race and economic class. Cutting arts education in schools matters for several reasons.

Any principal in an urban school who is dedicated to social justice should be concerned about this lack of arts education (Wallace, 2000; North, 2008; Theorharis, 2010). Narrowing curricula has disproportionately affected students along racial and economic lines. When creativity is not a highly valued skill, schooling practices continue to mirror and perpetuate stratification along the lines of race and socioeconomic status in the society at large, which effectively props up the status quo and enforces compliance ().

In addition to the socio-cultural concerns that this reality presented, such findings should sound an alarm on a national economic level. Creativity and innovation fostered through arts education, especially visual art, have continually been cited as traits that are crucial for individual as well as current corporate success (Carr & Portifilo, 2009; Pink, 2006; Robinson, 2001). Art education allows students to use vision and imagination to

² The report was completed by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Science

reflect and more fully understand their roles in the world through practicing systematic thoughts about artistic content including social and political issues (Gude, 2009). Art education also provides students with opportunities to explore balance, focus, and many other elements of artistic composition (Eisner, 2002).

Beyond the mechanics of doing art, students' visual-spatial abilities, reflection, self-criticism/reflection, and the willingness to experiment and learn from mistakes can also be fostered through participation with the arts (Winner & Hetland, 2008). These are important skills if we are to graduate public school students who can solve new, complex, and unpredictable problems (Eisner, 2002). Visual literacy, in particular, is an emerging curriculum field that has helped students to critically engage in current and historical events (Chung, 2007; Zambo, 2009). This problem should concern urban school leaders as they have played a role in deciding what programs are offered at their schools, how those programs are delivered, and who those programs have served (Nelson, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

Using the tenets of social justice and a framework grounded in critical theory, this study sought to uncover the roles individual urban principals and school leaders played in determining the quality and purposes of the arts in their schools. It also investigated how they perceived and were able to maintain arts education. Finally, this study explored whether or not urban principals understood arts education as education for social justice. Distinctions between traditional arts education and arts education for social justice are important here. Traditionally, quality arts curricula may have included access to materials that make a variety of art forms possible. Among other things, these material resources may include canvas and oil paints, clay and kilns, cameras and darkrooms,

metals, woods, stained glass, musical instruments, practice rooms, theaters, lighting and sound systems. Additionally, accomplished and credentialed arts staff people are included in traditional notions of quality.

When a social justice framework is applied, access to many material and human resources does not ensure quality arts programs are being delivered. Social justice art education requires critical attention to intention, process and content where “(a) it is rooted in people’s experiences, (b) it is a process of reflection and action together, and (c) it seeks to dismantle systems of inequality to create a more humane society” (Dewhurst, 2011, p.365). Arts programs that are well staffed, and adequately equipped with materials do not ensure pedagogy for social justice.

Luehrman (2002) found that principals played a significant role, along with arts teachers, in determining the quality of the art education programs in their schools, and that if principals perceived the arts as having little or no value, they were unlikely to ensure that the students at their schools were offered quality arts education. By highlighting educational leaders’ experiences and struggles with arts education programs and social justice during the era of accountability and financial strain, this study revealed how, and with what degree of success, school leaders have navigated a very complex economic and political terrain.

The accountability movement, coupled with financial strain, has made it difficult for principals to ensure that quality arts education courses, in terms of both access to resources and implementation of pedagogy for social justice, could be offered at their schools especially in urban areas (Chapman, 2005). This research was needed to discover how principals in urban areas perceived the value of the arts. This study

explored school leaders' perceptions and beliefs about the arts and experiences with arts education. It revealed to what extent principals were able to provide students with access to arts education. This study also uncovered experiences where urban principals were successful at securing adequate funding and other support for arts education and described what avenues they took to do so. This study also explored to what extent principals indicated understandings of how pedagogy for social justice could be delivered through arts education.

It is important to note here that advocating for arts education is not the only vehicle through which principals can arrive at social justice leadership in their schools. This research was intended to look at experiences of advocating for arts education as one possible and important way to implement pedagogy for social justice. It was concerned with arts education specifically because current political and economic conditions were making it increasingly difficult to deliver arts in public, urban schools.

This study was framed within a theory of educational leadership that is rooted in social justice where education is understood as a socially transformative institution and school leaders are purposed with the responsibility to engage in critical inquiry, interrupt unfair practices, and promote democratic action (Theoharis, 2007). Critical theories of knowing understand all knowledge as socially constructed (Woolfolk, 1995). Therefore schools become places where knowledge is produced and social identities are constructed through direct and indirect means (McLaren, 1995). Through the lens of critical pedagogy and constructivist and transformative practice, participation in art education programs can be seen as a way of constructing a critically empowered knowledge of self in relation to culture (Gude, 2009).

In brief, this research aimed to use information about the perceptions and experiences of urban leaders as material to reveal relationships between policy and leaders' curriculum decisions regarding arts education and social justice. Through a social justice lens and a critical framework, these schooling decisions have implications for the sorts of individual and community characteristics transformative school leaders want to encourage and the skills they want students to acquire. These decisions also carry economic implications dealing with how effectively urban students will be able to participate in a global community and shape culture.

Research Question

This research asked school leaders to reflect on their experience with and the roles of the arts in their schools. A qualitative case study protocol provided the methodology for this research. According to Creswell (2005), a case study is a deep exploration of a bounded environment where the case “is separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries” (p.439). Here, a single urban district was the bounded environment. Principals working in this district were the main unit of analysis and composed the participant source because they stood at a crossroads between mandated policy and delivered practice inside the schools. Therefore they played a major role in what and how arts education courses were delivered and how or if social justice issues were addressed. This investigation hoped to increase understandings related to the following research question:

How do urban principals and school leaders perceive the value of the arts within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

This question is supplemented by the following attendant questions:

1a. How do urban school leaders make decisions about offering arts education at their schools?

1b. What do urban school leaders consider when they make these decisions?

2a. How are urban school leaders maintaining access to arts education within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

2b. To what extent are urban school leaders who are maintaining this access aware of the relationships between arts education and social justice?

Limitations of this Study

All studies have limitations that should be identified by the author (Creswell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Willis, 2007). As a case study, this inquiry was limited in terms of funding as well as by restricted access to large numbers of participants. As a qualitative investigation, this study may be overlooked by those who favor numerical data. As it followed the guidelines of case study methodology, which aims to describe rather than generalize, the results will say little conclusively about educational outcomes for students in general (Willis, 2007). Rather, the results of this study provide rich descriptions of how school leaders are thinking about relationships among their roles as school leaders, arts education, and social justice as well as how those thoughts are reflected in the decisions they make.

Through describing school leaders' perceptions of and lived experiences with arts education, this research is relevant to advocates of arts education linked to social justice. Chapter Two shares a review of the literature surrounding the multiple facets of the questions above including the financial and political context of arts education in public schools, the academic and social benefits of arts education evidenced in research, theories

of educational leadership, and, finally, connections among arts education, school leadership, and social justice. Chapter Three outlines the theoretical frameworks that underpin this exploration and details the qualitative case study protocol that provides the methodology for this research. Chapter Four describes the research results. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the implications of the research results and offers recommendations for the future from the perspectives of educational theory, research, policy and practice.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

This literature review is divided into four parts. First, providing a context, it examines some of the normative beliefs about the arts and arts education. Then the it covers the history of the Standards-Based Reform movement and explains how it has affected arts education during a period of financial strain. Secondly, it reviews research related to academic and social benefits of arts education for students, including how arts education has offered ways of teaching and learning related to social justice. The third section focuses on educational leadership. Finally, it examines connections among social justice, school leadership, and arts education.

The literature review that follows is structured according to the outline:

- I. Context of Arts Education: Effects of the Standards-Based Reform Movement and Financial Strain
- II. Research on Arts Education
 - A. Academic benefits for students of arts education
 - B. Social benefits for students of arts education related to social justice
 - 1. The arts for critical pedagogy
 - 2. The arts for critical multicultural pedagogy
 - 3. The arts for social change
- III. Educational Leadership
 - A. Principals as instructional Leaders
 - B. Transformational and democratic school leadership

C. Principals as agents for social justice

IV. Connections among Social Justice, School Leadership, and Arts Education

A. Constructivism

B. Critical pedagogy

C. Critical multicultural pedagogy

Context of Arts Education: Effects of the Standards-Based Reform Movement and Financial Strain on Arts Education

Popular opinion, in general, has seemed to value the arts and arts education, at least on a basic level. For example, a Gallup poll conducted in 2007 found that 80 percent of Americans believed that learning how to play a musical instrument would help improve student skills in math and science (Winner & Hetland, 2008). Historically as well, there is evidence that Americans have had an intrinsic assumption that the arts were linked to intelligence. During the Progressive Era, the arts enjoyed high status in education, championed by John Dewey, whose writing and advocacy for the arts in education has continued to inspire and still provokes inquiry among educational theorists today (Breault & Breault, 2005).

Dewey (1934/2005) believed strongly that students learned best by doing, specifically by doing art. His ideas inspired followers who sustained the presence of the arts in schools. In fact, when the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was originally created decades later, its main purpose was to support arts agencies rather than art education in public schools because, at the time, the arts were playing central roles in many K-12 schools (O'Brien, 2001). However, since the launch of Sputnik in 1957, arts

education has diminished as emphasis on the areas of math and science have grown (Gullatt, 2007).

A study by the Education Committee of the States (Miller, 2006) conducted interviews with school policy makers to reveal how they felt about arts in education. The study found that a majority believed that while “the arts can be a valuable component of the curriculum...schools should give first priority to ensuring students master the core subjects” (Miller, 2006, p.2). This viewpoint of the arts is that of *extra*, or *second*, to core subjects. Like many people, school policy makers enjoy art and intuitively value it to a certain extent; however, they often do not accredit it as a discipline connected to skills that are fundamentally linked to intellectual ability. Policy has reflected these sentiments for decades.

Section 402 of the Civil Rights Act, passed in 1964, required the Commissioner of Education to conduct surveys assessing inequality in educational opportunity on a national scope. Significant discrepancies were found between White students compared to their Black and Hispanic counterparts. Inequalities were also identified between wealthy and poor, male and female, and suburban and urban, where the former in all cases was favored. Articulating social inequalities in America was not the only effect of this mandate from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Colman, 1990).

Conducting these surveys fundamentally reshaped the relationship between private social research agencies and the federal government. In response to the achievement gaps evidenced in these assessments, social change programs informed by information gathered through standardized measurements commenced on a nationwide scope. Tienda and Grusky (as cited in Coleman, 1990) explain:

[The surveys] broadened the conception of school quality and the ways in which we measure and assess educational inputs and outputs; and it redefined the domains of inquiry by asking new questions and by insisting on scientific evidence as a basis for decision making. (pp. ix-x)

The results of these mandated surveys were eventually published in 1966. They became part of a group of several research reports, known as the Coleman Reports, put forth by James S. Coleman from 1966 until 1981. These reports highlighted inequality in school achievement based on gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and distance from urban centers (Coleman, 1990).

Also, in an effort to address the inequality in public schools, President Lyndon Johnson passed the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) in 1965 (Hoff, 2008). Since then, covered in rhetoric of attempting to close the achievement gaps illustrated by the Coleman Reports, reform movements based on adherence to narrow, back-to-basics standardized assessment ensued (Brown, 2010). In addition to a stronger focus on set standards in education, publications such as *A Nation at Risk* sounded alarms about America's ability to compete in the global economy and caused stakes to become increasingly higher for students to perform better on standardized tests (Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan, 2008). Since the Coleman Reports, presidents have continued to support these Standards-Based Reform (SBR) movements through reauthorizations of ESEA. Within his first two years of office, Bill Clinton passed the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) in an expressed effort to raise education standards and the performance levels of all students (Riley, 1995).

President George W. Bush continued with the optimistically titled No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which charged schools with demonstrating achievement through (and only through) achievement on standardized tests. Furthermore, schools were required to meet these demands at prescribed levels of improvement, or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mandates (Meier, 2004). NCLB required that all students must score “proficient or above” in reading, math, and science, but not art, by the year 2014.³ Not including art (and the other subjects) as a tested area revealed that the policy making administration saw these content areas as disposable.

Because NCLB set the stage for the current administration, it is worth more discussion. Although policy makers expressed intentions of improving education for all students and closing the achievement gaps, educational critics were notorious for their outrage against NCLB. Darling-Hammond (2004) accused the legislation of being underfunded and ignoring economic disparities. She pointed out that in some states the cost allotted to educate one student ranged from \$3,000 annually in the poorest districts to over \$30,000 in the wealthiest; she asserted that in light of these conditions, NCLB was unfairly penalizing schools that failed to meet AYP demands because services, materials, and other costs associated with raising test scores were much more of a burden on their budgets than for schools in wealthier districts. Ravitch (2010), once a supporter of NCLB and advocate of the accountability movement, came to understand the effects of the law as an effort to remove rich curricula embedded in cultural experience including history, geography, literature, and the arts in order to focus on tested areas. It is this

³ Social studies, foreign language, and physical education are other content areas that have been cut in part to NCLB legislation

narrowing of the curricula in public schools, especially in urban and underfunded districts, that was the concern in this study, as it has impacted arts education directly.

Under the AYP demands of NCLB, reform movements across the U.S. morphed into a high-stakes testing system of limited-scope. Educational policies since ESEA, including NCLB, have always purported to be centered on issues of equity and equal opportunity in education yet critics have argued that support for equity is rhetorical and disingenuous (Chapman, 2004). SBR began as an effort to link content standards to high-level performance standards. National associations were developed to create standards in several content areas. However, cultural debates ensued, making it difficult for a national set of standards to ever be adopted (Ravitch, 2010). Many state and local agencies linked test scores to high school graduation requirements and attached achievement to school funding. The mandated tests that resulted did not measure the higher-order thinking skills envisioned by those who, through the latter half of the 20th century, acted as leaders of SBR (Hamilton et al., 2008).

At the time of this study, Congress was preparing for the reauthorization of ESEA, and debates occurred over what performance measures should be tied to federal funds and how accountability should be measured at local and state levels (Resnick, 2011). Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan endorsed high stakes testing and some of the other strict punitive policies of NCLB, like closing underperforming (and underfunded) schools and removing decision-making power from local school agencies (Giroux, 2009). By September 2010, 44 states agreed to adopt yet-to-be-created standards in order to secure federal funding for their districts (Gewertz & Robelen, 2010). As the arts has remained an untested area, these measures indicated that it was unlikely

that policy would move in directions that could make it easier for advocates to implement genuine, quality arts education in public schools.

NCLB legislation reflected an assumption that art has nothing to do with science and that math and literacy skills could be void of composition and social context. Mirroring that sentiment, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002) provided funding for research that was designed to find “scientific proofs of effective, low cost, user-friendly, and reliable ‘best practices’ in education” (Chapman, 2004, p.3). This very concept of researching educational practices evidenced the belief in a “teacher-proof” concept of curriculum, showing a serious lack of knowledge regarding the complicated array of variables that surround learning and academic achievement and the social needs of students.

The belief that arts education was a secondary content area was clearly demonstrated in the NCLB legislation. The arts were given status as a core subject under NCLB, but a lack of funding coupled with the fact that art remained an untested subject meant that the legislation indirectly damaged art education programs across the country, particularly in urban schools (Chapman, 2005). This trend was rooted in educational policy that began during the Civil Rights Era; however, it may have hurt some of the students that the law allegedly intended to help. Very unfortunately, the Department of Education admitted that since implementation, chronically failing schools have not benefitted since implementing NCLB policies (Wallis & Steptoe, 2006). Furthermore, educational research continued to indicate that the achievement gaps revealed in the Coleman reports still existed (Howard, 2010; Kozol, 1992).

Especially for schools that were classified “in need of improvement” for failing to meet AYP requirements, offering quality arts programs was challenging, and this hurdle affected urban and rural schools on greater levels than their suburban counterparts (Hammer, 2005). A national survey conducted by the Center on Educational Policy (CEP) reported that 71 percent of schools had reduced instruction time in subjects that were not tested under NCLB, including arts education (Grey, 2010). Another study carried out by the Civil Rights Project, a division of Harvard University, revealed that since the implementation of NCLB, teachers admitted to spending less time on the subjects not tested and that many of the teachers involved in the study believed that narrowing the curricula had diminished the teaching experience. Teachers also believed that a test-driven curricular focus may be linked to schools having problems attracting and retaining good teachers (Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, & Orfield, 2004).

This shrinking of curricula happened in urban schools where poor and minority students attended (Ahram, Stenbridge, Fergus & Noguera, 2011). It happened while American student populations became more culturally diverse than ever (Howard, 2007). In some of America’s most diverse, as well as majority minority schools, funding for arts education was cut most severely. As arts education curricula were not included as tested content areas, the schools that were most likely to cut funding were the schools that had been pressured to produce higher test results. Schools in wealthier, suburban districts that were more likely to be better funded were also more likely to have students who already met state achievement requirements (Hammer, 2005). This phenomenon disproportionately negatively affected arts education in urban schools and is especially

true in schools where students represented a lower socioeconomic status (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006).

In summary, SBR, especially as it was implemented under NCLB legislation, has translated into a system where students in urban and, in several cases, high poverty and high minority districts received less art education than their White counterparts living in wealthier districts (Levins, 2008). As the Obama administration prepared to reauthorize ESEA, there was little evidence that the climate for arts education would change, especially during a time marked by financial strain. Again, the fact that arts education severely dwindled is an issue that social justice advocates should be concerned with because limiting quality arts education in schools may have perpetuated discrepancies in equal access along lines of race, ethnicity and economic class. It can also be seen as a practice that took away powerful teaching tools that, when used intentionally so, could offer pedagogy for social justice education (Dewhurst, 2010).

Research on Arts Education

This section of the literature review highlights research that examines links between arts education and arts programs with possible benefits for students, both academic and social. It summarizes what research has revealed in terms of how students learn through participation in arts education and arts programs. It begins with studies related to academic goals such as achievement in math and literacy as well as other content areas. Beyond student achievement on standard measures of attainment or in connection to traditional content areas, it also reviews research that has specifically tied arts education, arts programs, and the arts to social justice practice. Arts educators and school administrators who advocate for the arts in schools have worked in and around

bureaucracies that have been, in many ways, adversarial to their needs. They have demonstrated that the potential for the application of the arts can exist in a variety of ways.

Academic benefits of arts education for students.

Here research is reviewed that clearly linked arts education and arts programs with student achievement. Examples of achievement included demonstrated improved understandings in traditional content areas, performance on standardized tests, and measured higher order thinking skills. Throughout, from a perspective of social justice and critical theory, issues of equity related to social identities are highlighted. Counter-studies are also included. Finally, the implications of these studies are addressed.

A study involving 24 pre-service teachers supported claims that art education could be used to help students to master mathematical concepts. Student teachers involved in the study reported that integrating art into their teaching could “recapture the wonder of learning mathematics” (Ward & Muller, 2006, p.22). In these cases, students created three dimensional objects that helped them learn mathematical principles, including weight, distance, and balance. In one example, students developed a deep understanding of the Law of Levers (a principle in physics developed by Archimedes that makes use of balancing mathematical equations and explains how the length of a lever is related to the weight it can lift).

Through a process of using hands-on manipulatives, students created mobiles to visually and symbolically explain the process of balancing equations. The process resulted in deeper understanding, improved student motivation, and general interest in math (Ward & Muller, 2006). Similarly, Bernice Patterson (2001) reported that after

using art and computer technology in her geometry class, “students increased their awareness of the geometric forms in their environment and imaginatively illustrated them in a variety of themes” (p.46). Carefully constructed integrations with various art content, like these described above, can improve student cognition in math areas.

Mishook and Kornhaber (2006) reviewed several studies related to arts education and arts programs in schools and offered several insights. In a study conducted on a partnership program with an elementary school and the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, results on standardized tests in math as well as reading improved. This improvement, the researchers concluded, was the result of a carefully designed integration program that required “the content lesson and the artistic lesson [to] be of equal importance” (p.4). Notably, according to the review of studies, schools integrated the arts with “reading and social studies more than with science and mathematics” (p.4) where the content favored the core subject well over that of art. According to Mishook and Kornhaber (2006), this practice reflected a limited application of art education and art programs and was usually “of little value in learning authentic art goals” (p.4). This study showed that when art was valued as equal to core subjects, it could have a significant positive effect on student test performance. Integrating art education programs into content classes cannot give superficial treatment to the arts content and, at the same time, produce a significant benefit resulting from that integration.

There has also been measured evidence that students who have studied the arts demonstrate specific cognitive abilities (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2000; Harlett & Gregg, 1997). These reports indicated that the learning skills acquired in arts education need not be connected to other content areas in order to be valuable. In a complex study

involving 2,406 students from 28 middle and elementary schools, a team of researchers collected quantitative data from survey instruments used to measure several indicators, including expression of ideas, imagining new possibilities, cooperative learning, risk taking, self esteem and confidence and then concluded that the arts could elicit complex thinking on its own. They showed that the arts held intrinsic merit and did not need to be connected to another content area to have value.

Burton et al. (2000) conducted a battery of assessments including the Torrance Test of Critical Thinking (TTCT), the Teacher Perception Scale (TPS) and a self concept instrument (SDQ-I). Comparisons between mean scores of students who had taken several years of arts instruction and students who had little to no arts instruction revealed that high arts students scored higher in every case. ANOVA results found the differences significant. Qualitative data also supported the research findings (Burton et al., 2000).

The original motivation for the Burton et al.(2000) study was to ascertain, from students who had several years in arts instruction, how thinking skills were transferred to other disciplines and to identify specifically what those thinking skills were. Their conclusion was that the thinking skills required to practice the arts are unique unto themselves. What they discovered meant that the arts elicit a powerful set of cognitive skills that are intrinsically valuable and do not need to be linked to other content areas in order for students to benefit from experiences with the arts. While using the arts across content areas can be beneficial, arts education can also stand alone as a content area and can elicit deep intellectual activities in students (Burton et al., 2000).

One study replicated a 1969 research study conducted by Hartley and Beasley and suggested that students who study the arts are more likely to be creative thinkers than

those who study pure science (Harlett & Greggs, 1997). In this study, students were divided into four groups: those studying (i) pure arts, (ii) arts and social studies, (iii) social science and science, and (iv) pure sciences. On this arts-science continuum, “the arts students as a whole scored significantly higher than the science students on three of four tests of divergent thinking” (Harlett & Greggs, 1997, p.93). While the term divergent may carry negative connotations, it really speaks to the ability of art students to think unconventionally, in new, truly creative ways. These thinking skills are likely to become increasingly important as globalization and technology continue to change our world in unforeseen ways (Harlett & Greggs, 1997).

A variety of students have responded well to arts education and arts programs. Some studies indicated that implementing arts education could be useful for improving the academic success of at-risk students in urban areas (Venable, 2005; Bolt & Brooks, 2006; Kinny, 2008). According to a study conducted at a charter school located in downtown Indianapolis where a high percentage of the students were involved with the juvenile justice system, students responded positively to learning through the use of creative arts when they created a mural for the school (Venable, 2005). Another study that involved at-risk populations’ experience with arts education reported that in addition to “fostering positive relationships, academic motivation, responsibility and a climate of respect...an arts-integrated curriculum correlated with improved grades, higher standardized test scores, improved attendance, more interest in school, fewer hours of television and increased community service involvement” (Boldt & Brooks, 2006, p.223). In this program, students were required to write personal stories and poetry, to use other forms of creative writing, and to perform plays. In social studies classes, they were

assigned re-writing projects where they re-wrote historical documents in modern-day language. They also partnered with community organizations and held exhibitions of student work in local centers. Boldt and Brooks (2006) reported that “art, drama and storytelling build on the natural strengths of each individual. The process of creation involves self-exploration and can be both empowering and healing” (p.224).

In another study involving at-risk students, dance was found to be a way to instill self-regulatory processes in fourth graders. Students involved in the study were engaged in fewer disciplinary instances than they had been prior to engagement with the dance program (Baum, Owen & Oreck, 1997). Also indicating that participation in the arts may have significant benefits for at-risk populations, a longitudinal study was conducted on students attending schools in need of improvement which revealed that through participation in band education, students improved performances on state standardized tests (Kinney, 2008). In this sense, supporting the arts in schools can be seen as an act of social justice because the art education programs provided a means of support for some of the nation’s most challenged students.

Unfortunately, examples of injustice are also revealed in the literature. The Mishook and Kornhaber (2006) study described above indicated that quality arts education courses or meaningful, coequal arts integration were more likely to exist only in schools where the majority of the students represented a high socioeconomic status. Mishook and Kornhaber (2006) reported that in schools where over three fourths of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch, the arts were commonly only used expressly to support the tested areas. Not only did this practice place art as second to tested areas, it effectively shortchanged groups of students who attended schools with high poverty

populations from quality arts education programs. This inequitable resource distribution within the educational system resulted in additional privileges for economically secure students who already held an economic advantage.

Quantitative research has not always indicated that participation in arts education or with arts programs has always benefited students academically. At Harvard, the Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP) was one of the largest assessments of the arts in education and attempted to describe the possible academic benefits of arts education. Results of this study indicated that students benefitted little from arts education in the areas investigated (Winner & Hetland, 2000). The findings reported only two significant benefits: one between music students and spatial/temporal reasoning skills and another between classroom drama students and verbal skills. The findings also pointed out that many of the quantitative studies that have assessed arts education neither claimed nor supported a causal relationship that could demonstrate that arts education caused improvements in academic and social skills.

The study also found that most quantitative research had been correlation studies that left unanswered the question, do arts improve certain abilities or are students with certain abilities attracted to arts education? For example, DeJarnette (as cited in Winner & Hetland, 2000) completed a study that found that students who were allowed to draw and write showed more knowledge about history than those who were allowed to only write. However, the study failed to show if drawing helped reluctant readers. Despite research demonstrating academic benefits to students beyond what standard measurements reveal, results like these gave policy makers justification for not

supporting arts education, especially during a time characterized by AYP demands and financial strain (Winner & Hetland, 2000).

Advocates for the arts cannot discount the findings in REAP. Alternatively, results linked positively to achievement have moved policy. In Florida, for example, reports showed a significant, positive correlation between participation in music education and higher GPAs, SAT scores, and performance on Florida's state standardized tests, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. This result prompted Florida legislators to expand access to music programs and led to the recruitment of and efforts for retention of quality music teachers (Smith, 2009). However, it is vital to point out here that even when arts education or arts programs have been supported by legislators, implementation motivated to improve test performance alone is seldom linked to authentic student academic benefits or, much less, to social justice. This practice of using arts education and arts programs only as a way to support tested areas has revealed a narrow understanding of the roles arts education can play in schools and in life.

Stewart and Walker (2005) linked their approach to art education curricula to school reform efforts connected to student achievement results. They based their curriculum for aspiring art teachers on pedagogical practices refined through Transforming Education through the Arts Challenge (TETAC), a five year project completed in 2001. Their curriculum emphasized "big ideas," which were enduring ideas that overarch human experience. The authors addressed the importance of the knowledge and skills required of students to understand visual art techniques and strategies that arts instructors can use to elicit student-motivated questions that can lead to deep understandings, and support aesthetic and mechanical skills central to making art. School

leaders who work to implement the sort of inquiry-based curriculum advocated by Stewart and Walker practice social justice because that type of leadership prioritizes student achievement but also moves beyond it to instill critical awareness and empowerment.

Anderson (2004) has eloquently reminded educators that “at its heart, art making is subjective intelligence. It is a problem solving activity (where students are) engaged to find, construct, and express meaning in life” (p.8). Additionally, sociolinguistic theories have linked conversation with others as a crucial part of the learning process; therefore, the discussion that happens in art rooms surrounding the symbols and metaphors embedded in works of art may be directly linked to art making and creatively constructing meaning (Chessin & Zander, 2003). Creative thinking and expression is directly practiced through engagement with and making art (Winner & Hetland, 2008). The previously cited studies involving art and the students at risk demonstrated that there are many other benefits for students beyond academic achievement. The research that follows highlights some of these examples.

Social benefits for students of arts education related to social justice.

According to Theoharis (2007), part of social justice education has involved equipping students with tools to resist oppressive social messages. Arts education, particularly visual culture approaches, has offered teachers and school leaders tools to prepare students to participate in active resistance. This has included the ability to engage in critical thinking about self and social issues, especially as they relate to cultural differences in society. Ultimately, the goal of social justice is inherently about social change that will only result from better democratic thinking and practice. Therefore, in

this section, research and theories of education are included that have demonstrated how learning through arts education and arts programs can benefit students in three ways directly related to social justice:

- The Arts for Critical Pedagogy
- The Arts for Critical Multicultural Pedagogy
- The Arts for Social Change.

The arts for critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy has been informed by a teaching philosophy that stressed the need for students to understand themselves as active participants in society's consumption and production of cultural knowledge in an ever-changing world where individuals continually need to adapt and readapt to their world and surroundings (McLaren, 1995). In short, the goal of critical educators has been to get their students actively engaging in the world and critically reflecting upon the social power relationships that occur among groups that inform how one reads another. Critical educators have encouraged their students to build an ability to read the world and, in turn, read how the world sees, or *reads*, them as individuals (Freire, 1970/1995).

Students have begun begin this process of critical reflection when they have told their personal stories and have created their own visual counter-narratives, thereby offering an educational practice that “can direct positive transformations in urban schools” (Whitehead, 2012, p.40). Such a project was undertaken when a team of teachers, artists, and university professors came together to provide students with the opportunity to explore American narratives and share their stories as well as their families' stories in an attempt to answer the question, “What does it mean to be an

American?” They called their work *The Storytelling Project*. What emerged were lively discussions and creative works of collage, poetry, and storytelling that revealed an enriched and critical understanding of the personal nature of national identity (Bell, Roberts, Irani & Murphy 2008).

In addition to telling stories, Bell et al. (2008) examined four specific types of stories with students: 1. *stock stories* that are “ubiquitous in dominant, mainstream institutions” (p.8), 2. *concealed stories* from outside of the mainstream that are about “struggle, self affirmation and survival” (p.8), 3. *resistance stories* that reveal how marginalized people have resisted racism and other forms of oppression, and 4. *counter-stories* that are “deliberately constructed to challenge the stock stories” (p.9). Bell et al. (2008) reported that “with careful teaching, stories can be powerful tools for connecting the personal and the political, the individual and the social, [and] the private and the public” (p.3) dimensions in society.

Storytelling, as a critical teaching practice, could be understood as existing within a framework of discourse that can encourage understanding of self identity and perceptions of others (Vasudevan, Stageman, Rodriguez, Fernandez & Dattatreyan, 2010). For critical pedagogues, “discourse refers to specific ways of knowing, acting, and believing that are co-constructed by participants of a discourse community” (Harman, 2007, p.33). Every discourse community has a localized, shared way of using language (verbal, visual, and nonverbal) and is informed by historical practices and deeply embedded beliefs and values. This discourse creates a dominant text that describes the dominant values in a given location at a given time. Critical pedagogues have been concerned with “probing the ideological silences and gaps within texts”

(Harman, 2007, p.40). They have tried to bring awareness to students about the experiences of the oppressed members in a society as well as analyze and critique the stories told by those who dominate.

Arts education advocates have argued that words are not the only ways to tell stories and share experiences. They have argued for the intrinsic value of using art as a means of employing visual literacy. Visual literacy has become a legitimate and increasingly important method of inquiry based on interpretations of cultural and visual information (Tavin, 2005; Sadik, 2008). Visual literacy has been used as a way to help adolescents make sense of the world on levels that extend beyond superficial exposure. Images are embedded with power that, without critical interrogation, can lead to or enforce stereotypes and other forms of prejudice. Debby Zambo (2009) explained:

Adolescents today live in a visual world and form opinions about their peers based on what they see....Looking carefully at images, engaging in dialogue, and thinking critically encourages adolescents with and without challenges to consider their position in the world and consider who and what they care about. It helps them to consider issues of equity and inclusion, and this in turn may lead to social justice. (p.67)

Critical educators have been able to guide their students to deconstruct racism, sexism, and other forms of oppressive practice in education by guiding them to recognize and think about oppression on an institutional and an individual level (Cosier, 2011).

Students are encouraged to identify their own and others' perceptions that may be the result of individual bias, privilege, or ignorance. Shirley Yokely (1999) connected her art teaching to critical pedagogy and saw the curriculum in art class as a way to build an

historical understanding in her students so that they come to discover “why things are the way they are and how they came to be that way as they open possibility for action and change” (p.22). In one of many examples, Yokely used self portraits of Frida Kahlo and Leonora Carrington to have students approach subjects of sexism, racism, classism, elitism, and ethnicity.

As the students in Yokley’s (1999) classroom progressed to work on their self portraits, she observed that, in doing so, the students had to examine their own culturally formed ideology as Americans, which was further problematized by the knowledge gained about these Mexican artists. It resulted in student work that “became a type of cultural critique that reflected how society and culture penetrate the personal and conversely how personal choices contribute to cultural formations –hence revealing the power of visual art” (Yokely, 1999, p.23). Yokely’s work demonstrated that when backed by intention, arts education can achieve some of the aims of critical pedagogy as students learn to identify who they are and what role they play in society from a perspective of a consumer as well as a producer of cultural information and social identities.

Critical pedagogy has engaged students in deconstructing self and other identities and allowed students to reconstitute an empowered sense of self (Hughes-Decatur, 2011). Research on the brain has indicated that most of human thinking occurs in our subconscious and “involves the processing of a continual stream of sensory information. We consistently represent the abstract through metaphors that we associate with physical experience and emotions” (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p.63). Since educational content has often included topics that matter emotionally, the arts also can be used as powerful

tools to harness and communicate those emotional understandings (Upitis, 2003). Students and school communities live and operate within a very complex world. Through arts education and arts programs, the difficult realities that shape our surroundings can be explored through symbolic representation and by constructing and expressing personal meaning. Finally, making art can be a way to make these complicated, emotional topics more approachable for students to deal with, discuss, share, and build new and rich understandings. Several scholars involved in art education for social justice have developed guidelines related to these practices (Barrett, 2004; Bell, 2009; Gude, 2009; Zwirn & Libresco, 2010).

Barrett (2004) encouraged art teachers to engage student artists in critical dialogues through peer critiques of one another's work. These art classrooms became environments where the teachers could create democratic and inclusive conversations as well as encourage critical reflection. Barrett (2004) used case studies to present students' interpretations of visual culture to explore denotation and connotation to develop a critical understanding of visual constructs. Further, Barrett (2004) suggested that good teachers "encourage a multiplicity of voices within the group. Call on the silent ones... Bring *absent* voices into the conversation and deepen it when necessary" (p.93). Gude (2009) explained that art making is a form of self expression where the artist represents self-experience through art work and asserted that this experience is why discourse in art education programs and speaking about one's art and the art of others is often powerful for students. In this view, artworks are reflexive stories of personal, identity-forming experiences. Gude (2009) uses Hebidge (1979) to expand:

A story cannot be told –an image cannot be understood –as pure form. In being made manifest by its maker, the story/image has entered the realm of culture, of signification. The maker can only signify, can only tell his/her story, paint his/her picture in the context of other signifiers, other stories, other images, other bits of meaning with which the maker formulates his or her own unique meaning. (p. 8)

According to Gude's words, art has become meaningful within a context of communication, social interaction, and individual interpretation. Discourse has been used as a way to uncover meaning in art. Delacruz (2010) added guidelines for critical discourse in art education programs. They supported critical, democratic discussions as important pieces of art education and reminded educators that creating a "social justice orientated public engagement" (Delacruz, 2010, p.25) through such conversations

requires more than rationalization and debate; it requires a classroom context (where conversation is) followed by collective plans of action that involve others, informed by the process of rational deliberation, consensus building, empathy, and compassion. Creating warm and caring classroom conditions facilitates an impetus to form alliances across divisions of race, gender, class, ethnicity...and a host of other differences that divide students. (Delacruz, 2010, p.26)

Linking what is felt and what is learned in art classrooms through critical discourse with collective action has been another guideline that informs education for social justice.

Freedman (2007) also connected art education to activism, and asserted that *good art* should be defined as art that *makes change* and causes people to engage in "creative action" (p.205) and work towards creating and supporting policies and practices that safeguard freedom of expression and creative expression through challenging dominant

messages communicated through mass media in visual culture from global perspectives.

In his research involving art teachers who used critical discussions about works of art and interrogated visual culture in their classrooms, Duncum (2008) reported that in addition to quality dialogue and commitment to action, in order for art education to reach its fullest potential, even teachers are required to take the position of learner along with their students, especially when controversial topics are addressed.

Carpenter and Tavin (2010) asserted that engagement with visual culture during the digital age profoundly changes and increases the urgency for art education as it has become vital to building social understandings as young students are constantly bombarded and influenced by value laden images. They explained how this has affected teaching art:

The reconceptualization of art education (is) engaged in an ongoing attempt to shift from traditional modes of art making and “art thinking” toward a profoundly critical, historical, political, and self-reflexive understanding of culture and social responsibility...Such a shift allows educators and learners to mobilize meaningful and transformative artistic and cultural productions in a variety of forms and actions. (Carpenter & Tavin, 2010, p. 329)

Educational leaders concerned about social justice need to be aware of how the field of art education has been changing so that they can ensure their students’ access to programs that can help them make sense of digital and visual messages in their physical environment and build critical awareness. The employment of visual literacy through quality art education as a means of critical inquiry of media culture has been a way of delivering critical pedagogy (Dewhurst, 2010).

Digital storytelling is a new form of narrative sharing that has emerged from the influx of technology including user-friendly video editing software and social media forums (Youtube, facebook, blogs, etc). Art educators have made use of digital storytelling in order to offer their students a way to communicate and, at the same time, learn how to use similar mediums and strategies as advertising companies and other corporations have used in order to expose ideological silences and gaps (Goodman, 2003). An expert on education during the digital age, David Buckingham (2007) offered this comment:

Education about the media should be seen as an indispensable prerequisite for education *with* or *through* the media. Likewise, if we want to use the internet or computer games or other digital media for teaching, we need to equip students to understand and to critique these media: we cannot regard them simply as neutral means of delivering information, and effective use of media in education therefore depend upon the students developing a form of critical literacy that goes well beyond a training in how to operate the hardware or software. (p.112)

Critical pedagogy asserts that students are not simply passive receptors of mass media messages but that they are also active participants in the acceptance or resistance of those messages. Part of arts education for social justice involves giving students the opportunities to use their voice through digital means.

In this way, art projects can also be a form of political activism. Chung and Kirby (2009) offered an example of how art has been used as a way to critically interrogate consumer society by creating visuals for display in their school that play on popular media images. Student work included replacing the words “Coca-cola” with “Obesity”

while maintaining the look of the soft drink's recognizable logo. Another inverted the McDonald's golden arches to create a W and the question "We love to make you fat?" as a play on the fast food chain's slogan, "We love to make you smile" (Chung & Kirby, 2009). This type of work is known as culture jamming and has been a significant movement in contemporary art. Art educators who seek to provide their students with opportunities to critically engage in society have found culture jams useful, as Martinez (2012) explained:

art education is positioned to challenge assumptions arising from mass media and visual culture because art education creates, interprets, and critiques visual images. Within the realms of mass media and visual culture, culture jams offer students an opportunity to examine and reinterpret dominant forms of culture, become active agents in the construction of knowledge, utilize cultural backgrounds, and correct misconceptions about their cultural heritage. (p.12)

Culture jamming has exemplified what can be made possible when the two fields of art and education intersect in meaningful ways.

In these classrooms, students acted as social activists, making statements that problematized how youth often fall prey to advertising. When used in this way, art can be seen as a means of directly empowering individuals. It can be understood as a stepping stone to help students build strong self identities as they develop a critical visual literacy through resisting media manipulation and practice social justice. As critical educational theorist Henry Giroux (2003) explained, in the postmodern era, every person's personal identity is created through negotiation or resistance to popular media images. Schools have served students well when art courses are offered as a space to

understand the role of visual advertising and empower students to subvert media or other imposed identities.

One important facet of visual literacy is the ability to understand images through having knowledge of both fine art and popular culture (Duncum, 2010). Teaching visual literacy, or the ability to understand objects and images through looking and discerning messages in visual culture, will become more and more important for schools to teach as the influence of the media and forms of visual messaging continues to grow; therefore, art education programs should provide spaces where students can develop this skill (Eisenhauer, 2006; Goodman, 2003; Kindler, 2003; Taylor, 2007).

Elements of popular culture have been taken directly from students' lives in order to incorporate visual literacy and critical thinking in art classrooms. Taylor (2007) employed music videos as part of her curriculum in order for students to engage their visual literacy as a means of exploring values. She connected her teaching to Giroux, who, rooted in critical pedagogy, informed her curriculum, as she intentionally made use of music videos as a resource for students to explore social relationships of authority and power through images and symbols (Taylor, 2007). Duncum (2010) used his work as an art educator to have his students explore visual representations of power, class, race, gender, and sexual orientation from different social, cultural, and historical perspectives and has observed how this led students to examine their personal assumptions about these issues.

Another report suggested that students can form stronger identities, thus becoming empowered through experiences with visual culture. Latchem (2006) detailed how a group of high school students reacted to artist Fred Wilson's museum exhibits

exploring notions of cultural capital through objects. As a museum curator in Maryland, Wilson repositioned statues of Native Americans found in the museums. To Wilson, the faces on the statues looked European, so he positioned them with their backs to the viewers, and placed them so that they were looking at contemporary photographs of Native Americans. In another example, he displayed slave shackles with elegant silverware in a display called *Metalworks*. In these examples, museum visitors' experience with visual culture led them to face issues of privilege alongside subjugation and social inequality. When students reflected on the symbolism in the display, they interrogated notions of power and control as well as historical legacies and the politics of display evident in his work (Latchem, 2006).

Students were given a forum through which they could explore their own positions in society and how they came to be. Latchem (2006) concluded that speaking about art gave students a way for the "individual to be formed and informed through narrative" (p.50). These studies were indications of the transformative power that can be tapped into through arts experiences. Part of the job of educators who are truly dedicated to serving the needs of all learners has been to affirm students' situations and help to strengthen their self efficacy by allowing them to work through assumptions and articulate personal ideas through a critical lens. This study pointed to the ability of art education programs to achieve just that. These studies revealed that art education can act as a vehicle that can help students become critically engaged citizens.

Introducing students to contemporary artists who have used their work as critical social commentary has provided students with examples that showed them how artists used visual information to communicate ideas and challenge preconceptions. Creating

museum exhibits where culturally significant objects and word/image relationships were juxtaposed, Wilson's work was used by critical educators to show students how, as artists, one could make use of viewers' visual literacy to challenge them to rethink their cultural assumptions and expose institutionalized forms of oppression (Allen, 2003). Like art teachers engaged in critical pedagogy who involve their students in creating visual interpretations of ideas about cultural capital and privilege, the themes in Wilson's work intended to help students use interpretations of visual art to discover and uncover power dynamics in society.

Kara Walker is another artist whose work has been useful for critical educators. Her exhibits have interrogated race in America based on the legacy of slavery and racial tensions throughout American history (Desai & Hamlin, 2010). She used life sized black, cut out silhouettes, evoking the whimsical charm of 19th century children's books and lured viewers in, who were then confronted with scenes that depicted acts of social, racial, and gender domination through exaggerated stereotypes from southern culture (i.e. the southern belle, Uncle Tom). Critiquing traditional social studies curricula, Desai and Hamlin (2010) reflected:

It is difficult to remain emotionally distant when viewing the work of Kara Walker (and others)...The provocative images that these artists produce can often feel unsettling, inspiring a visceral, physical reaction that pushes beyond a purely intellectual response. The work of these artists highlights the emotional texture (that is) largely missing from the way we teach history in schools...Artists can challenge the linear narratives of the past and the idea of "objective" representations of history. (p.49)

Walker's work demonstrated how students could engage in visual art to think about and feel historical realities from perspectives other than those told through dominant stories. It also spoke to how artists can engage with and add to historical knowledge through cultivating emotional reactions.

Another young artist who has been useful to critical educators is Kehinde Wiley. He has critically explored visual culture through creating portraits of African American men drawn from popular images of hip hop culture. His models stand in positions that reference European Renaissance portraiture of the royal and elite set against backgrounds of rococo floral patterns. The images mix the dynamics of masculinity, power, and aggression with tenderness and beauty while they comment on the history of portraiture and its meaning as a power symbol (Garfield, 2010). Likewise, Michael Ray Charles has used his work in painting and commercial advertising to explore the evolution of stereotypes of African Americans through mixing the Sambo, Mammy, and minstrel images of America's racist past with contemporary mass media images of Black youth, celebrities and athletes in order to raise the awareness of his viewers (Public Broadcasting System, 2009). Lorna Simpson offers an example of an artist who has used her photography to capture public, but hidden, intimate relations in order to examine how gender intersects across contemporary multiracial culture in America (The National Women's History Project, 2010). Carrie Mae Weems is another photographer who has made pictures to purposefully expose injustice and reconcile the past with the present and to "scrutinize subjectivity and expose pernicious stereotypes" (PBS, 2009). Introducing students to contemporary artists can help them to gain insights into some of the social conditions and issues of today.

The arts for critical multicultural pedagogy.

The goals of critical multicultural education overlap those of a critical pedagogy. While critical pedagogy has involved interrogating privileges rooted in socioeconomic class, anti-racist and critical multicultural pedagogy has explored power and oppression based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, and other forms of cultural diversity, asserting that racism has been embedded throughout social institutions (Landsing-Billings & Tate, 1995). Neito (1999) asserted that within a discriminatory environment, democracy and social justice are intertwined. Practicing critical multicultural education means understanding schools as sites where democracy can and should be created. Advocates for critical multicultural pedagogy have encouraged teachers and school leaders to use school practices to uncover personal attitudes towards racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural groups as well as design lessons that require students to acquire knowledge of histories and cultures of diverse groups.

Advocates for critical multicultural education have recommended that schools also work to understand how institutions (including the schools) perpetuate racial and cultural stereotypes and prop up power structures that maintain the status-quo in an attempt to prevent these perpetuations (Banks et al., , 2001). Critical multicultural art educators have used art education programs as a means to move beyond simplistic notions of multicultural education that focus on self esteem through encouraging “dangerous discourse” surrounding cultural differences (Chalmers, 2002, p.3).

Eisner (1998) asserted that a guiding goal in any successful art education program should be to “enable students to understand that there is a connection between the content and form that the arts display and the culture and time in which the work was created”

(p.148). He further added that this includes “the ability to recognize and accept multiple perspectives and resolutions” (p.148). Art education programs have been able to provide a means by which students have been able to learn about cultures and experiences that are different from their own within a critical multicultural framework; they do so while foregrounding power differentials across identities.

In the Spiral Workshop in Chicago, Olivia Gude (2009) used her pedagogy to increase high school students’ multicultural awareness through critical multicultural education. While some forms of education about diverse cultures may have led students to only see difference and otherness (Tatum, 2000), art education informed by critical multicultural pedagogy has used art and interpretation to obscure “the boundaries between self-experience and the experience of another...Through art, the self becomes vitally interested in other selves, sensing the possibilities and problems of those selves within oneself” (Gude, 2009, p.9-10). This type of work has been important for schools to engage in within a globalized world where encounters with diversity have characterized many social and economic interactions (Freidman, 2005).

Like critical pedagogy, multicultural educational theorists asserted that former oppressive practices, though today deemed officially unlawful (slavery, discrimination based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation⁴), still exist within the foundations of American institutions, especially within the institution of public education. Educational critics confirm that practices that perpetuate racial and cultural oppression are alive and well in our public institutions (Bell, 2007). Critical multicultural art education programs

⁴ It is important to note that this is not completely true for sexual orientation, as the federal government still officially discriminates against LGBT people.

has offered methods to combat institutional racism in schools by examining the way visual culture contributes to, or works to end, such practices.

Damm (2006) showed that arts education experiences can be useful catalysts for making students rethink their prejudices. A middle school created a class that was team-taught by university art teachers called “Creative Arts” and included music, visual arts, dance, and drama. The class participated in learning about Native Americans by studying different forms of Native American dance, music, craft, lifestyle, and history. Students reported that the class helped them to understand the complexities and the diversity that characterize Native American people. One student commented, “I will be the first to admit that my perception of Native Americans consisted of tepees...the most important thing I learned from our class on Native Americans is that the stereotypical image we see in the media is not true” (Damm, 2006, p.3). This project would have achieved an even deeper level of student critical awareness if the instructors had included work from contemporary Native American artists and inquiry into the xenophobic practices that have been in our history regarding Native Americans. However, the study still revealed how art can be used to engage students and encourage them to rethink the cultural assumptions they have learned from mainstream media sources, which often depict American Indians as they’ve existed in the past, ignoring their current and future places in American society.

Cultural dynamics within America are not the only issues that researchers have addressed regarding problematic, oppressive, and racist pasts. Banks (2004) affirmed that within the context of globalization, cultural awareness of those living within *other* countries, living the identities of *other* nations, will be as important as our cultural

awareness of those with whom we share our country. In world history, racist ideology has often been coupled with nationalism. In any country where immigrants exist, the potential for racial or ethnic discrimination also exists (Hobsbawm, 1994). We can learn a great deal from research performed in other countries that deals with combating racist, oppressive ideologies through art and arts education.

da Silva and Villas-Boas (2006) studied the effects of the visual arts on learning in Portuguese students. They analyzed the “power of using artistic images from different cultures to change students’ perceptions of cultural differences” (p.95). They used United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) 1996 proposal of ‘learning how to live together’ as a beginning point for their study. An experimental treatment group and a control group were used in their study. Their experimental treatment group was exposed to several art objects and images associated with different cultures. All students that participated in this study were eleven years old and identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic group other than Portuguese. They were all attending schools with diverse populations, and were third generation children who “considered themselves to be Portuguese citizens” (da Silva & Villas-Boas, 2006, p.96).

de Siva and Villas-Boas (2006) involved students whose ethnic heritages were from Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, Lusa (Portugal), and S. Tomé. Activities included drawing people from other cultures and an analysis of those drawings. Results “demonstrated that arts-based education may contribute to the development of students’ attitudes regarding respect towards different ethnic/cultural groups” (de Siva & Villas-Boas, 2006, p.101). Like many of their American counterparts, da Silva and

Villas-Boas lamented “this is an important conclusion at a time when the almost blind focus on ‘standards’ has threatened the existence of art in education” (p.102).

When the arts are valued, there is potential to overcome ethnic biases and racist stereotypes. The studies above illustrate that art education has been a powerful change agent. This work is important for school leaders who are concerned about social justice. When critical multicultural arts education is used purposefully and includes deep reflection, racist attitudes can be reconsidered and new understandings can be built. Art and arts education programs can give students who do not benefit from the dominant narrative a forum through which they can create counter-narratives. Creative, counter-narratives provide a rich opportunity for multiple perspectives to be shared and for diversity learning to occur.

The importance of engaging with visual culture and the possibilities that such pedagogical practices can hold for art education have not been fully agreed upon; however, brain research has revealed that pictorial representations involve and may stimulate many different kinds of learning, implying that educators should make use of visual literacy not only as an enrichment strategy but as an essential learning tool (Kindler, 2003). Because art education has offered spaces where this important learning can occur, particularly when it is linked to the goals of critical multicultural pedagogy, it should be seen not as secondary but as essential.

The arts for social change.

In this final section reviewing the research in arts education and arts programs, studies are highlighted that have illustrated how the arts has served as a powerful catalysts for social change, beginning in the schools. The first examples of these studies

were comprised of those that demonstrated pedagogical thinking outside of traditional schooling and explored partnerships with community agencies. This section then reviews research that was directly related to using the arts in ways that got students to participate directly in actions that exemplified democratic practice and worked for the greater good. These examples were designed by arts educators who were committed to social justice education. Their experiences showed that when linked intentionally with social justice educational purposes, the arts offered pedagogy for social transformation. School leaders who have made difficult decisions about cutting regular art instruction in their schools have often turned to such community-based programs as an alternative avenue to expose students to the arts.

Community partnerships have been built into school curricula in at least two ways: community-based learning and community service projects. Community-based learning involves activities that use a community site as a classroom and is useful because it connects the content being learned to the learner's local environment. It has been an empowering practice that "begins with recognizing the realities of the students and parents who are creators of their lives, histories and futures, and not objects of their realities" (James, 2004, p.28). Williams (1998) added that community-based education can make school more meaningful for students because they "can work from the basic perception of a living and dynamic whole as opposed to the decontextualized and often fragmentary offerings of textbooks" (p.71). Studies have shown that community-based practices can improve students' motivation, level of self-esteem, and sense of civic responsibility (Wade, 1995).

Community service learning has been defined as “the integration of meaningful service to one’s school or community with academic learning and structured reflection on the service experience” (Wade, 1995, p.122). For example, in her work as a principal in New York’s Spanish Harlem, Meier (1995) found that there were many benefits when students were required to perform community service as a part of their graduation requirements. Most notable, she observed that the students grew in maturity by learning to consider the needs of others and by taking the responsibility to meet those needs, at least in part. In addition, she concluded that such experiences demonstrated to young adults that they could have a positive effect on their communities and did not have to wait until they became older. They could be powerful exactly where they were (Meier, 1995). Community-based learning and community service learning do not require integration with the arts; however, arts education and arts programs have offered teachers and school leaders opportunities to redefine the roles of traditional schooling and make education more meaningful to the students.

Bastos (2006) is a Brazilian-born professor of art education who has had experience with community-based education. In one project, she worked with her students around conservation of historic buildings exploring *vernacular architecture*, which studies buildings that embody elements of the culture from which they were created. She quoted one of her students, Gabrielle Abowd, to explain:

It is important for art students to realize that buildings are a form of art, and unlike other forms, vernacular architecture has the unique ability of conveying a cultural history that by and large is not recorded in any art history books. (Abowd, as cited in Bastos, 2006, p. 22)

Bastos found this work culturally valuable for her students. She used experiences like this to “prepare teachers for diversity, equity and interconnectedness of local communities, nations and the world” (p.23). Community based experiences like the ones initiated by Bastos have demonstrated that opportunities for deep, transformative learning sometimes has existed outside of traditional classroom walls.

Russell and Hutzler (2007), working with elementary and secondary art educators, have long used service-learning projects in art to develop social emotional learning (SEL) in students. Often times, they have brought students to impoverished areas of the community to perform art-related services as well to seek and draw inspiration from these observations and experiences. To describe the connections between art education, service learning and SEL, Russell and Hutzler (2007) explained that these experiences resulted in a

reciprocal learning experience (where students) recognize the postmodern use of art for social change and political awareness. Thus the utilization of service learning highlights socially relevant purposes of postmodern art while expanding the classroom beyond the borders and walls of the school. (p. 8)

In their observations over the past several years, Russell and Hutzler (2007) noticed that these learning experiences, grounded by social realities and community needs and assets, helped students to develop a profound sense of social responsibility and an empowered self concept as students who learned, through the course of such interactions, that they could be agents of change within their neighborhoods. These experiences also contributed to the development of vital skills including communication and problem solving.

Art education programs have been integrated into community-based education and community service learning projects in several ways. In Wisconsin, Arts@Large is an organization that has partnered art and music specialists with public schools to offer students multidisciplinary art education programs (Arts@Large, 2009). Flavia Bastos has used her position as a university art education teacher to create an organization called Art in the Market where her university students engaged community members of all ages in different art activities, not only to help revive Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood with temporary murals and other projects, but also as means to critically engage her students; Bastos reported that for her mostly middle class art students, the community interaction "sensitizes them to diversity in people, and I think that's the only way we create anything, including artwork, that is accessible to a number of audiences" (Hughes, 2008, p.27).

In a study from Seattle, an arts center's engagement with community schools also suggested reason for powerful advocacy for art education programs. The researchers reported, from observations, that the "stages in making a piece of artistic work – immersion, surprise, deviation, collaboration, research –are also the qualities of good teaching" (McCue, 2007, p.599). By providing an active, lively space, the observations indicated that doing art can also foster student-motivated inquiry.

Again, there have been a variety of ways to provide quality art education programs that have benefitted students and schools. In the studies that follow next, the connections made between art education and social justice are direct and intentional. The examples are clearly linked to instructional purpose. With that in mind, the work

described here was done with the intention of transforming educational institutions into places that were inclusive and democratic in practice.

Teacher narratives suggested that students have become aware of global issues, environmental problems, and histories of oppression through art projects that explored current events and global issues. Whelan (2008) and Wynn (2007) both used projects in art education classrooms that helped students interrogate social injustices after Hurricane Katrina. These art projects, as well as the ones described below, fostered the practice of social justice as they instilled in students the ability and the desire to understand things outside of their communities and to build broad, inclusive perspectives about the greater good on a global level.

Slattery and McElfresh (1999) contended that schools should be sites of “justice, compassion and ecological sustainability” (p.10). They described an artist as a kind of prophet who “calls and inspires others to attend to matters of great significance” (p.7). To demonstrate their position, they used the work of visual artists Edward and Nancy Keinholz and Anselm Keifer. In brief, they asserted that the images created by these artists could be considered prophetic because they challenged “those who viewed their art to consider important social issues” (p.4). They reported that in schools, educators should want their students to discover their voice and be allowed to pay attention and call attention to complex, emotionally charged social issues. They stated that in their observation, “the arts are primary in this space because of their ability to develop voice, sustain passion and evoke response” (Slattery & McElfresh, 1999, p.3).

The arts have helped empower students by giving them new modes of communication. In this way, the arts can be understood as content that has fostered

dialogue about large, deep issues that have affected important areas of their lives. For educators, engaging students in purposeful art projects has also been used as way of getting students to have important conversations, focus directly on the greater good, and combat a “culture of hostility” (Cosier, 2007, pg. 53). Again, art projects connected to purpose have given students objects to talk about and therefore provided a forum through which social justice issues were discussed in personal ways.

Describing the modes of thinking made possible through participation in the arts, Greene (1997) stated:

Personal agency, passion, imagination, and a making of meaning: All of these must be part of full engagement with the arts; and it is difficult to accept a call for excellent teaching and “teaching for America’s future” that pays no heed to the awakenings the arts make possible. (p.33)

Several studies suggested that arts education courses and programs, in fact, nourished social justice thought as well as strengthened complex thinking skills. For example, through music classes where pieces from all over the globe were learned and performed, Richardson (2007) identified eight essential intellectual traits that she observed in her students that produced, as she saw them, “deep, personal exchanges that bell hooks calls ‘radical openness’: intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual empathy, intellectual autonomy, intellectual integrity, intellectual perseverance, confidence in reason and fair-mindedness” (p.213).

Art education that is linked to social justice has also been empowering. Young adults who participated in the “Out is In” project were able to use artistic mediums to communicate that heterosexism, “the privileging of heterosexuality and its attendant

oppression” (Grace & Wells, 2007, p.98) and homophobia, the “aversion and hostility toward persons with same-sex attractions” (Grace & Wells, 2007, p.98) were ubiquitous in the community. The researchers, informed by Freirean concepts of critical social learning (to be discussed in further detail), described their community-based project with the arts:

In our own case, to counter memories of bad experiences with formal education (D’Augelli, 1998; Friend, 1998), we chose informal, arts-informed, community education as a means to help sexual-minority youth and young adults find a way to become more resilient so that they could insert themselves into the world with the intention of making it more LGBITTQ inclusive, accepting, and accommodating. This ambition is in keeping with a new millennial trend to emphasize the developmental assets and resiliency of sexual minority learners in research (Savin-Williams, 2005, 2007). This accent on positive attributes replaces an earlier research emphasis that primarily focused on sexual minority individuals as victims of heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia. (Grace & Wells, 2007, p. 99)

The “Out is In” project demonstrated how the arts could be applied to deliver critical social learning experiences. Their project was an act of social justice because it interrupted the practice of homophobic thought and empowered sexual minority groups by providing them space to voice their experience and confront their communities on a conscience-raising level. It was also methodologically transformative and emancipatory as it shifted focus from traditional victim narratives of sexual minorities to stories of the positive assets and accomplishments of group members.

Eisner (2002) emphasized that the purpose of “learning anything in school is not primarily to enable one to do so well in school...it is to enable one to do well in life” (p.581). In order for students to grow into well-rounded individuals, educators should value art and art appreciation as a means of instilling creative, expansive thinking in our schools, but working towards attaining this goal means rethinking schooling. Greene (1997) declares, “If restructuring our schools is intended as a means of releasing the young to pose their own questions and to be empowered to pursue solutions, I cannot but view informed encounters with the arts as anything but paradigmatic” (p.26). If educators want schools to help all students reach their highest potential, the arts, which intrinsically embody human expressions, must hold a central position in their schools. Placing the arts at the curricular core means transformation on deep social and institutional levels. As school leaders have struggled with social justice and issues of equity, arts programs can be used as vehicles of organizational transformation and help efforts in school wide reform aimed at student achievement as it is demonstrated through standardized tests, projects, and presentations that show deep, interdisciplinary, and democratic understanding.

Educational Leadership

As this inquiry sought to ascertain how urban principals perceive arts education, it is important to discuss relevant theories of educational leadership that point to explanations of how principals have participated in determining to what degree quality arts education has been present at their schools. As such, this section of the literature review discusses principals as instructional leaders as well as organizational leaders. Since this inquiry was informed by social justice, leadership theories related to

democratic practice and transformation are covered in addition to theories that speak directly to social justice leadership.

Principals as instructional and organizational leaders.

There has been a wealth of research attesting to the notion that among the many roles that principals play in schools, their roles as instructional leaders are the most important (Fowler & Walter, 2003; Ruebling, Stow, Kayona & Clark, 2004; Gerwertz, 2008). In a two year study aimed at describing to what extent schools across the United States were implementing NCLB legislation and what effects implementation was having on student performance, Hoang (2010) concluded that

without stability in school leadership, (schools) are less likely to implement components of NCLB. In addition, principal support is needed in order for a school to maintain strong relationships among schools, family, and community partnerships or to improve these efforts. (p. 153)

From a study investigating how principals practiced instructional leadership, involving over 50 schools from an urban district, May and Supovitz (2011) concluded that there is a great deal of variance in both the approaches and the frequency at which principals act as leaders of instruction. They also concluded that higher rates of principal involvement with specific teachers and specified improvement agendas were positively related to changes in teacher practice (May & Supovitz, 2011). These reports demonstrated that in addition to their roles as managers of school safety and resource allocation, principals can and do affect instructional practice among teaching staff at their schools.

Using the statistical interpretation of meta-analysis to determine what effective educational leadership looked like, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) analyzed the

results of 70 principal leadership studies and found that certain direct leadership practices had significant correlations with student achievement improvements. These direct practices included systematically visiting classrooms, frequently interacting with students, publicly celebrating accomplishments of students, and maintaining visibility around the school (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). Not only has leadership affected instruction, but it has also directly influenced student achievement.

For urban school leaders, these results have been consistent. Through collecting data from several schools located in San Antonio, Minneapolis, and New York City, researchers found that both teaching and student achievement could be improved when time was devoted to offering professional development programs for teachers (Quint, Akey, Rappaport & Willner, 2007). Therefore, an important role for urban principals looking to transform student performance has been that of instructional leaders who provide meaningful professional development. It is in this role that they have been able to act as advocates of art education for social justice. They have supported arts instructors at their school and looked for professional development opportunities to expose teachers to ideas that may help them to incorporate the arts into other disciplines (Lorimer, 2009). Principals have also made use of teaching artists or artists in residency and provided them opportunities to collaborate with other teachers and participate in the school culture (Duma & Silverstein, 2008).

While focus on principals as instructional leaders is evident in the literature, so are critiques of narrowly defined roles of school leadership. Breault (2010) warned educational theorists of the “culture of blame”(p.297) that has steered current reform:

As a result, those of us responsible for leadership preparation often grasp at certain concepts that take on more importance than they should. Images such as "outcomes," "performance-based instruction," "partnerships," and "coaching" shape the nature of revised leadership programs without the benefit of an empirically justified or theoretically grounded context in which to examine these reforms. While the constructs have gained some degree of traction in other aspects of education, leadership professors have done little to nothing to make a theoretically or empirically justifiable link between these isolated constructs and leadership preparation. Instead, we operate under a blind faith that these constructs and how we specifically apply them to leadership preparation are appropriate and even necessary. (p. 297)

Like those who criticize NCLB for its focus on assessment and achievement outcomes that may have had little to do with the skill sets students will need in the future, Breault has advocated for theorists to stretch beyond conventional theories of leadership. She is not alone. Horng and Loeb (2010) concluded from several research projects that the most successful school leaders are not simply instructional leaders but are comprehensive organizational managers. According to their findings, principals who understood instructional leadership as only focused on classroom instruction or teacher observations were not as effective as those who understood curricula in a broad sense.

Reitzug (2011) attributed this condition to the effects of NCLB and argued that “when such linear alignment processes become the dominant focus of instructional leadership work-as it did for many of the principals in (his) studies-then it is problematic” (p. 321). Effective principals have taken holistic approaches to leadership by

incorporating the management of human and material resources with strong personal missions rooted in democratic practice.

Transformational and democratic school leadership.

Social transformation has been central for school leaders concerned with democracy, and therefore can be linked to social justice. Starrett (2010) defined the results of democratic education as an “educated citizenry that is capable of intelligent participation in governing the public welfare” (p.310). He went on to suggest that a curriculum that does not include the arts is lacking, and asserted that

the arts and humanities have much to teach the young about the cultural worlds they inhabit, about the variety of expressions of taste, of virtue and vice, of courage and folly. Questions can be raised about their own preferred cultural expressions of themselves, again, to connect with their journey of constructing an identity, of learning how to be someone, to belong, to do some good. (p. 310)

Starrett (2010) concluded that an important aspect of democratic leadership is the personal act of cultivating and articulating a clear democratic vision.

Practicing democratic leadership means that principals, in addition to being instructional leaders, have the responsibility to create communities of leadership within their schools where democratic visions can be applied. According to constructivist theories of leadership, “Leadership is viewed as a shared process among educators – principals and teachers...thus, the organizational structure is flattened and integrated and participants share common values and purposes. The interactive nature of a community promotes continuous improvement...Again, democratic practices are emphasized” (Lambert, et al, 2002, p. 13). Principals who advocate for arts education in their schools

apply constructivist theories of leadership when they enlist arts teachers to serve as teacher leaders during professional development programs across content areas.

Democratic leadership insists on positive social change. Educational transformative leadership theorists Henderson and Gornick (2007) have valued constructivist theories; however, believe that it is limited. While constructivists have realized the integral role that the student and the student's past experiences play in how that student constructs individual meaning, Henderson and Gornick (2007) offered the curricular wisdom paradigm (CW) as a model of leadership that extends beyond traditional ideas of constructivism as it connects "democratic self and social learning" (p.11) with personal experiences to subject matter. Therefore, not only should learning experiences be shaped by what the teacher knows about the students, but it should also be shaped by a bigger picture of democratic values that emphasize equal participation and positive social interaction. According to Henderson and Gornick (2007), conceptions of constructivism that understand the subject or content connections to the student or self as the most important component of creating curricula have fallen short because such conceptions fail to stress three equally important components—that of the community as well as local and global social contexts, where learning takes place. These authors' theories have not rejected constructivism, but rather have overlapped and added to it.

Henderson and Gornick (2007) stressed the important role that relationships play in the schools and, like the constructivists, are advocates of learning communities. Authentic learning communities, according to the authors, include more than the teachers and principals in a school. Citing Furman (1998, in Henderson & Gornick, 2007), the authors shared that

a professional learning community is a community of difference. It is based on the acceptance of others with respect, justice and appreciation of peaceful cooperation within difference. It is inspired by the metaphor an interconnected, interdependent web of persons engaged in a global community. (p.200)

Not only should educational leaders create learning communities among their staff members, but they should include community members, business leaders, and other professionals that hold a stake in the school's performance.

Transformation has been the goal of democratic leadership. Understanding the schools as sites of socially constructed knowledge has led many educational theorists to posit that schools are also places where students can construct democratic understandings (Dewey, 1997/1938;Sizer, 1992; Meier, 1995). For critical educational theorists, this perception of schools and schooling as social production meant that school-based leaders held an ethical responsibility to interrogate and interrupt power structures based on unequal privileges such as Western European heritage, whiteness, heterosexuality, Protestant practice, or other privileged forms of participation within the dominant American culture. Research findings have also suggested that pairing an intentional, critical multicultural pedagogy with arts education has provided places where racist and stereotypical assumptions were challenged and rethought through reflective discussion and making art (Lawton, 2005; Damm, 2006; Richardson, 2007). Through a critical lens, schools could become sites of protest and transformation towards ever better democratic practices (hooks, 1994; Sleeter, 1996). This work addressed social justice leadership, understood as action that disrupted the status quo (Theoharis, 2007).

Principals as agents for social justice.

Principals committed to social justice have used their positions, in part, to resist oppressive action in the schools (Theoharis, 2007). In a qualitative study, Theoharis investigated six urban school principals who defined themselves as committed to social justice and demonstrated, through academic achievement scores at their schools, that there were no significant differences among ethnic or socioeconomic student groups. Theoharis (2010) identified four major areas where these principals used their roles to interrupt injustice. These four areas of injustice included:

1. disparate and low student achievement,
2. a school climate in need of becoming more welcoming to marginalized families and disrupting the disconnect between the school and the community,
3. a deprofessionalized teaching staff, and
4. school structures that marginalize, segregate and impede achievement

(adapted from Theoharis, 2010, p.340).

According to the descriptions of these four actions above, principals practiced social justice when they used art education programs in several ways. This literature review has included examples where quality implementation of arts education has been linked with student achievement (Eisner, 1998, Burton et al., 2000; Patterson, 2001; Bolt & Brooks, 2006; Gullat, 2007.) and community involvement (Welch & Fisher, 1995; Williams, 1998; James, 2004; McCue, 2007). This portion of the literature review demonstrates how school leaders have addressed the third and forth areas of injustice named by Theoharis (2007, 2010). Principals have empowered staff and led change as agents for social justice.

Building on studies from Theoharis (2007; 2010) and others who have put forth results from research centered on social justice and administrative roles in schools, a team of scholars merged to offer a definition of social justice leadership (McKenzie, Christman, Hernandez, Fierro, Capper, Dantley, Gonzolaz, Cambron-McCabe & Sheurich, 2007). Like Theoharis (2007, 2010), they began with principals and school leaders who demonstrated equal academic success among students along racial, ethnic and economic lines. The description that emerged from the work of McKenzie et al. (2007) maintained that social justice leadership included three essential practices that worked to

1. increase student achievement because academic achievement is a form of “currency for success” (p.117) that all students should have access to,
2. “raise the critical consciousness of the students and staff” (p.117) through using learning communities, and
3. “act as a disrupting and destabilizing intervention into a racist, classist, sexist, homophobic and ableist education system in this country” (p.117).

To a large extent, these characteristics are related to the four areas of injustice laid out by Theoharis (2007). As demonstrated through his inclusion of the fourth and final area of injustice, central to social justice practices are acts of “disrupting and subverting arrangements which promote marginalization and exclusionary processes” (Theoharis, 2007, p.223). The investigative team lead by McKenzie et al. (2005) also included “disrupting” the status quo as an essential part of social justice leadership. Principals and school leaders can act as advocates for social justice when they use their roles as

curriculum and instructional leaders to offer professional development that empowers faculty and can lead to social transformation.

Transformation inspired by social justice has not been easy for school leaders to achieve. Administrative preparation programs often only give superficial treatment to matters of social inequality related to social justice (Marshall, 2004). Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) reported, for example, that when race is included in preparation programs, typically only a superficial understanding of inequitable treatment is included and does not investigate deeper into the pervasive and institutional nature of racism in society. Another study described new leaders as often unprepared and lacking “tools to analyze racial or ethnic conflict (or) specific strategies for building positive interethnic communities” (Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather & Walker, 2002, p.4).

In reporting about the essentials of social justice leadership, Jean-Marie (2008) identified “developing relationships that (drive) goodness and (foster) spiritual connection” (p. 352) as an important skill for school leaders to demonstrate. Professional relationships do not develop in isolation but only grow when opportunities for genuine collaborations are provided. Principals encourage positive, professional relationships among staff members when they work together to meet student needs. In conclusion, quality, effective leadership is based on student achievement along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, has needed to extend beyond achievement to reach democratic goals for social justice change, and is the result of collaborative efforts.

Connections among Social Justice Education, School Leadership, and Arts

Education

Social justice education has been defined as educating to end oppression (Wallace, 2000). In this way, schools can be understood as social institutions that have affected the degree to which the goals of social justice are met within society. North (2008) summarized consistent elements in the majority of models for social justice and identified “empowerment for the least advantaged” and diminishing the “pervasive social inequality in U.S. institutions and the larger world” (p.1184). When art education offer curricula that can empower and engage students in critical thinking that interrogates forms of institutional oppression, it can be a means towards emancipation on personal and social levels; and, therefore, is in line with the goals of social justice.

In this final section of the literature review, three pedagogical theories connected to social justice education, including constructivism, critical pedagogy, and critical multicultural education, are discussed. The work of three main educational theorists has been employed to illustrate these philosophies. First, constructivist theories of knowledge are connected to Dewey’s (2005/1934, 1997/1938) work because of his advocacy for learning through engaging experiences, especially in his advocacy of arts education and his commitment to schooling as democratic practice. Although he never called his work *constructivist*, connections can be made because both the theory and his educational philosophy understand learning as essentially experiential (Fosnot, 2006).

Second, critical pedagogy is explored through the foundational scholarship of Freire (1995/1970) who critiqued traditional systems of education that posited students as empty receptors of knowledge handed down by teachers, disregarding and essentially

oppressing the different experiences and ways of knowing that students bring into classrooms, and shaped their understandings to fit a status quo. His work with mostly economically disadvantaged and illiterate populations in Brazil pushed constructivists to not only place the learner at the center of the learning experience but furthered the notion that education should honor those individual experiences and be used to guide individual education to be essentially an emancipating force, uncovering social inequalities and empowering those who are oppressed.

Finally, critical multicultural education is reviewed, informed by the work of Banks (2004) who posited that simple engagement with diversity has not necessitated critical engagement and warned that without that critical component, superficial multicultural education has often reinforced the stereotypes which it had purported to challenge. These theories are reviewed here as guidelines that principals, as instructional and organizational leaders, can draw from to frame an understanding of educational practices rooted in social justice. Art educators who have understood their work as connected to these theories are also included here.

Constructivism.

Constructivist theories of knowing have empowered individuals by placing the learner's knowledge at the center of pedagogical practice (Fosnot, 1996). Constructivist theory asserted that all knowledge exists, or is constructed, within the minds of learners. Objects do not have intrinsic value. Truth is subjective and relative to experience (Woolfolk, 1995). An object, symbol, or idea achieves meaning built upon socially assigned beliefs held by the self and others. Therefore, teaching should always be centered on engaging the learner in a contextualized space, or medium, where content is

grounded within a conceptual environment that already has meaning to the learner (Yilmaz, 2008).

Art education has lent itself to practicing a pedagogy informed by constructivist theories of learning. The study of art is a process of looking, interpreting, communicating, making, and more. It is through these ways of interacting meta-cognitively with objects, symbols, and ideas that art education programs have helped students construct knowledge. Art educator, Sydney Walker (2003) used a project to help her students engage in constructivist thinking. Her students chose a big idea and then created six 3D representations related to that idea, using any medium, documenting in deep, reflective writing their thinking and decision making process. Having the students identify a big idea through initial reflections on intersecting opinions about the self and the world, students chose their big ideas based on concepts they were intrinsically interested in, rather than concepts that were extrinsically assigned to them. The ideas underlining constructivist theories of knowledge have implied that learning happens when students are engaged in activities that are meaningful to them on different levels where the “symbols and concepts are interpreted and created by the self and others through a variety of different mediums” (Fosnot, 2006, pp. 58-59). In this sense, Walker’s work helped students become thoughtful participants who were actively engaged critics of their environment

Art teachers who employed a critical, constructivist practice helped students to make connections across differences and unknowns, to see other perspectives, and to build new understandings. Olivia Gude (2009) offered insights:

The realm from which student artists can make personal meaning is greatly enlarged by the introduction through art education experiences of a wide range of contemporary and traditional art ideas. In drawing on and contributing to the reservoir of signifiers and significations, the artist maker shapes self and re-shapes the culture, subtly shifting all future use of these signifiers, all future collective meaning making. (p.9)

In this view, students as artists work as proactive constructors of cultural meaning as they build rich understandings of how and why objects and ideas are ascribed unique, symbolic significance within specific societies. Some theories of language have suggested that words also hold particular meanings within cultural contexts and can be considered as a system of codes where every word or letter is open to subjective interpretation (Slattery, 2006). In this sense, all language is a kind of personal metaphor; because it does not directly contain knowledge but rather, points to it.

In her studies regarding the use of metaphor in narrative, Greene (1997) asserted that even science is only one of many symbol systems used to construct meaning. Greene (1997) states that “a metaphor enables us to understand one thing better by likening it to what it is not....A metaphor not only involves a reorientation of consciousness, it also enables us to cross divides, to make connections between ourselves and others, and to look through other’s eyes” (p.393). Like metaphors, the arts involve communication through symbols that reference personal and cultural meaning. Constructivist, critical communication can happen through the arts and can help build better understandings while, at the same time, complicate and offer new questions. Social justice, rooted in a commitment to democratic practice, through a constructivist understanding of

knowledge, has urged educators to understand and honor multiple perspectives of knowledge and truth and to understand knowledge as socially constructed.

Although John Dewey wrote much of his theories on education decades ago, mostly during the Progressive Era, his ideas still shape educational scholarship today (Breault & Breault, 2005). Dewey understood intelligence as experiential, more than an ability to read and write well. He believed that a skillful artist was extremely intelligent because, as he saw it, artists had other understandings that extended beyond the scope of narrowly defined literacy. Dewey contended:

Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in production of works of arts is based upon the identification of thinking with use of one special kind of material, verbal signs and words. To think effectively in terms of relations of qualities is as severe a demand upon thought as to think in terms of symbols, verbal and mathematical. Indeed since words are easily manipulated in mechanical ways, the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being “intellectuals.” (p.47)

When Dewey recognized the thinking skills involved in making art, he distinguished those skills from those required for thinking verbally and mathematically. According to his understanding, art thinking involved understanding relations of qualities while verbal and mathematical thinking employed knowledge of symbols. In this view, art thinking relied on making links among several mechanical, aesthetic, and other qualities. His concluded that doing art was more difficult than verbal and mathematical tasks (Dewey, 2005/1934).

Dewey has been most well-known for being a progressive educator who championed democratic potentials of schooling. Like the critical theorists and the critical multicultural theorists who came after him, as a Progressive, Dewey saw the school as a place to equip students with the tools to live in a more perfect democracy. For him, this particular understanding of the schools as essentially democratic sites meant igniting imagination and allowing each student individual freedom to reach self fulfillment (Dewey, 1997/1938). Dewey also believed that schools should promote intellectual growth. A dilemma followers of Dewey have struggled with has been how to give up traditional classroom control and develop approaches that could foster intrinsic motivation and allow students to be the driving force of their education (Vartuli & Rohs, 2007). Some art education programs may have found that balance.

Although Dewey has not been well-known for any direct critiques on social forms of oppression such as racism or sexism or any of the other subordination addressed by critical pedagogy and critical multicultural education, he did recognize inequality and the need to break social divides. Here, he found an essential role for the arts and describes the power of art as nearly spiritual, understanding the arts as possessing a power to unite. Dewey (1934/2005) wrote:

Expression strikes below the barriers that separate human beings from one another. Since art is the most universal form of language, since it is constituted, even apart from literature, by the common qualities of the public world, it is the most universal and freest form of communication....That art weds (humans) and nature is a familiar fact. Art also renders (humans) aware of their union with one another in origin and destiny. (p.282)

It is important to make note here that Dewey's use of the "universal" is problematic in a postmodern paradigm that rejects notions of any universal shared experience or truth. Accepting universality too often assumes a white, Western lens that is racist, sexist, heteronormative and oppressive in other ways and limits how multicultural art is understood. However, this quote revealed Dewey's idea that people could communicate through the arts in ways that are not possible using mathematics or language alone. It is that quality of communication beyond words that Dewey described that can be linked to new student understandings made possible through arts experiences.

As a scholar, art advocate Elliot Eisner (2002) was influenced by Dewey's perspective. Like most of the theories discussed in this review, Eisner's philosophy of education has involved equipping students to be great social problem solvers. This education is done, according to his view, through the arts because the arts allow students to use their imaginations. Like art educators who value visual culture, Eisner has asserted that the arts are valuable because they can provide curricula that offer alternative modes of understanding and communicating as art provides:

...frames for reading the world. These frames, theories, concepts, images, and narratives parse the world in particular ways. Becoming socialized within a culture means acquiring these frames, for they allow you to join and participate in a discourse community where discourse refers to the sharing of any form in which meaning is encoded and can be decoded. Common frames make shared way of life possible.

(p.85)

Like Dewey, Eisner suggested that participation with the arts can offer opportunities to understand ourselves, our world, and the other people we encounter in our world. Like the constructivist theory, knowledge is a construction based on relationships between different individuals and their relationships with and interpretations of physical objects and experiences. With this definition of knowledge in mind, Eisner and Dewey recognize many ways of knowing. The arts offer a unique way of communicating ideas and concepts with others:

We appeal to poetry to say what cannot be expressed in literal language. We secure from images ideas and other forms of experience that elude discursive description. We experience through music qualities of lived experience that cannot be rendered in quantitative form. In short, our sensibilities and the forms of representation associated with them make distinctive contributions to what we notice, grasp, and understand.

(Eisner, 2002, p.204)

Engaging in art processes has helped students comprehend their environments in deep and rich ways. In an attempt to understand why students have benefitted from visual art education, Hetland, Winner, Veneema and Sheridan (2007) examined several art classes in schools that placed exceptional value on the arts and identified eight types of learning that were common in all classrooms they studied; students were able to: develop craft, engage and persist, envision, express, observe, reflect, stretch and explore, and understand the arts community. These abilities have created in students “the capacity to understand one thing that represents another (and) the capacity to make things that

represents others” (Rabkin, 2008). Again, communication beyond the limits of direct language is possible through making and experiencing art.

Eisner’s ideas have been supported by the work of art educators who have used art as a way to help students communicate personal ideas and grasp complicated concepts as they offer alternate ways of looking at the world, allowing for personal reflection and meaning making. This meaning-producing reflective process can apply to art education when art teachers allow their students to use their work as symbolic expressions of ideas to others in the classroom or the school. Arts teachers, especially in visual art, have the potential to have their students engage in critical conversations in this way, as some of the studies cited above reveal (Barrett, 2004; Delacruz, 2010).

Critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is a theory that was built largely around the liberating work Paulo Freire did with Brazil’s illiterate and poor populations (1995/1970). Prior to Freire’s work, knowledge was largely considered as finite, independent of interpretation, and could be handed from the teacher to the student, hence the traditional lecture hall. This static notion of the learner as separate from what is learned was challenged with the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1995/1970). In this classic book, Freire specifically challenged the “banking method of education” where students are seen as empty receptacles and become filled with knowledge handed down or deposited by the mythical all-knowing teacher. Instead of this rigid understanding of knowledge as separate from culture and social context, Freire contended that when students enter schools in any area or any time, they bring their current and past lived experiences with

them. These experiences frame each of their individual methods of inquiry as well as their personalized interpretations of handed down knowledge (Freire, 1995/1970).

Within this paradigm of learning, teachers' roles become participatory in learning as a process where they are able to tie what they know about the subject to the unique knowledge that the students already hold and bring to the classroom. In short, the traditional role of the teacher at the head of the classroom with the students sitting in rows taking notes during a lecture is poor teaching practice. Beyond that, for the teacher, the classroom is also a space to learn along with the students. This mutual learning happens when teachers approach education through a critical lens that understands knowledge as a social construction. Using the ideas of visual culture, Taylor (2007), whose work using music videos was described above, explained:

Co-learning, or learning with and from our students about some of the visual forms that matter most to them such as music video can inform and indeed transform viewing practices taught and learned in art education...what students see or value in music video as taboo and anarchy may be represented as activism, propaganda, and/or simply inventive ways of working in the world of art. (p.232)

One way that principals and teachers have made curriculum transformative has been to understand teaching as a series of opportunities to learn with students to rethink their own assumptions, identify and challenge personal biases, and expand their understandings.

According to Freire's ideas about learning, unless students engage in learning experiences that are based on recognizing the students' backgrounds, schooling has the dangerous potential of practicing cultural invasion (Freire, 1995/1970). Freire's work has challenged educators who care about social justice to think critically about power in

schooling and issues around what knowledge is claimed, by who, and which groups hold advantages and disadvantages based on that knowledge claim (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 1995). For example, if schools make decisions to implement American history curricula that are based only on experiences of White men, vital knowledge would be missing and understanding would become biased (Foner, 1988; Lowen, 1999). The work cited in the first part of this literature review, particularly the studies concerned with media literacy and visual culture, shows that art education can invite students to think about power and resist the many media messages (including textbooks and other educational materials) trying to shape their identities. Educators concerned with social justice can use schools to not only uphold democracy through constructivist pedagogy and active participation but can also move to dismantle structures of ideological oppression and unearned privilege (McIntosh, 2004).

Using critical pedagogy in a postmodern era, students have been empowered to see themselves as creators of messages, not just passive receptors. Eisenhower (2006) linked this idea in her practice to a postmodern understanding:

Within a postmodern and/or poststructuralist understanding of the subject, speaking of the students as vulnerable to popular culture, as needing decoding skills, and as manipulated by 'messages' is destabilized by the inability to maintain the unity of the category of *students* and *teachers*. The diversity of the category, *students*, in regard to age, culture, gender, learning style, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status and wellness, among others, destabilizes the category's function. (p.164)

In this sense, a postmodern lens requires a critical constructivist lens so that false modes of social power that are oppressive can be revealed. In Eisenhower's classroom, students were taught to think of themselves as powerful shapers of meaning. Understandings of legitimate knowledge were not bound only to those in authority. Gordon (1999) stated that anyone who is concerned with social justice should also be concerned with schooling and makes connections between the goals of critical pedagogy and social justice as they both "openly assert human emancipation as a guiding value" (p. 184). This type of learning can subvert existing power structures and can allow for new structures of understanding based on democracy and equity to emerge.

Critical multicultural pedagogy.

As a critical multicultural educational theorist, and advocate for social justice schooling, Banks (2004) declared that one of those new structures of understanding should be applied to literacy and that the perception of literacy reflected by several standardized tests is too narrow. Instead, Banks (2004) has called for a more holistic definition of literacy and a more human method of reasoning:

Literate citizens in a diverse democratic society should be reflective, moral, and active citizens in an interconnected global world. They should have the knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to change the world –from different cultures, races, religions, and nations –being able to get along and to work together to solve the world's intractable problems such as global warming, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, poverty, racism, sexism, and war. (p.298)

According to Banks (2004), social justice requires school leaders to redefine their conceptions of literacy. Additionally, a pluralist, multicultural society, like the United States, depends on this.

The classrooms highlighted, and the activities described in the first part of this review showed that art education programs have delivered opportunities for students to identify their personal perspectives, consider those of others, make connections, and build new understandings that are based on learning through cognitive, physical, emotional, and social ways. When students are allowed to acknowledge their personal roles in creating any outsiders' perceptions, they are empowered with the self-awareness to at least partially define themselves within their surroundings rather than be controlled by their surroundings and others' perceptions (Friere, 1970/1995). This realization requires meaningful, critical, transformative, self-reflective practice that can be fostered through arts education and programs when they are informed by critical pedagogy.

School leaders committed to social justice may also use the arts as professional development that can benefit teachers through critical engagement with visual culture. In urban areas, multicultural education requires curricula that recognize how many teachers come ill-equipped to teach within diverse environments. Sleeter (1996) offered the helpful diagram to illustrate how members of the dominant position in social contexts are likely to view inequality versus the perspective likely to be held by a member in the minority:

Table 1: Views Based on social position		
TOPIC/POSITION	Dominant Position	“Minority Position”
Nature of Society	<i>Fair, open</i>	<i>Unfair, rigid</i>
Nature of “have not” groups	<i>Lack ambition, effort, culture, language, ect.</i>	<i>Strong, resourceful</i>

From Sleeter, 1996⁵

After several ethnographic studies with mostly White, public school teachers, Sleeter (1996) asserted that “teachers bring to their work a worldview that is constructed within unequal racial relationships, but they usually do not recognize it as such” (p.78).

Research from art education professors Cosier and Nemeth (2010) also revealed how many student teachers are often ill-equipped to deal with cultural differences that they will encounter in their classrooms. According to supporters of critical multicultural education, Sleeter’s work is still relevant as teachers need to learn more about diversity, too.

One way that teachers and student teachers have done this critically engaging work is by including themselves in the process of self-reflective storytelling and use the practice to help them identify ways in which their unconscious biases may be enforcing racist and oppressive practices (Henderson & Gornick, 2007). As described in the section above, personal, reflective, and purposeful storytelling can be an effective way to encourage critical thinking, to understand how racism has operated in the past, and to deconstruct how it currently works within society. Counter-narrative (Bell et al, 2008) telling, or telling stories of personal experiences that challenge the status quo, is a form of the creative arts that can promote multicultural understandings (Whitehead, 2012).

⁵ Table from Sleeter, 1996, p.120

When the status quo goes unchecked, elite groups control knowledge. The control of knowledge and false knowledge that is passed on to students through text as well as schooling practices can lead to injustice and social oppression (Apple, 1990). Educational leaders who examine curricula through a postmodern, critical lens recognize democratic opposition embedded in curricula through hidden agendas and the null curriculum (Henderson & Gornick, 2007). In order for school leaders to avoid the oppressive curricular choices addressed by Apple (1990), the *hidden curriculum*, or the tacit information in schooling practices (i.e. how to act like a man or a woman, what it means to be successful or attractive) needs to be considered. On an even deeper level, uncovering the *null curriculum* requires schools to be places that recognize and honor groups that have been largely ignored in the past (i.e. non-heterosexuals, linguistic minorities, etc.) (Tatum, 2000). At the same time, these leaders need to understand that knowledge is always incomplete and always made up of multiple and, often times, competing perspectives (Slattery, 2006).

In the standards-based era when the arts are not tested, they often become part of the hidden curriculum. Apple (1993) citing Bourdieu, states: “art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberatively or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social difference” (p.223). For example, scholars who have studied the history and culture of public museums often describe an elitism that existed in those environments, alienating those who were not members of the educated, upper class (Roberts, 1997). As noted, studying and responding to the work of artist Fred Wilson could give students whose histories have been marginalized in museums and other institutions a powerful tool to understand and challenge the status quo.

In many urban schools, because the value of art has always been not directly expressed, the false and dangerous implication has been that art, while good, is extra, and extras are not for mostly poor, mostly minority students. This has implied that many urban students need to demonstrate math and literacy skills before they can have an extra. Part of the hidden curriculum that gets taught under such assumptions is that art is for the privileged. While students in arts-deprived schools may not have had any direct instruction in art education programs, they may have indirectly learned that they are not poets or painters or music makers. They may not know much about art, but they may have learned, through this practice of social difference, that art is not for them. Worse still, students who are not exposed to the arts in meaningful ways may not think about it at all, a condition that threatens to erase the arts from their experience, and to push the arts into the null curriculum (Tatum, 2000).

Nelson (2009) used his role as an assistant superintendent to advocate for the arts because of the emotional benefits students who participate in these programs receive, most notably, a sense of empowerment. Encouraging equitable practices and equal access, he recommended that principals ensure that art is for everyone in the schools, not just the gifted and talented (Nelson, 2009). While so many arts programs are underfunded in urban areas, making sure that all students have access to quality arts is an act of interrupting injustice and is in line with social justice education that principals can directly participate in.

Principals' attitudes and value for the arts have worked to shape arts education at their schools and have helped determine the quality of arts education curricula (Luehrman, 2002). If principals have not valued arts education, or have failed to see

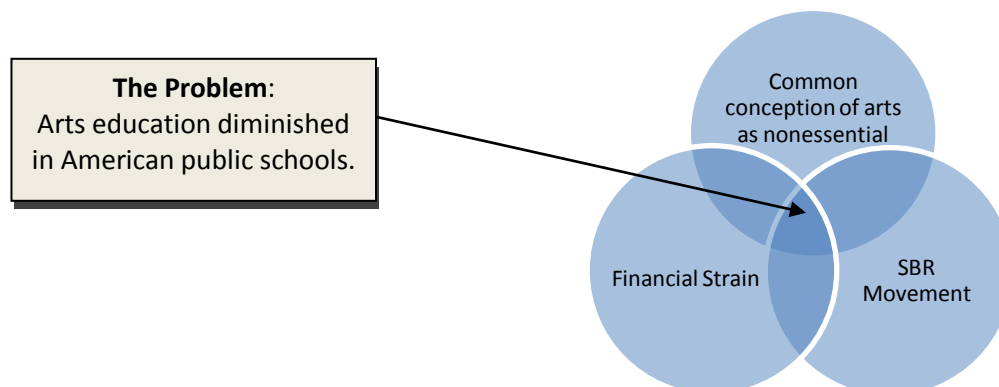
links between the arts and social justice, it becomes likely that arts education will not be made a priority and will not reach its fullest potential. Urban school leaders stand in positions to advocate for quality art education and arts programs, but first, they have to value the arts in their schools. Because principals, as instructional and curricular leaders, play unique roles in delivering arts education, research was needed to help describe how urban leaders perceived the arts and arts education, particularly in an AYP and financially strained school system. Such research was helpful to indicate how urban educational leaders perceive relationships among the arts, arts education, and social justice.

Chapter III—Methodology

Review of the Problem

Three overlapping circumstances have made it a challenge to deliver quality arts education in public schools today. As a result of Cold War era policies influenced by the Space Race and the Arms Race, since the 1960's, arts education has been undervalued compared to math and science as a content area in public schools (Grey, 2010). More recently, surveys suggest that policy makers value art but see it as extra compared to math, science, and literacy (ESC, 2006). These long-held social conceptions of art as nonessential are coupled with the fact that NCLB policies and the reform movements that followed have been fixed on achievement on standardized tests, effectively narrowing curricula to include only what is tested (Hamilton, et al., 2008; Ravitch, 2010). The SBR movement exists in an environment where public schools have made drastic budget cuts within a context of a strained economy (Singsen, 2010; Lee, 2010). As shown in figure 3.1, the culminating result of these factors is that the existence of the arts and arts education in public schools have severely dwindled (Holcomb, 2007; Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006).

Figure 1: Illustration of the Research Problem



Demands imposed by requirements to meet AYP, resulting from the SBR movement (especially under NCLB legislation), have narrowed curricula in urban schools more drastically than in suburban schools because suburban schools have been more likely to already meet AYP demands; therefore, they have not had to direct as many human and financial resources towards improving or reforming the areas that are most commonly tested, mainly mathematics and literacy (Chapman, 2004 & 2005). Compared to suburban schools, urban schools have been more likely to serve populations that are more racially and ethnically diverse and have higher concentrations of students living in poverty (Miron & St. John, 2003). This trend means that discrepancies in terms of access to quality arts education have been made apparent along racial, ethnic, and socio-economic lines. Part of the problem also lies in the fact that urban schools have been grossly underfunded compared to their suburban counterparts; differences in some states have shown urban schools' per pupil monetary allotment to be a mere tenth of what it is in surrounding suburban areas (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Research has shown that quality arts programs can elicit several academic and social benefits for students (Upitis, 2003; Chessin & Zander, 2006; Gullat, 2008). Arts education has also been linked to student acquisition of higher order cognitive skills, including visual literacy, which are critically important skills for students to develop in order to participate in a global economy that relies on understanding and communicating through a variety of visual media, symbols, and signs (Robinson, 2001). Decreasing access to arts education in urban areas has unjustly barred students in urban areas from access to important skills (Bollow-Tempel, 2010).

The fact that urban students have had less access to quality arts education should concern urban school leaders, especially those committed to social justice. Urban principals stand at a crossroads between the policies they are handed from federal, state, and local agencies and the practices they encourage among/in teachers and other staff. In a study exploring the unique roles that principals play in school change, Fullan (2010) asserted that “from practice to theory, from doubt to conviction, the key to the speed of quality change is embedded in the power of the principal helping to lead the organization and system transformation” (p.15). School leaders stand in unique positions where they guide instruction in the schools. Regardless of the research, if principles do not understand the benefits of arts education, they are less likely to advocate for it or make decisions that will support it.

Review of the Research Question

In order to understand the problem of arts education disappearing in urban public schools more fully, research aimed at understanding the perspectives that principals and other school leaders hold towards the arts and arts education was called for to address the following research questions:

How do urban principals and school leaders perceive the value of the arts within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

This question is supplemented by the following attendant questions:

1a. How do urban school leaders make decisions about offering arts education at their schools?

1b. What do urban school leaders consider when they make these decisions?

2a. How are urban school leaders maintaining access to arts education within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

2b. To what extent are urban school leaders who are maintaining this access aware of the relationships between arts education and social justice?

Answering the research question and its attendant questions called for a qualitative approach informed further by case study methodology. Critical social theory and the tenets of social justice also framed this inquiry.

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative studies are appropriate when investigating phenomenon that are not able to be described quantitatively. Although qualitative studies include a wide variety of methods, all qualitative research rests on two common characteristics. Qualitative research is essentially *interpretive* as it is a “form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live” (Holloway, 1997, p.2). Qualitative studies are also *naturalistic* because they are, in the words of Malterud (2001):

developed within the social and human sciences, and... (include) various strategies for systematic collection, organization and interpretation of textual material obtained while talking with other people or through observation. The aim of such research is to investigate the meaning of social phenomenon as experienced by the people themselves.

(p. 398)

As an interpretive study, absolute truth and decisive judgments were not the aims of this research; rather it was a complicated investigation into how school leaders felt about arts

education. As a naturalistic inquiry, this study relied on dialogue and observation. This research involved studying individuals and their unique perceptions of the arts and the values they perceived of the arts in education. Since these perceptions were difficult to quantify numerically, qualitative methods were appropriate.

Social constructivist research paradigm.

All inquiries are situated within a particular epistemological paradigm. Guba, used the work of several educational research experts to describe a paradigm, or world view, as a “basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990, p.17, cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 19). A paradigm includes the “philosophical assumptions, epistemologies and ontologies” (Crotty, 1998, cited in Creswell, 2007, p.19) *as well as* “broadly conceived research methodologies (and) alternative knowledge claims” (Neuman, 2000, cited in Creswell, 2007, p.19).

From an epistemological perspective, this research reflected an understanding of knowledge as socially constructed and subjective, based on individual experiences, perceptions, and values. This perspective reflected a social constructivist paradigm that Creswell (2007) described as a world view where

individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop substantive meanings of their experiences –meanings directed toward certain objects of things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing the meaning into a few categories or ideas. The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not

simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through the historical and cultural norms that operate in individual's lives. (p.20-21)

By combining and identifying the intersections of several principals' unique perspectives about the values of arts education within the given political and economic conditions, valuable insight could be gained.

Critical theory informed by social justice.

The conceptual orientation of this inquiry rested on a commitment to social justice. In its largest sense, the purpose of this research has been to encourage democratic and social change. Theoharis (2007) has asserted that social justice is an action that includes three practices:

- engaging in critical inquiry about social issues and marginalizing practices
- interrupting unfair, marginalizing practices, and
- practicing democratic action.

By engaging in the inquiry using a critical lens, this research has made a small step towards social justice practice. According to the definition offered by Theoharis (2007), the decreasing opportunities for urban students to participate in quality arts education courses and programs should be understood as a marginalizing practice and should concern educators, especially those who are committed to social justice.

This research applied critical theory, which was appropriate for an inquiry rooted in social justice. Critical theorists have supported positions grounded by Marxist understandings of social class conflict, which has created oppressed and oppressor roles among groups of people (Audi, 1997). As a result of these socio-economic conflicts

among people, critical theorists have asserted that society is structured by unequal distributions of power based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other differences where certain characteristics are privileged and others are marginalized, leading to the oppression of certain groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Critical theory has developed into several branches. This research was particularly concerned with critical social theory. As with critical pedagogy, the work of Freire frames critical social theory. Critical social theorists are, similar to the ideas of Friere, who was “concerned about a social transformation, demythologizing of reality and an awakening of critical consciousness whereby people perceive the social, political and economic contradictions of their time and take action against the oppressive elements” (Brown, 2006, p. 710). The goal of research, from a critical theoretical perspective, has been to change oppressive conditions and generate something similar to what Habermas understood as “emancipatory knowledge” (Willis, 2007). Emancipatory knowledge has helped to empower individuals to resist oppressive practices and change marginalizing conditions.

Role of researcher bias in qualitative research.

Because of the subjective nature of knowledge assumed under this paradigm, qualitative researchers have asserted that researcher bias is always present and always has significance; they have also claimed that the point of research is “not to eliminate the values and expectations that a researcher brings to a study, as with the objective approach in the positivist tradition, but rather to appreciate and discuss how these influence the conduct and conclusions of the study (Toma, 2006, p.417). Qualitative researchers who operate within a social constructivist paradigm have asserted that individual “truth” is

always incomplete and is a perpetual process and, as such, requires that qualitative methodologies reflect a rejection of absolute truth present in positivist paradigms (Willis, 2007). Guba and Lincoln (1994) eloquently articulated that as researchers

we should be prepared to admit that values do play a significant part in inquiry, to do our best to expose and explicate them (largely a matter of reflexivity), and, finally, to take them into account to whatever extent we can. (p.186)

Qualitative methodologies must include strategies for dealing with researcher bias. There are many strategies to choose from. In qualitative research, it has been understood that researchers' values and personal experiences play a role in what types of research choices are made. As such, researchers have been understood as research instruments whose assumptions and biases should be clearly explained directly in the research report (Malterud, 2001).

Researcher perspectives.

Researcher bias always influences the interpretations and the outcomes of a study. One way of dealing with this bias has been to address it and make the research audience aware of biases by directly reporting the perspective of the researcher in the publication or manuscript (Toma, 2006). It is important to offer a description of my personal perspectives at the time of this research. I came to this study believing that students can and do benefit from participation with the arts. As noted in the literature review, research has demonstrated that arts education can foster divergent thinking skills (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2000). The skills that students practice through participation in the arts are important in a global economy and citizenship that relies on visual

communication, interpretation of signs and symbols, and highly creative problem solving skills to create solutions to new and complex problems.

As an advocate for the arts, I have been concerned with the severe cuts to the arts in urban schools, due to financial strain, the SRB movement, and believed that the perspectives of arts-as-extra, has been problematic. These cuts have become a social justice issue in light of the fact that they are disproportionately affecting access to the arts in schools for urban students compared to their suburban counterparts.

A Nested Case Study Design

This study was a qualitative inquiry that made use of case study methodology and relied on analysis of mostly narrative data. Case studies are well suited to research informed by critical theory because they allow for integrative inquiry to explore the “interdependencies of inequalities” where data has been collected from social, economic, and cultural sources (McDonough & Gildersleeve, 2006, p. 63). According to Yin (2003), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.18). This inquiry was an exploration of why urban high school principals valued arts education and how they were making decisions about arts education at their buildings within a political and economic environment that has undervalued arts education. Principals who participated in this study revealed unique, individual perspectives. Obtaining this type of qualitative information required a flexible methodology that could adapt as information unfolded. Therefore, this case study made use of semi-structured interviews with participants and

site observation notes from school tours. It also utilized a researcher's field log that was maintained throughout the study.

Case studies involve data that are "bounded" to a single site that fits the criteria related to the inquiry (Heck, 2006, pg. 379). Accordingly, this research was conducted in a single, urban school district, which provided the bounded site, or the context of the study. Principals made up the main unit of analysis, or cases, in this inquiry. Supplemental information came from the environment, including other staff participant interviews, site observations, and information about the district publically available online.

A requirement of quality case study research has been the need for participants to be interviewed and observed within their natural environments in order to achieve an accurate picture of the phenomenon being researched (Yin, 2003). To meet this requirement, principals were interviewed in their offices at the high schools where they worked. Site tours further served to fulfill this requirement.

Patton (2002) explained case studies can be "nested or layered" (p.447). Cases are *nested* within one site, or sites of different cases are *layered*. For example, in this study, cases were nested within one district. If, for example, cases from another district were collected, the first and second district analyzed could be layered to explore cases on a larger scale. In either event, before any cross-case comparisons can be made, Patton (2002) stated:

The analyst's first and foremost responsibility consists of doing justice to each individual case. All else depends on that....The full report may include several case studies that are then compared and contrasted, but the basic unit of analysis

of such a comparative study remains the distinct cases and the credibility of the overall findings will depend on the quality of the individual case studies. (p.448-450)

Again, in this study, principals made up the individual unit of analysis in this nested case study research design. Analysis began at the individual level through transcript reviews and field journaling. The final research results were generated by making comparisons and noting connections or conflicts among participants through content analysis in two phases of systematically coding the data.

Participant selection.

Rather than the random sampling required in quantitative research, qualitative researchers have used purposive sampling (Thomas, 2006). Participants in this study made up what Maxwell (1996) has referred to as a representative sample, which means that the participant group was not made up of completely typical or extremely unique examples, but that the group displayed a semblance of the variance of the population within the case (as cited in Thomas, 2006). Purposive sampling was done in order to find principal participants that could speak about arts education programs at their buildings and within the district.

As a type of purposive sampling, criterion sampling was used to select participants. Patton (2001) has defined criterion sampling as a valid, non-random method for choosing research participants. Principals, who made up the main unit of analysis in this research, met three criteria before they were selected to participate in this study. They all worked within the same urban district. They were all principals of large (200+ students per grade level) public, high schools where arts education courses were still

available. Finally, the principals had prior administrative experience and, therefore, had experience with arts education over a period of time or over their careers.

Participants who met the criteria were identified in different ways. Initially, people who had access to principals in the district, or *gatekeepers* (Seidman, 2006), suggested individuals who would make appropriate candidates for participation. Additionally, a list of more potential participants was contacted after publically available information about the schools in the district was reviewed. Participants were contacted by phone and selected until six participants were secured.

Qualitative researchers have commonly used two criteria to determine how many participants are required to complete a study. These criteria are sufficiency and saturation of information (Seidman, 2006). That is, a researcher should continue to collect data from as many sources as possible until information becomes repeated and nothing new seems to be revealed through further research (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). When individuals are interviewed in order to learn about a particular event or trend, each individual can carry significance, as Seidman (2006) adds:

Phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to stories of relatively few participants. Researchers can figure out ahead of time the range of sites and people they would like to sample and set a goal for a certain number of participants in the study. At some point, however, the interviewer may recognize that he or she is not learning anything decidedly new and that the process of interviewing itself is becoming laborious rather than pleasurable. That is a time to say “enough.” (Bertaux, 1981, p.55-56)

A total of six principal participants were selected and interviewed twice. Additionally, three of these principals suggested interviewing other staff members in their building, who each were interviewed once. Therefore, this research included collecting a total of 15 semi-structured interviews.

Contributions of other participants.

In this case study, it was important to gather data about the principals and arts education from others because other perspectives could add to and enrich the data (Seidman, 2006). Therefore, in addition to six, urban high school principals, three other staff members participated in this study. These individuals were directly suggested by the principals they worked with. They included an assistant principal who also acted as the art department chair, a visual arts teacher who also acted as a union representative and teacher advocate, and a teacher who taught both physics and theater. The addition of these three, unique participants added valuable insights to roles that principals play in shaping the arts education programs at their schools. Siedman (2006) has also suggested including interviews from individuals “who are outside the range of those at the center of the study (can be) an effective way for interviewers to check themselves against drawing easy conclusions from their research” (p.54).

The interviews with people other than principals were secondary to the research and were only included if principals identified these participants as persons who would have further information about arts education at their schools. The intention of the study was to reveal very specifically how principals have been thinking about the arts and arts education, what they have been able to do, and what they have actually done in efforts to provide arts education at their buildings. As such, when interviewing people other than

principals, I focused on their experiences with principals and the actions they have observed from school leaders. Their perspectives were used as data sources, which could either confirm or challenge the research findings as they emerged from the interviews with the principal participants.

Data collection.

Data was collected from three main sources during this case study during the Spring 2012 school semester. They included: publically available documents, guided site observations (one with each principal participant or a representative designated by the principal), and several semi-structured interviews. As stated, six principals from a single urban district participated in this study. Each met certain criteria and was interviewed twice during the study. The first interview was designed to elicit principals' general ideas about leadership, curricula, and arts education. Before the second and final interviews, site observation notes about the arts displayed in the schools were recorded during guided tours, one at each school. While some of the principals were able to lead these tours, due to time constraints of other participants, some of the tours were guided by other staff members. Second, and final, interviews took place after the site tours and focused on participants' personal experiences with arts education and how arts education had been affected by standards-based policies and economic challenges.

One important aspect of qualitative research designs has been that they can include flexibility and are able to evolve as the data are unfolded (Toma, 2006). Due to this nature of qualitative studies, while a protocol to be followed was designed, not every detail was specified. An outline of the research steps was specified. A site observation guide was developed to guide notes taken during the school tours. Interview guides were

also created to direct both the first and second rounds of the semi-structured interviews. The second round interview guide changed based on the initial analysis of the first interviews (See Appendices B & D). Qualitative studies have allowed for such adjustments to happen during the research process, as new information leads to new questions.

Semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were fitting for this inquiry because they allowed participants to express different ideas and tell different stories based on their unique attitudes and experiences. Merriam (1988) has added that semi-structured interviews are valuable in terms of validity because there is “ample opportunity to probe for clarification and ask questions appropriate to the respondent’s knowledge, involvement and status” (p.86). Since this inquiry was about what individuals were thinking and feeling and included unique and subjective information that was difficult, if not impossible, to quantify, semi-structured interviews were called for. The interview questions contained in the initial interview guides were designed to draw out participants’ stories about their experience as principals (or with principals) related to arts education. Here, the theory of narrative inquiry was applied, asserting that narrative data can uncover relevant truths (Willis, 2007). Semi-structured interviews served as a way to extract more relevant information than would have been possible with more rigid interview methods.

Data Analysis

When conducting qualitative research, collecting and analyzing data should be done simultaneously throughout the study (Toma, 2006). Because personal bias affects all research, studies must also provide ways of accounting for that. Toma (2006) noted:

While collecting and recording data, the researcher tests ideas and potential conclusions. The researcher also considers and records his or her own position – his or her relationship to the situation being studied, which is an aspect of dependability in trustworthiness. (p.421)

Throughout the study, data analysis occurred through the use of three main tools: a field log journal, six analytic memos, and two phases of systematic coding of interview transcripts using NVivo© software.

A field log journal was maintained throughout the process. The use of such a field journal has been a common practice in qualitative research to help identify technical issues as well as to record conceptual insights during the research process (Patton, 2002). In addition to the field log, analytical memos were written six times during the research process, with a final memo written after all the data had been collected and coded twice. The analytic memos served as a way of keeping track of researcher understandings as they emerged during the research process. It was a type of reflexive journaling that helped to “move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, pg.161).

Since this inquiry was about perceptions, narrative data was brought together through two main coding steps. Initial coding was followed by final coding. The initial coding phase was completed through using a combination of three types of coding: descriptive coding, used mainly to record observations during the site tours and describe what was seen; thematic coding, where similar topics, drawn from the research questions, were grouped together, and finally; value coding, used to identify personal perspectives (Saldana, 2009).

The initial coding phase was broken into two stages. During the first stage, the first-round interview transcripts, site tour observation notes, and accompanying field work journal entries were coded and evaluated. Then the questions on the second interview guide were adjusted accordingly. Initial coding was completed when the fifteen interviews (two from each of the six principals and three from participants other than principals), six site tour observation notes, and accompanying twenty-one field work journal entries were all coded (descriptive, thematic, and value) using NVivo© software.

All transcripts were completely recoded a second time during the final coding phase. During this second and last round of coding, the data were reorganized through focus coding; where similar units of information were brought together to further describe the larger meaning of the data collected (Saldana, 2009). While codes used during thematic coding came directly from the research questions, (i.e. Decision Making, Accountability) codes used during focus coding were derived from the research data (i.e. Arts Education for Engagement, Support for Accountability). Final research results were reported from this second cycle of coding (See Appendices G, H & I).

This coding process revealed patterns of information and determined the research conclusions. After coding the data according to descriptions, themes, and values, and then, according to focuses, responses to the research question and the attendant questions were constructed. In this study, these data sources included six principals' perspectives supported by three perspectives from others collected and transcribed from interviews, six site observations notes, and some review of publically available documents.

Trustworthiness

It is important that a study account for the trustworthiness of its conclusions. Some qualitative researchers have disagreed with the assumptions underpinning the notion of validity and instead have informed what they do through the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Although others employed these strategies, I focused on trustworthiness. One way researchers have ensured that the information from interviews is trustworthy is to demonstrate internal consistency over time and compare the things that a participant said in one interview to things that were said on a different day, searching for similarities. One way to gather enough information to be able to identify these consistencies or patterns in participant meaning making through interviews was to interview each principal participant more than once (Seidman, 2006).

Researchers have also used triangulation as another process common in qualitative research (specifically case study research with various data sources) to strengthen reliability and internal validity (Merriam, 1988). In the case of this inquiry, member checks and research journaling (as in the field log and the analytic memos described) served as alternatives to validity, reliability, and triangulation (Willis, 2007). Participants were able to review the transcripts throughout the study. Additionally, email correspondence was used to clarify any information following the last interview. Finally, as a final member check, participants were given copies of their excerpts as they appeared in the research results before the final research report was submitted.

Research Limitations

This research, like all studies, is limited by some notable factors. As a case study, this research was limited to the constraints of one district and bound to the contributions of the six principals who participated directly in the study. As the study included only six participants, it is likely that important stories of other individuals were left out. The intention of this study was to shed light on how and why some principals valued arts education, and, on a more important level, it hoped to uncover leadership that was proactive about arts education.

Some information was harder to locate than was originally anticipated. Therefore, this research does not contain significant amounts of district level, quantitative data regarding the numbers of students who are taking arts education courses or how many students are taking more than the required one credit. Arts education was dealt with broadly instead of giving specific details about the very different arts courses that exist. District level data that were uncovered was spotty and filled with significant gaps.

Summary

In summary, this research inquiry has been grounded in a commitment to social justice. Research has revealed that the arts can be used to deliver social justice education, as it can boost academic achievement, inform critical thinking, inspire activism, and interrupt injustice. Therefore, arts education advocates should be concerned with how principals and school leaders perceive the value of the arts, especially during a time marked by financial strain and AYP demands. As curriculum and instructional leaders, principals have played an essential role in determining to what extent quality arts education and arts programs are available for students. This has been critically important

in urban areas, especially in schools that have served high minority and high poverty populations.

It was important for researchers who have valued the arts to understand how principals in large public schools have seen the value of arts education as well as gain an awareness of how they have perceived that value within the context of financial strain and the SBR movement. Using a qualitative case study approach to the research provided a sound method for collecting information and has revealed some of these values and perceptions. It has also illustrated how principals have made decisions about the arts at their schools, which holds significant interest to advocates of the arts in public schools.

Chapter IV – Research Results

Review of the Research Question

This research was in response to a decrease in urban students access to quality arts education at their schools (Chapman, 2004). It explored urban principals' perspectives of the values of arts education within a specific political and economic context that has been less supportive of arts education compared to other content areas. In an effort to understand the role that school leaders play in delivering arts education in large, urban, public high schools, it addressed one major question:

How do urban principals and school leaders perceive the value of the arts within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

Critical theory informed by social justice frames this research. Therefore, this question was supplemented by two sets of attendant questions that further guided this inquiry:

1a. How do urban school leaders make decisions about offering arts education at their schools?

*1b. What do urban school leaders consider when they make these decisions?
and*

2a. How are urban school leaders maintaining access to arts education within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

2b. To what extent are urban school leaders who are maintaining this access aware of the relationships between arts education and social justice?

A brief description of the district, the research participants, and their schools is offered.

Then descriptions of the themes that emerged most frequently and principals' perception

of the values of arts education are described. These primary themes include: (a) perceived student engagement in arts education; (b) ideas of arts education as a fun escape; and (c) observed student empowerment through arts education. The results then go on to describe secondary themes or statements that occurred less frequently but still held significance as they added insight to the research questions. They include: (a) arts connected to achievement in other content areas; (b) arts as way to offer more than other content areas; and (c) the arts as a way to transcend poverty.

Next, the larger, national context of education affecting this study is addressed. Principals' perceived effects of accountability on arts education in the district are discussed. Then, how principals believe financial burdens have affected arts education in different ways is described. Following that, the attendant questions are addressed in order. The issues that guide principals' choices about arts education are discussed and the factors that principals consider when making decisions about arts education are detailed. Next, descriptions are given of the ways in which principals have been able to maintain arts education. Finally, comments that indicate the extent to which principals revealed understandings about the relationships between arts education and education for social justice is explored.

Overview of Arts Education within the District

This district served over 80,000 students in grades K-12. There are 123 elementary, K-8, and middle schools that feed into 29 high schools. According to 2010-2011 data, just over 7,000 students were enrolled in the 9th grade, while the 12th grade included approximately 4,500 students. For the same year, the district reported a 67% graduation rate. The demographic breakdown of the district was as follows: 56.2%

African American, 23.5% Hispanic, 14.4% White, 5.2% Asian and .08% Native American. Within those demographics, 19.8 % are classified as Special Education students and 10% are English Language Learners. Finally, an overwhelming 82.6% came from low income households.

During the 2010-2011 school year, 61% of 4th grade students in the district achieved proficient/advanced scores on the state reading assessment, while 55% attained the same scores on the assessment for mathematics. In grade 10, students performed lower, achieving 39% proficient/advanced in reading scores and 30% in math. The district was classified as a District Identified for Improvement (DIFI) and many schools have been pressured to meet AYP demands (Karp,2012).

Information reported on the district website showed evidence that social justice has been a concern as well as a priority. The pages dealing with PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies) addressed “culturally responsive teaching” practices. There has also been an active movement originating from the district’s former superintendent and a group of proactive teachers called C.L.E.a.R. Justice (Class, Language, Ethnicity and Race) that directly addressed social justice in the literature it had available on the site, including representation for a group called Educators’ Network for Social Justice who have hosted regular meetings as well as an annual Anti-Racist, Anti Biased Teaching Conference for local teachers.

A statewide, web-based database reported the graduation requirements mandated from the state as well as variations among different districts. This district met the credits required by state law in English (4), math (2), science (2), social studies (3), health (.5), and physical education (1.5). While the state required no credits in fine arts for

graduation, this district included 1 credit, and was among 16.5% of the state's districts that exceeded the state requirement in the subject of fine arts. On average, state districts only required .2 credits in fine arts for graduation, indicating that, in practice, many districts aligned with state requirements, did not include the fine arts at all when stipulating requirements for high school graduation. Additionally, the district superintendent has proactively attempted to keep arts, music, and physical education courses in schools and has created a central fund, the AMP fund that aims to help schools preserve staff in those areas.

These data made this district an appropriate site to conduct a study on principals' beliefs about arts education at urban high schools. Despite the standards-based reform movement and financial challenges that schools have faced during an economic downturn, this district has maintained some arts education programs and has promoted social justice, indicated by the website. Since this was the case, principals' perceptions of and practices regarding arts education in this district are relevant to those concerned that students have suffered an injustice when they are barred from participation in the arts.

Description of schools.

The high schools represented an urban district that contained 29 high schools. Among those high schools, there existed an overwhelming degree of variation as a result of the charter movement and other educational policies that have encouraged choice. Among those, charter schools, contracted agency schools, partnership schools, small high schools, and Head Start Programs were not considered for participation. This study focused on large, comprehensive high schools (where large is defined as having at least 200 students per grade level).

I targeted twelve large, comprehensive schools in the district. Two of the participants in this study were referred to me by a *gatekeeper*, or person who had already established a relationship with and trust with these principals. These two participants were each principals at one of the initially targeted twelve schools. After three rounds of recruitment by phone, a total of six participants were secured.

The high school principals included two who worked at citywide specialty schools. The first specialty school was specifically sought out to participate in this study because it had an arts focus. With such a focus, the leadership there was likely to share significant insight on the state of the arts from the perspective of school leadership and, therefore, was desirable for this study. Another principal from a specialty school with a focus on careers in the trades and technology agreed to participate. That school is the second citywide specialty school in this study. The remaining four principals who participated were from large, traditional, comprehensive high schools.

Profile of the participant group.

As this study was framed in social justice and informed by critical theory, the genders and ethnicities of each participant are included. The principals' numbers of years of experience were also important to consider because experience affects perspectives, and participants with experience could reflect on changes or trends over time. During the first round interviews, I asked participants to state their gender and describe their ethnicity as well as state their years of administrative experience, producing the following results:

Table 2: Participant Group Profile			
<i>High School Name</i>	<i>Principal Name</i>	<i>Ethnicity (self described)</i>	<i>Years of Admin. Experience</i>
Kennedy High School (KHS):	Ms. Larsen	Cuban American	16
City Academy of the Arts (CAA):	Mr. Anderson	African America	12
West Middle & High School (WMHS)	Mr. Connelly	White Jewish	4
East View High School (EVHS)	Mr. Blake	African American	10
Lake Park High School (LPHS)	Mr. Simmons	White	22
Technical Careers Preparatory Academy (TCPA)	Ms. Nelson	Caucasian	8

Note: Pseudonyms are used to identify participants and high school names.

In addition to the six principal participants, three support participants were added.

One was an assistant principal who also worked as the chair of the arts department.

Another was an arts teacher who also taught physics at the arts-focused school. Finally, an art teacher who was union representative for teachers also participated. Support participants were referred to me, respectively, by Ms. Larsen, Mr. Anderson, and Mr. Blake. Since their participation was included upon the direction of the principal participants, their additions to this study have been used to support deeper understanding of principals' perceptions and the roles of school leaders in arts education.

Urban Principals' Perceptions of the Values of Arts Education

Principals identified several different benefits of arts education programs at their schools. Three major themes emerged from the research. They included engagement, escape, and self-expression or empowerment. Secondary themes are also discussed in which an individual or a few participants revealed unique understandings, specific to why they valued arts in education, or were relevant and added to understanding the research problem.

Engagement.

Every principal who participated in this study specifically mentioned engagement as a reason for valuing the arts in education. During the first interview for this study, Ms. Larsen expressed that she very much valued the arts and worked hard to keep them at Kennedy High School (KHS). She believed that the arts had the power to engage students. She used research to support her belief:

If we take a look at what research says about students being able to do more creative things, you can actually see that those types of classes or courses really keep the kids focused. It's another avenue for them to be successful in, not all students are meant to be successful in all academic areas, but maybe they have a talent and even if they don't have talent, it's important for us to make sure that the kids are able to engage in an activity that is part of the arts program.

From West Middle and High School (WMHS), Mr. Connelly also used research to explain his perception that arts education can engage students. He said, "The statistics speak to the importance of the arts. I mean, there's no question about it. A child that is participating in arts is more engaged in school." Mr. Anderson also said that he believed that the arts engaged students and suggested that this engagement could help students to reach their potentials at City Academy of the Arts (CAA). He said, "We use the arts to engage students so that we can get the highest potential from them –productivity from them....They choose it. They work on it. That's what they love to do. It keeps them engaged." Similarly, he commented, "The arts are a very key component to helping kids to be engaged, and in helping students see their greatest potential." He went on to explain how his conviction towards the arts as a mechanism of engagement factored into a

decision to change a scheduling procedure at his building. Anderson explained:

So we're going to break up that monotony a little bit for a week just to try it, to give them one hour of arts, then to do everything else and then come back and do their second hour. Just to see if it will show improvements with attendance and increase their engagement levels.

He also stated that he believed that this engagement with the arts made his arts-centered school unique because it helped to build focus in the building. He believed his school benefited by being able to use the arts as a unifying element, explaining, "You have some of your traditional schools –that don't have a focus. There's no engagement in the school building because nobody knows what the focus of the school is." His comments consistently supported similar ideas. He confirmed his beliefs in the ability of arts education to engage students when he stated, "*I know* that the arts are the key to helping students, to engage students and helping them be successful."

Other principals used personal experiences to support their beliefs that arts education engaged students. At East View High School (EVHS), Mr. Blake recalled personal observations of some students in an AP art class, hinting at the influence some teachers have, when he reported:

I often watch them, you know, just kinda have the light on this image they've taken a picture of, and they're studying the image and the kids are really into it. And they don't have to have the teacher there for them to do this. But this just kind of speaks to this teacher's commitment to art and how that has been passed on to her students. So that's how I would say they benefit our students.

Mr. Blake noticed that the students in AP art were very engaged and mentioned the students' concentration in the absence of the teacher as an indication of that engagement. He attributed engagement to teacher quality.

From Lake Park High School (LPHS), Mr. Simmons stated that he felt very lucky to be able to be at a high school that was still able to maintain an arts education program. He also drew from personal experience. Part of his professional background had included working as a principal at an arts-focused middle school where what he considered quality arts integration occurred. That experience helped to solidify his belief that arts education was essential. Like the other principals, he also noted student engagement as a direct product of arts education. Simmons said:

We're fortunate to still have, you know, a comprehensive visual and performing arts program, and you know, for some of our students it's the *hook*. You know, just like athletics. You know, when you have a jazz band, you have a gospel choir, you have a full orchestra, marching band, then the kids get excited, (and) enjoy the uniforms and march in the parades and march at the games and play at the games, you know, the choirs can perform. You know, we have a full musical this year. We're doing *Cats*. It's a very huge, huge expense to do a musical, but it's a wonderful way to get performers and visual artists involved in designing and putting together the sets and that sort of stuff. You know, visual art is not only drawing, but we have ceramics. We have jewelry making. We have photography, and things like that, I think, are a nice *hook* to get –to get the kids.

He explained how performing a musical every year at his school has engaged the students at his building:

To me, it's huge, because it's something that gets a lot of hoopla. It engages more kids into the arts –designing the sets and the lights and building and all that sort of the stuff. And the kids who sewed the costumes and we have, you know, the sewing machines go mad for days putting those costumes together and, you know, designing the costumes and actually putting on all the makeup.

For Mr. Simmons, getting ready to perform a musical was a school wide task that could engage many students by working together on something they were excited about.

Ms. Nelson also expressed the idea that the arts were a means of engaging students. As a school with a focus in technical careers, Technical Careers Preparatory Academy (TCPA) did not have a conventional arts education program, but she valued the arts in education and tried to expose her students to artistic opportunities. Under her leadership, the school created a gallery space for student work to be displayed, especially highlighting work from the graphic arts course at her school. She explained that in her building the art gallery served as not only a space for students to display their work but also as a place that could attract potential students who may not be aware of the creative opportunities there and, as a result of interactions with gallery, may become more attracted to going to the school. She explained:

One of the things that we definitely want to do iswith our art gallery, we want to make sure we engage a student that may (think), you know, “oh my gosh, I can do *this* on the computer! I can be a part of this.” ...who might, just by per chance, think, “This may be a place I’d like to go, and be part of –having my stuff be in an art gallery.” So, one of the things that we want to do it is bring them over (for) a tour and see the different things that are possible with the digital graphics that we

have here and see our building in a different perspective than they've ever seen it before.

She added this observation of her students, who she has seen discover and explore creative processes:

They realize that, "There might even be a job that I can really do that and love it!" So again, it's not necessarily that they come in knowing what they want to do, but the experiences that they've had can help guide them to that. You know, we've had some students that have been very successful in that way. You know, and again, I put a broad definition on maybe, the arts and what not, but you know, you look at engineering or architecture stuff like that, and you have to be able to think 3D.

Although there was not a conventional arts education program at that technical-centered high school, Ms. Nelson asserted that her students practice creative, artistic processes through engineering and architecture. She hoped that these experiences would help to engage potential students to attend TCPA.

Overall, the principals indicated that they believed arts education was valuable at schools because it nurtured student engagement. Some used research to support their beliefs while others relied on past experiences and personal observations to explain their beliefs. This was the case across many different arts courses, according to the principals' comments.

Arts education as a fun escape.

Principals believed that arts education had the ability to engage students simply because the students enjoyed it. Unique to other content areas, principals consistently

described the arts as something students liked to do or even loved. Almost all of the participants offered perspectives of arts education as something that the students felt was fun. Like Mr. Blake, who referenced teacher quality, Ms. Larsen pointed to the influence of arts teachers:

They work very closely with the kids to make sure that there are special events, performances that are done through the school –and just to keep the kids actively involved in something that they might love to do.

As Ms. Larsen mentioned “love to do,” Mr. Simmons also mentioned enjoyment as a benefit of arts education for students:

The excitement of taking a class that maybe they really are fond of, uh, maybe a class that isn’t as intense academically as some of the other classes so that they can have a little bit of fun in a classroom learning, um, I think that makes it –I think it’s *fun*.

Describing students in their arts classes at CAA, Mr. Anderson simply stated, “That’s what they love to do.” Later he repeated that the arts “provide (students) with something for 6-8 hours that they really, really enjoy doing.”

Mr. Anderson referred a physics/theater teacher from CCA to participate in this study. He confirmed that the students there enjoyed the arts focus, and it was also fun for the staff:

We’ve really been in kind of a nice environment to work. The kids want to learn. We’re having fun, and like, laughing as they learn. You know, the vibe in here is kind of cool for the most part, and I –I never have a boring day, for the most part. I’m always –it’s always fun. It’s always interesting.

At CCA, the arts focus was not something for only the students to enjoy, but, according to the physics/theater teacher there, adults in the building also benefitted by coming to classrooms excited to teach.

When Mr. Blake was explaining his opinion regarding why the district superintendent decided to preserve some funding for arts education, he implied that the superintendent has similar beliefs about arts education: “He believes that it is a carrot for many students –that a kid may not get excited about coming to school for a math course, but they may get excited about coming to school for an arts course.” Mr. Blake agreed with the notion and added personally, “I know that many students are not waking up in the morning and saying, ‘Hey! I want to go to school so I can go to my class!’ or ‘so I can go to my reading class’.” He went on to explain the intentions of the superintendent stating:

His belief is that the arts play a real role in hooking kids into education. Getting them in a place where you can teach them reading, teach them math –but also giving them an opportunity to –how can I say? Participate in those academic areas that have a little bit of fun.... (He) wanted to allow kids to kind of express and enjoy their experiences while they’re at school and so he’s pretty much put a mandate on schools where he’s said, “If you have X amount of kids, you’re going to have X amount of access to either art or phy ed courses based on your student population.”

Like the other principals, when Mr. Connelly described what he would ultimately like to see students at his high school getting out of participating in arts education courses, he also described using art as an escape:

Ultimately, I think the arts should provide that opportunity for students to escape for an hour and really be that one reason why they love coming to school, if they can't find any other reason to love coming to school, where as visual arts, music, drumming, dancing, you know, I think we need to find a place for every student, whether it be a relationship with an adult or a relationship with content. I see the arts as potentially being that critical piece that a young person can relate to and love –and that gets them out of bed, and gets them excited to come to school. And art, specifically music at this school, does that for a number of kids –and its great! Drum line, orchestra, band...I mean, these kids are passionate about it.

In support of how Mr. Blake described the viewpoint of the district superintendent, Mr. Connelly said that for some of his students enjoying arts education classes provided the motivation to be at school. He said that the effects of AYP resulted in very rigid schedules for credit deficient students but especially music classes provided some relief. He explained:

For some kids, I know it's the only reason they come to school. I know our drum line kids, they come to school because they love the 51 minutes a day in school when we have double music classes where they get to bang on the drums and engage in an activity that they like. And the schedules at these –at our schools, are very rigid. And when you're at (a school with) an at risk population, when we teach at risk kids, and we're a sick school and a school in need of improvement grants, there's all these different stipulations that impact our scheduling. For instance, a lot of our students in 9th and 10th grade –they're double dosing in math and English meaning they have two 51 blocks, two 51 minute blocks of reading,

English language arts and writing. And another double block of math. That's more than half their day dedicated to two subjects. Throw in science and social studies and a P.E. and a health class and there's not a lot of latitude for a student to be engaged in a class activity that really satisfies them.

Mr. Anderson, observing similar practices and disengaged students, was critical of the results of AYP:

Many kids don't learn because they're not vested in what is the climate at the school. And they don't have anything that's going to engage them. What we do, as a public school entity—many times we say kids can't read. So, before they had reading for 60 minutes. Now, they have reading for 120 minutes—so I'm going to have you be doing double of what you didn't like doing the first time, right? -- which is a mistake, because if I was bored for the 60 minutes, now you're going to bore me for 120 minutes. Now I'm disengaged. We don't do things differently.

We do things the same and add on to it—doesn't make a lot of sense.

Some of the comments made by a few of the principals indicated that the levels of student engagement they observe, or perceive, in arts classes are higher than what they see in other content areas. This seemed to be especially the case for students who were credit deficient in math and reading and in need of double the course credits in order to catch up, limiting their opportunities to participate in engaging electives.

Participation in arts courses, according to some principals, could offer students relief, as a fun escape, from some of the rigors of their schedules. Principals believed, and indicated that the superintendent also believed, that arts education gave some students a

reason to be at school. Principals all named student engagement in arts education as a benefit for students at their schools.

Arts education as empowering.

Principals perceived empowerment as another important value of arts education. Some principals believed that arts offered students something to be proud of, as a talent or a gift. Some believed that the arts offered ways for students to find identity and express themselves, as reflected by the arts displayed at the schools. Other principals believed that, regardless of talent, participation in arts education and using the arts in schools could give students opportunities for healthy emotional expression.

Ms. Larsen referred one of the assistant principals from KHS, who also worked as the arts department's chairperson, to participate in this study. During this support interview, in order to attest to the how she perceived the value of arts education, she spoke about empowerment specifically at the high school level. The assistant principal made clear that:

(Arts education is) about the students not only expressing their creativity but also, you know, developing it further. It's so limited at the elementary levels. This gives them a chance to experiment in an environment that is conducive to that creative expression and development.

She named self-expression when she further described the unique results of student participation in quality arts education at KHS:

You have a well-rounded person, and I know that it's a cliché, but it's the truth.

You know, to be able to listen to music, to be able to write music, dance, whatever it is that your *gift* is –to be able to express yourself, at a public school –it's very

rare nowadays.

Mr. Simmons also named self-expression among the several ways in which he believed students benefitted from participation in the arts:

Well, I think that it helps their self-image, their self-confidence, an ability to express themselves, an ability to show, maybe, a gift that, maybe, no one, maybe, knew they had –to be able to perform, or show off their art work.

Like the assistant principal at KHS, Mr. Simmons also believed that artistic talent was a gift that some students could discover and develop and, through participation, ultimately could gain self-confidence.

Mr. Blake also expressed similar sentiments, describing a personal connection as a grade school student, when he recalled, with a smile, self-expression as a reason why he valued the arts:

I think that (music) allowed me to express my feelings. When I remember my music teacher who– in elementary school introduced me to, you know, a little recorder that you would play, um, and I remember the singing. As a kid, I looked forward to singing because it was a release for me.

He referred to expression again when he explained how that personal experience influenced his aims as a school administrator at EVHS:

Music and art is a way of folks being able to express themselves and so, my goal is to provide that opportunity for our students to express themselves through the arts –whether it be through drawing, painting, clay or music and dance.

EVHS had a relationship with City Year, a young adult service program that operates through AmeriCorps to support schools nationwide. City Year had an arts initiative when

it worked with the school and was responsible for several murals throughout the building. When he first described the project, Blake reported, “It was, kind of, framed in beautification—which is probably another arm into the arts.” When asked how important the “beautification” role of the arts was, he noted pride of ownership and stated that it was particularly important to his student population:

I think it’s real important, as far as just kind of enhancing the walls of a school – kind of bringing those walls that have traditionally just kind of been those—you know, had those institutional colors –trying to bring them to life and, um, allow students to kind of express themselves through, you know, putting a mural on the wall. I mean, we have murals all throughout (this school) that kids have done connected to that activity that will be there for years –years to come.

He went on to explain the pride students feel when they see their work:

And that kid can come and always say, “Look, my initials are at the bottom of that wall. I did that mural on the second floor, by the trophy case.” So...And when that first started, there were many kids coming up to me and asking me, saying you know, “Mr. Blake, can I do a wall?” and, “What do I need to be able to do?” – just to do a mural on the wall. That’s *huge* in this community... –just being able to express themselves. And we want them to express themselves in a positive way rather than a negative way.

For Mr. Blake, understanding the benefits of arts education had to do with empowering students to take ownership and pride in the school building.

Mr. Blake referred one of the visual arts teachers at his school to be a support participant in this study. The principal described him as a “teacher activist.” During his

support interview, the art teacher outlined a service learning project that one of his classes completed in which the students responded to a nearby clinic's need for art in the lobby. His students created Calder-inspired mobiles. While describing this service learning project that his students engaged in, he also noted empowerment as a benefit, especially from seeing personal work displayed:

So the idea, the skill set needed, the experience, leads directly into a project that they are actually able to see the results and see it put into play and practice and can consistently see that, so that when they go into the (nearby clinic) if they've got a younger brother or sister, they will directly see the mobile in that office, or in that space.

He went on, describing similar effects when students recognized their murals:

When they're walking around the halls, they're actually able to say and see, "Hey, there's my mural." But another component to it is to that idea of legacy. "I did that. I created that. I've left my mark." So it's that, it's those kinds of ideas and those kinds of things that are where I think service learning is really invaluable.

According to these examples, some principals valued the arts because of the pride of ownership that they see students feeling towards their works of art when they are displayed prominently.

The staff at TCPA further empowered students when they responded to the students' desires to build a green screen. When asked to describe the benefits of providing her students with this opportunity to engage in a creative activity, Ms. Nelson also named expression:

I think, what it does is it allows them to express themselves. It allows them to, you know, really bring our school into a positive light and to, you know, perhaps a different venue when we're trying to promote ourselves; and, it allows them to try to do things that maybe –that they wouldn't have been allowed to try if we wouldn't allow for that creativity.

Since the school did not offer traditional arts classes, students at her school benefitted from afterschool clubs. Ms. Nelson, again, referred to self-expression when she revealed which club she thought the students particularly benefitted from, “One of our greatest ones, I would say, is forensics and drama. And I think that the kids really express themselves in that way. Pretty neat, actually.”

Like Mr. Blake, Ms. Nelson also implied that the district superintendent genuinely supported arts education. She stated that expression was one of the benefits of arts education that she believed was motivating the superintendent to continue funding arts education:

In my opinion, the superintendent puts a lot of value in differentiated kinds of learning and different learning styles. And I think that he understands the need for our students, especially in (this city) to be able to express themselves in a positive way, and I think, I that, um, that at least in the conversations I've heard, I've not specifically had with him, but he understands the vital role that the arts play with child development, so...I think he gets that.

Like the beliefs of the superintendent, as offered by Ms. Nelson, the ability for students to express themselves in a positive way was one more benefit that these leaders in education have attributed to students' participation in the arts.

Student art displayed on the school walls indicated that students were using arts education classes as opportunities for self-expression. Examples included self-portraits, especially from CAA where the backgrounds reflected cityscapes that could potentially mirror the students' own neighborhoods. There were also examples of student work that indicated how at least a few students were using artistic expression to deal with heavy and dark emotions. At CAA, hanging in a display case in one of the main hallways, was a work depicting a girl lying in bed with chunks of her body missing with words that read "the problem was eating away at her." At TCPA, digitally created images also revealed deep, emotional student expression. Notes from two examples taken during the observation there read:

- "Till Death Do Us Part": a black and white digitally created image of two skeletons embracing in a graveyard with the words written on one of the headstones.
- "Can't you see the FEAR in their eyes?" A girl in a red dress walking on a path through a forest behind a backdrop of a huge eye; everything in black and white except the girl in the dress.

Clearly, the students have used the arts to express an array of emotions. Principals revealed that they valued the arts partly as a way for students to communicate personal feelings. Their comments indicated that they believe students are empowered through the arts to express themselves and improve self-confidence.

Other secondary themes.

The secondary themes described in this section are perspectives that emerged less frequently than the primary themes. Although the beliefs described here were represented

by fewer participants, they are still relevant to the inquiry. In a qualitative case study design, it is important to highlight not only the commonalities among participants but also to reveal the unique perspectives of the individuals as well.

Two principals indicated that they found value in arts education because they believed that experiences with art could be connected directly to achievement in other content areas. From CAA, Mr. Anderson said:

If you can be disciplined to learn an arts area you can do anything in this world. Math looks easy. English is easy. If you can learn a piece that's written in Italian, then you can learn the English language and do it well. If you can read music, you can learn math.

Mr. Simmons also expressed similar ideas when he stated his observations at LPHS:

It encourages –it excites kids. And for some of the students, you know, it—that's what it takes to get them here and be excited and stay in school long enough to realize, oh I do need math and I do need to be able to read to be a successful musician or whatever it is, and, yeah –it's important.

Both Mr. Anderson and Mr. Simmons made direct comments that implied they believed that students who participate in the arts can also benefit academically. Mr. Simmons's comment pointed to engagement again. However, instead of engagement being described as something that he felt made the arts valuable, he expressed his belief that engagement in the arts could help students appreciate other content area, specifically math and reading, that perhaps they would not appreciate without being involved in music. Here, the arts were seen as valuable because they could be a means to an end. Both comments identified

tested content areas of math and reading when stating specifically where academic benefit can be achieved.

Research has revealed that the arts may be able to elicit thinking skills and abilities that are separate from those developed through other content areas, providing new ways of thinking, knowing, and understanding (Burton, Horowitz & Ables, 2000). Mr. Simmons suggested that students can encounter new ways of learning in arts classes, partly because the students are able to reflect on their work in personal ways. When asked if he thought those things happened in other content areas, he replied:

Somewhat, but in a different way, even, then when its art. You know, I think highly engaged classrooms have the kids debating and things like that. But it's usually about a topic, it's usually about not your own work, so this is a little bit more about your own work, I think.

Mr. Connelly's belief that the arts could offer something more than other content areas was informed by his personal experience. He attended an arts-based middle school as a student and described the benefit of the arts for his sibling: "My sister also was the same program (as me) and she excelled. It gave her a lot of self-confidence which I don't think she would have found in other content areas." Mr. Blake also made statements indicating that he believed that arts offered something more than other academic areas. For him, the arts at his school provided a way to showcase and celebrate the diversity at his school:

If you were to tour our building, you would see that there's a lot of art posted. There's art showcased in display cases. In our building, because of the diversity that exists in the building, I think art is one of those common modes of expression that kind of crosses all of the varied cultures that exist in our building. And, so I

think that it plays a really important role. Just as important as math or as English, that, you know, our students have an opportunity to express themselves through that mode of arts. So, it's beyond –it's not just a basic elective course. It holds a little bit more weight than that.

Like the other principals, Mr. Blake noted expression as a benefit of arts education.

Beyond self expression, he valued the arts as a means of expressions of cultural diversity.

Mr. Anderson's conviction to arts education ran deep. For him, it was a matter of providing his students with an opportunity to achieve long term success: "For the society, if the focus is on moving up test scores, you know –there's a good part of No Child Left Behind, because it holds schools accountable for making sure that everybody is achieving." He then related this notion to delivering arts education:

One thing that is common with public schools, urban schools, is that our kids are in bad situations. They live under the poverty level. So, if we can expose kids to good things like art, like a good math, a good English class, all that stuff and then tie all those things together so that life is not such a puzzle...or just give them some resources so that they can break the cycle of public welfare and all that other stuff...give them an opportunity to go on to college, that's what keeps me fired up.

Mr. Anderson understood arts education as part of a practice that may, for his students, provide ways to transcend poverty and was motivated as a leader to act upon that understanding.

In summary, individual experiences and personal convictions often played a role in what principals perceived the value of arts education to be at their buildings and for their students. For several reasons and a variety of rationales, principals all had favorable ideas

about the arts, and those ideas influenced their practice. As practitioners, principals hold power. Whether or not principals care about arts education can play a determining factor in the shape of arts education programs. The reason why the schools still provided arts opportunities was because the principals wanted the arts to be there.

National Context

Like several urban districts nationwide, the accountability movement and financial strain have affected arts education in the district. Accountability especially affected the schools because most of them have been classified as SIFI schools (Schools Identified for Intervention), so they have felt the pressure to demonstrate quick gains in students' scores achieved on standardized tests. When coupled with financial strain, many schools in the district have cut arts education courses and departments (the same trend can be seen in physical education programs), and the district employed significantly fewer full-time arts education staff for the 2010-2011 school year than in the 2004-2005 school year, indicating this trend. The district superintendent's AMP fund allowed the district to hire more arts staff members during the 2012-2013 school year, but did not take effect until after the data for this study were collected. In this section, I explore the context of arts education and how principals in this study perceived the effects of the accountability movement, specifically on arts education. In the following section dealing with financial strain, I address what principals felt in regards to how their schools would specifically be affected by the AMP fund.

Accountability.

Principals favored the accountability movement for different reasons. In general, principals' responses indicated that they believed that strict accountability and

performance requirements provided cohesiveness, rigor, and clear standards. Some also felt that a more unified curriculum was helpful for a transient population. Other principals indicated that they felt that the accountability movement had helped the school and the district improve.

Favorable perceptions of accountability.

When asked how, given her experience, she had seen school faculty respond to accountability measures, Ms. Larsen's answer gave clear evidence that she favored accountability:

It depends on how much a principal encourages accountability. And I happen to be a principal that really encourages accountability, but I don't do it in a punitive way. What I've seen is, teachers who have a school that's out of control or a school that really needs good leadership is very encouraged by somebody like myself; that comes in and says, "This is the way that we're going to do things and this is how we're going to do it, and this is my expectations for you. These *are* my expectations." I believe that teachers are very encouraged with leaders like myself that believe in accountability, and not just for the sake of accountability to get you, but to *grow* professionally --and to make our school better. And then there are other schools that, I believe (at some other high schools) that those teachers are at a certain level where they believe that they don't *need* that much of a change, so they're gonna fight it more. So it depends on the culture of the school. And with this particular school, they're very happy to have me here and they're very willing to please me and make me happy and to move with me --forward, to making our school better.

Mr. Blake also mentioned moving the school forward as a reason why teachers and school staff have become more supportive of accountability demands:

There was resistance initially, but now, I think there is not as much resistance to us because it's becoming common place and I think that because we have a long ways to go in moving our district forward, that that message has been heard.

Mr. Anderson said that even at his arts-focused school, "We've been really consistent with state standards." He revealed that although the accountability movement came with significant challenges, ultimately, he believed it was beneficial:

Accountability has –especially for school administration has probably picked up tenfold. The accountability measures and the responsibility is tremendous and at times, overwhelming –but it's a good lesson. It's a good lesson. It's a good lesson because you have to be more accountable, which we should be responsible for, but sometimes there are variables outside of the local school that affect your school – especially in a district where you have centralization and decentralization all at the same time. And then you have mandates from an outside entity that affect the school –the overall climate of the school. So the accountability measure, coming from outside of the school is tremendous and you also have the burden of accountability on the inside of the school. So it's a good lesson. It's good practice if you can be successful with it. Whoever can be successful through that time is going to be great.

Mr. Simmons also referenced the standards as a focus of his instructional leadership, when he stated that part of what he has tried to do with his staff has included "staying true to the state core curriculum standards as well as looking at pedagogy to highly engage the kids"

Accountability's effect on arts education.

Principals did not perceive accountability as having had much effect, negative or otherwise, on arts education curricula. There was an important exception to this. During the SBR era, many principals had expectations for the arts staff at their schools to incorporate writing skills in an effort for students to practice literacy across all content areas. In addition to incorporating writing, Mr. Anderson, at CAA, stated that all of the arts teachers have also been required to cover five math problems a day for a set length of time in order to make boosting achievement in math a school wide effort. Principals were using arts courses to help meet AYP demands. When Mr. Anderson was asked how the accountability movement had affected arts departments at CAA, he responded positively:

It's only made us better, is what I think. I mean, you have to be accountable for what you do. Academics have to be part of the arts anyway...—There's two parts of it. One, standardization can make students, and schools, more accountable for the achievement and that – but only if it's aligned to things that promote progress.

Mr. Blake offered this observation of extending both literacy and math content to arts courses:

Because of the urgency to raise student achievement, the arts department is being asked to support raising student achievement in math and reading. So, you have art teachers, you have music teachers, that are now fully involved in the professional development that's being offered to the entire staff when in years past, "I'm an art teacher." "I'm a music teacher." "Why do I need to be concerned about numeracy or literacy?" or, you know, "annotation as far as being able to use this as a reading strategy?" You see, no no no. Those days have passed. Everyone

is responsible for raising student achievement and we're just going to kind of be – kind of explicit about how we're going about that regardless of what you teach.

While touring LPHS, I noted evidence that writing standards were in place in arts classes. Many displays of student work were accompanied by a clearly worded “High School Learning Intention” or a paragraph containing an “artist’s statement.” Mr. Simmons said of the practice:

Teachers have to be really cognizant of the teaching of reading, of the teaching of writing and integrating those strategies into their lessons and we require all the fine arts teachers to include reading and writing in their classrooms assignments, in their work as well as in their final exams. So it's kind of an integrated approach.

He went on to explain that during planning time

We talk about, how do you make sure that the art teachers really understand the importance of students' reading abilities? You know? And how do you enhance your instruction by taking advantage of kids that are really, really good readers and how do you differentiate your instruction for kids who can barely read?

While integrating writing and incorporating reading into arts instruction at his school, Mr. Simmons believed that accountability had not significantly changed curricula in the arts.

When asked to comment on it, he speculated:

I don't know if it's changed *curriculum*, its changed accountability to make sure people are teaching what's expected of them to teach. You know, in our district, we have learning targets that are aligned to state standards. Many core content areas have state standards. They have academic standards from their associations and now we're going with the common core standards. And so, I think the

standards have always been there, and I think great teachers always taught, not *to* the standards, but make sure they teach *with* the standards and make sure that the students mastered the standards.

He continued, speaking favorably of the standards:

So, I, in my own work, you know, we're making sure that the teachers are aligning their curriculum to the standards and we're assessing to the standards, and we're doing integrated assessments to make sure that the kids are doing well, and we're MAP testing them in reading and math, and that's certainly helpful, and so I think that's, you know, I think that's good.

Compared to content areas other than the arts, Mr. Simmons reasoned that other content areas were more heavily affected by accountability. He said that in his practice, he has always looked for his teachers to make connections between curricula and learning standards:

I think that we've always had accountability and I think that when we review the syllabi that all our teachers provide us, and provide the kids, that you know, teaching –if I'm teaching fibers, I want to know what the process for teaching fibers is, or whatever else.

When asked whether he believed if the accountability movement had helped or hindered teachers' ability to deliver creative instruction, he brought up engagement again as he affirmed:

I think it's helped. And one of the things that we've done is what we call *walk throughs*. And we've done walk throughs, oh I don't know, three or four years – looking at the engagement levels of kids in the classroom. And you have to plan

for that. And at the high school level, it's so much easier just to stand up and lecture and then have the kids just do some kinds of work. It may be a project or it may be a work sheet. Well, how do you take that to the next level? Sure, you, in high school, you *have* to do some kind of lecture to share your knowledge. But, you know, to really apply it? To have kids compare and contrast or you know, do some types of higher level thinking in groups or in projects? To me, that's –that's the important part and that's the pedagogy that we're really trying to push with our teachers. I think, at the high school level, at least here, our teachers are content rich.

Ms. Nelson revealed ideas similar to Mr. Simmons when she stated about the accountability movement's effect at TCPA:

I actually think that has been a great thing that when you –again just looking at the high school, when you look at the autonomy that classrooms used to have where, you know, it was –whether it be perceived or real, you sometimes taught to what you enjoyed. So, if I was, you know, a social studies teacher and I really enjoyed World War II, I might spend an inordinate amount of time on that because I enjoyed it. And so I think with new Common Core Standards, along with the accountability piece, moving to more common assessments and collaboration –I think what it's done is it's forced us to talk and communicate and share ideas and, again, change the ways that we've generally or typically given instruction. And so I think it's a really positive thing –especially at the high school. I think it's really forced us to kind of look up; see outside of our four walls of our classroom.

Ms. Nelson's comments revealed her belief that the accountability had broadened

curricula and made content more rich than it had been in the past. Based on her reference to social studies teachers, she believed that without the accountability movement, teachers may have limited what they taught only to what they wanted to teach, instead of covering the wide range of topics required by the standards.

Conclusions about accountability and arts education.

For several of the principals, the accountability movement was perceived to have had overall positive effects on education on a variety of levels. Included in that positive perception, it was further indicated that arts education curricula had improved because of accountability. Principals indicated that they used the standards because they felt that it made the schools better. They also believe that it had a positive effect on arts instruction.

Financial strain.

Overall, principals indicated that they felt that the budget was a major challenge. Some reported that enrollment had kept their arts departments in place while others explained that cuts were made. Some faced unique challenges based on the individual needs of their schools. Again, as was the case with accountability, principals in this study seemed to believe that curricula in arts education have not changed much. While budget cuts may have made the class sizes become larger, course offerings fewer, and departments smaller, principals did not report observing changes in content being taught. When cuts to programs or staff had to be made because of the budget, some principals revealed that accountability steered their decisions about arts education at their schools.

Enrollment preserved arts education.

When I asked Ms. Larsen how budget cuts had affected the arts department at her school, she began by saying she believed that “it is very unfortunate that many schools

have had to cut the arts because realistically, that is a perfect avenue for kids to really be able to be successful in.” When asked what part the arts played at KHS, she explained, “We were able to really make sure that, you know, that we were able to get it as an elective. And I think things have changed drastically because of budget cuts. But it’s really played a big role.” She went on to explain how enrollment helped protect funding for arts education at her school:

The budget is always difficult, especially in the area of the arts. Ah, because I really thought that the arts were important in the schools that I’ve been in, I’ve always tried to keep them. Ah, but in schools that didn’t have enrollment – I mean, those are the first things that they have to cut. And that’s very unfortunate.

I was fortunate in the fact that I had the experiences as a principal and I was able to get the enrollment that I needed in order to sustain the arts program.

Like Ms. Larsen, Mr. Connelly also reported that at his high school, arts programs were not affected, something he was very happy to report:

In spite of all the budget cuts, historically, WMHS has always had terrific music and arts, and we still maintain that, which I’m very happy to have inherited, and I’m very pleased that I was able to maintain. Next year our budget was intact as far as the arts go.

Because overall student enrollment determined school budgets, schools that were able to maintain enrollment were also able to maintain arts teaching staff.

Where cuts were made to arts education.

Although principals all struggled with budgets, some schools were able to keep their arts staff intact while other principals were not. Ms. Nelson reported that her staff

lost an arts teacher as a result of budget cuts. She explained that partly in response to this, several student clubs have developed at TCPA in order to fulfill a need:

Well, unfortunately, the arts are one of things, the actual art classes and the art teacher, um, were cut, due to budget cuts, about three years ago, so we've had to be creative in how we've kept that alive. So we do have clubs where the kids can join, and we do –they can do the arts. There's drawing and different kinds of things that's on a basic, self inspired level.

Although Ms. Nelson was not the principal at the time, she was employed at TCPA and reflected on the final decision to let go of the arts staff at her school:

I know that it was a very difficult decision. I know that we really fought, even in third Friday count the following year, to see if we could bring it back –a part time level, or anything like that. And, ah, I just remember that, um, all avenues were exhausted, at least the avenues that we were aware of and knew about. You know, (the school), in terms of a collective whole, and it just didn't work out –which was sad. We still stay very connected to that art teacher that we did have to loose, but we tried all of the avenues that we could –at least from the perspective that I had at the time.

In addition to losing staff, extracurricular programs have been cut as a result of financial conditions. Ms. Nelson recalled, “We had a drum line for a while, but we don't. We have an interest in drum line, but it's expensive to buy drums.” At times, despite the beliefs of school administrators, a lack of funding has meant cuts to arts staff members and programs in some schools.

Unique challenges.

Unlike Mr. Connelly and Ms. Larsen, Mr. Anderson faced the unique challenges of funding an arts-centered school. In addition to academic staff, he also had to find funding for three times as many arts teaching staff than the others. For him, it was a matter of conviction to the arts:

Sometimes when we look at budget cuts, it's very difficult. I mean, and sometimes, you can't do anything else, um because cuts are so drastic. We are in budget time right now, so we don't know what budgets are going to look like, but the one thing that we cannot do is sacrifice the creativity of our students.

Later, he explained how budget cuts at his school meant cuts to areas other than the arts:

This is an arts school. So we can't make a sacrifice in the arts. Our sacrifice has to be academic—in terms of the academic staff. And, we have to try to figure out how to program the school so that we can still be successful. But if you are programming a school—if you're an arts school that's given a traditional school budget, a sacrifice somewhere needs to be made because not every school has 12-13 arts staff.

Unique staffing needs coupled with one-size-fits all funding policies created unique challenges for Mr. Anderson's arts-based school.

Mr. Blake attempted to add to his arts department by bringing a band program back to the school. Money remained a major challenge. When asked to describe where money came from to fund additions to arts departments in schools that have little resources, Mr. Blake began:

First off, you have to be very, very creative and there's not a lot of room for creativity. When say I creative, I mean finding not only, you know, fiscal resources in house, but also those resources fiscally outside of your building which may be by way of a grant, which may be by way of a partnership, so to speak.

I asked Mr. Blake about an upright bass standing in his office. He began to explain a music program that used to flourish at EVHS:

(This high school had) this real, *huge* music department. They used to put on this –twenty years ago –this magnificent band presentation or orchestra presentation. As the school started to lose money or have cuts, the district came in and took all of those instruments so this is one of the lone remaining instruments that the district did not get to. They said, “Hey, you don't have music in your building. You've removed the music teacher. We're going to take all of the instruments out of the building.” So, now the problem has been, I'm trying. I come in here; I came in three years ago. I've tried to restore the music program and, I don't have any instruments.

He continued to explain the difficult situation:

I'm trying to restore a music program here. I have to be very careful, okay, now when I choose a band teacher, where am I going to get those instruments from? You know? Because if I don't have those instruments or have a plan for those instruments coming into the building and coming into the building immediately so that that teacher can have the instruments and the kids can have their instruments so that they can actually learn the music, then, you know, it's kind of a calculated risk. Because I don't have –I mean, moneys are tight.

In summary, he concluded:

And so, the question - the answer to your question is: You are responsible for finding those funds. The district will support you. They may help you out. They may help you find instruments but as far as if you need to purchase instruments or materials for that program, it's on you as a building person.

Mr. Simmons faced a different problem with the music department at LPHS. He had the staff and the instruments but not the students. He was asked to explain what he felt was motivating the district superintendent to create the AMP fund. He began, "Well, I think he feels terrible, like most people would, that you have inner city kids that have no exposure to the fine arts, or the performing arts." He went on to describe the effects that the lack of exposure was having on the students in the district:

I mean, it's very difficult at the high school level these days to have a band and orchestra –especially orchestra when very few of our K-8 or middle schools have a band or orchestra. And you know, it's hard to have a beginner's band in high school, I mean, the kids are just too embarrassed and who wants to come and see some big guys up there going [makes a screeching noise] on the violin? I mean, the kids don't have the funds to have private lessons, even if the school *did* have, say music lessons that the parents –you know, they just don't have the funds to do that. Our orchestra is dwindling, and our orchestra director and I had that conversation earlier this year, you know, that you gotta recruit to figure out how to get the students back.

During the site tour, I observed the space for music instruction at LPHS. The school overall had a high-quality facility, including several soundproof rooms. When the space

was mentioned during the interview, Mr. Simmons said,

Yeah, he's got that huge room. He's got the practice rooms, and we've got the beautiful equipment. And, you know, we can accommodate it and he'll take as many kids as he can. He'll put in those orchestra classes and band classes –but, if you only get twenty freshmen coming in who know how to play an instrument?

It's kind of tough.

Even in schools where the material and human resources were available, policies that have restricted young students' access to the arts remained a challenge for high school principals who were attempting to grow their music programs.

Principals' perspectives of the AMP fund.

As mentioned, the district superintendent has made efforts to address the lack of access to the arts for the schools in the district by setting aside a central fund that would allow principals to hire at least one full time employee certified in art, music or physical education. All principals were asked to describe how they felt the fund would impact their school. While the fund addressed a real need and the reactions to the superintendent were overall very positive, several of the principals could not confirm how their schools would benefit.

Mr. Connelly had contradicting things to say about the AMP fund. At the start, he spoke favorably of the AMP fund and revealed that student enrollment played a more decisive factor than overall budget cuts when making decisions about where to direct funding. He said:

Some of the credit has to go to (the district) in that they centrally funded what's

called AMP: Art, Music, Phy Ed. So –one FTE⁶ from each of those areas came from (district funds). So that actually helped me a great deal. I did have to make some cuts. I made three position cuts, based on projected enrollment.

When asked if Mr. Connelly saw any effects on arts education at his school solely due to budget cuts, separate from any effects attributed to accountability, again, he referred to the AMP fund; “I personally don’t because we’re able to maintain the classes that we value – specifically art classes. There’s no FTE cuts in any arts...Not to mention, the board, the school board centralized some funding for the arts.” But then, after some further discussion, he reported the following about the AMP fund:

At our school, it doesn’t really impact us in terms of funding teaching. We already have (the positions). Now, if you’re a school that didn’t have a music teacher or was facing the prospects of having to cut music or arts, it was probably a godsend, but for us, it was just an FTE that we’d already budgeted for. I suppose that it created some latitude, and allowed us to not have to cut other places, but um –you know, like I said, my budget was okay, so I wasn’t that ecstatic over it.

Mr. Blake spoke about the superintendent’s policy favorably:

He’s kind of mandated that, ah, you know, every school, elementary through high, is going to have that access for students. And I think that it’s a *great* access, so as a result of that, in our budgets, those positions have been centralized so the funding is coming out of central services for those arts teachers.

Mr. Blake went on crediting the superintendent’s response to the budget crisis, explaining specifically how the arts would be affected at his school as a result of the AMP fund:

⁶FTE refers to *full time employment* and is equal to the amount of a salary for one full time teaching staff

I got three positions. I got three fulltime positions to kind of offset whatever else I offer in the arts. He's saying, "I'm going to *guarantee* that you have this in your building, based on your student population, around the areas of arts and phy ed."

OK? And he did that pretty much for every school –for every school. No one was excluded from that because he was so – I mean he was *so* –He'd taken a very strong position on *kids need more* than just reading and writing.

Mr. Anderson went on to detail the financial status of arts education in the district and commented about the district superintendent's policy:

It's been highly publicized that the arts have been cut tremendously over the years, and even more so this past year. The superintendent is making the attempt to fire up the arts program for the district by providing at least a .2 art, music or phy ed position in schools that have never had it.

Ms. Nelson also commented favorably on the AMP funding and reported that it would help support the graphics art teacher at her school: "We're able to fund her to continue on in what she's doing, because otherwise we may not have been able to keep that class." About the ability to offer arts opportunities to her students given financial challenges, Nelson concluded, "It *is* a struggle, and it's not consistent." Later, Mr. Anderson concurred with Ms. Nelson's notion of struggle and did not share Mr. Blake's enthusiasm as he concluded, "The arts opportunities district wide are not good. Our kids in elementary schools have basically –we don't provide enough of arts. They don't get it."

Since the allocation of the AMP is dependent upon student enrollment, in some schools, the fund only supported an arts staff member one day a week. When asked if he felt policies that resulted in funding only 20% of an arts teacher's salary needs was

enough to make a difference, he said, “I guess you can expose them once a week –or have a person come to the school for six weeks at a time...I guess that exposes them to it, but it’s really cheating the students.” As with the other principals, Mr. Simmons was asked to elaborate on the ways in which he felt AMP funding would most likely affect his budget: “Well, I think that for us, it’s probably a wash. You know –they took money out and they put teachers back in. Well, they certainly didn’t put enough teachers back in to fulfill all of our art needs.” He further clarified:

To support AMPS, schools are getting less money in, because they put that AMP fund together. I think that for schools that don’t have art, you know –at least now they’re able to have a half time art teacher or whatever. I mean, it’s a bonanza, but then –how much money did they lose?

Principals believed that the district superintendent was right and well-intentioned to enforce the AMP fund. They all believed that he was reacting to a real and important need. While some thought that the AMP fund would help them sustain arts programs, none reported growing their arts programs. Mr. Blake cut a physical education position when he originally decided to hire a new music teacher, who he also planned to replace with a visual arts teacher. Most principals were unsure how much of an effect the money would have at their schools.

Perceived effect of budget cuts on curricula in arts education.

While principals observed changes in terms of size in their arts departments, they believed that the content in arts courses was not affected as a result of budget cuts. When Ms. Larsen was asked if the accountability movement had specifically affected the art department at KHS, she recognized an increased emphasis on tested areas but ultimately

believed that school budgets had a bigger effect on the status of arts education:

Ah, I would say, there's such a push for reading and math and I know that, and accountability for reading and math –that that has been the focus for especially (this district). And I think to some degree, it probably has, but when you take a look at the whole picture, its mainly budgetary constraints that have affected the arts program more than anything.

Mr. Blake said that the budget cuts have caused the district to take a more unified approach to curricula:

When we had moneys –or when moneys appeared to be kind of plentiful, I think that the, you know, decisions around curriculum and material were a little bit broader. I don't really think that there was a real focused approach to curriculum and materials as it is now.

Later, he continued, adding a comment about curricula in general:

There is more of a conscience, purposeful decision making around curriculum and materials used. We don't want –because of the tight budget, we can't afford to buy one curriculum here and another curriculum here for the same course.

By “here,” Mr. Blake was referring to his school versus other high schools in the district.

Where schools used to have more independence about their curricular choices, budget cuts have restricted the variety of materials purchased throughout the district to deliver instruction. However, principals did not indicate that this trend toward uniformity had changed the content in arts courses.

Influence of accountability on budget decisions.

Accountability played a key role in determining how financial resources were

allocated at the high schools. The physics/theater teacher from CAA, who was a support participant in this study, expressed concern, having observed the effects of NCLB while speaking with elementary school teachers in the district. Unlike the principals, he identified accountability, and not a lack of funding, as the reason for the cuts to arts education:

I was in this classroom with a bunch of elementary teachers, “Well, our art --we don’t have any more art teachers” at these elementary schools. It’s, “They’re jobs have all been cut, you know, because --cause we have to get ready for this test.” It’s just so, *so* wrong and pennywise and pound foolish and cutting off your nose to spite your face, kind of thing. It’s like, you know, sad!

Mr. Blake reflected on this trend, as he had seen it unfold over the years, and also gave his impression of the relationship between accountability and budget cuts within the context of the district:

I think that I’ve been in the district twenty years. And, like I said, ten years as a principal, three years as assistant principal. What tends to happen is that as budgets get tighter, and programs have to be whittled down, normally the first thing that goes is art --or phy ed, but in many cases, it’s art courses because of the current state the district is in under corrective action from (the state central agency), you know --the focus is math and literacy. And so, hey, if I got to make a decision between a math teacher and a arts teacher? Well, this is what I’m being held accountable for—is raising students’ achievement in math, I’m probably going to lose the arts teacher, because in a lot, *a lot* of school administrators’ mind, that’s what I’m being held accountable for, and so...maybe I don’t need art.

Maybe I have to make sure that my math teachers and my ELA teachers are –are situated.

He felt that the accountability movement would continue to steer curricula as long as money remained tight:

I think because of the budget constraints that the district is under and the other compliance issues and corrective actions that the district is under from the state, that the state has kinda imposed their will on the district for the district to become tighter in their focus around literacy and numeracy.

He asserted that despite this belief that students need more than standardized skills, school leaders are still often forced to cut arts education courses and staff members:

Budget cuts are unfortunate. When it comes to this environment of having to raise student performance in reading, obviously in math, when you factor in budget cuts into that equation, and you've got to build a budget from one year to the next, and one year you might be looking at 1.5 million dollar cut. Unfortunately, no one is going to race to cutting a math position or an English position because those teachers are obviously very critical in directly impacting math or reading.

Mr. Blake continued, returning again to the superintendent's actions as a perceived response to this action:

So, I mean, that's why the superintendent is saying, "We know that this is happening.

We're going to make sure that there's opportunities for kids in your building surrounding the arts." That's what that is born out of, because of, you know the

press role, you've got to cut 1.5? You've got to make that cut. You're going to cut off what you perceive as being the extra.

Although Mr. Blake valued the arts and felt that students benefitted greatly from opportunities to participate in arts education, ultimately he believed bureaucratic mandates would guide many principals' actions concerning difficult budget decisions.

At LPHS, Mr. Simmons also asserted that, although budget cuts are very difficult to make, determining what gets cut is dependent upon accountability. He expressed:

Yeah, it's very difficult. It's very, very difficult. Like I said, when you're forced with cuts—I mean, you know, your school's not judged on your musical. It's not judged on if your marching band can march and do one of the big routines. It's judged on your math and your English language arts scores.

When asked if he felt that was a fair assessment, he replied, "No, but it is what it is. So, you know, am I going to cut a math teacher to save an art teacher? No. I can't." Despite holding personal esteem for the arts and an appreciation of arts education, these values would not trump bureaucratic requirements.

Conclusion about budget cuts and arts education.

Principals faced difficult choices as they attempted to allocate sparse resources. As he was reflecting on the challenges presented by the budget at his school, Mr. Simmons spoke about the cost of producing a musical there:

We're going to have the conversation—soon. Are we going to have a musical next year? Are we going to do a musical every other year, or? We have to look at the resources for that. You know because it's so expensive and then if we don't do a

musical, what are we going to do in lieu of a musical? Do we have our own music festival? Or?

While the budget seemed to be a critical and a challenging issue at LPHS, Mr. Simmons also indicated a determination to stretch resources to produce a musical, or some other music event, in order to continue to support arts activities at his school.

Outlining generally how budget cuts have negatively affected her school, Ms. Nelson explained further:

Your class sizes increase, which makes it more difficult to reach that student on a one-on-one capacity. Discipline then, sometimes, increases. Students don't feel that sense of connection. I mean, I think –overall, what it's done overall is it's just made the delivery of the curriculum a more difficult task, so we've had to challenge ourselves to deliver it in a more, I guess, of an out of the box thinking kinds of ways especially at the high school level.

Like Mr. Simmons, Ms. Nelson was still driven to deliver opportunities for her students to participate in arts activities despite budget cuts and the challenges resulting from AYP requirements.

All of the principals struggled with issues dealing with the budgets at their schools. Although they faced unique challenges, they each made conscientious choices about preserving (to some extent) arts education and other arts activities at their schools. They all seemed to feel that the district superintendent had acted favorably in attempting to secure funding for the arts through the AMP fund, although they differed in terms of how each was personally affected by it at their buildings. They also indicated that ultimate

decisions are usually based on principal evaluation criteria, and some attested to how strong the pull to comply with accountability measures could be.

Decisions about Arts Education

Decision-making processes and the factors that principals consider when making choices that deal with the arts department at their schools were ultimately guided by accountability and evaluation criteria. Tradition also shaped the decisions they made about the arts program at their schools. This study also revealed that principals' decisions were influenced by the quality of their teachers, especially regarding arts education.

The influences of accountability.

Several principals in this study indicated that meeting accountability requirements factored heavily as they made curricular decisions at their schools. Principals were motivated to make decisions based on the pressures they are under to meet the mandated assessment requirements. Mr. Blake and Mr. Simmons both spoke directly about this reality. When Mr. Connelly was first asked to describe what he would like to see in an arts department at his school, he responded, "Given that I don't really have an arts background, recreating the arts curriculum is beyond my ability to tackle." Mr. Simmons also indicated that he did not play a big role in making decisions about arts education compared to other content areas when he explained, "when I go to professional development, we hit the heavy academics. We really don't –and I don't see, and I don't spend time looking at the state standards, or, the standards that are set, for the art teachers." As a result of accountability, principals are focused more on tested content areas, and this helps to explain why the arts departments have downsized in many district schools.

Mr. Blake explained how he understood the process, indicating the role that accountability played, especially if tight budgets required cutting staff positions:

And so, what tends to happen, because of budget cuts is that you tend to cut those, you know, those art teachers or those music teachers, because the thought is that they don't directly impact –and this is not diminish their –you know, their courses or their department, but, you know, math teachers *teach math* and English teachers and reading teachers *teach reading* and those are kind of what we're rated on, you know, as far as how our school is performing, and so you –so a lot of your resources go to those areas. And the other areas are kind of –kind of, so to speak, don't have that layer of *protection* that math and reading and ELA courses would have.

Mr. Simmons mirrored Mr. Blake's sentiments. When asked if he could provide any more insight as to why he thought the arts had been undervalued, he responded:

Because my evaluation is based on my performance in math and English language arts. That says it. I mean, you know, I could throw a heck of a *Cats* musical this year at this place, and our math scores and our English language and our reading scores go down the tubes? They might say adiós to me on that.

Mr. Simmons expressed his realization that maintaining the arts at his high school ultimately rested upon his shoulders, as the principal of the school. Reflecting on his former work experience at an arts-centered middle school, he expressed:

Oh, the value of arts! You know, just to see, especially if you have an integrated arts program, I think that has so much value for teaching and learning and excitement and engaging kids. I think it's made me realize, you know when tough

decisions need to be made, that art isn't the first thing on the chopping block, whereas; maybe at some of the schools it was easy to say, well we just won't have band and orchestra anymore.

If principals do not value the arts, they will favor the tested content areas because of accountability measures.

The role of tradition.

Evidence of tradition in the arts education programs at the schools was revealed during the site observations as well as through some of the conversations with the principals and a support participant during this research. In general, principals thought about what used to be as they made decisions surrounding arts at their schools. Mr. Simmons high school traditionally put on a musical every year, and he was committed to keeping that tradition alive. Similarly, Mr. Connell's and Mr. Blake's school had large music programs in the past, so Mr. Connelly worked to maintain that and Mr. Blake made efforts to revive the music program at his school. Mr. Anderson's high school had always focused on the fine arts, and he did not seem to be changing that. Except in the case of Ms. Nelson, traditions weighed heavier than innovations.

On many of the site tours, observation notes included several examples of student work that mimicked the work of western European artists. At KHS, work displayed included: Edward Munch, Georges Seurat, Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, images of Egyptian and Greek sculpture, and a picture of the Sistine Chapel. Similar sights of western European artists were observed at CAA: another *Mona Lisa*, another of Munch's *Scream*, a large painting mimicking a work of Paul Gauguin, a value study of *The Thinker*; artwork in the lobby included Degas's dancers and a famous jungle scene by

Henri Rousseau & Picasso's *Three Musicians*. Similar examples of western art were on display at the other high schools as well. Although cultural diversity was apparent in the art at some of the schools, most notably at EVHS, western European art was ubiquitous.

The categories of arts education seemed to have remained stagnant as well. When asked to describe his arts-focused school, Mr. Anderson listed the traditional courses: "CAA is a school that is based around the arts. All five of the arts areas –creative writing, visual art, theater, music and dance." Only Mr. Simmons and Ms. Nelson reported offering digital arts. There used to be a video production course offered at KHS, as was mentioned during the school tour, but that course was no longer offered at the time this study occurred.

Principals in this study, for the most part, did not indicate that they were taking new approaches to arts education. For example, some reported that they were not integrating arts into other content areas, despite their perceptions that students found participating in the arts to be enjoyable and engaging. According to Mr. Connelly, the administration at WMHS does not actively promote arts integration. When asked if teachers were encouraged to integrate the arts into their content areas, his reply again indicated that tested content material was a major focus, "I think...-no. They're not. For right now, we're really hammering home a unified scope and sequence in every class." His comments indicated that adherence to the standards take precedence.

Despite valuing the arts on a personal level and seeing important benefits for students and schools, these principals were not actively translating their value of the arts into ways that were altering instructional practices at their buildings. Mr. Blake expanded:

We're talking traditional high school that tends to have a traditional mind set. So, I think, when you start talking about integrating art across curricular areas, that's new. It's a new way of thinking. I think it's a great idea, but you're traditional teacher has not done it yet, so it's *new* to them. And so, how —you know— effectively doing that, effectively integrating an art into a social studies classroom or into a science classroom, is one that is, I think, needs to be pushed. And that can be pushed through just kind of a *somebody* who knows how to effectively do that. Or expose teachers to how that can happen and how it can benefit their delivery of instruction in certain areas.

Mr. Simmons also described a “critical need” for new modes of professional development but indicated that schools are hard pressed for the time needed and the resources required for offering such experiences to their staff:

Just to have professional development and have professional development that is differentiated to their needs especially in the area of pedagogy and with the trying times, with the economy and the school budgets, it's hard to allow teachers to go to conferences or go to group meetings....its finding the time and the resources to do that. You know, professional development, it really encourages teachers and teaches teachers and allows us to hold them accountable to do that type of teaching.

He continued to say:

I think our best work was when we had time to do better professional development, taught by our own people. And then we actually taught it, modeled it, put it in people's classrooms. Teachers were very comfortable going to their peers, going

to their friends and saying, you know, hey, I've got to really figure out how to do this or process this pedagogy and they would go right to someone in the building. Mr. Simmons indicated a lack of time as a barrier to providing professional development that could lead to innovation in arts instruction despite expressing a desire and a need for it.

Observation notes taken during the site tours included student art work that was used to display school rules or promote the PBIS⁷ standards required by the state. The art teacher from EVHS recalled being asked several times to make posters for the school for the purpose of posting behavioral expectations for the student body. He commented about the administration:

They're not thinking when they come to me and they ask me (to make posters) –or any one of my colleagues. They're not necessarily thinking about, "Well, here's an opportunity for you to be able to embed bullying into your curriculum." They want something to show and to demonstrate that we are engaging our students in an anti-bullying campaign –whatever it may be.

Even when the content of student art work appeared to address a social issue, like in the above example, bullying, this art teacher did not believe that the issue was being addressed in a critical way. According to his comments, a determining factor for school administrators to seek this type of work from art teachers was often, again, accountability or another evaluation requirement.

The principals were not actively engaged with creating arts curricula at their schools that could be considered innovative or progressive. This did not suggest that they did not see a need for or did not want innovation, as was most directly stated by Mr.

⁷ PBIS stands for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Simmons. It should be understood more as a condition of the accountability movement that has resulted in diverting principals' attention to focus on tested content areas. Arts teachers in their high schools may have used the arts to engage students in different ways, but there was little indication that this was a principal-driven practice.

The unique conditions at a technology-focused school made Ms. Nelson stand out as an important contradiction. This is detailed in a following section when she explained how she has been able to maintain access to the arts at her school. However, although she showed some leadership that led to innovative arts instruction, her actions were reactions to the cuts to her conventional arts program, rather than a progressive vision for arts at her school. Without that external condition, it cannot be determined if she would have pursued such an unconventional path in the arts if more traditional methods had still been available at her school.

The influence of teacher quality.

Teacher quality was an important factor when principals made decisions about arts education in their buildings. Principals in this study described teachers who influenced their decisions. They also explained the attributes that they believed made a quality teacher. As with other information in this study, individual differences could be seen throughout, but commonalities among expressions have been highlighted.

In their descriptions of quality arts teachers, principals indicated that they seek individuals who not only engage students in creative activity but are also willing and able to add to the culture of the school. Principals in this study indicated that they seek to employ arts staff that can do more than deliver instruction. They defined quality teachers as teachers who taught relevant and challenging material connected to developing critical

skills as well as those who demonstrated dedication, passion, and understanding toward the student body.

When Ms. Larsen stated that her school had recently hired a new arts teacher, she was asked what qualities she was looking for ideally:

I'm looking for a person that is passionate about their work. I'm looking for a person that is going to be dedicated to doing their best for kids. I'm looking for a person that has good classroom management skills. And I am looking for a person that is going to provide the school with different enriching programs and not just stay in the classroom. And that's it. They're going to give back to the school also.

Mr. Blake was also in the process of hiring a new arts staff person. When asked about the traits he was looking for from candidates for the job, he replied:

Okay, we're looking for an individual that kind of fits (this school) and also has, or brings a skill set to our school that's going to give us the best opportunity to expose children to the arts. I mean, it's kind of a basic piece. That's where we're at. I don't want someone who doesn't have a proven track record in an area. So I'm trying to find –not just get anybody, but I do want –I also want someone who has some urban experience, that has –this is what I've expressed to the interview team is that –someone who is going to be able to thrive in an environment like this.

I asked him what he thought it took to be able to thrive at EVHS. His response was both practical and philosophical:

Well, I think it takes someone that sort of understands the demographic that they're coming into –someone that has a creative –a real creative side. When I say creative –that can present materials or curriculum to students creatively. We also

want someone that has kind of a broad license that can be maybe teach different areas of the arts and we've been strategic that way so we're not locked into just one or two courses. We can have a person teach multiple courses throughout the year. Also, someone that has a sense of efficacy –a *belief* in this population. I mean-that's one of our criteria for everyone. Do you believe that you are a difference maker? If you don't have that belief, then I don't want you here at (this school). And the same holds true for an arts teacher. If you don't feel like you can make a difference, then maybe this is not the setting for you. So, those would be characteristics that I'm looking for.

Principals were looking for arts teachers who could do more than teach their content area, but sought out individuals who would make positive contributions beyond their classrooms and to the staff and student body.

Principals revealed similar characteristics when they reflected on who they felt were quality arts teachers at their buildings. I asked Ms. Larsen to describe how she had seen some of her arts teachers give back, and she gave the following examples:

Well, I'm just thinking about two particular art teachers that are just wonderful – our department chair –she just is incredible. She's involved with the interview team. She works with our new teachers. She mentors them. Um, she has worked in the past on open house programs that we've provided for our students and (with) parents. She just is an incredible leader and so, she is one that, you know, I mean, has *really* made a difference in our school. Another person in that department is the Senior Advisor, and very much involved in all types of activities here at our school. So, these two teachers really are just awesome and they really do a lot of

different things to provide the help that we need to make the school –to help the school move forward.

Mr. Blake offered this as he described the different reasons he had for valuing two of his arts staff members:

I think we have two solid arts teachers. I think the difference that they make –one is, how can I say? He’s an art teacher, but he’s very political. And so that is often brought into –there’s kind of this social justice piece that is expressed through art – which is important for this generation of students to have. But then you also have the other one that kind of balances that off a little, who is just, is really passionate about art. I mean, I’m speaking of (the other art teacher). She is just very passionate about this mode of expression. And you can see that in her teaching. And, she’s got this real focus on, you know –kind of whatever-it-takes mentality. That’s the kind of mentality she has. So, I think that’s how they’re making a difference.

I asked Mr. Connelly to describe what he valued about a music teacher whom he spoke favorably of and he described how she stuck out from many of the other staff members there when he said that he valued “her dedication” the most about her, and went on:

She is teaching many levels of band, chorus. And she’s at the basketball games with the drum line. She’s at the evening events. We don’t have a lot of staff (who) engage the students outside of the classroom. We don’t. It’s tragic to me, to be honest with you. The sign, I heard a guy say –he said that the sign of a great school was how long those doors are open after the last bell rings. Those doors are shut. It’s sad.

Other principals identified dedication and a willingness to be involved in the school outside of class time when talking about the teachers who they identified as among the best at their school. Ms. Larsen did not name an arts teacher, but she mentioned a particular teacher's love of the arts as an attribute. The teacher that Ms. Larsen referred to was also the director of the school play earlier that year and volunteered countless hours to complete its production. Ms. Larsen said:

She's an English teacher and she values the arts, obviously. She is the Teacher of the Year this year because she does so much for our school. I don't want to exclude those people because that is all part of being in the arts and working with students. And so, I just wanted to make sure I said that.

Mr. Anderson mentioned his physics/theater teacher and spoke about the way he delivered instruction in content other than art:

Our best physics teacher –who is also theater. So that class, right away, is not going to be a normal physics class because his class is more theatrical. He's an actor here around(the state). So, um, kids love it. Now he can come to them in a totally different way in physics –especially if he has theater students. But just the way he, um, just the way that he would have is class is different from a straight up physics teacher. But we don't have too many teachers in the building who do not have some type of arts background.

At an arts-based school, administrative decision making about arts instruction involved supporting teachers who were also working artists. The physics/theater instructor confirmed, “They’ve always been very supportive of me, of the fact that I’m a working

actor.” For Mr. Anderson, artistic ability is something that he values in his staff because he sees that talent transfer to abilities to deliver instruction.

Not all of the principals reported having completely positive experiences with the arts staff members at their schools. Mr. Connelly spoke about variations in teacher quality at his school:

I have two really good art teachers, and I have a lousy art teacher and I remember at my other job how we were trying to, we were just trying to get art to be a more, um –a more meaningful class, in that we were using, or we were applying, what our educational objectives were to even an art class and I remember breaking down the (standard state assessment test) and identifying a strand of, um, of questions where the students were particularly weak –it might have been analysis or something, and so, we were breaking down the steps of questions and art was one where the art teacher played an active role and she was coming up with fantastic ideas, I mean, to increase literacy in her class.

When asked to describe specifically what he felt made a good teacher, he responded:

The passion that they bring, their creativity, the manner in which they run their classes in that it’s organized and structured and there’s clear rubrics, so that the students know what they’re being graded on. Um, it’s run in a transparent way. It’s run, I think, with fidelity, in that, she’s teaching according to her art standards and the students are aware of them and they have to fulfill certain –they have to fulfill certain, I don’t know what the word is, but they have to accomplish certain *things* versus the other teacher who says, “Oh, today’s free draw day!” –which is just crap.

Mr. Connelly was not the only principal who hinted at experiences with poor arts teachers. Mr. Blake's comments exemplified how teacher quality can play a crucial role in how principals make decisions about arts education, especially when quality is lacking. He had previously cut a physical education teacher and had hired a music teacher that did not meet his expectations for the program:

Just because you say you're going to bring art back, you also have to consider teacher quality. Now, I just made this big, bold decision, but I didn't get the best music teacher that I think I could have gotten. And so, I—I am struggling with that decision because teacher quality is a concern, and—so you know, I can say—hey, I have music in the building, but the *quality* of the music education that I'm providing for the students is kind of what I want to think about.

Following up on his desire to bring band back to EVHS, he confessed:

Well, I moved away from that and, I'll just be frank about that. Although you may want something, but if the want is... —doesn't provide you with an individual that you feel is capable or competent in the area, sometimes that can be kind of a curse. And so, I swapped out —this year, I swapped out a music teacher for a art teacher — a visual art teacher. So, I kind of flipped flopped positions because I didn't feel like I was getting what I was needing to get out of the music position. I kind of felt like it was sending us backwards, setting us back a bit. So I kind of made — I said, in the best interest of my kids, I said, well although I don't want to take the arts away from them, I just kind of said, okay, let me give them another opportunity in another vein of the arts ...while still keeping that opportunity there, where I just didn't get a whole lot out of the music position —and I think that that's

kind of a systemic issue that needs to be addressed. And I'll just kind of leave that conversation at that...

Mr. Blake's example revealed that when the principal perceived a lack of teacher quality, or if the teacher did not meet the principal's expectations for the course, the course may have been cut, sometimes despite the values and intentions of the principal.

When principals considered their arts staff members to be high quality, they sometimes relied on them to make decisions regarding the particular needs or the directions that the arts should take in their buildings. Mr. Connelly indicated that a quality teacher at his school was influential in making decisions about arts education. He stated, "I support the arts as I can. Every purchase order that (the teacher) ever wanted for her program, I will sign this –provided it's not obscene. Kids are great in that program." When asked if he believed he was willing to do what she asked more because of how he valued this arts teacher as a teacher or more by how he valued the arts, Mr. Connelly replied, "I see the value of her and I see the value of the arts." Because he valued both her and the arts, she was able to get most of the things she asked for.

Mr. Blake described the important influence of a strong art teacher at his school. When asked how he would go about making a decision about the direction of the arts program at his school, he referenced a quality teacher when he said:

I have a very strong art teacher that happens to be also –I mean, he's very passionate about art and, pretty much an activist. I would term him a teacher activist that is involved in arts boards in the city. He also happens to be a union representative that sits on the state and national boards around unions, and so he voices his opinion, quite a bit around the *need* for art to be in place, and for the

importance of art being in place. I tend to lean towards his advice or his

experience when making decisions about how we're going to offer art here.

Because the teacher at this school was trusted by the principal, he was able to influence decisions significantly. It is also important to note that Mr. Blake was the only principal in my study who directly referenced social justice. This pointed to the power arts teachers could have as persons who have the potential to educate administrators when they use their voice as a means of advocating for the importance of the arts as a tool for social justice. Like the teacher at EVHS demonstrated, arts teachers could have tremendous impacts when they acted as teacher leaders in their buildings and became engaged in the district and the larger political realms that shape education.

Conclusions about principals' decisions about arts education.

Accountability seemed to guide principals' focus when they made instructional decisions. When cuts needed to be made, their decisions seemed to favor tested content areas at the expense of arts education. Traditional ideas of what art includes and how arts instruction should be delivered prevailed and seemed to steer decisions about arts education. Teacher quality had a major influence on how principals in this study determined the directions of the arts departments at their building. When arts teachers were perceived as particularly dedicated and invested in the school, they could potentially hold some of the decision making power regarding the curricular choices for their departments. Mr. Blake's story reveals that when arts teachers are involved in social justice, they can educate principals and also shape arts instruction.

In conclusion, when they made decisions about arts education, principals took into consideration, first, what the requirements of their evaluation would be. Then, they

considered resources. Principals indicated that teachers could be understood as resources, especially if they were able to volunteer or bring something unique to the school community. High quality arts teachers have influenced principals to make decisions that support the arts, while observations of poor teacher quality sometimes resulted in making cuts to those programs.

Maintaining Access to Arts Education

Urban school leaders have maintained access to arts education in a few different ways. The methods identified in this study included preserving funding or making cuts in other content areas. Many principals discussed creating larger class sizes so that courses could be preserved. The experiences of two principals are highlighted. Mr. Anderson, as reported by a support participant, was able to maintain access to arts at his school by highlighting the accomplishments of the arts students at his school through public media formats, which made it difficult for the district to force cuts. Because the traditional arts program at TCPA was cut, Ms. Nelson had to rely on creative alternatives to provide her students with some access to the arts.

Deciding to fund arts education.

Stated simply, maintaining access to arts education required that principals decided, in the first place, to preserve some money in the school budget for funding it. The assistant principal and chair of the arts department at KHS said as much when asked to explain the practices Ms. Larsen used to maintain arts education at the school:

You know, she funds it. We –she and I and the rest of the administrators, we encourage, we participate, we attend the performances. Well, we fund it. I mean, I think it sounds very generic, but if –without that money, there would be no music,

there would be no music program, you know, art program, those programs. There would be no band. There would be no orchestra. Those things would be cut. The majority of the schools see them as not necessary, and we believe at KHS, it's extremely important.

Again, maintaining arts education depended on a belief that the arts are valuable for students and schools. According to the chair of the arts department at KHS, maintaining access to arts education in urban high schools began with a choice. Mr. Simmons added, "I guess it does come back to the principal. If he or she doesn't believe in it, it would be the easiest classes to get rid of."

Making arts education students' successes public.

Mr. Anderson spoke several times of the unique challenges connected to trying to budget for an arts-focused school. District regulations have funded his school as if it were no different from other high schools in the district. Mr. Anderson was able to secure enough funding to fulfill the needs of his school, whose arts staff was at least triple the size of the arts teaching staff at the other five schools in this study. The physics/theater teacher, who was a support participant in this study, offered further insight:

It's a little bit of a PR gig, but really an important one, and --yeah, and I think Mr. Anderson is, you know, way toward the top of the people at doing that, and like, getting recognized and I think this is the first year they funded us as an arts school. He was finally able to do that, you know, (along) with the bad press that they've gotten, they've gotten some amazing press with --like our guys singing this, or our guys finishing at the top three in the poetry competition!

He went on to explain with some frustration, “So if, if –If central office is going to say look at –look at how great whatever –this –look at this great thing about (the district), well, why won’t you fund us as if we were a arts school?” Then he described the reactions of district administrative agencies:

Their whole look, the way they looked at us and approached us was like, “Well, you’re at a budget deficit” and it’s just like, “well, yeah –but it’s because you’re taking this gazillion dollars away for things that we have no share in or part of,” and etcetera so, yeah, underneath *those* criteria, we’re under budget.

He expanded on the role that Mr. Anderson played in preserving funding for the arts despite bureaucratic challenges:

So, we have this deficit we were in. And so it was kind of finagling and Mr. Anderson did a really good job of shuffling things around and PRing –which is, you know, I think a big job of the principal, as far as being an advocate for arts education. It’s like getting our name out there, getting the kind of funding we need, holding our staff together, which is another commitment he genuinely made, which is like, you know, with all our disagreements, he’s like, “No—I know these guys can teach and I’m going to find a way to keep them.” And, he, you know, has to play games sometimes with the budget as it presents itself –Like (for) a couple teachers, I think he had to publically say, “This is *what* –with the budget that you’re allowing, we’re going to have to cut these three teachers which does *this* to our class sizes, or whatever, and he’s kind of –and I think he kind of does that as a means of –of “You really *want to* do this? You really *want to* make me do this kind

of thing?” You know? Learning how to play, you know, the strings of that instrument is really critical.

At a high school that employed a dozen or more full time arts staff in addition to other content area teachers, maintaining those staff required highlighting the benefits and accomplishments of the programs. Using local media to expose those accomplishments has helped Mr. Anderson convince district agencies to rethink funding policies towards his school.

Encouraging creative alternatives.

Maintaining access to arts education could also be done through using creative projects in other content areas. Ms. Nelson reported that at TCPA staff members have been able to provide opportunities for her students to engage in different artistic activities through several different classes:

I think, you know, in welding, they create. They have to have a creative piece to create the tables and the chairs and the different things that they create. Obviously, the construction academy because they’re going all the way from the blueprint, if you will, on the computer, but still, they have to create all the way to completing the construction of it.

Relationships with community organizations have also offered an alternative venue for students at TCPA to maintain access to creative educational opportunities. Ms. Nelson explained one example that a group of students at her school were involved in that integrated art, writing and history:

They’re creating those artifacts, and they’re creating *a lot* of live –or they call it a living design, so it’ll be outside. It’ll be historical people or events or places in

Milwaukee and then, it will also be the kids that researched it –their history, their place, their belonging in where ever they came from and they just put it together in this nice, flowing kind of exhibit, and it's there on display for all to enjoy.

She continued, expanding on the abilities that she'd observed in her students:

our students are constantly creating 3D objects that are printed through this CAD, and so I do think that there is a type of creative, arts based mind that is attracted to this school, um, and it might not be a traditional kind of art or design, but definitely, they have that ability, to kind of think 3D, or think out of the box or to envision something and to make it happen.

Ms. Nelson also described different contests that her students were involved in, furthering their opportunities with arts activities:

Just to incorporate the trades with that, we do have welding and we do have carpentry and those sorts of things. So we pair with NARI a lot, the home improvement show, and we do this art gallery, and our kids create things like trellises. They create beautiful tables using decorative rod iron, and you know, creating the table top for it and what not. Um, they made a bench for our art gallery, so that's in there. So, you know, we just try to make sure everyone is involved with the materials we have here and the classes and the resources that we have. And then allowing the students to, you know, inspire from that. It's not a direct art, but to me it is a creative piece.

She continued with even more examples:

We have a robotics team that, you know, obviously does the digital drawings and creates from that a robot, and they take that to national competitions. And we also

have a group of students who are, each year, in a competition and they create the emblem and everything for a motorcycle they put together and they, you create it. And I think they won last year for Visual Display. So they have to put some of their, um, creative design like into the fuel tank and stuff and things like that. So we try to incorporate that kind of thing. Our students also create their own designs for our t-shirts and what not. And they do all of those in their digital classes. And, we always have kind of a competition in those digital classes and they create the student ID for the year.

Because Ms. Nelson was not able to offer traditional arts courses at her building, other resources were utilized. Those resources included volunteers to lead afterschool clubs and making the most of partnerships with the neighborhood where the school was located.

Conclusions about maintaining access to arts education.

Maintaining access to arts education in large urban high schools has been challenging. Resources have been scarce and the materials needed to offer quality arts courses have been expensive. Principals were able to maintain at least some access to the arts for their students through traditional avenues, including keeping student enrollment at a level that would support a staff-rich school. Other resourceful methods included incentivizing staff and volunteers, encouraging teachers to participate in contests and other opportunities, building community partnerships, and utilizing local resources.

Awareness of Relationships between Arts Education and Education for Social Justice

Studies included in the literature review for this research have provided testimony that arts education classes can be combined with purposeful critical pedagogy and can achieve some of the goals held by educators for social justice (Damm, 2006; Eisenhaur,

2006; Gude, 2009). An important finding was that principals did not directly connect arts education with social justice. The tenets of social justice and school leadership for social justice are reviewed here and a review of principals comments and observations from the study related to those tenets are presented. McKenzie et al. (2007) maintained that social justice leadership included three essential practices that charge school leaders to:

- increase student achievement because academic achievement is a form of “currency for success” (p.117) that all students should have access to;
- “raise the critical consciousness of the students and staff” (p.117) through using learning communities, and
- “act as a disrupting and destabilizing intervention into a racist, classist, sexist, homophobic and ableist education system in this country” (p.117).

Additionally, Theoharis (2007) has asserted that social justice requires three actions:

- engaging in critical inquiry about social issues and marginalizing practices,
- interrupting unfair, marginalizing practices, and
- practicing democratic action.

Since these definitions overlap to some extent, this section is divided into four topics that merge both theorists’ descriptions. These topics are: student achievement, democratic practice, critical conversations, and finally, interrupting oppression.

It is important to assert here that the goal of this research was not to ascertain to what extent arts education linked with social justice practices actually occurred at each principals’ respective school. Rather, the final attendant question sought to assess to what extent principals, busy with policy requirements, were aware of the new, intriguing, and even hopeful research findings in the field of arts education. How aware were principals

of research studies that were linking arts education to liberating social justice practice? Equally important, it should be noted that principals were not asked directly about social justice in an effort to avoid disingenuous responses. Rather, the interview questions were developed in order to get principals to talk about their actions as school leaders and their practices regarding leadership or the arts so that their responses would point to their awareness (or lack of awareness) to the connections that can be made between arts education and pedagogy for social justice (See Appendices B-D).

Student achievement.

Part of interrupting injustice has involved giving marginalized students access to success. While controversy has existed over how success in schools has been assessed and ultimately defined, it is important that traditionally low performing student groups successfully finish high school and go on to college so that they may achieve what McKenzie, et al. (2007) has defined as “currency for success.” As indicated in several of the principals’ comments regarding using the standards that reflected their positive attitudes towards accountability, they all worked hard to make sure that their students graduated and had opportunities after high school.

All of the principals indicated achievement was one of their main goals. Mr. Connelly reported, “Our mission is simple, and is to give the students that come to our school and attend our school the best possible education.” Ms. Nelson described of her school that, “our mission is to make them college ready.” Similarly, Mr. Blake stated that “the goal is student achievement –especially in literacy and in math.” Mr. Simmons pointed out his relatively high attendance and graduation rates as a source of pride:

We have 1600 students. They come from all over the city. Our mission is to prepare the students to successfully transition from high school to college. We are a college prep specialty school. Last year we graduated 373 seniors and 85% went on to college and they achieved around three million dollars in scholarships, so...It's a tough mission in our city, you know, when you have mostly students of color, which our school is about 88% students of color and around 70% of the students are free and reduced lunch, um, it's a challenge, but the kids are focused on the vision and the mission and our attendance is around 95% each day, so they're here. They're focused and, ah, we work on making sure that the kids are highly engaged in the lessons, and so, it's a neat place.

Even at an arts-based school, Mr. Anderson stated, "The most important thing is that there is an integration of arts and academics." Clearly, principals in urban schools have been very concerned about the academic success of their students. They often identified that success as among their most important goals as a school leader.

There was very little indication that principals understood that the arts could help students achieve academic success. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Simmons made direct comments that linked the arts to academic achievement, and in those cases, they did not indicate that they valued the learning that happened in arts classroom for its own sake, but rather understood it as a means of helping students become successful in math and reading courses. While they may value expression and creativity, no principals indicated that any of these were part of academic success. Academic achievement is still largely understood as separate from artistic achievement.

As an advocate for social justice and a teacher leader, the art teacher from EVHS

offered a great deal of insight to this portion of the research. When he was asked how he understood the value of arts education, he articulated something different from the principals in this study:

My philosophy in art education is more about students' brain development. Art education has become in my thoughts, and in my practice more about that idea of brain development, and more (about) the students connecting with the creativity needed and seen as valuable by businesses that see change in culture, where creativity, the 21st Century skills set is becoming more centered around creativity and problem solving and analysis.

This teacher was among one of the only participants to connect the skills taught in arts settings to the needs of an emerging job market that students should have access to. Ms. Nelson indicated that students who took design classes or learned to use a green screen were excited to “realize that there might even be a job that I can really do that and love it,” but this was unique compared to the other principals.

Democratic practice.

Some elements of social justice related to practicing democracy in schools have already been described previously in this chapter, and will briefly be reviewed here. Part of democratic practice involves participating in the environment outside of the school and addressing the needs of the community together. Many of the principals described using the arts as a way to engage the community with their school or using the community as a resource to provide the students with opportunities to serve through participation with the arts.

At some high schools, the arts have played a major role in building relationships with the community. Ms. Larsen and Mr. Blake both worked with City Year. Ms. Larsen's arts staff people, along with other staff who volunteer time, have also built relationships with several other community agencies. The dance clubs at the school have been particularly active, performing for several events, including different ethnic celebrations, throughout the community. The arts teacher who Mr. Blake referred to participate in this study also described community service learning projects. Ms. Nelson also spoke about a number of community partnerships TCPA had formed so that her students would be exposed to arts activities.

Democratic practice of community service and engagement with the community through the arts, was at least one way in which the students in these schools were participating in social justice activities.. However, a lack of commentary about the social and democratic benefits of these interactions again pointed to an overall lack of understanding, for the most part.

Critical conversations.

Conversations and critical reflection is an extremely important action related to social justice practice. Social justice requires students and staff to uncover bias and examine inequalities (Freire, 1970; Gude, 2009). However, only Mr. Simmons commented on the benefits of dialogue that happens in an arts classroom. He remarked:

Just giving our kids experiences. It think, we better prepare them for college and having conversations and having debates. You know, questioning each other about their work, you how do they critique each others' work without being nasty.

I asked him if he thought those types of conversations happened in other classrooms, and he responded:

Somewhat, but in a different way, even, then when its art. You know, I think highly engaged classrooms have the kids debating and things like that. But it's usually about a topic, it's usually about not your own work, so this is a little bit more about your own work, I think.

Even though Mr. Simmons recognized the value of dialogue through art engagement, he did not articulate a deep understanding of the potential connection to social justice, or even how dialogue could extend beyond self to build greater awareness of others. In fact, he indicated that he wasn't really aware of how conversation in an arts class could be about a "topic" as in other classes. Again, this points to a lack of understanding.

The art teacher at EVHS had much to say about this. When asked if he thought principals ever considered using arts education as a way to get students to critically engage in issues of race, gender, poverty, sexual orientation and other issues, he replied, "Self-identification?...You know, I'm painting with a broad brush, but in my limited experiences, principals aren't often thinking about bringing self-identification issues into much of a curriculum –broadly speaking –much less speaking specifically to art."

Interviews with the principals seemed to confirm this observation. As mentioned, out of the six principal participants, Mr. Blake stood out as the only one who directly mentioned social justice during the interviews. As the art teacher at Mr. Blake's school was involved in the union and actively promoted social justice, this points to the power that a strong vision and voice from art staff members can have in educating the principal.

Mr. Blake reported that the art teacher at his school seemed to touch on “the social justice piece” that he said was important, specifically, for this generation:

Well, when I say that, I think that this generation of students has to have a voice. I think that, you know, they have to have a sense of activism, because, you know, students in years past –you just were a student and how you felt, or how you perceived something or someone important, you know, we as the adults kind of set the parameters for what you were supposed to learn and how you were supposed to learn. This generation of students now, they’re coming into a world where it’s changed – a *whole lot*. You know, access to information, social media –those being kinda those venues to change and that kind of a thing.

He continued, explaining the changing needs for students today:

Kids need to know how to do that –how to have that expression, that voice, the ability to be informed decision makers –more so now than ever before, and I think that the one art teacher kinda pushes that and you can see it even in the products that are produced artistically from that class.

He went on to reveal an occasion when a student used art to react to some political current events that had resulted in a recall election after the state governor made decisions to cut school funding:

There’ve been times actually, when it’s been *too* political, and I had to say, “Hey, we’re going to pull this display.” Because this kind of puts us into a different arena – and this was about some recall stuff –you know? Kind of governor type stuff, where I kind of had to say, “You know, this is kind of inappropriate for our

school.” I understand that the students are expressing themselves, but we’re not going to have *this* [laughing] display in our school.

I commented that it seemed like there was a fine line, and his response indicated his conflicting feelings surrounding the decision to remove the student’s art:

It’s a very fine line and, you know and so, I said, “In this case, this subliminal message that may be in the art, we’re going to pull.” And I felt bad about that because it was kid’s art. But, because of that fine line, there’s some things that I don’t think a public school should be the stage for. And so that’s why I say, maybe it’s too much. And we kind of had to put the brakes on some things. But that’s part of that voice. This is how we feel about these budget constraints or these budget cuts and how it’s impacted art and that kind of thing...this is not the stage for it, you know? Newspaper clippings creatively folded into the art and that type of thing—and so that’s why I say it was slick! It was cool how it was done! But, it was caught, and I had to pull the display.

I asked him whether or not before he pulled the display, there were reactions that made him take it down or if it was that he was anticipating strong reactions. He reflected:

Well, I –it was something that I saw that you had to look very closely at to put together. And I said, well...you know, I caught myself just kind of going to the display case to admire the art but as I’m looking at the images, I’m like *there’s a real message here*. And, when I talked to the instructor, he said, “Well that was intentional,” but it was done very*creatively* [laughing] And so at that point in the discussion, I just went, hey, I feel kinda bad about, you know –censoring these

students' feelings about this, but I just don't think this is the setting for this type of message.

He concluded by saying, "You know, we are a public school." While principals indicated that they cared about social justice issues and cared about arts education, there also were limits, according to the experience reported by Mr. Blake, to the controversies that school leaders were willing to allow students to actively engage in.

Many assumed that social issues meant social problems. For example, Ms. Larson stated, "Our administrative team works with students that are having problems in school, with other individual students or if there's a conflict with a teacher, we also handle that. We also have four counselors that work with the students." Mr. Blake offered a position along the same lines, "We have what we call EWI meetings, which are those early warning indicators meetings....during those meetings, academy teachers discuss student data. Part of the data is how are they performing academicallybut then its also data on behavior." Only Mr. Connelly asked me to clarify, so I told him that I was asking more about identity than behavior problems. His response revealed an interesting event:

I think that question exposes us as a school...We have three African American staff. Yet our population is 80...I'd have to look it up, but in the 80's, African American. The staff does not represent or reflect our population and I don't think that that issue is ever talked about. Identity? I don't think it's talked about in a real authentic way. In fact, I remember in the beginning of the year, actually, when a teacher wanted to talk about the perception of African Americans in the media

He recalled the details of this event:

Some kids came to me, and they were offended that she was talking about it, and I said, “Why are you offended?” You know? “This is a legitimate issue, worthy of discussion.” I just remember the kids shutting down. And –you know, I can’t speak to the conversation that was had in the classroom, whether or not it was dynamic and did talk about race and identity and perception and misperception. I don’t know, but, to me that was kinda interesting –that this, this child didn’t even wanna embrace the conversation.

He wondered aloud:

Was it a function of them being embarrassed? I don’t think so. I think that they thought that it was inappropriate for this teacher to be talking about the perceptions of African Americans because she was white. And our staff is white. Our staff hasn’t changed as much as, as much as I would like them to have changed with the change of the population. It’s a challenge. I don’t think you necessarily have to be African American to teach African American kids, but a little diversity amongst the staff would go a long way.

The recalling of this event and the responses offered by the other principals suggest that if critical conversations are happening in their buildings, through the arts or in other content areas, they are not the result of principal direction.

If this study had been about the arts teachers or the actual art at the participating high schools, the research findings may look very different. A lot of the student art work that I observed was imaginative and self-expressive. At KHS, during the site tour, one of the art teachers gave me a copy of her homework assignment where her students were exploring visual culture. In my field log journal, I recorded:

homework assignment: asking students to read an article about the “Taliban and the destruction of ancient Buddhas” Students are required to “write about your feelings and opinions about this destruction, answer the question: How can art be so powerful that people want to destroy it? List some form of artistic expression today that people talk of banning or destroying.”

This was a powerful example of the important reflection that arts teachers are engaging students in. This example was recorded where Ms. Larsen was the principal. However, Ms. Larsen, like the other principals, did not mention critical thought or dialogue as a benefit of student participation in the arts.

Interrupting oppression.

As stated, some of the art observed suggested that the arts staff may have been engaging their students in art for the sake of activism. Some of the art that I observed at TCPA expressed advocacy for non-violence and improved race relations. There were examples of art that included and celebrated cultural diversity of the student populations and highlighted the local history at all of the high schools I toured, especially where City Year had been active (KHS and EVHS), where there were quotes painted on the wall from social activists like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and Hellen Keller. However, little evidence was revealed that principals were a guiding force in this direction.

Principals did not indicate that they were aware of ways that their students were engaging in social activism in their schools. The one exception was Mr. Blake, but ultimately, there were limits in terms of how much he actually wanted his students to be critically engaged, as his story about censorship details. Because the art teacher at EVHS represented the teachers’ union and attended several conferences, I asked him if,

given his perspective, school leaders were aware of the potentials of and the growing importance of arts education. He responded:

I know a number of administrators who are *very* aware of the current thoughts, trends and ideas being floated out there and gaining traction, *really* gaining momentum, around visual literacy and the 21st Century Skill Set. What does that entail? And, the fact that arts and creativity –that arts agenda—really are a strong component of that....I also, having heard them, talked with them, discussed those notions, they really *do* understand.

But he continued, stating that it was not a lack of understanding, but instead, a lack of resources that prevented principals from making innovative changes:

It's very frustrating because the current system that's in place is so tattered and torn, and really –it makes no sense –that the resources that are allocated, excuse me –the *dwindling* resources that are allocated don't follow that at all. So there's that, you know, the dichotomy of on the one hand, you understand the importance and the growing –I mean, if you just talked about the data –If you just talked about the research, the piece on brain development, and the momentum that is gained about arts education and how it impacts and influences brain development, a lot of people –they might not get it, but they're familiar with the proposition, but, then you have on the other side, juxtaposition. The understanding that resources suck or they're nonexistent, so therefore we can't fund what we know or are starting to believe to be true.

When he further described the challenge, he suggested that a large problem was resistance to any change:

It's scary in a way because with that growth and understanding comes the natural byproduct of, "Well, we need to need to change to the system. And, we need to change into something different." It's a complete sea change. And, I know just as many administrators who would just as soon see the fires of hell than change the status quo. (laugh) So...There's that.

He concluded, about the problem:

You know, as a leader in the school, as someone who knows enough about leadership in the district, and who is a leader at the state and national level for the teachers' union, the national level and the state level – I see a huge amount of recognition that we need to change the way we do things and part of that is with that 21st Century Skills Set guiding those changes and guiding the necessary sea change and system. But, when it comes down to the localstatus quo is a pretty hard siren's call to resist.

He was critical about administrators' understandings of the importance of arts education, adding:

It doesn't go deep enough to create a drive to change that's strong enough to bring that belief into reality....So, that's where I think a lot of our administrators are. They pay lip service to it. "I know, art is really important." You'll come to me as a principal and, "I get it –but I ain't got no money to do anything about it." So, they pay lip service to it, but again, it's that whole notion of the status quo doesn't allow it.

According to these statements, although principals may have been aware of the importance of arts education, they were less knowledgeable regarding how to transform

educational practices to reflect and apply that knowledge in meaningful ways. Even if principals were committed to education for social justice on some levels, they have not made connections between education for social justice, content instruction, and student experiences in arts education courses.

Summary of Research Findings

In summary, principals in this study valued arts education at their schools. They all had favorable perspectives of the standards, and the accountability movement seemed to have the biggest impact on their decision making as school leaders. Once a decision was made to continue funding arts staff members, many principals did not play a major role in making decisions about the directions of the arts departments at their schools. They often left those whom they regarded as quality teachers to direct those decisions. Despite all principals reporting that they have made sacrifices due to budget cuts, some principals were able to keep arts faculty in place through securing student enrollment. Where arts programs were offered, observations and discussions indicated that the delivery of arts instruction was very traditional. There was little evidence that arts departments were incorporating some of the more progressive strategies used by arts educators for social justice.

Chapter V: Conclusions, Interpretations, and Recommendations

As an advocate for arts education and social justice leadership, this qualitative analysis used case study methodology to explore principals' understandings of the values of arts education, specifically within the context of the accountability movement and financial challenges. It also looked at how principals made decisions about and were able to maintain students' access to arts education at their school. Finally, it investigated to what extent principals understood how arts education curricula could be linked to social justice. Six principals and three support staff from a single, urban district participated in this research. Data were collected during the Spring Semester 2012.

This chapter is divided into six main sections. First, the research problem is reviewed, including the research question, attendant questions, and the purpose of the study. Second, the research results are discussed. Finally, using a social justice lens, implications and recommendations are offered in four different areas: theory, research, policy and practice.

Findings revealed that although principals were concerned with social justice to some extent, for the most part, they made few connections between arts education and education for social justice. This pointed to significant disconnects between educational theorists and researchers from educational leadership and arts education as well as between university theorists or researchers and practitioners in public schools. This chapter concludes with a call for greater communication and cooperation among those from all levels who are working to improve education. It calls for them to develop

strategies and practices that advocate for arts education for social justice in public schools.

Review of the Research Problem

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore principals' perspectives related to the values of arts education for schools and students. It addressed the problem of arts education being an undervalued content area. This problem has been exacerbated by an emphasis on accountability coupled with an economic downturn. This has been problematic because it has caused arts education to dwindle, most severely in public, urban schools (Chapman, 2004). This problem should be understood by school leaders and advocates for social justice as a matter of injustice since differences in access to quality arts education have been clearly drawn along variations in ethnicity, race and socioeconomic status (Bollow-Tempel, 2010).

The literature review for this study offered several examples of how some arts educators have used arts curricula to engage students in social justice issues and democratic activism (Anderson, 2004; Gude, 2009). It also covered theories of school leadership from a social justice perspective (Theoharis, 2007). However; despite strong theories and powerful examples, it began by critically exploring the challenging context of arts education and revealed that AYP demands and financial strain have worked to devastate arts programs in many schools. Because principals act as instructional leaders and make building level staffing and programming decisions, this reality called for research that could describe how and why urban principals valued arts education and to what extent they understood the potentials of democratic and transformative pedagogy

embedded in innovative arts education curricula. As such this research addressed the following questions, including the main research question and four attendant questions:

How do urban principals and school leaders perceive the value of the arts within a climate of accountability and financial strain?

In general, given such a climate,

1a. How do urban school leaders make decisions about offering arts education at their schools? and

1b. What do urban school leaders consider when they make these decisions?

2a. How are urban school leaders maintaining access to arts education within a climate of accountability and financial strain? and

2b. To what extent are urban school leaders who are maintaining this access aware of the relationships between arts education and social justice?

It is important to review social justice here, as it provides the conceptual framework for this research. Social justice is engaging in action that interrupts the status quo in order for more democratic policies and practices to emerge (Brown, 2006). For principals, this means working to improve the achievement of chronically underperforming student groups, engaging in leadership practices that include voices from many stakeholders, bridging the gaps that exist between the school and the students' communities, engaging in critical dialogue and reflection that can deconstruct institutional forms of oppression, and finally, engaging in action that stops unjust practices (Theoharis, 2007 & 2010).

According to this definition, principals who have maintained access to arts education for their students may have taken steps towards social justice. Providing equal access to arts education in places where there have been discrepancies can be seen as

action that ends an oppressive practice of exclusion. Since research has linked arts education to academic benefits for students (Gullat, 2007), providing arts access can also be seen as practice that helps to counteract low achievement. However, it is important to keep in mind that simply offering arts education does not guarantee that arts students are critically engaging in social justice issues. As Marshall (2004) asserted, often school leaders have not dealt with those issues in ways that are more than superficial.

Access to arts education is not the same as social justice activism. Dewhurst (2011) asserted that arts education for social justice depends on critical intentions that ground curricula in the lives of students where both the students and the teachers act together as learners and activists in order to change society to become “more humane” (p.365). Arts education for social justice does not mean providing arts programming where there is none; it means providing art in a way that is radically different than has traditionally been done.

Discussion of the Research Results

In this section, the results of the research are discussed. They are addressed briefly according to the research questions, in the order that they were laid out in the research findings. For the most part, principals did not make direct connections between social justice and arts education. Although principals expressed a genuine appreciation for arts education, their understandings were mostly traditional and did not indicate an awareness of the progressive ways that arts education has been changing (Duncum, 2007).

Principals identified three primary reasons why they felt that students benefitted from participation in the arts. First, principals believed that most of the students who

participated in arts classes were engaged. Second, in contrast to other subjects, principals felt that arts classes gave students a fun, escape from the rigid schedules that have resulted in efforts to meet AYP demands. Finally, principals indicated that their students could benefit from participating in arts education courses by using the arts as a means of empowerment, through self expression and healthy emotional expression. While they believed that arts education could be engaging and empowering, seeing it as a fun escape reflected a limited understanding of the arts as having potentially rigorous and important content.

National context.

Notably, none of the principals in this study reported that they believed that there were any significant changes in arts education curricula because of AYP or budget cuts. Accountability was understood as a school wide responsibility that all teachers shared. Mr. Simmons mentioned that arts teachers were now required to include writing expectations for their students. Additionally, Mr. Anderson mentioned that the arts teachers at his school needed to devote some time to helping students develop math skills. Contrary to critiques that accountability had narrowed school curricula, principals believed that AYP demands had helped strengthen and focus their schools and the district.

Principals reported that budget cuts had made it a challenge to maintain large-scale arts education programs. The superintendant's AMP fund helped to maintain programs, but did not help school art programs to grow. Despite the new, central support, Ms. Nelson's technical high school was not able to hire back the arts member

that the school lost three years ago. Mr. Anderson struggled with blanket policies that made it difficult to maintain his large arts staff at his arts specialty high school.

Decisions about and maintaining access to arts education.

This study indicated that when principals valued the arts, they found ways to continue arts education at their schools despite external policy pressures and budget constraints. They made decisions about arts education based on the resources that were available to them. These available resources were at least partly determined by tight budgets and included human resources. While evaluation criteria served as the most important factor guiding principals' decisions about where to cut programs if cuts had to be made, tradition and teacher quality were also significant.

Tradition played a major factor in determining what arts were offered in schools. Principals were motivated by what used to be, when high schools had extensive arts programs. For Mr. Anderson, that meant offering conventional courses in the fine arts instead of reforming the arts program at his school to make it more innovative. Ms. Larsen maintained a number of dance groups at her high school. Mr. Connelly also maintained the music program. Likewise, because students at EVHS had traditionally preformed an annual musical, Mr. Simmons was committed to continue on in doing so. Mr. Blake was motivated to restore the band program to what it once was .

Ms. Nelson, as a result of losing her arts staff member, stood out an important exception as she looked to community partnerships, participation in local and national competitions and after school clubs to provide students at her school with arts opportunities. She also encouraged creative problem solving at her school and invited students and staff members to share ideas. Additionally, she recognized teachers who

integrated the arts into their content areas and highlighted their work as she spoke with me.

There were other indications that traditional ideas of how arts education should be offered prevailed. Art work that mimicked Western European art could be seen in most high schools. While there were some examples of non-western arts, the Western European examples were dominant. There were only two high schools that had added digital graphics and media courses, as was the case at both Mr. Blake's school and Ms. Nelson's schools. Most schools had only attempted to offer the standards of visual art, music, dance, and theater. This suggested that despite the progressive developments that have occurred in arts education, principals, for the most part, were not actively engaged in promoting innovative reform in arts curricula.

AYP demands have forced principals to focus most of their attention as instructional leaders on math and literacy reforms. Mr. Simmons and Mr. Connelly both stated that they did not spend much time thinking about arts curricula. When principals felt that the arts staff members were high quality teachers, they were more likely to support the arts. An emphasis on the tested content areas has meant that principals were often willing to leave decision making about the arts up to the arts staff members at their schools, given that they trusted the arts staff people at their schools. This gave arts staff members the potential to exert a high degree of power. On the other hand, as demonstrated by Mr. Blake's story involving a music teacher, when teacher quality was poor, principals were less likely to protect those arts content areas.

Principals found different ways to maintain their arts programs. The AMP fund prevented principals from making additional cuts to their small arts departments. At the

building level, in addition to those centrally diverted and secured funds, principals continued to offer arts education and arts activities through maintaining overall student enrollment, through the use of volunteers and by creating community partnerships. Sustaining student enrollment numbers prevented many staff cuts, as was the case for Ms. Larsen and Mr. Connelly. For others, sacrifices and extra work were required to provide quality arts opportunities. That meant letting go of a physical education teacher for Mr. Blake. In the case of Mr. Anderson, class sizes increased in other academic courses in order to maintain arts staff. He also found some additional support for the arts needs at his school by highlighting the students' successes in the arts at his building to policy makers. Ms. Larsen, Ms. Nelson and Mr. Simmons reported relying heavily on a network of volunteers and were challenged to come up with ways to compensate their work as well as possible.

Although the art teacher from at TCPA was let go, Ms. Nelson acted in creative ways to ensure that her students could continue to participate in arts activities. She decided to fund a green screen for her students' video production course. Under her leadership, the school created a gallery space that highlighted the creative work that students did in digital graphics classes as well as other content areas. Despite a lack of direct funding to support arts curricula at her school, she practiced unconventional thinking about how the arts could be offered. The result was that the arts at her school were more innovative and progressive than at the other high schools.

Social justice.

Based on the definitions put forth by Theorharis (2007&2010) and McKenzie, et al, (2007), I looked at principals' comments about student achievement, democratic

practice, critical conversations and interrupting oppression as indicators of social justice. Although all of the principals were working as leaders for social justice in some ways, most failed to recognize how arts education courses could engage students in social justice action.

All principals worked hard to improve the educational attainment of their students. This was directly stated as they described the mission of their schools and described how they understood their roles as principal. Only two principals, Mr. Anderson and Mr. Simmons, indicated that they saw a connection between participation with the arts and academic achievement. However, despite the belief that the arts could engage students and empower them, they admitted that they did not encourage arts integration. Mr. Connelly and Mr. Blake also reported that they did not encourage arts integration into other content areas.

Principals reported that they practiced democratic leadership styles that employed teacher leaders and collective decision making processes. They also worked to create relationships between the schools and their communities with varying degrees of success, with Ms. Nelson being the best example. Mr. Connelly reported that issues of identity were not discussed among his staff and recalled an event where students were unwilling to talk with their teacher about a conflict based on racist perceptions. Evidence was scant that indicated that principals engaged in meaningful dialogue that could work dismantle oppressive schooling practices.

Mr. Anderson, Mr. Blake, and Mr. Connelly made direct statements that indicated that part of their mission as school leaders was to lead social transformation. Only Mr. Anderson specifically mentioned the arts as a means for students to transcend poverty.

While the student artwork displayed in the high schools indicated that the arts may have been used for students to express emotions, deal with race relations, and reflect on ethnic and cultural diversity, there was no indication that students were using arts to critically interrogate other forms of oppression, including oppression based on religion, gender or sexual orientation.

Mr. Blake indicated that the art teacher at his school was using art to engage students in social activism. Some student work was taken down from the walls there because he felt that a public school was an inappropriate setting for political controversy. While principals certainly wanted to provide their students with quality educations that would sustain future success, they did not seem eager to engage in the conflicts that inevitably arise in any transformative effort that changes the status quo. In fact, the only principal that directly spoke about social justice also decided to censor student work.

As I address the implications and offer my recommendations based on my research findings, I use the tenets of social justice as guidelines to describe how schooling either works against, works to or should be working to improving student achievement, practicing democratic action, engaging in critical conversations and finally, interrupting oppression. I describe the implications and offer recommendations in four main areas: theory, research, policy and practice. Here, I understand theory as the epistemological and ontological ideologies that inform research, policy and practice. Research is understood as academic inquiry, policy as bureaucratic legislation and practice as grounded, building level action.

Implications related to theory.

While some of the principals' administrative practices were characteristic of Theoharis' descriptions of educational leadership for social justice, that practice did not directly extend to arts areas, in most cases. This implies that not only is there a breakdown between theory and practice, but that there are also missing connections among theorists.

I observed some art that dealt with nonviolence and race relations; however, I saw very few examples of art that confronted other forms of injustice, such as discrimination based on socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, gender, or sexual orientation. One conclusion, consistent with the statements put forth by the art teacher whose interview supported this study, is that there is a limited understanding of how the arts can be used to confront these issues. A lack of direct statements from the principals also puts into question to what extent, as school leaders, they are able and willing to deal with social issues that are, at least to some extent, potentially controversial.

This implies that these largely ignored realities, including poverty and economic injustice, religious, ethnic and racial stereotyping and discrimination, gender inequality and heterocentricity are what comprise the dangerous hidden and null curricula that social justice pedagogy attempts to dismantle (Henderson & Gornick, 2007). Educational theorists who advocate for pedagogies for social justice are not doing enough to promote these understandings. As a result, oppression is perpetuated and democracy continues to function in a damaged state.

Recommendations for theory.

Using critical theory as a framework connected to social justice, more emphasis is needed from scholarship on how to practice social transformation. Social change is the goal of education for social justice. As instructional leaders, practitioners need exposure to new ways of thinking about how to deliver curricula. There needs to be more collaborative action between theorists and practitioners to inform practice. . The evidence in this study suggests breakdowns have occurred between those that *think* about education and those that *do* education. These two camps cannot remain as disconnected as they currently are if movements toward social change are going to be successful.

Dialogue is needed to bridge this divide. Practitioners should be encouraged, and financially supported by central district, state and federal agencies, to attend academic conferences that promote progressive, anti-biased teaching and learning. Those who direct academic conferences should create forums where the endpoint of social justice can be defined by theorists and practitioners together. There is a lack of theory to frame research studies that incorporate the three main areas that this inquiry attempted to cover: educational leadership, arts education, and education for social justice. Theorists from the fields of educational leadership, arts education, and education for social justice need to come together to help practitioners demystify what it means to disrupt the status quo.

Theories have done well to explain how policies have hurt education, how education is not democratic and how social justice issues are not addressed (hooks, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Bell, 2007). However, the arguments that critical theorists make often break down when it comes to answering the questions that most practitioners want to know: *What does education for social justice look like?* and *What happens to*

societies as a result? Practitioners in education should be invited to the table to participate in that discussion and define those goals and leave those discussions equipped to more schooling in more democratic ways than are currently happening.

Universities can play an exciting, central role in this transformation. Those who deliver arts education for social justice need to play key roles in those discussions and reach out to practitioners as well as those outside of their direct field. Because art education that engages in social justice can help to uncover the null and hidden curricula (Henderson & Gornick, 2006), it can play a major role in social transformation towards a better functioning democracy. In addition to racial discrimination and religious intolerance, there is great need for action especially around oppression based on differences in ability, socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation as there was nearly no evidence that students or staff are engaging in critical thought about these matters. Scholars who are at the forefront of arts education for social justice should reach out to scholars in educational leadership for social justice and create an alliance and develop strategies to suggest new research, direct policy and approach practitioners.

Implications related to research.

As I began to research the district, I attempted to find quantitative data that could describe what arts courses were being offered in the district and how many students were enrolled in them. I also wanted to identify changes over time. The information was scant. Quantitative data about reading and math were plentiful, but this was not the case for arts education. The district's lack of quantitative information about arts education was a testimony to current assessment and data collection trends that have placed an emphasis on recording and tracking reading and mathematics scores. The findings from

this research suggest that arts remain an undervalued field, despite research. They are largely seen as something extra, or a privilege for students who meet assessment requirements and can afford academically to play in an elective for part of the school day.

There is a lack of the quantitative data needed to inform understandings of the state of arts education in urban districts. More qualitative studies are needed to further reveal the specific benefits of progressive, quality arts education, especially as they relate to education for social justice. However, as several quality reports have already been published in that area, the implication is that researchers may need to take different approaches in order to make sure that they are reaching new and critical venues and not simply “preaching to the choir.”

Overall, principals were in favor of accountability measures and believed that they had helped to move the district forward. Ms. Larsen, Mr. Anderson and Mr. Blake all reported that accountability brought a rigor to the curriculum that was not there before. Ms. Nelson believed that it also broadened the curriculum and guarded against teachers who taught only what they wanted to. This implies that there have been misunderstandings among researchers and practitioners. Researchers, like theorists, have been working within silos that have resulted in separate fields of inquiry, rather than collaborate. As stated above, more democratic and inclusive forums for communication need to be developed.

Recommendations for research.

There are limitless possibilities for research directions that may fill this void. Gaps in the data create relevant questions for researchers. More systematic collection of data on arts education may help to reveal what arts courses are offered and what

discrepancies (in terms of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and GPA) exist in order to ensure equal access. Quantitative data about arts education should be tracked with as much attention as other content areas so that a clear picture of the state of arts education can be formed.

Qualitative research should continue to highlight success stories, especially focusing on the roles of certain principals who have particularly excelled at delivering progressive and integrative arts education to students. More action research could help practitioners understand more clearly the benefits of the arts, persuading policy makers to face exactly what they are cutting out of education when the arts are removed or preserved only for some. As Mr. Anderson's story demonstrated, that can be an effective way to preserve the arts.

Researchers concerned with promoting social justice will need to work to push understandings of the benefits of arts education as more than something that is superficial or extra. Research must continue to highlight where innovations in arts education curricula has prepared students for jobs not only in the growing creative sector of the economy, but in all aspects of the economy that require divergent thinking and innovation. The arts elicit critically important skills that will be crucial in order for people to tackle new problems that come with globalization, climate change and population growth. Divergent cognitive skills are required to build systems and strategies of collaboration and coexistence that minimize conflict. Social justice educators don't promote art just because it makes things pretty. We don't want to dismantle discrimination because it feels good to get along. We, in fact, all urgently depend on the skills that the arts can develop and everyone is guaranteed to pay a hefty cost at their

disposal. Researchers are charged with effectively demonstrating this and making these points public. Further, they are called to discover what works from a leadership perspective and help to move policy in ways that encourage leadership for social justice.

In the immediate future, since assessment measures continue to play a dominant role in principals' practice, studies that can clearly link arts education to academic achievement will probably be the most effective means of ensuring that arts education programs are protected or able to thrive. It will be important for researchers who do so to continue to promote examples of students engaged in social justice practice at the same time in order to ensure that arts education courses do not simply succumb to bureaucratic measures.

Implications related to policy.

District and state agencies have begun to respond to a decrease in arts education especially in urban areas, implying that there may be a backlash to the NCLB policies that resulted in putting the arts on the back burner in many districts struggling to meet AYP demands

Educational policies have not valued arts education. Most of the funding for education has been directed to tested areas. Even when principals are able to retain funding for the arts staff at their schools, supplying expensive materials remains a problem. Educational policies are largely controlled by assessment practices that do not involve the arts.

This presents a tricky situation for advocates for arts education. On the one hand, if the arts were tested as other content areas, principals who have cut arts education would be less likely to do so. On the other hand, if the arts became subject to standardize tests, it is very possible that arts education curricula would not emphasize engagement in

social justice issues, simply because such a thing is not easy to assess. Policy should not treat the arts as other content areas; however, without policies that require arts education, and hold school leaders accountable for delivering quality arts education, the arts are likely to remain undervalued. Researchers are developing ways to measure student engagement, self esteem and other indicators of success that reach beyond the scope of traditional assessment currently in use. This implies that there are different and more hopeful directions for evaluation to take.

The district superintendent's support for arts education may finally be an indication that the tides are turning in favor of supporting arts education, but damage has already been done. As reported by both Mr. Simmons and Mr. Anderson, music programs have suffered in particular because once a student has entered high school with no exposure to an instrument or reading music, chances are very slim that he or she will take up trying to learn something new. Policy makers will need to deal with past errors.

Although policy makers, like the district superintendent, have begun to move in directions that promote the arts, they still seem to fail to understand the true relevance of arts education, especially when linked to social justice. Policy makers seem to want to promote the arts, but like the principals in this study, they are not concerned with asking "to what end?" should the arts exist in schools, implying that they could simply promote fine arts, or a white Western definition of the arts instead of engaging in the innovation required of social justice action.

Recommendations for policy.

Policy makers need to protect arts education programs. The superintendent's actions in this study might serve as an example. By centrally controlling funds and

preserving a set amount of money for arts, music, and physical education teaching staff, not only did he help principals maintain those programs in their schools, he also sent the powerful message to the principals in his district that the arts were a priority and all students have a right to access to the arts. In an era of accountability, those higher up in the educational bureaucracy have a tremendous amount of power to advocate their agendas.

Since external policies have been such a strong force shaping principals' decisions, top down support for the arts can be very powerful. As another step in that direction, arts education courses should be a state mandated requirement for graduation as well. Furthermore, the one credit requirement that the district holds, equivalent to one semester during four years of high school, is not enough for students to reap the full benefits of participation with the arts so arts advocates should demand policy makers require additional credit requirements. Theorists and researchers need to act as advocates for the arts who can demonstrate to policy makers that not only do schools need more art, but they need different art.

Recommendations that can be realistically implemented should be developed by theorists and researchers and promoted to policy makers. While district agencies were able to maintain arts staff, funding still remained a challenge, so national organizations should help subsidize the cost of the materials necessary to deliver quality arts programs. It would also help for policy makers to think more outside the box in terms of how students might meet new arts requirements, should they in fact increase. For example, students who participate in afterschool programs that involve the arts could earn credit towards graduation for such activities. Community based organizations, for example,

could employ certified arts teachers as consultants for new programs in order to implement such opportunities.

Policy makers need to perpetuate a broader definition of academic success. Instead of, or in addition to, standardized testing, districts should value the democratic actions that some students, especially those highlighted in the community involvement at Ms. Nelson's school, are engaged in. Service learning and civic action projects or collaborative problem solving activities could become part of the requirements for graduation. Arts educators for social justice want to practice better ways of doing school so that society improves and democracy becomes more inclusive. Policy makers should be advocating for assessments that will actually encourage people to behave creatively and thoughtfully and will actually change society in positive ways. Practitioners do this work, they simply do not get credited for it. Policy should work to help practitioners be more democratic instead of ignoring or hindering that good work.

Finally, policy makers also need to work hard to undo past damage. Elementary programs need to be revamped so that high school students have some artistic skills to build on by the time they enter high school. The high schools, especially those with the equipment and the space, should offer those resources to elementary students in the form of after school or summer programs. Districts may need more resources, but until needs can be met, the resources that are available should be put to work in creative ways. This will have to be a district level effort.

Implications related to practice.

As I approached this study, I assumed that I would find at least some principals who were familiar with the strategies used by arts educators to engage students in social

justice that were covered in the literature review. As this was largely not the case, this study calls for more open and strategic communication between researchers and practitioners. While Luehrman (2002) found that principals played the biggest role in determining the quality of arts education in public schools, the principals in this study did not engage in arts curricula in such a way.

Findings revealed that many principals have a strong desire to and are committed to providing arts opportunities at their schools. With the exception of Ms. Nelson; however, principals expressed very traditional ideas of what comprises the arts as a content area. Although there was some commitment to social justice practice from a leadership perspective, principals did not describe deep understandings between education for social justice and the curricula in arts education.

Principals might have the potential to understand arts education as a part of what is needed to deliver education for social justice. They all recognized that the arts could make a part of schooling be engaging and enjoyable for students. They also recognized that the arts could also provide students in those classes with an opportunity to be expressive. While engagement and expression are parts of education for social justice, the reasons that principals gave for valuing arts education did not indicate that they had a deep or articulate understanding of the ways that arts education curricula could be connected to social justice issues. Like policy makers, they did not ask “how?” or “why?” the arts were engaging, or explore “to what end?” engagement in the arts could lead to better, more democratic beliefs or behaviors. They did not articulate a direct understanding of how arts education could be used to transform society into a less

oppressive and more inclusive democracy, as does the work of several arts educators for social justice (Bastos, 2006; de Silva & Villas-Boas, 2006; Desai & Hamlin, 2010).

The literature suggested that the accountability movement has narrowed the role of the principal to comply only with AYP requirements (Breault, 2010; Reitzug, 2011). Contrary to descriptions of compliant leaders found in such literature, I observed that, while AYP requirements were certainly significant forces shaping practice, principals still retained a degree of autonomy and were capable of implementing practices and strategies at their schools that were informed by internal, personal goals, instead of simply bowing to compliance measures. This implies, again, that policy designed to encourage civic engagement through creative means might not only be effective, but may actually be welcomed. Recalling Mr. Simmons as he lamented how he could throw a wonderful musical or have students in a marching band perform a complicated routine, but how it wouldn't matter since ultimately he would not be judged on those things. Leaders would most likely rise to the occasion if they were encouraged to demonstrate how their students could act in creative, collaborative and constructive ways.

Within this level of autonomy, many practitioners in educational leadership still have a long way to go in terms of implementing arts programs in their schools that will directly engage students in social justice issues and activities. Arts teachers, as indicated by this and other studies, have the potential to be change agents at their schools, especially if they are trained in education for social justice (Cosier & Nemeth, 2010). School leaders and arts content experts will need to combine forces to deliver transformative instruction that engages students in democratic practice, critical thinking, and social activism. First, educational leaders will need to be able to articulate

connections between arts education and education for social justice. Then, school leaders need to commit to a vision of transformative and democratic educational practice.

Again, the discrepancies between research and practice point to a strong disconnect between academic perspectives and practical experience. There were also some discrepancies between what principals said and how they acted. Although the arts have continued to exist in urban high schools and principals continually reported how they valued the arts, arts education was simply was not as much of a priority to principals compared to the tested areas of math and literacy. Even though all of the principals in this study attested to the fact that the arts engage students, they did not indicate that they encouraged integrating arts into other content areas. This implies that school leaders are either unaware of the revolutionary possibilities within arts education for social justice or they are satisfied with the status quo.

Based on the practices observed, it seemed that principals wanted students to have critical thinking skills, but some were not equipped to deal with the real critical thinking that could actually expose social injustices and disrupt the status quo, as demonstrated by Mr. Blake's story of censoring a student's work that was, in his mind, too political and not appropriate for a public school. While principals certainly would support any effort to incorporate the arts into a larger vision of scholastic success and school safety, principals at public high schools may be resistant to using the arts to engage students in controversial social activism.

Recommendations for practice.

Principals need to connect with theory and research in order to define their roles as change agents and act accordingly. They must empower arts education teachers to act

as teacher leaders in the school and inform the school as arts specialists. These staff members can help teachers in other content areas explore ideas in terms of how to bring the delivery of their subject's content to deeper levels and engage students in critical thinking, self-reflection, and intentional meaning making. In order for social change to take hold, school leaders who support that change need to be in place. Where they are not, the arts staff members and others who support social justice and transformation need to act either to proactively educate the principal or to subvert schooling that maintains the status quo.

Principals need to engage teachers in ways that are artistic, emotional and inspiring. At the same time, they need to include practices that are critically reflective. They need to help teachers become reflexive practitioners, critical of their own work as educators. They need to be vigilant school leaders who include teachers in other staff members in developing a social justice mission and then they need to protect that mission. A powerful way to start is to make sure that teachers confront their own bias. Reflective questions, such as "When do you first remember being treated a specific way based on your race/ethnicity/gender/sexual orientation?" and "When do you first remember others who were different from you being treated differently?" A practical next step is to engage in storytelling about meaningful teaching, verbal or visual that helps reveal the nature of the educational practices that occur at their schools so that they can interrogate the implicit, explicit, hidden and null curricula at their schools. Staff members should be surveyed on a regular basis to assess to what extent they feel the school is acting to uphold the tenets of social justice. They should directly reflect to what extent the school is encouraging authentic student achievement, engaging in democratic

practices, holding critical conversations and taking action to disrupt oppression. Then they can collaborate to identify the needs of their school's community and develop unique ways that can integrate the arts with other content areas to address those needs in action that serves others and makes the community better.

Conclusion

Despite acknowledgements from urban school leaders that the arts were important, the status quo remained a strong directing force in that content area. The findings on principals' awareness of arts for social justice were scant. If high school students were using the arts to engage in social justice issues, the drive for that most likely came from the arts teachers and not directly from the principals. This implies that new knowledge about the theories, research, policies, and practices in the area of arts education have largely existed in silos, as special interests, so that only those who have sought that information are likely to have been exposed to it.

Ms. Nelson stood out as an educational leader who, despite very little resources, was able to deliver experiences for her students to engage with the arts in ways that most closely mirrored arts education for social justice. Students were involved in directing some of the decisions at her school and were empowered to make requests for different clubs and resources (i.e. green screen) based on their interests. They were engaged in community projects, like restoring historic water vessels through collaborative work with neighborhood agencies. They competed in prestigious design competitions and gained skills that could be immediately applied to a changing workforce. She stands out as a leader who has been able to do school differently through practice informed by a very

broad perspective of what makes up the creative arts and how to best meet the creative needs of her students.

There was evidence that principals may be open to using the arts in new ways but are unsure where to start without a proactive arts teacher on staff at their schools. This research revealed significant disconnects across many fields and perspectives of educational leadership, arts education, and education for social justice. It calls for more open interaction among different stakeholders and for the creation of a coalition of forces that can put forth a clear blueprint detailing how arts education can be used as part of a transformational pedagogy and the creation of more democratic systems of schooling. It also charges advocates of the arts for social justice pedagogies to further articulate the vision and the goals of such action for the schools and society at large.

Dialogue between advocates for education for social justice and educational leaders is needed to build cooperative understandings. Until there is a clear and articulate vision of and commitment to social justice practices and goals, oppression will likely only be dealt with on a superficial level and society will remain largely unchanged, despite pockets of success. In short, in order for schools to become places where social transformation happens, the schools themselves need to operate drastically differently. With interactions among theorists, researchers, policy makers and practitioners committed to achieving visions based on social justice principles, there will be endless and exciting possibilities for hope and change.

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Appendix A- Timeline

1. IRB approval
2. District approval
3. Participant selection through suggestions, phone calls and email responses
4. Schedule of Interviews & Site Observations
5. First Round Interviews with Principals
6. Generation of Transcripts
7. Site Observations
8. Analytic Memo #1
9. Descriptive, Thematic & Value Coding (from interview transcripts, site observation notes & field log journal)
10. Second Round Interviews with Principals (30-45 minutes each)
11. Generation of Transcripts
12. Analytic Memo #2
13. Any Interviews with Others (30-45 minutes each)
14. Generation of Transcripts
15. Any further research from publically available documents
16. Analytic Memo #3
17. Final follow up interviews – <i>Questions to be determined</i> (30-45 minutes each)
18. Focused Coding (from sources above as well as analytical memos)
19. Analytic Memo #4
20. Formal Member Check
21. Final Report of Research Results

Appendix B- Open Ended Questions

FIRST ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS:

Basic demographic information (1. ethnicity 2. gender 3. years of administrative experience)

Focus: *What factors influence how and why urban leaders come to decisions about offering arts education at their schools?*

1. **Tell me about your school.** (Your role) (What is most important to you?) (Why?) (Can you say more about...)
2. **Tell me about the role that the arts play in education / at your school.** (How may that be changing?) Describe changes/ challenges/ reactions) (What makes you feel that way?)
3. **How are teachers and staff addressing social issues with the students here?** (Do the arts play a role in that in anyway?) (Specifically, what social issues are being addressed?) (Which teachers in what subject areas are doing this?)
4. **How do you makes decisions about arts education at this building?** (What were the decisions?) (What influenced your decisions?) (What were some reactions?) (What were you able to do?)
5. **Who are some of the people (or the positions) at this school who influence the decisions you make about arts education?** (Would you be willing to share their contact information so I may include their insight in this research?)

SECOND ROUND INTERVIEWS FOR PRINCIPALS *(original)*

Focus: *How are urban school leaders who value the arts maintaining access to arts education within a climate of accountability and financial strain?*

1. **How has the accountability movement and budget cuts effected the curriculum here?** (Have you made decisions to keep/cut programs?) (Why?)
2. **How has the art department here been affected by the accountability movement?** (How is this different from in the past?) (What effects do you see?)

3. **How has the art department here been affected by budget cuts?** (Who made those decisions?) (What factored into those decisions?)
4. **What resources are available to students here who express interest in arts courses?** (Organizations outside of the school?) (How did these resources become available?)
5. **Is there anyone here who may offer more insights about what you have told me?** (Please provide contact information)

SECOND ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS *(adapted)*

1. **What role did the arts play in your K-12 education?** (How does that influence you now?)
2. **Tell me about your background as an educator and explain why you pursued a career in educational administration.** (Has the job met your expectations? Why or why not?)
3. **How has the accountability movement and budget cuts effected the curriculum here?** (Have you made decisions to keep/cut programs? Why? Why not?)
4. **How has the art department here been affected by the accountability movement?** (How is this different from the past?) (What effects do you see?)
5. **How has the art department here been affected by budget cuts?** (Who made those decisions?) (What factored into those decisions?)
6. **During your career both as a teacher and as an administrator, how have you seen arts education programs change over the past decade?** (Say more)
7. **Is there anyone here who may offer more insights about what you have told me?** (Please provide contact information)

Appendix C: Site Observation Guide

Principal participants will be asked to show the researcher where art can be seen at the school and to give a brief guided tour.

1. What is the overall aesthetic of the entrance? The hallways?
2. Where is art displayed in the school?
3. What classrooms have art on the walls? (Student-created art or other?)
4. What social issues does the art deal with?
5. What types of student school performances are advertised?
6. What social/ cultural issues do the performances address?
7. What social/ cultural issues are seen throughout what is visually apparent?

Appendix D- Open Ended Questions for support participants

Each interview will be conducted differently according to who is interviewed...

Basic demographic information (1. ethnicity 2. gender 3. years of administrative experience)

Arts Teachers:

What do you feel guides the curricula decisions in this school?

Where do decisions to cut or keep arts courses or programs here come from?

What roles do the principals play in those decisions?

What can principals who want to maintain access to the arts do?

In your experience, how do people (staff, students, parents, neighborhood residents) usually react to cuts in arts education?

What would you like principals to know about art here?

Community Based Organization Representative:

How do you become involved in schools?

Who initiates the process?

What roles do the principals play?

How do students react to your programs?

What would you like principals and school administrators to know about your programs?

Department Level School Leader

What role do the arts play at this school?

How important is that to the staff? Students? Community?

What has the principal done that has affected arts here?

What were the reactions from the staff? Students? Community?

Appendix E- Field Work Log

LOG

Date:

Time:

Site of Data Collection:

Type of data collection activity:

Respondents or people observed:

Data collectors:

Purpose of data collection activity:

Type of data report:

SUMMARY/HIGHLIGHTS

- *Points that stick out immediately after the data collection*

DATA

- *i.e. observation log, interview transcript, etc*

METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTS

- *Technical problems, things to do differently as study continues*

ANALYTICAL COMMENTS

- *Initial interpretations of data and explanations of how data adds to the study*

Appendix F- Protocol Table

RESEARCH STEP	DESCRIPTION	APPLICATION
RESEARCH DESIGN (external validity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use theory in a single case study • use replication logic in multiple case studies 	This is a multiple case study. Theory is informed by qualitative research as well as Critical Theory described above.
DATA COLLECTION (reliability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use case study protocol • develop case study database 	The study database will be a single USB jump drive where all pieces of data collected will be stored. Data will be backed up on the researcher's computer. Hard copies of data will be stored in a single three ring binder.
DATA COLLECTION (construct validity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use multiple sources of evidence • establish chain of evidence • have key informants review draft of case study report 	Public records, Interview transcripts, site observations, field journal log, analytical memos, Nvivo details from coded narrative data, member checks
DATA ANALYSIS (internal validity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do pattern matching • Do explanation building • address rival explanations • use logical models 	Analysis will have two stages: initial coding with In Vivo, using value coding first, followed by a second cycle of thematic coding (Saldaña, 2009)

Research Step and Description from Yin(2003) p.41

Appendix G

Results of Initial Coding: Phase 1

Coding Type	Node Name	Definition	Sources	References
Descriptive Coding <i>For the most part, straightforward descriptions used to identify data. Nodes here used in this study mostly to describe art observed during the site guided tours.</i>	2D MATERIAL	Drawing, painting, photography, etc	8	34
	3D MATERIAL	Sculpture, stain glass, jewelry, ect.	6	17
	ART CONNECTED TO LITERATURE	Art related to literature or reading	4	7
	ART CONNECTED TO MATH & SCIENCE	Art related to math or science	4	4
	ART CONNECTED TO SOCIAL STUDIES	Art related to history or social studies	5	11
	ART DISPLAYING ACHIEVEMENT	Art related to academic goals, college or school spirit	6	10
	ART IN CLASS	Art observed in classrooms	7	8
	ART WITH LOCAL HISTORY	Art that reflects the local history and environment	6	16
	CLASSIC ART	Greco Roman art displayed in schools	2	3
	DIVERSITY CELEBRATION	Art with multicultural issues, nonwhite examples, etc	5	10
	NONWESTERN ART	Art not from North America or Western Europe	2	6
	PERFORMING ARTS	Music, theater dance, spoken word, etc.	9	19
	WESTERN ART	Art from North America or Western Europe	6	13
Thematic Coding <i>Nodes created to address the themes in the research question and attendant questions</i>	ACCOUNTABILITY	SBR, AYP, evaluations and other mandates	10	20
	ARTS EDUCATION	Courses and programs offered or observed	16	40
	DECISION MAKING	Examples of decisions and explanations for decisions	12	46
	ECONOMIC STRAIN	Financial conditions, budget, ect.	12	28
	EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	Leadership styles or philosophies	13	37
	SOCIAL JUSTICE	Empowerment, reform, equity, access, ect.	3	6
	URBAN EDUCATION	Responses contextualized within the city's conditions	21	61
Value Coding <i>Nodes used to reveal participants personal perspectives.</i>	ATTITUDE TOWARDS ARTS EDUCATION	Feelings, emotions, ect about art	11	31
	BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION	Personal experiences with and biases about arts ed.	22	59
	VALUE OF ARTS EDUCATION	Understandings about why art /arts ed is good	12	36

Appendix H

Results of Initial Coding: COMPLETE

Coding Type	Node Name	Definition	Sources	References
Descriptive Coding <i>For the most part, straightforward descriptions used to identify data. Nodes here used in this study mostly to describe art observed during the site guided tours.</i>	2D MATERIAL	Drawing, painting, photography, etc	8	34
	3D MATERIAL	Sculpture, stain glass, jewelry, ect.	7	18
	ART CONNECTED TO LITERATURE	Art related to literature or reading	5	8
	ART CONNECTED TO MATH & SCIENCE	Art related to math or science	5	5
	ART CONNECTED TO SOCIAL STUDIES	Art related to history or social studies	5	11
	ART DISPLAYING ACHIEVEMENT	Art related to academic goals, college or school spirit	6	10
	ART IN CLASS	Art observed in classrooms	8	9
	ART WITH LOCAL HISTORY	Art that reflects the local history and environment	6	16
	CLASSIC ART	Greco Roman art displayed in schools	2	3
	DIVERSITY CELEBRATION	Art with multicultural issues, nonwhite examples, etc	5	10
	NONWESTERN ART	Art not from North America or Western Europe	2	6
	PERFORMING ARTS	Music, theater dance, spoken word, etc.	12	23
	WESTERN ART	Art from North America or Western Europe	6	13
Thematic Coding <i>Nodes created to address the themes in the research question and attendant questions</i>	ACCOUNTABILITY	SBR, AYP, evaluations and other mandates	26	52
	ARTS EDUCATION	Courses and programs offered or observed	29	58
	DECISION MAKING	Examples of decisions and explanations for decisions	22	72
	ECONOMIC STRAIN	Financial conditions, budget, ect.	24	57
	EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	Leadership styles or philosophies	27	63
	SOCIAL JUSTICE	Empowerment, reform, equity, access, ect.	37	113
	URBAN EDUCATION	Responses contextualized within the city's conditions	9	15
Value Coding <i>Nodes used to reveal participants personal perspectives.</i>	ATTITUDE TOWARDS ARTS EDUCATION	Feelings, emotions, ect about art	22	52
	BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION	Personal experiences with and biases about arts ed.	35	96
	VALUE OF ARTS EDUCATION	Understandings about why art /arts ed is good	23	64

Appendix I

RESULTS OF FOCUS CODING

Node	Sources	References
Traditional ideas of arts education	8	16
Budget cut effects on arts education	14	42
Engagement in arts	8	16
Escape through or Fun in arts education	10	10
Progressive ideas of arts education	11	29
Relationships with others and community through the arts	9	15
Self Expression and Empowerment through arts education	10	17
Social Justice issues addressed through the arts	8	23
Support for Accountability	9	22
Teacher Quality	6	11
Other interesting statements	15	56

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Place of birth: Brookfield, WI

Education

B.A., St. Olaf College, May 1999
 Majors: History and Educational Philosophy
 Minor: Asian Studies
 M.A., New York University, August 2001
 Social Studies Education
 Ph. D., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, June, 2013
 Urban Education, specialization in Administrative Leadership

Dissertation Title: Arts Education in an Urban School District: Principals' Perspectives and Practices in a Standards Based Environment Coupled with an Economic Downturn

Graduate Internship: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Council for Professional Education, Project Assistant, academic years 2008-2009 & 2009-2010

Other Internships: Oconomowoc High School, Assistant Principal; Franklin School District, Director of Instruction

Memberships: American Education Research Association. Council for Unity. Educational Outreach Committee of the Riverwest Cooperative. Enduring Themes in American History (New York Historical Society and Columbia Teacher's College grant program)

Teaching Experience: High School Social Studies, Milwaukee Public Schools and New York City Department of Education; Professional Development, Oconomowoc High School

Honors: Dean's Scholarship at UWM, Academic years 2008-2009 & 2009-2010

Presentations: Anti Racist Anti Biased Teaching Conference, 2010; *Designing for Diversity: Professional development to help teachers uncover/confront personal bias.*

10th Annual Curriculum & Pedagogy Conference, 2009; *Using Mixed Methods to Assess Participation in Visual Arts: How researchers interested in arts education may use both quantitative and qualitative inquiry to strengthen evaluation of and boost support for visual arts programs in public schools.*

8th Annual Curriculum & Pedagogy Conference, 2007; *Creative Arts in Content Areas: Possibilities for Community Partnerships and Multicultural Pedagogy in Urban Schools*

Certifications: State of Wisconsin Broad Field Social Studies (701), Principal (10) and Director of Instruction (51)