CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

In This Issue…

Theme: Arts Education and Media Literacy

"*Media literacy and the arts inform one another as disciplines for teaching and learning, and these disciplines can be integrated with all other academic content areas, while meeting state education standards.*" – new guiding principles for program implementation, explored through Project SMARTArt, 2001-2005 (http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article659.html)

Because of the close relationship between media literacy and the arts -- especially in exploring Core Concept #2, "Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules" -- the state of media arts education in the U.S. is critical to the state of media literacy education as a foundational discipline. Today, the arts have lost ground in public schools and those most committed to reform--such as individual artists and teachers, community-based organizations, and national organizations--are often outside of the school room and looking in.

In this issue of Connections, we explore some of the directions arts education reform has taken in the wake of constant budget cuts and shifting priorities within schools, and make a few educated guesses about the shape of arts education advocacy and practice in the years to come. In our theme article, we trace the influence of events of the last thirty years on reform efforts today. Next, we profile a demonstration project in Texas which used media and communications technologies to extend the reach of visual arts education across the state. In our news section, we report on the progress of proposed media arts standards in the Los Angeles Unified School District. We also offer a list of sources for arts policy, advocacy and scholarship in our Media Literacy Resources section. And in our MediaLit Moment, written in recognition of National Eating Disorders Awareness Month, we use a daring ad from the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty to help students test their assumptions regarding body image and physical fitness. Whether you're a teacher, researcher or parent, you're likely to find something in this issue to help you stay informed and become more involved.

The Shifting Landscape of Arts Education Advocacy: A Brief History

The current landscape of arts education in the United States was shaped in large part by events of the 1970s. Funding cuts to arts education were felt by the end of the decade, and many organizations responded to the diminished offerings in the schools. Major arts and cultural organizations re-defined their missions and expanded their educational programming. After school centers and programs sprang up which offered arts instruction, and community-based arts organizations flourished in this time period as well. For example, ArtsConnection was founded in 1979 as a not-for-profit organization whose goal was to connect professional artists with students and teachers in school-based programs. Reform of arts education today is affected largely through partnerships and alliances between schools, government offices, and these organizations (Bodilly, Augustine and Zakaras, 2008).

In the 1980s, academic institutions and major arts organizations began to conduct studies and publish research to validate the benefits of the arts to children's lives, as well as the benefits of their inclusion in school curricula. The Arts Education Partnership and Harvard's Project Zero

are two of the major leaders in this field. These advocacy efforts may have paid off, as public interest in arts education appears to be high. According to a December 2007 poll by Lake Research Partners, 88% of respondents indicated that arts education is essential to cultivating the imagination, and 91% felt that arts education should be considered one of the "basic" subjects in schools (Arts Education Partnership, 2008).

As research generated new conceptual frameworks for understanding the importance of the arts to education, stakeholders began to champion a variety of philosophical positions on the proper focus of arts education. The Getty Center for Education was one prominent voice in these discussions, arguing that art should be treated as a distinct discipline which includes art history and criticism as well as production. Others, citing research suggesting that arts training facilitates cognitive learning processes over a variety of domains, have called for integration of the arts across the curriculum. While this approach to advocacy and practice is still influential, the conclusions of the studies used to justify this approach are frequently tentative, and the field of "neuroeducation" is still in a relative state of infancy (Dana Foundation, 2009).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2000, popularly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), has contributed to the deepening of the current crisis. Over the last several years, schools have focused on preparing students for the high-stakes standardized tests mandated by the act, to the visible detriment of arts programming. According to a 2007 survey by the Center on Education Policy, 71% of the nation's schools had reduced instructional time in subjects such as history, the arts and music to make room for instruction in reading and mathematics. The average reduction in time given to these subjects was about 32% (McMurrer, 2007).

A lesser-known feature of the NCLB legislation may be acting as a catalyst for positive change, however. Before it was passed, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Kennedy Center for the Arts and the Getty Center successfully lobbied for inclusion of the arts as a "core" subject area. The designation of the arts as a core subject appears to be exerting an influence on the arts education community, as assessment is now a recurring theme in efforts at reform. For example, Harvard's Project Zero published "The Qualities of Quality" in June of 2009, which reviews the practices and philosophies common to several successful arts demonstration projects in operation today; and the College Board, which assesses achievement in the arts through its Advanced Placement program, launched its own "Arts at the Core" initiative in January of 2010. New assessments in the arts could appeal to audiences who already appreciate the value of the arts to education but still have questions about the feasibility of implementing arts instruction in schools.

In the meanwhile, many arts educators seem to have "stripped down" the position taken by the Getty Center on the arts as a separate discipline. Rather than focusing on the elements and principles of specific art forms and the sequential courses needed to teach them, these educators are beginning to view the arts as the basis for a discipline-centered process of inquiry which can promote higher-level thinking skills among students (Dana Foundation,

2009). The shift in pedagogy seems to be propelling educators and other stakeholders towards engagement with fields such as global literacy, media literacy, and 21st century skills.

What's likely to happen with school arts programs in the 21st century? Encouraging signs are on the horizon, but the greatest certainty is change, as arts education practice is likely to be transformed in unanticipated ways.

Most of the sources referenced for this story are listed in the Resources for Media Literacy section for this issue. Here are references for the statistical sources cited:

Arts Education Partnership (2008). *New Poll Reveals Stifling Imagination in Schools Underlies Innovation and Skills Deficit*. http://www.theimaginenation.net

McMurrer, Jennifer (2007). *Choices, Changes and Challenges: Curriculum and Instruction in the NCLB Era*. Washington, D.C.: Center on Education Policy. http://www.cep-dc.org/

Research Highlights

Expanding Arts Education Through Digital Storytelling: A Case Study

With so many constraints on budgets, staffing and time, how can most museums—especially small ones—produce online educational materials that provide an engaging, meaningful experience for prospective visitors? And how can they be disseminated as widely as possible? In spring 2005 these questions were on the mind of board members at the Edward and Betty Marcus Foundation, which has worked with Texas museums to advance visual arts education for nearly two decades. The foundation turned for help to the New Media Consortium (NMC), an Austin-based organization affiliated with 300 colleges, universities and museums which focuses on the introduction of new learning technologies to institutions of higher education. The NMC was already beginning to reach out to museums with its Pachyderm platform, an open source authoring environment for creators of web-based and multimedia learning experiences, and the two organizations decided to collaborate on a demonstration project.

After several months of discussion with museum leaders and educators throughout the state, they crafted an ambitious plan to increase the capacity of virtually every art museum in Texas to work with digital media and make use of digital storytelling tools and techniques. The first phase of the Edward and Betty Marcus Digital Education Project for Texas Art Museums began in 2006, when staff at thirty-six Texas institutions participated in multi-day training sessions to help familiarize them with the tools available to them on the Pachyderm platform. These regional trainings were held in several cities across the state, and delivered through a custom curriculum designed in collaboration with the Center for Digital Storytelling in San Francisco.

The second phase began in 2007 with a program of small, targeted mini-grants to individual museums. These funds were intended to support an easily manageable project with a budget between $2,500 and $5,000. All 36 participating museums had access to a centralized team of multimedia consultants as they completed their mini-grant projects.

As a precondition for receiving mini-grant support, museums had to agree to allow broad use of their materials for arts education across the state. To support that goal of expanded access, the NMC sought out releases and IP contracts which could be adapted to secure rights from artists and collectors in Texas. Attorneys and intellectual property experts were hired to review the documents, and from them produced a set of releases and contracts that all Texas museums could use, not only for the mini-grant projects, but more generally as a way to negotiate for and secure digital rights whenever needed.

In planning the Digital Education Project, The Marcus Foundation and the NMC not only worked to capitalize on the ubiquity and decreasing cost of digital media tools, but also linked the use of new media technologies to targeted philanthropic investments, increasing the chances that the project could be "scaled"—that is, replicated by other institutions in other

locales across the United States. Over the three years of the project (2006 through 2008), the foundation invested $1.7 million, but the average benefit for each individual museum averaged just $15,000 per year, with roughly $3,500 in direct support in the form of cash or equipment.

The remainder of the benefits were in the form of services available to all museums. The Digital Education Project was able to serve the needs of all museums for multi-media consultations with a team of two full-time staff and a third contracted on a part-time basis, at a cost of less than $150,000 per year. All participating museums were served by a single team of legal experts, and that team drafted release forms and digital rights agreements that could be used by museums across the state for a variety of purposes.

Another welcome outcome of the project grew out of the initial regional trainings. Over time, a community of digital storytellers was created across the state that helped to sustain the momentum of the work. By the beginning of the fourth year of the project, staff at all the participating museums appeared to be fully committed to their missions, and open to new strategies.

To see a gallery of submissions from these museums, and to learn more about the project, visit the New Media Consortium website at http://www.nmc.org

European Union Issues Recommendations for Media Literacy Education

In August of last year, the Commission of the European Communities issued a formal recommendation that media literacy instruction be included in the compulsory education curriculum of all member states of the European Union. While the recommendations are non-binding, the strategies documented in this "Commission Recommendation" are wide-ranging and comprehensive. The preamble asserts that European citizens need to "develop the analytical skills that allow for better intellectual and emotional understanding of digital media" (p.3), and should have the "ability to make informed and diversified choices as media consumers" (ibid); and the preamble cites media literacy as "an important factor for active citizenship in today's society" (p.2).

The Commission's strategies for media literacy reflect both a national and grassroots approach. It argues that a higher degree of literacy among EU member states would support "a more competitive knowledge economy" across the EU as a whole (p. 3), and also encourages local authorities to support media literacy initiatives in the non-formal education sector. And the Commission declares that a media literate society "would be at the same time a stimulus and a pre-condition for pluralism and independence in the media" (p.4).

Aside from recommending inclusion in the curricula of schools across the EU, the Commission recommends that the member states make a strong commitment to media

literacy research as a foundation for policy, asserting that "there are no agreed criteria or standards for assessing media literacy, and there is an urgent need for larger-scale, longer-term research to establish such criteria" (p.3).

If EU member states decide to act upon the Commission's recommendations, the next decade may yield a number of successful initiatives that could provide supporters of media literacy education with new tools for advocacy, as well as concrete models for implementation.
To learn more about Commission policies on media literacy, and to read the Commission's recommendations, point your web browser to :

http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm

Click "EN" for the English version of the report.

CML News

"Media Arts at LAUSD"
www.lausd.net

Salon Convened by LAUSD Media Arts Group

On January 30th, the Arts Education Branch of the Los Angeles Unified School District held a "Media Arts Salon" attended by supporters of new media arts standards which are currently under review by the district. Members of the recently formed advisory committee for these standards, including CML President Tessa Jolls, were also in attendance. In part, the salon was intended as an exchange of visions and ideas. Since several versions of the standards had already undergone a process of formulation, critique and review, the salon agenda also included practical items such as defining "media arts" in common, decisive language and describing the core skills and knowledge possessed by "proficient" media arts students.

Dain Olsen, Pre-K-12 Media Arts Expert at LAUSD, convened the salon and provided the introductory remarks. Olsen emphasized media arts as a core arts literacy, and illuminated its primal and modern roots. Displaying a flickering panorama of the Caves of Lascaux onscreen, he asked the audience why the experience of cave art could not also be considered a "technologically enhanced" experience, and argued that the media arts are "absolutely comprehensive, embracing both the digital and the analog, in an utter dissolution of boundaries, categories, specializations, in a low-threshold accessibility to multimedia production." Olsen also pointed to the benefits of adding this interdisciplinary subject to the curriculum, asserting that media arts are "an inter-connector that has been missing from these artificially divided, abstracted, de-contextualized and diminished subject areas whose content can now be enhanced, enriched and activated within new learning architectures."
In its formal presentation of the standards to the district, the Arts Education Branch listed several student outcomes, including: higher student retention; creative, critical thinking, collaborative,

interdisciplinary, and technologically literate students; and workforce preparedness in rapidly expanding media arts industries. A full portfolio of courses has also been proposed, with courses progressing from foundation to master levels and ranging from interactive (gaming) design to media theory.

No date has been given for final consideration of the proposed standards. For its part, the Arts Education Branch conducted a thorough investigation into existing and related standards in California before drafting the standards, and has some hopes that the media arts standards will not only be approved, but will make their way to the state capitol. The California Visual and Performing Arts Standards (VAPA) were established on the basis of LAUSD's prior arts standards, and the new Media Arts standards were developed on the same structural framework as the current state VAPA standards.

For more information, look for the "Media Arts at LAUSD" web page at www.lausd.net.

About Us…

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

http://www.ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org

Media Literacy Resources

Teaching Tip: "What do you notice?" is one of the most important questions to ask in the media literacy classroom. And, of course, all answers are acceptable because different people notice different things.

Arts Education in the United States Today: Selected Reading

The following is a list of readings selected to provide an overview of contemporary trends in arts education reform:

The Dana Foundation (2009). *Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts and the Brain: Findings and Challenges for Educators and Researchers from the 2009 John Hopkins University Summit*. New York: Author.

The findings of the Neuroeducation Summit include some fascinating dialogues between educators and scientific researchers. They also give the reader a valuable snapshot of current thinking on arts education among educators, scientists, school administrators, and policy makers. A separate document on the Dana Foundation website, *The Science of Education: Informing Teaching and Learning Through the Brain Sciences*, is a short introduction to the issues discussed in the summit findings. All documents available at: http://www.dana.org

Seidel, Steven et al, (2009). *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education*. Cambridge, MA: Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Two issues have dominated arts education reform over the last thirty years: guaranteeing full access to the arts, and documenting the outcomes of student experiences with arts training. In this study, Steven Seidel and his associates investigate how leading practitioners, theorists and administrators define, recognize and plan for excellence in arts education. This publication is available for purchase at the Project Zero eBookstore, but a PDF file of the study may also be downloaded for free. Available at: http://pzweb.harvard.edu

Deasy, Richard J., (Ed.). (2002) *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*. Washington, D.C: Arts Education Partnership.

Critical Links is a compendium of research studies--62 in all--on the impact of arts education on the social and academic skills of students. The studies are selected and summarized by leading researchers in the field, and divided into sections by each of the four major arts disciplines: dance, drama, music and visual arts. This publication may be purchased or downloaded for free at: http://www.aep-arts.org/

Bodilly, Susan J., Augustine, Catherine H., and Laura Zakaras (2008). *Revitalizing Arts Education Through Community-Wide Coordination*. Santa Monica: Rand Corp.

This study is a descriptive and comparative analysis of multi-partner arts education initiatives in six major urban centers. The study may be purchased as a softcover book, or downloaded for free at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/

National Task Force on the Arts in Education (2009). *Arts at the Core: Recommendations for Advancing the State of Arts Education in the 21st Century*. New York: The College Board. Though this is a custom report directed at the College Board (which writes and administers educational tests such as the SAT and AP exams), several of the recommendations set out in this document are innovative, and, taken as a whole, they illuminate the role that a large "non-state" educational institution can play in arts education reform. This report may be downloaded for free at: http://professionals.collegeboard.com/policy-advocacy/access/national-arts-task-force

Damsen, Jess (2007). *The Media Mural Project: Empowering Youth in New Mass Media*. Journal for Learning Through the Arts, 3 (1).
This article is a good theoretical and applied discussion of a new media production project carried out in an alternative middle/high school in the California Central Coast farming community of Watsonville. By far the most interesting aspect of the study is the analysis of students' shifting perspectives on their community, their peers and themselves as they completed different stages of the project. The Journal for Learning Through the Arts is only published electronically, and may be accessed at: http://escholarship.org/uc/clta_lta

Arts Education Policy Review is the leading academic journal in this field. Here is a partial listing of AEPR articles consulted for this issue:

Choi, Haeryun, and Piro, Joseph M., (2009). *Expanding Arts Education in a Digital Age*, 110 (3), 27-34.

Grey, Anne C. (2010). *No Child Left Behind in Art Education Policy: A Review of Key Recommendations for Arts Language Revisions*, 111 (1), 8-15.

Jolls, Tessa, and Grande, Denise, (2005). *A Road to Follow,* 107 (1), 25-30.

Mishook, Jacob J., and Kornhaber, Mindy L. (2006). *Arts Integration in an Era of Accountability*, 107 (4), 3-11.

Med!aLit Moments

Fit-ness is in the Eye of the Beholder

Today many school nursing offices still emphasize body mass index (BMI) as a primary indicator of student health. Yet body mass index by itself is never a reliable indicator of health, and adolescent students can readily be labeled as "obese" when they may simply be growing unevenly, gaining weight before growing in height, or becoming more muscular in build due to genetic factors or exercise. Moreover, the practice of measuring BMI can lead schools to focus on individual weight loss rather than the importance of balanced diet and exercise for all students. Doing so makes it difficult for students who fall outside of the "normal" range to maintain a positive self-image, and can even contribute to the incidence of eating disorders among young people.

In recognition of National Eating Disorders Awareness Month, we present this MediaLit Moment in which your students will have the chance to reflect on their perceptions regarding weight and physical fitness, and to think more critically about the values and lifestyles embedded in media images of "fit" people.

Have students analyze their perceptions of a media text that offers an alternative image of fitness.

AHA! This woman doesn't look like most of the "fit" people I see in movies or TV, but does that mean she's "out of shape"?

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?
Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same media message differently.

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or
    omitted from, this message?
Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view

Grade Level: 9-12

Materials: Printed image, slide of the same image and slide projector, or computer with broadband access and data projector to display image at the following URL:
http://adsoftheworld.com/files/images/DOVE-Fat-Fit.preview.jpg

This image is taken from a 2004 billboard for the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, and asks viewers whether the model shown on the billboard is "fat" or "fit."

Activity: As an anticipatory set to this lesson, you might want to ask students for their definition of fitness. What's most important? Sticking to a healthy diet? Being able to run a marathon? Come up with a loose definition.

Once you have shown the image, allow some time for students' spontaneous responses, and simply act as a facilitator for discussion. When you feel the class is ready, ask: what inferences (or guesses) can you make regarding this woman's physical fitness just by looking at the image on the billboard? Can you imagine this woman dancing? Running? Skiing? (or any other activity which requires energy, strength, coordination, etc.) If your students confuse the concepts of *thin* and *fit* when discussing fit-ness, call attention to the assumption of thin-ness as a primary indicator of health and how that assumption affects them personally (if time permits, see Extended Activity below).

Next, ask students to write down a list of the "fit" female characters they've seen in the media—in movies, on TV, on the Internet, in video games. What are they like? What do they do? You can expand this prompt by giving students the option to add male characters and/or "fat" characters to their list.

How does the woman on the billboard compare with the media images of fit people that they see on an everyday basis? Why do they think the producers of these other media portrayed fit characters in the way that they did?

Extended Activity: Assign a project in which students do some research on what constitutes physical fitness. Or consult with a health teacher and distribute materials (or direct students to sources) on physical fitness that helps them understand that weight is just one indicator of health that should be considered in context with many other factors. Or. . . ask them to interview people they think are fit, and ask them what "staying fit" means to them, and why they believe that is true.

OR:

Key Question #5: Why was this message sent?
Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power

Dove took down the billboards when 51% of audiences responded that they thought the model was "fat." Why do they think Dove took the billboards down, and why do they think Dove produced this billboard in the first place? If you were in charge of this campaign, would you do anything differently? You could also ask students to draw or produce their own billboard (well, something that will fit inside the classroom door. . .).

If you want to broaden the discussion, ask students to visit the Campaign for Real Beauty website (at www.campaignforrealbeauty.com), and ask students why a major beauty products company would decide to create this campaign.