Arts Immersion: Using the Arts as a Vehicle for Interdisciplinary Learning

by

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Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of British Columbia, 2013
Bachelor of Education, University of British Columbia, 2016

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION IN ART EDUCATION

in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

I acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

In this paper, I assert that the arts do not need to be supplemental to the instruction of curriculum in other subject areas, as is seen in traditional discipline-based arts education or arts-integration style programs, but rather, like language, the arts can be a medium or vehicle in and through which emergent learning in other areas can occur. In this paper, emergent learning refers to the potential for the learning of interdisciplinary outcomes to happen as a result of the art-making process. This is the model of Arts Immersion, which distinguishes itself from arts integration models by stressing an art form-first model of instruction, rather than a curriculum-first model. In this paper I begin by introducing my topic through a personal narrative. I then provide a critical contextualization for Arts Immersion by surveying both historical and contemporary research. I provide context for my own personal art practice and present images and rationales to support this context. I then return to the personal narrative style to present a collection of narrative inquiry and autoethnographic reflections that share my own personal experiences with Arts Immersion. Finally, I conclude by offering opportunities for further research.

Keywords: art education, Arts Immersion, art as language,
emergent learning, immersive learning

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Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Alison Shields of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, for her unwavering support throughout the process of this Masters' project. I am especially grateful for the many conversations we had throughout the process about my work and studio practice, and for helping me grow my confidence as an artist and educator.

I would next like to thank my professors, Dr. Michael Emme and Dr. Natalie LeBlanc for their instruction and guidance throughout the MEd program, as well as Dr. Michelle Wiebe, who was a second reader for this paper. Her comments to this paper, and support throughout the program were invaluable.

This project could not have happened without the Calgary Arts Academy community who provided me with the relevant experiences, exposure, and mentoring that made this work possible. I am especially indebted to my principal, Michelle Stonehouse, for her leadership and guidance, as well as to my many staff colleagues who were major collaborators in each of the projects reflected on in the project. I am so grateful to work in an environment where I learn as much as I teach every day.

I would also like to recognize the many Calgary Arts Academy students who were involved in the projects reflected on in this paper. Co-creating with them is a truly humbling experience, and I am so privileged to work with such a creative, collaborative, and inclusive group of young people each day.

Finally, I wish to express my extreme gratitude to my Art Education cohort, friends and family who have supported me in immeasurable ways over the past three years. This project would not have been possible without their support. Thank you.

Arts Immersion: Using the Arts as a Vehicle for Interdisciplinary Learning

In the spring of 2016, I was finishing a Bachelor of Education degree at the University of British Columbia. As an art specialist, I was passionate about arts education and focused my research throughout the year on answering the question: How can learning art also help students learn 21st century skills? At this time, I was also applying for teaching positions for the upcoming school year, and was excited to find a posting for a position at a school whose philosophy included the phrase "learning through the arts prepares students for success in the 21st century." I hastily applied for a position and soon after was offered an interview, and subsequently, a position teaching Grade 4/5.

Upon being offered the position, I began obsessively researching the school, its mandate, vision, purpose, and philosophy. The school was distinct from others in Calgary as it offered a program called Arts Immersion. Not knowing what Arts Immersion was, I searched the internet for a definition but could find none. I was familiar with the French Immersion programs that were common throughout Calgary, but struggled to envision how a program that was immersive in the arts could function. My curiosity was piqued however, and I was determined to secure a job, so I accepted the position and began teaching that August.

After orienting at my new school, I soon learned that it was no surprise that my initial Google searches (and university library searches) proved null. Arts Immersion was an original term to the school, created by the founding members fourteen years earlier. And although the term had a concrete theoretical definition in the school, in practice, it became far more nebulous. It was clear to the other staff and myself that the arts were a valuable teaching tool, but understanding how to employ that tool to build academic excellence in all subject areas while maintaining the trust and support of students, families, and the Ministry was a much bigger feat.

After two years at the school I had become completely persuaded by Arts Immersion. I could see that my students were achieving success academically in each of their subjects, were developing powerful character traits such as empathy, resilience, and confidence, and most of all, were excited to come to school every day. It was at this point that I decided I wanted to share this model with a greater audience while also compiling research-backed evidence to support the model. With this goal, I applied to the MEd program at the University of Victoria and began studies that summer.

Significance to the Field of Arts Education

Arts Immersion, as a term, is difficult to find in the research on arts education. While not non-existent, there is only one author that I have found who has already employed the term. Susan Chapman is an Australian arts educator who uses the term in her papers "Arts Immersion: Using the arts as a language across the primary school curriculum" (2015a) and in "Arts Immersion for music teachers: how to widen the path without losing the plot" (2015b). In "Arts Immersion for music teachers," Chapman defines Arts Immersion as a "process of using the arts as the purposeful medium through which enhanced learning occurs across disciplines to inform mutual understandings" (p. 93), which mirrors my understanding of the term. She suggests that the arts must be an equal partner in learning, and identifies opportunities for future action research to take place that would consider the implementation of this methodology (p. 96). Chapman's research is up-and-coming, and through this paper I hope to provide further rationale, methodology, and examples to support her theories.

Identification of the Topic

This research project began with the question: How can an Arts Immersion model support learning across the curriculum areas? I was interested in studying the effectiveness of

using Arts Immersion to teach a variety of subject areas in K-12 settings. Feeling the need to anchor this question in existing research, however, I turned to existing literature on French immersion programs for support. My research question then became: How can art be taught and function as a second/additional language?. I added a follow-up question: How can we teach the curricular subject areas through this language? After considering this question for some time, I decided that the scope of the question was limiting as it focused too much on curriculum as a prescribed set of learning objectives. Instead, I wanted to open my question up to real-world experiences in the arts at any level, and so my focus shifted to addressing the questions: How does an Arts Immersion mode of teaching promote emergent learning across the subjects?; and/or what does emergent learning look like in an Arts Immersion model?

Through this project, I demonstrate my definition of Arts Immersion as a method of teaching that begins in an art form, first and foremost. It promotes artistic exploration as a vehicle for exploration of the other subject areas that prioritizes emergent and interdisciplinary learnings as indicators of success. While facilitators of Arts Immersion may have some ideas of the curricular objectives that will be encountered throughout a project, many other learnings are emergent. This progression is evident in the following anecdote, taken from a real-life Arts Immersion classroom.

An open-concept classroom in Alberta is home to eighty-four grade 4 and 5 students who share the space with their four artist-teachers and two teaching artists. The students and facilitators are preparing to present an art show at the end of the month with a focus on installation art that interacts with the senses of sight, sound, and touch. Throughout the room, students are working alone and in groups to create planning drawings of the gallery space in order to assist them in curating the installations, when several students encounter a problem

with their drawings. Their drawings don't accurately represent the space or the artworks that are intended to go into the space. Recognizing this is a theme amongst several groups, one of the teaching artists calls the students over to a whiteboard and asks them to bring pencils, paper, and drawing boards. He stands in front of the group, holding a cardboard box that had been resting near the recycling bin. He raises the box above his head and asks the students to identify how many sides of the 6-sided box they can see. Then he lowers the box below his waist and asks them how many vertices and edges of the box they can see. He points out where the ceiling lamps are in the room and asks students to point to the parts of the box that are in shadow, and those that have light touching them. What follows is a fairly traditional mini-lesson in two-point perspective. The teaching artist demonstrates on the white board how to identify the horizon line and the vanishing points, while the students follow along on their own papers. He explains that all vertical lines must be perfectly up and down, while all horizon lines must be perfectly perpendicular to the vertical lines and parallel to each other. The students use rulers to ensure their non-vertical or horizontal lines all connect back to the vanishing points. One student asks why there are numbers on both sides of the ruler, to which another student explains the difference between metric and imperial units of measurement. While the teaching artist is demonstrating, the artist-teachers circulate amongst the group to provide one-on-one assistance and formative assessment. Once everyone in the group has drawn several rectangular prisms and cubes in different sizes and positions across their page (and some students have extended their learning by discovering how to draw more complex shapes like pyramids and cylinders), the teaching artist returns to the discussion about light and shadow. He asks the students to point in the direction of where the sun rises in the morning, and tells them that this is 'east'. He next asks them to point in the direction where the sun sets, 'west', and asks them to show with their

arms the path that the sun takes across the sky each day. He returns to the board and mimics their arms with the whiteboard marker, showing the movement of the sun across a day. They briefly discuss how opaque objects, like people and buildings, cast shadows, while translucent and transparent objects cast partial shadows or no shadows because they let light through their form. The students then add shadows to their shapes based on the position of the 'sun' in their drawings. The mini-lesson ends, and students return to their planning drawings with their two-point perspective samples in hand. For the remainder of the working period, students continue to work on their planning drawings, equipped with the skills to show shapes in space.

Summary of Project

In this project, I take a three-fold approach to defining and presenting the Arts Immersion model. First, I present critical contextualization to Arts Immersion by demonstrating why this research is important, untangling Arts Immersion from arts integration styles, and making parallels to other theories of immersion and emergent learning. Next, I reflect on and share learnings from my own art practice to support the argument that Arts Immersion can be a method of lifelong learning as well as a model used in K-12 settings. Then, I present a collection of narrative inquiry style research and autoethnographic reflections to share my experiences working in an Arts Immersion school. Together, I hope to provide strong support for the relevance and pertinence of Arts Immersion to the field of art education while also presenting a pedagogical framework for how this model may be employed in diverse settings.

Critical Contextualization: Tracing the Research Context

Why Teach Through the Arts?

In the early 20th Century, educational theorist John Dewey brought the idea of the interconnectedness of curriculum to the stage of western educational research (Dewey, 1907.) He

believed that education was rooted in experience, and that it was the role of schools to connect the experiences of life outside the classroom to the learnings inside the school. His dream for schools involved the child "com[ing] to school with all the experience he has got outside the school, and to leave it with something to be immediately used in his everyday life" (p. 97). In building connections between education and life, he argued that connections could be made between the subjects, and that identifying these connections would increase meaning, relevance, and engagement for students. He criticized traditional models of school which teach subjects in isolation of each other, and identified ways that school infrastructure could change to help bridge the subjects more easily. In his model of experiential learning, students would naturally be led to ask inquiry questions that would further their investigation, and these learnings would reflect back for them the tenets of modern society.

In *The School and Society,* Dewey (1907) also argued for the inclusion of arts education in schools, for the arts "represent the culmination, the idealization, the highest point of refinement of all the work carried on [in school]" (p. 103). Dewey highlighted the relationship between technical skill and idea in art, and believed that the expression of this relationship is an example of applying learning at a masterful level. Dewey (1934) furthered this idea in a paper titled *Art as Experience,* where he suggested that the arts are connected with daily life, not in an objective, illustrative way, but in a symbiotic way. He believed that art "reflected the emotions and ideas that are associated with the chief institutions of social life" (Dewey, p. 7), and that by pursuing the arts, one participates in a transformative experience that reveals morals, truths, and reflection on purposeful lives (Goldblatt, 2006).

While Dewey's writing comes from the previous century, I assert that many of his ideas are still relevant today. If we accept the notion that the subjects are connected, and therefore,

should not be taught in isolation, then we find ourselves in search of a model that naturally bridges the subjects and connects them with our daily life experiences. If we also accept that the arts are an expression and cumulation of experience, skill, knowledge, and ideas, then we may decide that the arts could be the vehicle for transformative learning. In the following sections I will explore some of the contemporary rationales for art education that build on the foundational arguments of John Dewey.

A 21st Century Call for Learning Through the Arts. In 2006, researchers, ministers, directors and lecturers from prominent Arts institutions around the world met in Lisbon, Portugal with the aim to "explore the role of Arts Education in meeting the need for creativity and cultural awareness in the 21st Century" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 3). The result of their meeting was the creation of the UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education, a document that offers rationales and strategic policy recommendations for the implementation of arts education programs worldwide. In their document, they suggest that an arts education has the potential to 1) Uphold the human right to education and cultural participation, 2) Develop individual capabilities, 3) Improve the quality of education, and 4) Promote the expression of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2006). While the first argument acts as more of a call for attention, the latter three arguments provide a skeleton for some of the ways that an arts education can benefit students and society as a whole. In the upcoming sections, I will use the latter three arguments as a framework for guiding an investigation of current research on arts education in schools.

The Arts Have the Potential to Develop Individual Capabilities. When the UNESCO team wrote the Road Map, they were not thinking about the development of artistic technical skills specifically. Instead, they were interested in highlighting the skills needed for participation in a 21st Century society that could be fostered through art education. Like Dewey, they insisted

that merging life learning, school learning, and artistic practice had the potential to cultivate societal skills such as creativity and initiative, imagination, emotional intelligence, morality, critical reflection, autonomy, and freedom of thought and action (UNESCO, 2006). These skills are not only important in the study and creation of works of art, but can also be transferred to other areas of learning and lived experience.

Two years prior to the creation of the Road Map, Elliot Eisner (2002) wrote *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, where he reflected on the teachings of art and how they can be measured. He identified seven teachings which come from the practice of thinking aesthetically about images and their creation. His teachings are less concerned with what the art is about, and more derived from the act of artmaking itself. Examples of these teachings include "Attention to relationships" (p. 75) where artists learn to see the interactions between parts of a whole, "Using materials as a medium" (p. 79) where artists envision possibilities and limits of a material with which they work, and "Shaping form to create expressive content" (p. 81) where artists make decisions about how they work to influence the emotive qualities of their art (2004). In each of these examples, and the other four that Eisner identifies, the value of arts education is mostly about the refinement of sensibilities and the development of an aesthetic way of seeing that advantages the artist over their non-art peers.

Rena Upitis (2011) also believes in the ability for an arts education to develop individual capabilities, and structures her research collection around the idea of the "whole child." Her use of the whole child term encompasses a vast variety of definitions, but mainly considers the "intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of children in an environment that is supportive, challenging, and safe" (p. 7). Specifically, she identifies skills of risk-taking, social skills, and self-confidence as some of the major benefits of arts education on the development of

the whole child. She references studies by Jensen (2001), Davis (2008), Noddings (2005), Flohr (2010), and Respress and Lutfi (2006) as evidence of these benefits, but delves deeper into a study by Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (1999) that suggested students with a high level of education in the arts became more cooperative, more willing to display their work publicly, and more likely to be confident in their abilities in other academic subjects. In that study, the authors interpreted their findings to suggest that schools must use arts instruction to create open and flexible curricula that is interdisciplinary in nature and that allows time and space for depth of study (1999).

In tandem with the skills of risk-taking, social cooperation, and self-confidence, Upitis (2011) presents evidence for the development of meta-cognitive skills, such as self-regulation, memory, motivation, and attention, to develop as a result of an arts education. She purports that self-regulation is especially present in the study of art, as habits such as practice, focus, discipline, and reflection are commonly employed in the creation of a work of art. While she does not present evidence for the transfer of this skill to other areas of academic study, she does supply evidence of increased attention, persistence, and memory retention while working in the art form through studies by Posner et al. (2008) and Jonides (2008). Future research will need to be done to assess whether the transfer of these skills to other areas of study occurs.

One area that does have some evidence for the transfer of skills is the area of empathy and compassion. Through her arts-immersion project and study, Maristely's Story, Susan N. Chapman (2019) demonstrated how these virtues can be cultivated through artmaking and discussion. The study involved having middle-school art students interact with stories of suffering in a Brazilian favela community and create visual responses to the stories. Through their responses, which were visual, written, and verbal, empathy and compassion were

demonstrated. This phenomenon was also documented by Melissa Cain, who provides numerous examples of art activities which have fostered compassion and empathy, including dance-based activities, drama-based activities, visual art activities, and visual storytelling activities (2019). In summarizing the connection between artmaking and empathy, Cain (2019) states:

> Through both making and responding in the arts, we come to know more about ourselves. We are given the time, spaces, tools, and incentive to take risks and to offer up a part of ourselves to others in the hope that it will be acknowledged and valued. Through rich conversation, we can develop creative insight, artistic thinking, wonder, imagination, subjective interpretation, perception of experience, empathy, and compassion. (pp. 49-50)

Through the studies presented by both Chapman and Cain, we can deduce that artmaking has the ability to develop capacities for both empathy and compassion. What is not clear, is whether all art activities hold his potential, or if it lies in the careful construction of specific art activities.

The Arts Have the Potential to Improve the Quality of Education. UNESCO (2006) defines a quality education as education that "provides all young people and learners with the locally-relevant abilities required for them to function successfully in their society; is appropriate in terms of the students' lives, aspirations and interests, as well as those of their families and societies, and is inclusive and rights-based" (p. 6). Therefore, it is necessary to identify opportunities to pursue these goals in the creation of any educational program. Arts education supporters often make claims of the arts' ability to meet these requirements intrinsically by allowing learners to create and engage with art that is personally relevant, meaningful and reflective of their local environment (Burton et al., 1999; Ruppert, 2006; Upitis, 2011). Studies have also shown that student engagement increases when learning through the arts (Smithrim &

Upitis, 2005), and that the integration of art with other subject areas has the potential to positively impact the success of disadvantaged students (Robinson, 2013).

When it comes to the discussion of the extrinsic benefits of art education, proponents of arts education often cite the numerous studies that show a correlation between participation in the arts and improved academic scores in other subject areas. One of the most frequently cited studies in Canadian literature is the Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) study, which was a pan-Canadian longitudinal study led by the Royal Conservatory of Music in 1999. This study had numerous findings, but an increase in math scores for the experimental group was one of the most significant (Smithrim & Upitis, 2005. The LTTA study supported the findings of an American study from the same era that presents a correlation between participation in the arts at a secondary level and increased academic success, particularly in the area of mathematics (Catterall et al., 1999). More recently, a not-for-profit organization called The Song Room (TSR) commissioned a study to report on the effectiveness of their arts programming on academic achievement in school (Caldwell & Vaughan, 2014). Their study found that students who participated in the arts programming had significantly higher academic grades, literacy results, and attendance than those that did not participate in TSR. While these findings and those from the previous two studies are promising, critics of studies like these, question the unproven links between correlation and causation, and suggest that more research must be done to accurately make these claims (Winner & Hetland, 2003).

The Arts Have the Potential to Promote the Expression of Cultural Diversity. The final aim of UNESCO's (2006) Road Map for Arts Education is to educate on art's ability to create awareness and knowledge of cultural practices, diversity, and collective identities and values. One argument for this case is that the arts benefit both the maker and the audience who

experiences it. Art can inspire, provoke, question, and entertain those that partake in it, and by creating and sharing art, we are offering these experiences to those in our community. Others suggest that the arts are important because they make aspects of life *special* that would otherwise be considered *ordinary*, creating moments of joy in an otherwise mundane existence (Dissanayake, 2003). Still others have argued that the arts are a mode of connection between cultures, languages, ideas and communities that may not have opportunities to engage otherwise (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2017; Donmoyer, 1995; Chapman, 2015a).

Those who criticize the extrinsic motivations of art education programs offer their counterarguments under this umbrella as well. Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner are two such researchers who have cautioned readers of the false correlations between participation in the arts and increased test scores, yet offer their own reasons for supporting art education, which has the potential to connect diverse audiences and express cultural diversity. They propose eight studio habits of mind, which are similar to the skills addressed by Eisner, but are broadened to account for more generalized learning. From their list, the habits of "understand art worlds," "reflect," "express," and "observe" offer the greatest connections with the idea of cultural expression, and show how learners of the arts interact with ideas, feelings, personal meanings, other artists, and organizations to create art that is meaningful within the broader society (Hetland et al., 2013). Through connection with others, these habits also suggest that art can create a sense of belonging for both the creators and the audience, strengthening community bonds and cultural participation (Eisner, 2003).

Art as Language

There are many definitions of what language is, and choosing a definition is key to understanding how the arts may function as a language. In 2003, Elliot Eisner described language as the "primary means through which images collected are given a public countenance" (p. 342). In this definition, language can communicate literal, literary, poetic, and metaphorical understandings, with the words acting as a bridge between the imagination and representation, or 'vision' as he called it. Rules and structure help to guide readers and writers to interpret meaning in the vision. In this example, if language is a train, then meaning and information are the cargo that it carries from one destination to another. For Eisner, ideas and information only become language when the delivery of the train from one station (human) to the next occurs.

For Robert Donmoyer (1995), language is "both the medium we use to transmit curriculum content and the raw material of thought" (p. 14). In this definition, language functions as both the train that carries information, as well as the freight cars that hold the information. Without the freight cars, there would be no organization to the information and no way of transferring it from one destination (or human) to the next. For the purposes of this paper, I will use a third definition of language which I believe accommodates and simplifies both of the previous definitions. This definition, also from Elliot Eisner (2003), states that language is "the use of any form of representation in which meaning is conveyed or construed" (p. 342). In this definition, it does not matter if the information is carried by train, plane, or bicycle, all that matters is that the information is moved.

In the context of schools, information is often broken into categories, or subjects, which are taught in isolation of each other. Language education specialists are quick to point out that although the content varies from one subject to the next, the medium through which information

is shared stays the same. We use language to intake, process, and share information that is learned, and therefore, the development of language is an integral part of all subjects (Moffett & Wagner, 1992). Robert Donmoyer, in his 1995 article "The Arts as Modes of Learning and Methods of Teaching," addresses the possibility of adapting the language educator's case to the context of arts education. Drawing from linguistic theory, he states that like language and math, art is a system of symbols and signifiers that can help us understand and be understood by others. By saying this, he opens up the potential for using different vehicles to transmit information than just language. Art, with its own system of communication, can therefore step in as the vehicle for information transmission.

Georgina Barton (2014) also makes the connection between traditional language-based literacy and artistic literacy, stating that they are both about the interpretation and expression of symbolic forms. She shows how humans interact with artistic literacy both as perceivers and creators of art, and suggests that being literate in the arts means being able to construct meaning from the art that is perceived or created. In her 2014 chapter with Peter Freebody, she extends this idea by considering the ways that artistic literacy could support the goals of other subject area courses, by giving examples from arts classrooms and by dissecting their lessons for evidence of interdisciplinary learning. In one example, students use dance to build understanding of complex themes of racial tension and segregation in 1960s America. While traditional language is used to help guide the exploration (the teacher gives instructions and leads discussions,) the real meaning-making comes from the embodied practice of studying, interpreting and demonstrating the dance moves.

If we accept Donmoyer and Barton's assertions that the arts hold systems of symbols that can be interpreted, and that they offer non-verbal ways to interpret meaning and create new

understandings, then we can begin to grasp how the arts can function as language in and of themselves. We can also then consider how this language could be used in spaces outside of the art studio (or theatre, music room, etc.) to help foster learning across the curriculum. While this is valuable, it is also necessary to consider some of the advantages to using art as a medium of transmission rather than traditional languages. To begin, I return to the work of Elliot Eisner (2003) who identified that in furthering a means for communication, learning through the arts offers two additional benefits. First, they provide the opportunity to learn in new and novel ways, stretching our capacity for understanding by pushing us to use a variety of systems to create meaning. Second, they create aesthetic experiences, which are the moments of joy and magic that occur when we look at a painting, listen to a favourite song, experience a theatrical production, or move our body in certain ways. Eisner believes that these aesthetic experiences can be brought into other subject areas, such as math or science, if one approaches the subject with artistry.

Another argument to be made for using art as a vehicle of expression is that the arts are often able to communicate what words cannot. Lexical languages are limited in what they are able to communicate, and words often fall short when trying to describe a feeling, experience, memory, or idea. This is where art can be employed to communicate the nuances of a message that do not translate well to words. This phenomena is seen when observing small children, who often communicate through drawings, movements, and melodies long before their vocabularies develop to a usable extent (Wright, 2010.)

Art, when used in place of language, can also overcome cultural bias and ethnocentrism that is prevalent in language. Robert Donmoyer (1995) addresses this in “The Arts as Modes of Learning and Methods of Teaching” through classroom examples that he presents as evidence

that art has fewer cross-cultural distortions than translated language. He suggests that by integrating the arts with other subjects, some of these biases and misrepresentations can be avoided as the aesthetic experience requires less reliance on socially-constructed meanings (1995). With these arguments in mind, we can now begin to assemble what an arts education that uses art as the language (or vehicle) of information transmission would look like. In the next section I begin to articulate what an Arts Immersion program is, and how it is different from other models of learning through art.

A Foundation for Arts Immersion

In order to explain best what Arts Immersion learning is, I believe that it is important to first differentiate Arts Immersion from what it is not. Since the early 20th century when John Dewey (1934) brought the ideas of the interconnectedness of curriculum to the stage of educational research, researchers and educators have been interested in how the arts could benefit a model of interdisciplinary learning (Bresler, 1995; Donmoyer, 1995; Lynch, 2007; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Goldberg, 2016). By the 1990s, the value of learning an art form was well established (Burton et al., 1999), and 'arts integration' became a commonly used term in the field of art education research. Since then, several researchers have tried to tease out some of the nuances between approaches under the arts integration umbrella (Bresler, 1995; Goldberg, 2016), but none of these approaches have successfully described the Arts Immersion experience, and therefore, signal both a gap in the research and an opportunity for discussion about an alternative model, namely, Arts Immersion.

A Survey of Arts Integration Styles. In researching existing methods of arts integration styles, I was drawn to the work of Liora Bresler, who in 1995, identified four distinct versions of arts integration, which she terms the 'co-equal,' the 'affective,' the 'subservient,' and the 'social

integration' styles. In each of these versions, the arts are combined with the other subject areas to varying degrees of success and depending on the teacher's level of familiarity with the art form. I was hoping to find some overlap with Arts Immersion methodology in one of Bresler's styles, but soon realized that all four integration versions are driven first and foremost by the content area with which it is combined, leaving the art form to play a supporting role in teaching and learning. In a true Arts Immersion program, the art form would lead the investigation, while the content from the other subject areas would be encountered second to the art form skills. In each of Bresler's versions, teachers began with a unit of study from their subject area content, and found ways to integrate the arts with that unit of study. Bresler (1995) herself is critical of several of the models for not providing higher-order cognitive skills or "critical reflection on the technical and formal qualities of an [arts] project" (p. 34). Even in her preferred model, the 'co-equal' integrative model, she identifies limitations to its use, and asserts it as rooted in curricular concepts (p. 34).

While Bresler's styles are still used to describe integration methods today, I was also interested in reading more current research about arts integration to see if a model has emerged that is more in line with an Arts Immersion model. This led me to Deirdre Russell-Bowie (2009), who has created her own three categories for sorting arts integration models. She presents the categories 'service connections,' 'symmetric correlations,' and 'syntegration.' In 'service connections,' the arts are used in service of another subject area, often at the expense of true learning in the arts. An example she provides is learning to sing 'The Alphabet Song' to help memorize the letters of the alphabet. In this example, the arts (music) are being employed, but the focus on learning is in the subject area of literacy. In her category 'symmetric correlations,' the arts are coupled with another subject or subjects, but

the aims of both subjects are held in equal regard. Outcomes from each subject would be promoted and explored, with the material or resource being the bridge between the arts and the other subject(s). The last of the three categories, 'syntegration,' is closest in description to my definition of Arts Immersion, though it still falls short. According to Russell-Bowie (2009), syntegration occurs when "teachers plan purposefully to use the broad themes or concepts that move across subjects so that the theme or concept is explored in a meaningful way by and within different subjects" (p. 8). In this model, the teacher would choose a theme, idea, concept, or focus question, and then approach the topic from multiple curricular perspectives, including the arts. This model falls short in describing Arts Immersion, because in this model, the arts are explored simultaneously (yet still separately) from the other subject areas, whereas in Arts Immersion, the arts would be explored first and used as a vehicle to 'travel' to and encounter learning in the other subject areas.

Still unsatisfied with the present models, I continued my search for an existing model that describes my understanding of Arts Immersion. This brought me to Merryl Goldberg (2016), who once again, has created her own set of four models that describe differences between arts integration styles. Her models have also been referenced heavily in contemporary research surrounding arts integration, and break styles down into groups of 'learning about the arts,' 'the arts as text,' 'learning with the arts,' and 'learning through the arts.' Upon investigating her topics, I once again came to the realization that each of Goldberg's models are based on a content-first mindset that privileges the outcomes from the traditional subject areas over the possibilities for learning through the arts. The one model of Goldberg's that has the potential to get at what Arts Immersion learning provides, is "the arts as text" category (p. 24). Goldberg does not present this category as a framework for use, but

rather makes a comparison between art and language as methods of expression. Along with identifying many of the benefits of including the arts as part of a holistic learning program, she explains how the arts "act as languages of expression for people and cultures throughout the world" (p. 24). She argues that art can stimulate creative and imaginative responses and reflections on our experiences, and that the symbolism inherent in the arts functions much like words and phrases in language (pp. 24-26). This description calls back to our discussion on art as language, and brings us closer to describing a model that uses art as the vehicle for learning across the subject areas.

Emergent Learning in the Arts. The idea of an emergent curriculum is not new to the field of arts education. Reggio Emilia schools employ this style of learning regularly by providing opportunities and experiences for students to interact with materials in novel ways, which are then guided and interpreted by a teacher who facilitates the experience (Wright, 1997). In this setting, the classroom is referred to as the "atelier" and the arts teacher as the "atelierista" (Schiller, 1995). While the teacher may have some broad ideas or goals about where they plan for the learning to go, the arts experiences are largely guided by the interests of the students and are left open for the possibilities of many different potential learnings. In this way, the arts are not taught as a separate discipline from the other subject areas, but rather are used to immerse and guide exploration through a variety of encounters with materials, ideas, concepts, and themes (Schiller, 1995).

While Reggio Emilia instruction is typically provided in Early Childhood settings, I believe that the foundational principles of this model, i.e. emergent learning, can be scaled for use at any age level. By adopting the principles of flexible learning environments that allow for individual exploration and foster creativity, the promotion of investigations into materials, and

celebration of students' identities and interests, emergent curriculum can be created and provided at any level (Biermeier, 2015). In an article for web-based publisher Medium, Sahana Chattopadhyay (2019) presents a diagram that shows how emergent learning, which "happens from a place of reflection and sensemaking," is situated opposite of intended learning, which "happens from a place of knowing and against a set of specific goals." When emergent learning is coupled with goals of ongoing learning (as opposed to training,) outcomes such as paradigm shifts, generative conversations, sense and sensemaking, and the birthing of new possibilities arise (Chattopadhyay, 2019). Chattopadhyay's diagram is intended for business environments, but the happenings that she presents as possible when emergent learning and ongoing learning are combined are indeed valued by educators today as they mirror some of the goals of 21st century learning (Alberta Education, 2011).

Immersive Learning in the Arts. Immersion learning can be defined as learning that is "focus[ed] on the experiential aspects of gaining and applying knowledge, where students use all of the skills and materials at their disposal to further their understanding about how the world works" (Johnson-Green, 2018). For Johnson-Green, this is where the key difference between immersion methods and integrated methods of teaching lie. Whereas integrated practice is focused on combining skills to solve a problem or create a product, immersion learning is more focused on the process of learning which often involves questioning, experimenting, and observing (Johnson-Green, 2018).

While most of the discussions around the use of immersion learning in education are focused on the acquisition of additional languages, increasing attention is being brought to alternative uses of immersion learning. Vuk et al. (2015) apply the concept of immersion learning to the creative process by explaining how immersion involves a complete experience

with a beginning, process, and conclusion. These stages encompass the processes of interacting with artwork, envisioning possibilities, entering a state of 'flow' while artmaking, and resolving the process through the communication of ideas, thoughts, and feelings (Vuk et al., 2015).

Putting it all together: What Arts Immersion Is. Arts Immersion is a coupling of both emergent learning and immersive programming, where the goal is to learn with and through art, using it as a medium to bridge interdisciplinary understandings (Chapman, 2015a). While the term is limited in its use in academic research thus far, Susan N. Chapman defines the term as "the process of using the Arts as the purposeful medium through which enhanced learning occurs across disciplines to inform mutual understandings" (Chapman, 2015b, p. 34). This mutual benefit happens when Arts Immersion distinguishes itself from existing arts integration models by rooting itself first and foremost in an art form, rather than the subject-specific curricular goals. In this way, interdisciplinary skills and knowledge points are encountered rather than targeted throughout the artmaking process. Through Arts Immersion, the classroom is transformed into a studio environment where students and learning facilitators co-create understandings and connections through the making of art. Elissa Johnson-Green (2018) describes this process in her music environment as "changing perspective from teaching music *to* children to working *together* using music as an artistic material" (p. 8), though the statement could be adapted to speak for any arts-based practice. Arts Immersion requires educators who are skilled in their art form and knowledgeable about key concepts from the other age-appropriate subject areas so that they can highlight these connections when they are encountered during the art project. Susan N. Chapman (2015b) suggests that one way that this can happen is by collaborative teaching partnerships between arts specialists and generalist teachers (2015b), though other models of instruction are possible also.

Borrowing and Adapting the French Immersion Case

By acknowledging that art can be a language through and in which we can acquire meaning and understandings from other subject areas, we can look to the research about French immersion programs to consider ways to establish a successful Arts Immersion program. Ample research has been conducted in the area of language immersion programs in Canada, with results showing that students consistently achieve a high level of functional fluency in their immersed language by the end of Grade 12 and that students perform as well in English and in their other subject areas as their English-program counterparts (Alberta Education, 2014, p. 7). To begin my research in this area, I looked to the "Handbook for French Immersion Administrators," published by Alberta Education in 2014, for opportunities for comparison between the French immersion program to a potential Arts Immersion program.

While reading the handbook on French immersion, I discovered that it became very easy to replace each occurrence of the word 'French' with the word 'art' and have the sentences continue to be meaningful. For example, the French immersion goal "To enable students to gain an understanding and appreciation of francophone cultures" (p. 2) requires a single word change, from 'francophone' to 'art', to reflect a goal that would still be present in an Arts Immersion context. Many of the sentences did not need any word changes for them to still make sense. For example, the goal "To enable students to achieve the learner outcomes in all core and complementary courses" requires no editing to have it still reflect the goals of an Arts Immersion program. In the section on "How French Immersion Works" (p. 2), the handbook shows that learning the language, learning about the language, and learning through the language are the three ways that French immersion integrates language instruction with content area instruction.

Once again, we can adjust the wording slightly to adapt the language educator's model for the Arts Immersion model:

- **"Learning the language [of art]** enables students to read/view, speak/make, write, and listen/watch in [the arts]" (p. 2). While the students aren't reading, speaking, writing, or listening in traditional matters, this point suggests that by learning how to understand the art of others, students would also be able to create their own art that can be understood by others. They are developing fluency to be able to participate in artistic discourse.
- **"Students learn about the language [of art]** when they study [art] as a subject" (p. 2). This point suggests that students would learn about art (history, technique, literacy) when studying art specifically. While learning about art may be the primary goal of a lesson, due to the emergent quality of art making, this learning would likely happen in combination with cross-curricular acquisitions.
- "Students **learn through the language [of art]** when they use [the arts] to solve problems, understand concepts and create knowledge" (p. 2). This point gets at the heart of art immersion theory, which is that students who have learned how to think and communicate in and about art, can learn concepts from other content areas *through* art.

In this model, students are learning how to participate and communicate in art, learning about the contexts surrounding art, and using art in meaningful ways that support interdisciplinary learning in other subject areas. If we continue to study the French immersion handbook, we can also identify guidelines and requirements for ensuring the success of an Arts Immersion program. Specifically, I have identified eight key requirements of French immersion

programs that, with slight adaptations in wording, also describe some important features of art immersion programs (Alberta Education, 2014).

1) *Artist-teachers "must endeavor to present authentic and motivating learning situations*" (p. 3). This guideline is mostly met already by the use of an Arts Immersion framework which in itself is authentic and often motivating to students. However, this should still be carefully considered when planning Arts Immersion activities.
2) *Arts Immersion activities must "take into account the different learning styles and intelligences of students"* (p. 3). Arts Immersion programs make it easier for students and artist-teachers to naturally differentiate assignments and instructional methods, but artist-teachers must still know their students well to be able to identify ways to support and engage their learners on an individual level.
3) *Artist-teachers must "provide an [artistically] rich learning environment"* (p. 4). Students must have opportunities to experience art made by others in order to help them develop their own artistic language. Classroom posters, books, web sites, music, and authentic arts experiences (attending plays, dance performances, concerts, galleries, etc.) are all possible ways to encounter art in a semester.
4) *"[Art] must be seen not only as a tool to learn subject matter, but also as a means of communicating and dealing with the world outside the classroom"* (p. 4). This aids in making the classroom art experiences meaningful, relevant and engaging while also helping students to identify careers in the arts that may be of interest to them.

5) *"[Arts] immersion program[s] require a school environment that values the learning of [art] and promotes [art] as a living language"* (p. 4). The most effective way to ensure a school culture that celebrates and converses in the arts is if all students in the school are enrolled in the art immersion program. If this is not possible, staff must take extra steps to ensure that art is valued within the community. Parents and guardians of students must also be engaged in this process so that the message of artistic value is continued at home.
6) *The teaching staff must be fluent in art* [ME6] (p. 4). This is one of the biggest challenges of an Arts Immersion program, and addresses some of the concerns that Donmoyer brings up regarding the consequences of art teaching by non-art teachers (pp. 18-19). Like in French immersion, teachers in an Arts Immersion setting must be literate in the "language" of art if students are to be successful in their learning. By literate, I mean they must be able to understand art made by others and be understood by others in their own art making.
7) *"With very few exceptions, [art immersion] is suitable for any child... provided they receive the same assistance as they would in a regular English program"* (p. 5). Students with learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, giftedness, behavioural problems and other challenges to their learning must still receive appropriate supports if they are to do as well academically in an Arts Immersion program as they would in a traditional program.
8) *Ongoing assessment must happen in order to appropriately adapt the program as needed* (p. 15). Like in an arts studio, I encourage that assessment should be largely formative with plentiful constructive feedback to ensure appropriate

development of artistic language and curricular understanding (Alberta Education, 2014).

Proposing a Model

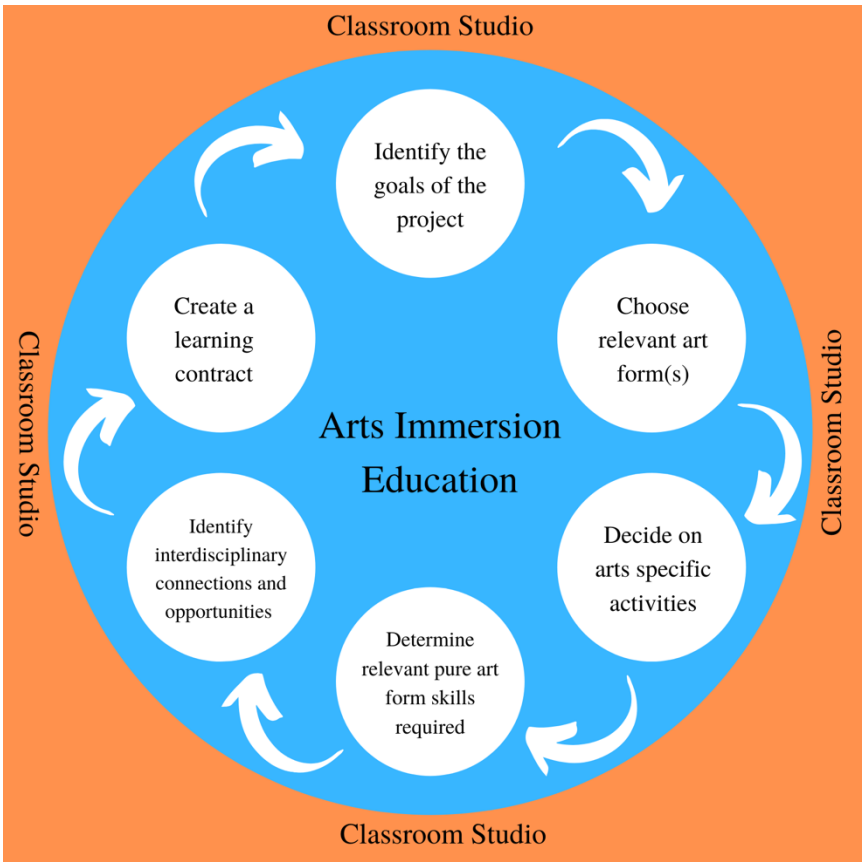

Figure 1: Arts Immersion model. Created by Alyson Moore.

In this section I propose a framework for Arts Immersion planning, which I accompany with examples from my own teaching experience in an Arts Immersion environment. Figure 1 shows a model for creating an Arts Immersion project. In this model, we begin in the top bubble that states "Identify the goals of the project" and then work clockwise through the remainder of the process to create the project. The figure is represented as a cycle to show the importance of constantly returning to the model throughout the process of the project in order to make adjustments as needed and to continually remind us of the goals of the project.

In ‘Identifying the goals of the project,’ we as staff and students begin by considering what the final outcome of the project will be. Oftentimes this will be the art that results from the learning that can then be shared with others. In the example from the beginning of this paper, the goal of the project was to create a gallery show of installation art that interacts with the senses of sight, sound, and touch. Next, we needed to ‘Choose relevant art form(s).’ In this step, we identified installation and sculptural art as significant art forms, but we also decided that performance art, painting, and poetry would occur throughout the gallery space. Curating and curatorial statement writing were also significant aspects of putting on a show, so these were added to our list of art forms. Then we needed to ‘Decide on the specific arts activities,’ which is where we worked as a teaching team and with students to decide on six major projects or ideas that would be included in the gallery show. Things like “create the feeling of being in a weird living room” and “build an interactive sound sculpture” were two such activities that we identified while planning the project. These activities evolved with the students throughout the course of the project, but identifying key ideas or activities was important for us to be able to move on to the next step, ‘Determine the relevant pure art form skills required.’ In the examples of the Living Room Project, we identified that students would need to understand techniques for construction using cardboard, making scale drawings, and understanding the principles and elements of art and design such as colour, texture/pattern, shape/form, and contrast. In the example of the sound sculpture, students would need to know how to form major and minor chords on a keyboard, use GarageBand software, and identify ways in which different sounds create or symbolize different emotional responses. Once we had a list of the art-based objectives that students would need to learn, we moved

into identifying the curricular outcomes that could naturally emerge from their learning during the project. It was very important that we waited until each of the previous steps was complete before addressing this step, in order to ensure that the goals of the project remained intact and meaningful. We now opened the program of studies for Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, and Health to search for objectives that would naturally fit into the activities we had decided on earlier. In the case of the Living Room Project, students would need to learn how to read and use a ruler, use standard and non-standard units of measurement, calculate perimeter, area and volume and work with a variety of regular and irregular polygons. In the Sound Sculpture Project, students would need to understand fractions as they relate to units of time in musical scores and have an understanding of single and parallel electrical circuits when constructing the physical set-up of the speakers and lights in the sculpture. Many of the soft skills were also addressed in each activity undertaken in this project, such as using effective communication skills to solve conflicts, collaborating in small and large groups, creating and following roles and responsibilities for individuals in groups, and promoting the safety of self and others. Of course, many additional curricular outcomes were addressed throughout the process of the project, as was seen in the anecdote earlier in this paper.

Once all of the lists were made and activities chosen, the final step before beginning the project was to create a learning contract. A learning contract is an agreement between artist-teachers, students, and family support at home to ensure that everyone is committed to the goals of the project and the targeted learning opportunities for each student. It is an accountability piece, much like a syllabus, that not only identifies the themes and goals of the project and the cross-curricular connections that will take place throughout the project, but also identifies

opportunities for individual choice, goal-setting, and differentiated involvement. It is also a way to promote requirement number five from the eight requirements that I identified previously of an Arts Immersion program, namely, that the arts must be valued as a mode of learning and medium of instruction by all parties involved in the student's learning. It is a document that is signed by students, artist-teachers, and guardians so that a community is built upon mutual support and shared responsibility for the student's learning. Once the document had been signed, we were able to move into the active portion of the project which was implementing the Arts Immersion program in the classroom.

For four years, I have taught in an environment that promotes the kind of learning I have just described, and I continue to be amazed at the level of engagement of the students with whom I work. Their work often exceeds expectations or anticipated results, which to me is evidence of the emergent nature of authentic art making. I see them making connections between the real-world problems and ideas that they encounter in their art making and the curricular area content that they are required to learn, which in most cases, happens naturally as a result of the art making process. My job then becomes one of facilitating meaningful art projects that allow students to develop technical skills in the arts, allowing them to develop the ability to interpret art that they experience, and providing continuous and constructive feedback that helps them realize and assert their own responses to the ideas they explore.

Artistic Work

On the first day of classes in my first summer of the MEd program, my course instructor, Dr. Michelle Wiebe, asked our class to raise our hand if we considered ourselves an artist. I couldn't do it. It had been five years since I had graduated from my BFA program, and with the exception of a few pieces made as part of my application package to the MEd, I hadn't made any

art since. Not because I didn't want to, but because I left the BFA with extreme anxiety and fear towards artmaking. Four years of critiques had left me with the idea that rather than making *bad art*, I shouldn't make art at all. And so, on that day, I didn't raise my hand. Several others didn't as well. Dr. Wiebe, taking note of the hands down, pledged to us that by the end of the course her goal was to have us all embracing the term *artist* as part of our hybrid professional identities. That summer, I entered the shared studio space with trepidation. I was nervous about working so publicly with my cohort, about being exposed as a bad artist, and worse, failing to create anything at all, like I had done for the last five years. I left the studio assigning process up to some of the more confident voices in the cohort, and ended up with the first studio space noticeable when entering the room. I felt on display at all times and ended up working from my rented bedroom off-campus for the first few weeks to avoid the judgement of peers. When I needed to work on campus, I worked on very small pieces of paper so that I could lean over and hide what I was doing. Nevertheless, I did make some things, and when I eventually connected with others in the cohort and started to share some of my anxieties, I learned that these were common experiences for many artists. The visual interview assignment was a particularly freeing activity, as I was able to connect with another classmate through art and play with the art in novel ways without worrying too much about a final product. By the end of the summer, due to the encouragement of peers, readings and discussions in class, observations of others' studio practices and positive feedback from instructors, I was calling myself an artist. While the work I made that summer was neither groundbreaking nor work that I was especially proud of, it was the necessary first step towards a return to making art that I could be proud of in the future.

On the first day of classes in the second summer of the MEd program, my instructor, Dr. Alison Shields, posed to the class a different question. She asked us to write a one-word answer

to the question “What does art do?” on paper, which was later shared with the class. The question stumped me momentarily. While I believe whole-heartedly in the value of art, I had never stopped to think about the function of art. We were given a bit of time to think about our responses, and after considering a few different words, I eventually chose “connects.” It turned out not to be a particularly original word, as four or five others in the class had chosen the same thing, but for me, it encompassed everything I believe about the power of art. Art involves connecting disparate images, symbols and concepts in novel ways. It involves connecting materials to ideas, and history to the present. Most of all though, it involves connecting people together through shared emotions, experiences, reflections, and stories.

Figure 2: Photograph of my studio show in Summer 1. Photo and art by Alyson Moore.

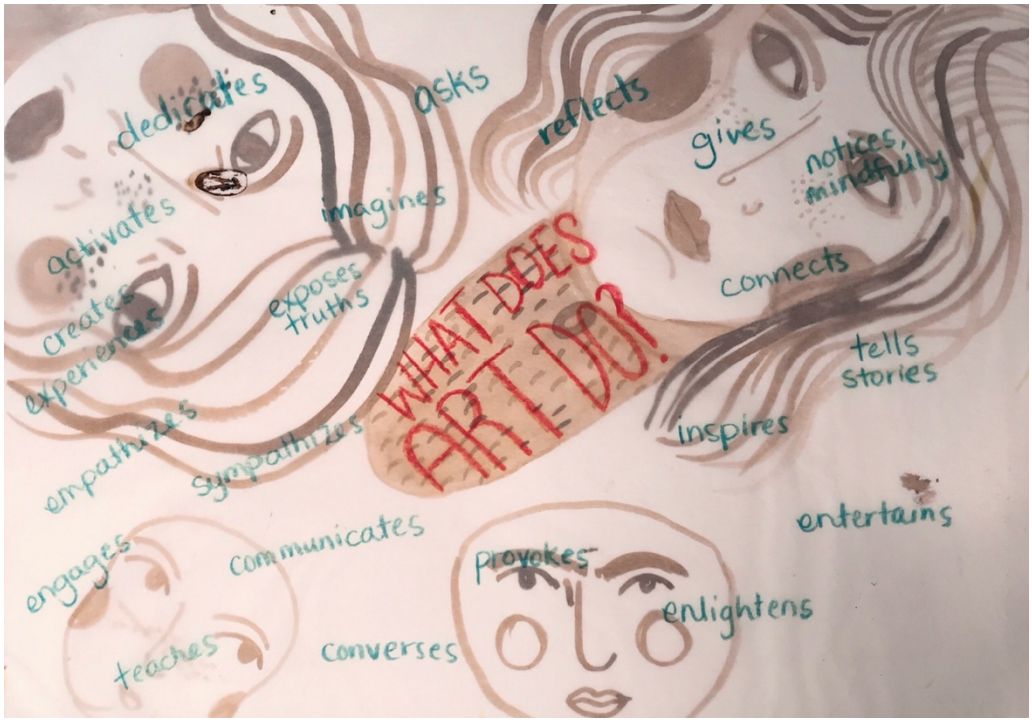

Figure 3: Sketchbook page from Summer 2. Art and photograph by Alyson Moore.

I used this term, connects, as a starting point for my art investigations that summer. I made a list of artists and artwork that I resonated with, and started to reflect on what it was that I was connecting with in their work. I thought of it as a conversation. First, I would interpret what the artist was saying to me, the viewer, then I would create my own response back. I began by looking at one of my favourite photographers, Laura Letinsky, who is someone I had taught several times in my art classes at school. In her work, she photographs still life arrangements that often show the remnants of food consumption, gatherings, or other evidence of human presence. Her images include sharp or unconventional angles, high contrast lighting, and uses a limited palette of whites with a few contrasting colours, like red or green. There are a variety of shapes and forms in her work, and the combinations of straight lines and rounded objects and edges add visual contrast as well. Her work resonates with me because of the interesting compositions, as well as the ability to tell a story. When looking at her work, I imagine a number of scenarios and stories to explain how the image came to be. I think about who was involved, and what was

happening prior to the image. There's a tension in the narratives, between celebration and destruction, between joy and pain. This uncertainty between extremes and evocation of story is something I wish to do through my own work, and so as I began to ideate for my own studio work, I chose images from Letinsky's catalogue that spoke to be most, and I began to mind map some of the themes, ideas, and references that I was interpreting in her work. Next, I started to think about how those similar ideas would look when translated through my own experience and artmaking approaches. The ideas of purity and sterility juxtaposed with their opposites stuck out to me most, and made me think about other examples of spaces that occupy these dualities. That's where the concept of the bed came in, which continued to be important throughout the rest of that summer and into the following year.

For me, the concept of the bed communicates many of the same tensions and dualities that I derived from looking at Letinsky's work. The bed is a place of rest and rejuvenation, but also the place where we retreat to in times of stress and depression. It is a place of play, but also fills the functional, biological need for sleep. Beds can be lavish and comfortable, yet also sterile and hard, like those that we turn to in times of sickness and injury. It's a space of together, but also of being alone. In my work, I aim to evoke many of these ideas simultaneously by representing beds that are unmade. The folds in the sheets and blankets hold the secrets and histories of that space, and may suggest subtly at the answers without giving anything away.

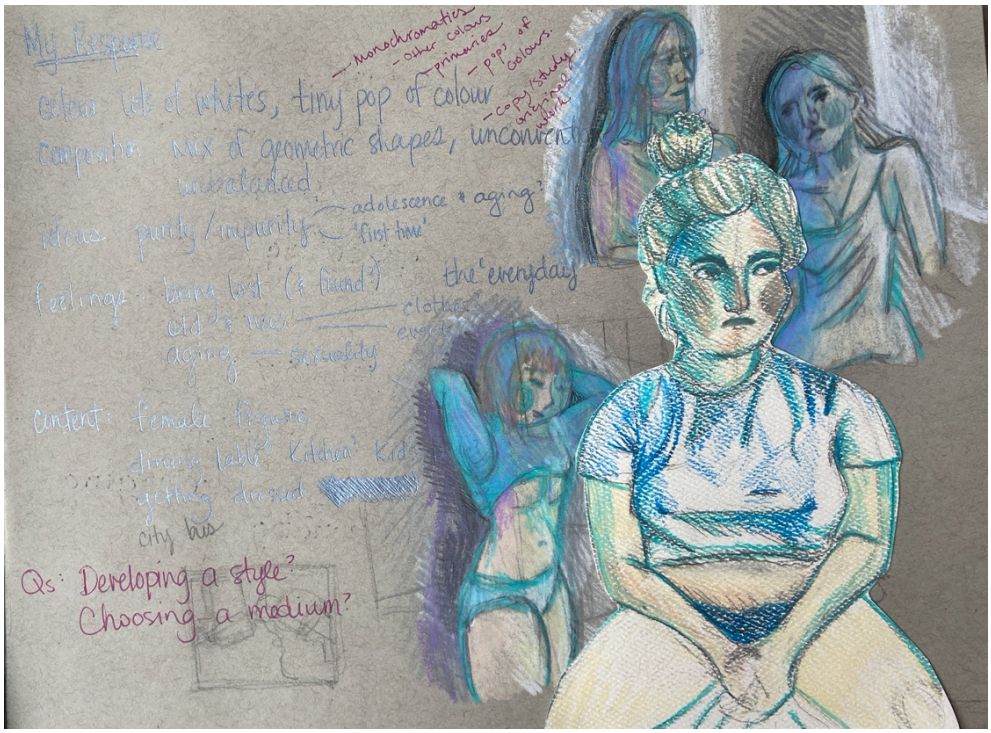

Figure 4: Sketchbook page from Summer 2. Art and photograph by Alyson Moore.

Figure 5: Mind map from Summer 2 sketchbook. Art and photograph by Alyson Moore.

I began by sketching figures interacting with beds, and I also made several watercolour studies of the ways that bedsheets hang, fold, or crumple on beds. I determined, after consultation with instructors and peers, that the bedsheets were all that was needed to tell the stories that I was hoping to communicate. I felt that the images with figures directed the viewer's interpretations too much, whereas the images that were absent of humans allowed more space for provoking questions and suggesting dualities. Because of this, I transitioned to larger scale paintings of beds with only voluminous bedding on top. I worked from photographs that I took myself, and enjoyed this method because I was able to manipulate and play with composition before translating it to paint. Having not worked in acrylic paint for many years, I really struggled at first with colour mixing, and so developed a few different strategies to help with that. The first strategy was opening my reference photo in photoshop and using the eyedropper tool to pull out the many different colours that were present in the photo. I used this method for my first two large paintings, but was still not happy with the colours. I then transitioned to a more limited palette using raw umber and ultramarine blue as a base, and had much more success with the third painting. With each painting, I moved towards a more painterly approach with visible brushstrokes and textured lines.

Figure 6: Studies for bed series. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

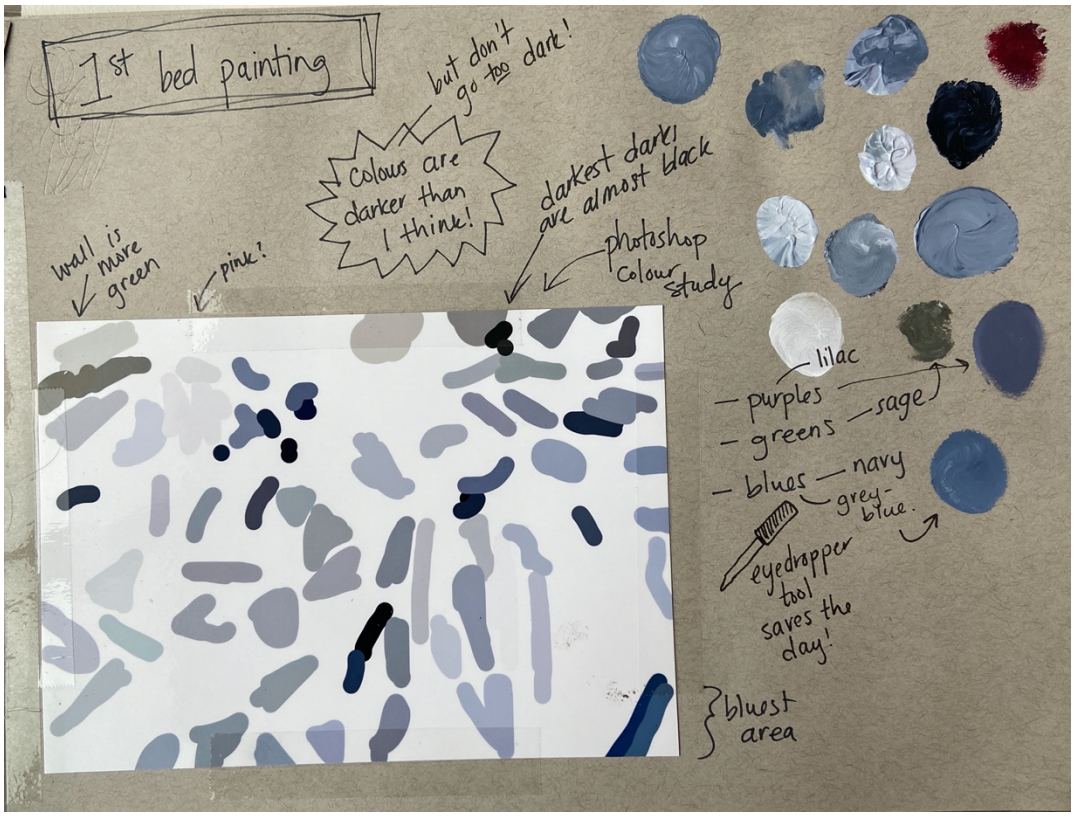

Figure 8: Sketchbook page from Summer 2. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 7: Process photo of first bed painting. Art and photo by Alyson Moore

Figure 10: Completed first bed painting, titled "So it is 1". Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 9: Second completed bed painting. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 11: Third completed bed painting. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Looking back, the bed paintings continued to develop themes and elements that I was working with in the previous summer and even further back into my BFA program. Elements of light and texture coupled with themes of intimacy and the home were always present in my work, but came together in a way that I was finally very happy about. Specifically, I was pleased that they tackled these themes in a way that was subtle enough to provoke questions and stories, whereas previous work I had always felt was too overtly narrative or descriptive. Art that I enjoy does exactly this, it prompts me to consider perspectives and experiences without giving everything away. I feel that I accomplished that through this ongoing series titled “In the folds,” and I plan to continue developing this concept and series in future work.

In between working on the second and third bed painting, I planned a weekend artist retreat for myself and two coworkers, one a visual artist, and the other a poet. We went up to my

family's cabin, a lake home that has been in the family since the 1940s. My grandmother and her brother share ownership of it, and the home is filled with antiques from their parents' time. I've been visiting the cabin since I was born, and had never really stopped to think about or even really look at the collections of items in it. But a stumble across a handwritten journal from my great-grandmother's honeymoon changed that. I had never seen the journal, nor even heard of it, but when I found it on a shelf, I found myself engrossed in the story of how she spent her honeymoon in the mountains of Alberta. Hearing her voice through her writing made her and her past belongings come to life, and I began to explore the collections of items throughout the home with a new perspective. I even found a box of old photographs of my great-grandparents and my grandmother as a child that I had never seen before. I started to think about how all of the items

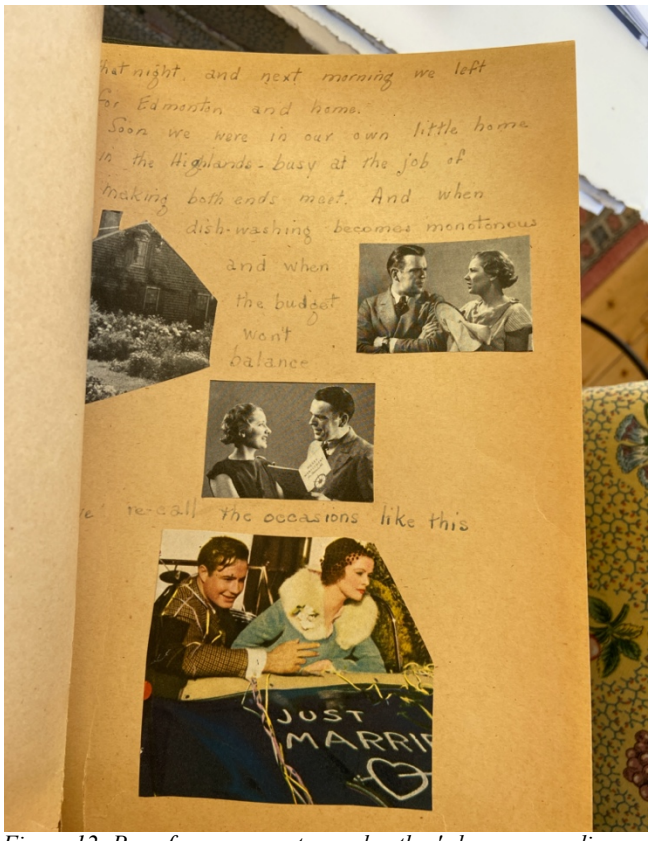

Figure 12: Page from my great-grandmother's honeymoon diary, August, 1936.

in the home had been curated into the collections that I saw by my grandmother herself, and started to photograph each of the little collections I found.

At this time, I was also looking at a lot of work by Mary Pratt. I had loved her work ever since seeing some of it in the National Gallery of Canada years ago, but had recently returned to her work after hearing of her death earlier that year. I was always struck by the way that she brought light into her paintings, but more so, I was interested in the little snapshots of her daily life. For a long time, I felt sadness from her paintings. To me, they seemed to tell the story of a woman stuck in domestic servitude, a silent call for feminist intervention. The absence of others in the paintings made them feel lonely and cold, and I wondered if she ever felt joy in her life. But after reading more about her life and work, especially a quote from an interview that Dr. Shields conducted with her, I realized that I had been looking at the paintings all wrong. Her paintings weren't about servitude and solace, instead, they were about finding the extraordinary in the ordinary, the little moments of beauty and excitement that exist if one looks for them. There's a term that Pratt used, both in the interview with Dr. Shields and in a Canadian Art article that I had read. The idea of an "erotic" response that runs through her body when looking at something exquisite changed the way I viewed her work and experience. Rather than pity her, I envied her, and I started to look for those moments in my own life.

The next series that I worked on I consider a collaboration between three generations of women in my life. The works are still life paintings that I made based on photographs I took, of collections that my grandmother curated and assembled, using items that belonged to her mother. Through my paintings, I hope to share moments of domestic bliss and create some shared understandings about life as a woman in Canada. While I never met my great-grandmother, I was

born on her birthday and given her first name. I also recently learned that she was a schoolteacher, like me. My grandmother is the most inspiring woman I know and my favourite person on earth. She painted a lot in her younger years and taught music for most of her life. Through this series, I feel connected to them both, which has reconfirmed my answer to the question "What does art do?" My great-grandmother's name was Mary, and so I titled the paintings in this series "For Mary," as a nod to both her as well as Mary Pratt. The series as a whole is titled "For your still life," which I consider to be a meditation on both the joys and challenges of domestic life.

Figure 13: Photograph of one of my grandmother's collections. Photo by Alyson Moore.

Through my own art making, I have come to understand how experiences with emergence and immersion in an art practice can lead to new understandings and creations. When I arrived at the cabin for my art retreat, I hadn't planned or even considered using the collections

around the home as the basis for a new series. I had been in that space before, hundreds of times, and never took notice of the collections present or the stacks of photographs that were hidden away. Yet, on that day I did find them, and an old journal lead to some old photos which led me back to the collections that were in plain sight, which led to me spending a few hours photographing my surroundings. Even then, it wasn't until weeks later when I considered using those photos as references for a series of paintings. By being immersed in an artistic frame of mind and creative space, the work emerged one by one. With each one, I came to understand and connect with my present and past, with an artist I've never met, and with countless other strangers who share experiences as females navigating domestic spaces in contemporary Canada.

Figure 14: Photo of my grandmother and great-grandmother in the Banff Hot Springs, 1941. Photographer unknown.

Figure 16: Process photo of my first still life painting. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 15: Finished image of first still life painting. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 18: Photo of second completed still life. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 17: Photo of third completed still life. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 20: Photo of fourth completed still life. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

Figure 19: Photo of fifth completed still life. Art and photo by Alyson Moore.

In three summers, I went from making no art at all, to having a regular studio practice. I went from cowering over 6-inch square drawings in an effort to hide my work from others, to building connections with other artists and looking for ways to share my work with a greater audience. I plan to continue with both the bed series as well as the still life series, and have ideas for future work beyond that as well. While my work is not directly related to my research, I do feel that they are inseparable. Through experiencing my own journey of artmaking, I am better able to understand and empathize with my students who may be going through similar things. I understand what it means to work through the design process, and can put it into practice in my teaching having this knowledge. I can empower my students to refer to themselves as artists and encourage them to contemplate what art *does* for them. Through the process of artmaking I have come to understand myself better and learned about how I connect with others in the world. I believe this is what authentic arts experiences do, and why I so greatly value Arts Immersion as a pedagogy in my own teaching.

The Project

When I began this project, I had planned on documenting the process of an Arts Immersion project from start to finish in my own classroom. I had planned on interviewing students and teaching colleagues throughout the process, holding discussions to further investigate their experiences with the project, and collecting samples of artwork both in process and completed as evidence of the learning process. To prepare for this kind of research, I went through the ethics board process and received permission to continue with my project. I presented the research project to my administration, received signed consent forms from student and staff participants, and created discussion guides, checklists, and other measures that were to be used in the collection of data throughout the project. Unfortunately, I was not able to move

forward with this project because one week into the study the schools were shut down indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was required to pivot my project quickly into something that was possible in the circumstances we were in, and began searching for alternative methods of arts-based research. In doing my research for the critical contextualization component of this paper, I came across an article by Melissa Cain (2019) where she used narrative inquiry and ethnographic reflection as methods of qualitative research. In her paper, she wrote narratives based on personal experiences, then dissected those experiences from an ethnographic perspective. I connected with this method immediately, and saw the potential for me to report on past experiences with Arts Immersion, rather than documenting the course of a project live.

Further investigation into these methods of research brought me to an article posted by the National Art Education Association Museum Education Division about autoethnographic practices in museum contexts (Evans & Blair, 2016). In this article, the authors present an exercise geared for museum educators who wish to bring autoethnographic practices to their work. The exercise presents a series of eight questions that are intended to be reflected on through writing. While reading through the list of questions, I immediately recognized an opportunity for me to adapt these questions to my own context, and use the questions to guide me through the ethnographic reflective component of my project.

Inspired by both articles, my project is a series of eight personal narratives with accompanying ethnographic reflections. Some photographs have been included to support the narratives and provide context for the project. My goal for these narratives and reflections was to understand better my own teaching practice, investigate why I do what I do, and share those

findings and the methodology of Arts Immersion with a greater audience. I have tried to share the narratives with as much truthfulness as possible, but recognize that my memory may at times have failed to produce specific details accurately. Names of participants in the projects have been excluded, but I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to all those staff and students who worked alongside me during these projects. I am very fortunate to work in an environment that is highly collaborative and that values team teaching, and therefore, I do not try to claim ownership over or credit for any of the projects shared. Instead, I wish to present them as authentic art experiences that I was able to share with the students and teaching colleagues present for each project.

Seven Matches

The air felt different that morning. The usual high-fives and "Good mornings" that peppered the Year 4/5 studio classroom were absent, and what was left was a low hum of "Did you hear?" and "It's so sad." Normally, a celebrity passing would not have had such an effect on this group, but this was no ordinary celebrity. Gord Downie's battle with a terminal brain tumor had been well-documented in the news for several years leading up to his passing, and just a year prior, nearly 12 million Canadians had tuned in to watch him perform in The Tragically Hip's farewell concert. Many of the students in the room had watched the historic rock show, guided by their "artsy" music-loving parents, and nearly half of the students present had learned and performed a Hip song the year prior in their music classes at school. As teachers, we knew we had to recognize the solemnity that was present in the room. So, we asked all one hundred students to join us by lying on their backs in the studio, as we dimmed the lights, and listened to Ahead By a Century. Some students quietly sang along throughout the song, or drummed their fingers against the floor to the rhythm. Others just lay there, soaking in the melodies of Downie's

genius. When the song ended, students began to sit up slowly, but continued not to speak. One of my colleagues on the team, a theatre artist who was also trained in Critical Incident Response, began to explain the significance of the activity to those who had not yet heard the news. Shortly after, students began sharing stories of their own experiences of loss or of people close to them who were battling cancer. Some talked about their grandparents, some about their dog. At one point, one child who, after hearing the stories of others' had felt supported and safe, shared that his father was currently battling the same type of cancer that had taken Gord Downie.

The rest of the day proceeded as normal, but my team of teachers and artists who were present for that morning's ceremony began to brainstorm how to build on the students' engagement with Downie's story. The school-wide winter celebration, an annual event that takes place in one of Calgary's largest venues, was happening in less than two months, and we decided that we would use that as an opportunity to create an art-based response to the legacy of Gord Downie.

The project began as they always did, by diving into an art form and collecting research that would provide a foundation for our own artistic creation. We started by watching the film "Secret Path," which was based on Downie's album by the same name. In the film, the full Secret Path album plays to illustrations by Jeff Lemire, telling the story of a young Anishinaabe boy named Chanie Wenjack who died while fleeing an Indian residential school in 1966. The students had so many questions, including "How could Canada have let this happen?" and "How many other children faced a similar fate?" Guided by their questions, they began to research Canada's history of residential schools and discovered first-hand stories of many others who either survived, or were affected, by the Indian residential school system. Using the songs and visuals from Secret Path as a starting point, the students imagined themselves in the situations

that many young Indigenous people had found themselves in, of being pulled away from their homes and sent to the schools which stripped them of their families, languages, culture, and beliefs. They also imagined what it would be like to be a parent and have their children taken away. These practices built on our young students' capacities for empathy, and fueled them to learn more. They researched the Indigenous groups who were local to their province, learned about the richness of these cultures prior to settler contact, and the ways that contemporary Indigenous people are working to reconnect with their cultures. The students' investigations were guided by the inclusion of local Indigenous guests we had invited to engage with our students, including a local beadwork artist who shared her stories and craft and a local elder who spoke to our group and facilitated a smudge ceremony. Our own team's visual artist, a Métis woman from Manitoba, facilitated a number of discussions and investigations into the past, present, and future of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples, including through an activity called "The Blanket Exercise" where students participate as actors in an oral retelling of the colonization of Turtle Island.

When we felt we had adequate background understanding and empathy towards our topic to begin our artistic investigation, we returned to the Secret Path album that prompted our research and allowed the music to pour over us once more. The soft, steady strum of acoustic guitar and beating of drums mixed with electronic pulses and ambient sounds of nature reminded us of the timelessness of Wenjack's story. His story, through the lens of Downie's music, simultaneously told the past, present, and future of Canada's history of residential schools. After listening to the full album together, we decided that the album's third track, a song called "Seven Matches," provided the best opportunities for an artistic movement-based response that would

communicate the themes of resilience and reconciliation that our students had told us were important for them to share.

Our lesson moved to the dance studio, where students worked in groups to "feel out" the music and identify movements that they wanted to incorporate into the piece. Sometimes these movements were narrative of the words being sung, sometimes they were more interpretive of the melodies and rhythms of the music itself, and in other instances they were driven by emotional connection to the music and lyrics together. I watched students lie in rows while another student hopped over them, like a train passing over a set of tracks. I saw others play out interactions between characters, like Chanie embracing his father. Some students were swaying like trees in the forest while others flitted around them like birds searching for a nest. Over the next few weeks, the students choreographed and rehearsed the full six minutes of the piece with help from our dance and theatre artist-in-residence.

Out of our group of 100 students, we had about five students who asked if they could engage with the topic through visual art rather than dance. For these students, we talked about creating paper lanterns that could become props in the dance, since we had already spoken in depth about using some kind of light metaphor in the piece as a symbol of hope. As the visual art specialist on my team, I took these students to the art room where we experimented with different kinds of materials, including dowels, straws, and wooden skewers, to determine which material would work best to form the support for our lanterns. We then drew out a number of different three-dimensional shapes on paper, before using the materials to actually build the 3D shapes. At the time, I had been reading Joseph Boyden's novella "Wenjack" to give myself more background information for the piece. In the story, each chapter is named for a different animal that accompanies Chanie through his journey, and at the end, dances with his spirit in the forest

after his death. I suggested to the students who were working on the lantern structures that perhaps we could use imagery of the animals from the book, animals from the Canadian wild, on our lanterns. After a few more days of building, testing materials, and playing with light and shadow techniques, we had ten lanterns completed, each with a different animal depicted. These lanterns were later choreographed into the dance that the rest of the students had been rehearsing and represented nature's watch over Chanie on his journey home.

Our performance day had arrived, and huddled out of view on stage left were one hundred nervous, yet excited fourth and fifth graders, preparing to share their hard work. They watched from off-stage as one of their fifth-grade classmates performed a traditional Cree fancy dance for the audience, accompanied by her mentor, a Cree woman and dance teacher, as well as a live drummer. We had invited the student's dance teacher to speak to our audience before our performance about reconciliation, as well as to introduce our performance piece from a place of authenticity and partnership. When she had finished speaking, and the twirling and jangling of the intricate costumes had ceased, our own student drummers entered the stage and began their rhythmic pounding meant to simulate the coming of a train. The next six minutes went by in a blur, but no amount of nerves could derail the rehearsal that the students put into the piece. Every movement was carefully executed in time with the music, and when the dance ended, the audience erupted into applause and tears.

Through art, our young students developed a genuine connection to Canada's history of residential schools and shared their new learnings with their families at home, widening the scope of our reach. And what began as a tribute to Gord Downie ended as a heartfelt offering to the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Though we never had a chance to ask Gord Downie what he thought of our tribute, we were able to meet his brother a year later, and shared a taped recording

of our piece with him. His response confirmed for us that Gord would have been proud of the learning that the students engaged with, and that by educating ourselves on a topic that was so near and dear to Gord's heart, we had indeed paid tribute to his legacy.

Figure 21: Students rehearse "Seven Matches" on the Jubilee stage, December, 2017. Photo by Josie Chu.

Reflection: How does learning occur in Arts Immersion?

When our teaching team met at the start of the year, we did not plan on doing the Seven Matches project. In fact, we didn't plan any of the projects that happened that year. We did know that on December 8th of that year we would be performing something on a large stage, as the venue had been booked a year in advance and the annual production was a school-wide tradition. But on principle, we decided not to plan any of the specifics of the performance until we met the students we would be working with that year and, with them, co-created a piece that would be based on their interests and goals. Without that step, we ran the risk of students not being as engaged or willing to participate in the production, or of missing out on opportunities for emergent learning due to a hyper-scripted teacher-centred project. By co-constructing their art piece with teachers and artists, the students were able to have authentic, scaffolded learning experiences in the arts that simultaneously met the provincially-mandated curriculum for their age level in a way that was exciting and relevant.

Through this project, students learned about some of the stories and histories of the First Nations in Canada. They critically examined the role of residential schools in systematically oppressing generations of students in the past, as well as the lasting effects that these policies have had today. They explored the features of different geographic regions in Canada, particularly within the Canadian Shield region as they tracked Wenjack's journey from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School towards his home in Ogoki Post. They practiced research skills and using media discernment when collecting information from the internet. Some students worked with two and three-dimensional shapes while exploring the area and volume of their paper lanterns. Central to all their work however, were the practices of community involvement, productive group work strategies such as conflict resolution, compromise, and

assigning roles, following the steps of the design process, and using movement and visuals to communicate narrative, emotions, and meaning.

The Seven Matches project could not have happened any other year. It was the combination or individual students, teaching staff, and world happenings that propelled this art piece into fruition. This is what Arts Immersion is truly about; providing opportunities for student voice, space and time for unexpected learnings to occur, mindful facilitation by skilled staff, and trust in the artistic process that by following the model, great learning and great art can occur.

Parisian Salon

"One more!" the students chanted as I flipped the page of our 'Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls 2' book. I had brought the book out to introduce the students to prominent women in history in honour of International Women's Day. All of the students, regardless of gender, were enthralled in both the one-page biographies that composed the book as well as the stunning and varied illustrated portraits that accompanied each story. After pouring through pages that documented the bravery of Ellen DeGeneres to be herself in the face of prejudice, the determination and perseverance of Beyoncé to achieve her dreams, and, a personal favourite, the commitment to addressing race and gender inequalities by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, we began to speculate what legacies we as students and teachers might leave behind years from now, or the stories that people may tell about us in the future. One student said she would be remembered for her participation in federal government, another said he would be known for his animal conservation efforts. One by one we daydreamed about our goals and ambitions for the future, and eventually began to write them down on paper. After a brief lesson on third person narration and preterit verb tense, the students worked to revise their recorded reflections into a narrative that matched the format of those from our book. "Once upon a time" was scrawled across the top of every student's page, not because they were told to, but because they had heard that phrase begin each of the stories in the 'Rebel Girls' book. They next day, we took a break from working on our imagined biographies and started to work on illustrated self-portraits to accompany our stories. I led a very traditional drawing lesson on proportions of the face, where curricular concepts like fractions and symmetry were frequently referred to. It took a couple of days for us to make it through all the steps of drawing a face, but by the end, the students were proud of the work they had done.

The ‘Rebel Girls’ book and mini project had given us a lot of positive momentum, and so the teaching staff and students met to discuss how we might expand on our work to create a larger integrative Arts Immersion project. I was encouraged by the students’ interest in learning about feminist heroes, and was eager to build in some art historical content into the next project. So naturally, we began to talk about Gertrude Stein and the modernist salons of Paris in the early 20th Century. A quick google search later, we were looking at images of rooms filled from floor to ceiling with art on our classroom TV that connected to my laptop. Many of these images featured female guests seated in the salons, and we read further to discover how even salons of the 18th and 19th Centuries were often hosted, organized, and moderated by women. The salon, both historically and in the modernist era, was a place for women to exchange ideas, discuss politics and further their education through constructive discussion. And of course, in the case of Gertrude Stein’s 27 rue de Fleurus, a place for artists of many disciplines to share, critique, and present their work.

We had it in our minds that we would recreate the salons of Paris in our classroom, and six weeks later, would open the salon to guests. We busily dove into the design process once more by returning to our realistic pencil portraits that currently accompanied our imagined biographies. I showed slides of artwork by Matisse, Derain, Braques, Seurat, and Van Gogh to demonstrate how Modernist artists, particularly those that lived and worked in France, used colour, shape, form, and texture to abstract their paintings. We discussed the reasons these artists rebelled against art traditions of the past, and what made their art so interesting for audiences of the time. One by one the students began experimenting with their pencil drawings to decide with which elements they would play to abstract their drawing. Some students carefully tested different vibrant oil-pastel colours on photocopies of their drawing first to be sure of the effect,

while others bravely wielded scissors, attacking their proportionally perfect drawings and reassembling the pieces into a Braques-like collage.

Throughout the six weeks, the students worked on a large variety of different art projects, hoping to create enough content to fill our room from floor to ceiling, like the images we had seen on Google. In one task, they worked with another teacher using clay and assemblage techniques to create Miro-inspired sculptures depicting symbols of the Famous Five (a group of women celebrated for bringing voting rights to women in Alberta.) In another, they worked with our theatre specialist to learn, memorize, and perform selected scenes from Modernist-era plays. When working with me, I continued our dive into abstraction and this time, focused on simplification as a means of abstraction. We looked at Picasso's bull series, the one that starts with a realistic drawing of a bull, but ten images later is left as just a simple line drawing suggesting the same bull. We compared it with Lichtenstein's bull series, that sees a similar bull drawing broken down into fragmented shapes and lines until all that is left is a colourful composition that bears no resemblance to the original image. In the abstracted portrait project, we talked a lot about personal identity and how it is formed over time. For this project, we wanted to focus on cultural identity, and so students began by brainstorming a list of important cultural objects or symbols that help form our local or national identity. They selected one or several objects to draw, first in a realistic way, then later began to simplify their drawings into shapes, lines, and blocks of colour through a series of repeated sketches. We discussed aspects of colour theory, specifically, how all colours can be simplified into the primary colours: red, yellow, and blue, by looking at art by Mondrian. We talked about how three-dimensional forms can be simplified into two-dimensional shapes, which can be simplified into one-dimensional lines, and once more into a zero-dimensional point through the work of Kandinsky.

As we approached the day when we'd invited guests to come engage with our exhibition, students and teachers worked together to curate and install the work. We discovered that we'd produced so much art that we filled all of our walls Gertrude Stein-style, and ended up needing to build temporary walls to house the remaining art. In addition to the visual art, we set up spaces for performances to happen and ample lounge seats for guests to sit and discuss the work they'd seen. On the day before Salon day, the students left school in a blur of excitement, eager to reveal their efforts to family and friends the next day. I was packing up my things to go as well, when a skein of yarn landed in my lap. I looked up. One of my teaching partners was holding another skein, and a laptop that displayed a picture of Duchamp's string installation at the 1942 surrealist exhibition 'First Papers in Surrealism.' Without saying another word, both of us started throwing the skeins over the open rafters and structural pillars that make up our classroom. The rest of my teaching team, and one student who was at school late waiting for a ride, worked for over an hour throwing yarn across the room until we had an installation that covered every part of the ceiling as well as created a sculptural archway over the entrance door of the classroom. This was our contribution to the show, gift to the students, and final nod to art history and modernism.

On Salon day, our students shared their work with parents, grandparents and other guests, as well as with the other students and teaching staff in the school. Visitors to the salon walked into a room filled with art from floor to yarn-covered ceiling. Some of our student artists arrived in their best "French artist" outfits, which typically involved stripes and berets. One student donned a faux mustache that Dali would have been proud of. Music played, actors performed, and salon-goers admired the multitude of ideas and expressions that were present in the space. It

wasn't 27 rue de Fleurus, but it was original. In my mind, it was even better because it was created by 100 young artists, working together and learning at the same time.

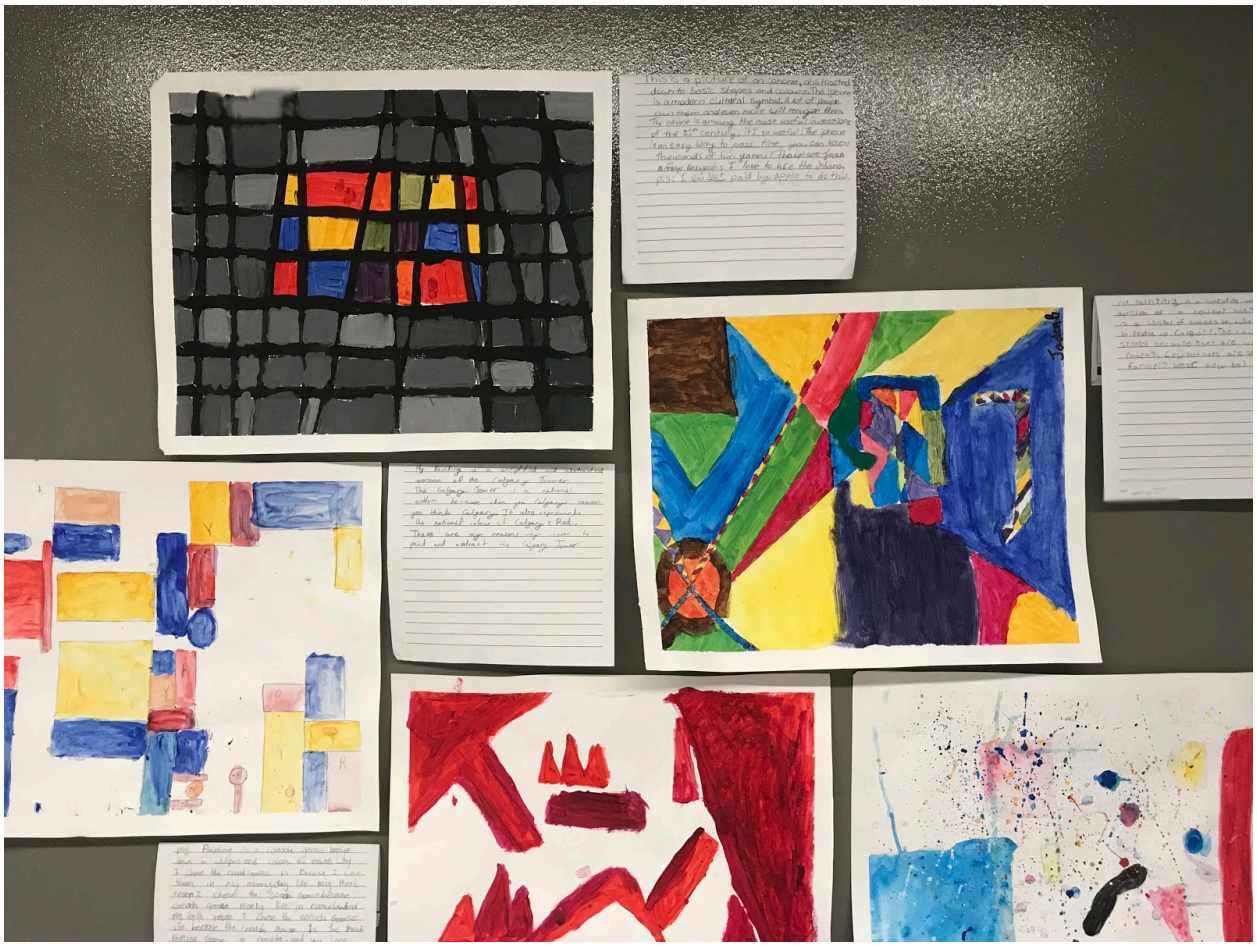

Figure 22: Student artwork hangs at the Parisian Salon, April, 2018. Photo by Alyson Moore.

Reflection: How my teaching facilitates learning in Arts Immersion.

I have always believed that good teaching begins when the teacher is excited about a topic. In my own practice, this means selecting and sharing the things that interest me with my students in a way that gets them excited to learn as well. Of course, the provincially-mandated curriculum means that there are always topics that I'm required to teach that are not immediately interesting to me (hello "Waste and our World" unit,) but it is up to me as the teacher to find ways to make the topic personally interesting and engaging so that my students have a chance of being invested in it too. That's how I began the Salon project, by sharing things that I was excited about (feminism, art history, and stories) with students, but also by leaving space for the students to share the things in which they were interested. The goal is always to bridge my own passions and goals for the students' learning with the things that they are excited about and motivated to do. While the expressions of learning are always different, I do follow a similar pattern in my teaching. I begin by identifying an end goal, or a structure for sharing my student's learning. Sometimes, this is co-constructed with the students, and other times, due to time constraints and the need for a cohesive over-arching year plan, it is a negotiation among the teaching staff ahead of time.

Once the goal is identified, in this case, to have a Parisian-inspired Salon to showcase a multitude of art forms, ideas, and achievements, then we start identifying the types of art forms that students will naturally engage with in order to meet the goal. In the salon project, this meant primarily working in the visual art form, though we also identified opportunities in theatre arts, music, and creative writing. Next, our art form specialists met and discussed which art form-specific skills and knowledge points the students would require in order to be successful in their goal. As the visual art specialist on my team, I identified that a working knowledge of Modernist

theory, history, and techniques was relevant and important for the students. This is where discussions about rebelling against the status quo, abstraction, simplification, and colour theory came to play. When teaching in Arts Immersion, I am always mindful of finding a balance between over-planning and under-planning. While it is necessary and important to set a trajectory before beginning a project, I never want to plan so much that I block opportunities for emergent learning along the way. This also usually means providing more time for a project than I initially think we'll require, so I am able to leave space and time for those in-the-moment learning opportunities to occur.

With the goal identified and a list of artistic skills required to be successful in the goal made, I am ready to begin working with the students. If they haven't been engaged in the process up until this point, I am sure to bring them in now. We usually meet in a "town hall" type meeting to discuss areas of interest within the project, opportunities for individual exploration in service of our team goal, and curricular connections from other subject areas. Sometimes, we'll break into smaller groups to take on different aspects of the production. Other times, we break our goal into steps to be completed sequentially. We speak about the design process often, specifically the steps of "ideating" and "revising." We return to these steps often, not just in the mini projects that are completed to contribute to the overall experience, but also in the creation of the entire production. We regularly meet to discuss where we are in the process what is going well, what has changed, and how we can adapt to changing goals and ideas.

The rest of the project typically runs smoothly, and by the end, students are always proud of the work they've accomplished and eager to share it with their friends and families. Because they have been so invested in the process from start to finish, they are able to explain each of the decisions that were made to arrive at the final product, and can explain the significance of their

art in context. While the sharing day is always a lot of fun, for me, the most rewarding part is the next day (or next week), when we hold our “post-mortem” for the project. Seated in a circle, we take turns sharing our successes and challenges in completing the project. We discuss what went better than expected, and what we could have done differently if given another opportunity. We reflect on what we’ve learned, both in terms of artistic abilities and in terms of subject specific skills and knowledge. We share feedback from our guests, and relive moments of humour, growth, fatigue, and more. Sometimes, we will have the students write a personal reflection on their contributions and achievements, and other times we have them work in groups to mind-map a web of connections between curricular outcomes and activities that they participated in. Our final presentation is never what we imagined it would be at the start. There are often many things that we had wanted to do but either couldn’t accomplish in the time frame, or became no longer relevant throughout the process. More importantly however, are the multitude of things that were included in our presentation for which we could never have expected or planned at the beginning. These are the things that make Arts Immersion so exciting, as well as the things that make community-based art projects so meaningful for the artists and their audiences. These are the reasons why I choose to teach in this way.

The Bluenose

It was the first day back to school after February Break when two fifth-grade girls came bursting into the school together, arm-in-arm, carrying a stack of US Letter paper. They skipped past their eagerly awaiting friends in the coat room in search of their theatre artist-in-residence. Their cries for our theatre artist-in-residence echoed through the hallway and into my classroom, and when they found her in the neighbouring room, they dropped the stack of papers on a table in front of her and exclaimed "We wrote a play!"

In fact, they had. Although it was short and simple in its narrative, the girls had drafted a script for a play called "The Bluenose" which took place on the iconic Canadian racing ship by the same name, the one whose sequel adorns our dime. It seemed the girls had spent much of their fifth-grade year enamored by stories of the Titanic, and prior to the break had done some research on their own into Canadian vessels. During their time off over the break, the girls collaborated in person and online to co-author a Cameron Crowe-inspired love story, but this time set aboard the iconic Nova Scotia schooner. They anxiously awaited while our artist-in-residence read through their pages, and when she finished, they had a proposal for her. They wanted the whole Year 4/5 division, all one hundred students, to rehearse and perform their play for the rest of the school at the end of the year. She wasn't able to answer the girls right away. She had to speak to the rest of us on the teaching team first, as we were already late into the year and had other projects and goals in the works for the upcoming months. It took very little discussion to convince us however. We were going to produce The Bluenose.

We were currently in the middle of another arts-based project, and so while we pursued that project we also began to discuss as a teaching team how to provide our students with an authentic arts-based experience using The Bluenose as our framework. We identified our various

strengths as a team, which included experience in dance, visual art, music, and theatre. We allowed our theatre specialists to take the lead on the project as their experience was most relevant to our goals, but we also discussed how the other art forms were relevant and necessary to the production. Just like how our own interests were all varied, so too were those of our students. We wanted to ensure opportunities for all students to engage and succeed with the project, regardless of their own interests or favourite art forms, and so decided to give students the opportunity to select the aspects of the production that they most wanted to contribute to.

After an initial read-through of the script with our entire division, we posted sign-up lists for production roles and held auditions for character roles and directing roles. One small group of students, which included our two original playwrights, worked with our theatre artist-in-residence on the scripts and on building skills as stage managers. A larger group of students worked with another facilitator as our cast of actors, with a few extras contributing in the role of directors. Those that were interested in music worked with another teacher on creating and performing original music for the production, and those that loved to dance worked with our dance specialist to incorporate expressive movement into the production. My group of students included all those who selected Visual Art as their preferred way of contributing to the production. I began the project feeling anxious and unsure about how I could contribute, as my experience in theatrical productions was extremely limited. However, it didn't take long before I realized that I could rely on the students' experience at the beginning to brainstorm different ways that the visual arts could be used in a play. Some of their suggestions included backdrops, props, costumes, promotional material (such as posters and postcards), and programs, and very quickly we had a long list of tasks ahead of us to complete.

Luckily, our daily visits from the directors and stage managers helped communicate the needs of the other groups, which enabled us to prioritize our list of tasks and better understand what was needed to make the production a success. At the beginning, within my visual art group we ended up dividing ourselves into smaller groups to each take on a specific goal. One group worked on making the boat flags that the dance group said they wanted for their movement piece. Another group worked on props, like a telescope and steering wheel for the boat. Yet another group spoke to the actors and determined a few key costume pieces that needed to be created for the characters. Those initial weeks were a flurry of activity as all students eagerly participated in their tasks, knowing that the work they were doing was meaningful and important. As a first-year teacher, I was amazed at how little I needed to do to "run" my production group. My role mostly became one of supervision and of giving arts-based feedback to the smaller groups, as everything else was self-sufficient.

When the small group projects began to wrap up, our group decided to take on some larger projects that needed the entire visual art crew's attention. One of these items was a backdrop. We met on my classroom carpet and discussed together what elements should be included in the backdrop, referring regularly to our copy of the revised script. We looked at images of different set design layouts and imagery on google, as well as images of the Atlantic Ocean and Nova Scotian scenery. Together, we decided to create a backdrop that would make it seem like the actors were all on the boat. Our reference image included a deck, some hanging ropes, and the stern of a sailboat. We used a grid method to assemble the large backdrop, by diving our reference image into squares, and having each individual student take a square to scale up and draw on larger paper. This task required a great deal of mathematic reasoning, not just in the measuring and scaling aspect, but also in the translation of images. I taught the

students how to estimate fractions to help understand the relationships between positive and negative space, and in the end when all pieces were assembled, in most cases our drawings lined up very closely. A few students took on the task of cleaning up the drawn pencil lines to make sure everything matched up at the end, and another group of students got out the paint when they were done and added colour to the entire image.

While the small group of students worked on painting our backdrop, the rest of us decided to make some extra props to be used during one of the musical numbers. The song was called "Dumpster Sea," which called for environmental protection of our oceans, and was based on Canadian-artist Terry Jacks' Concrete Sea. My visual artists decided to make props to suggest the ocean and began researching different types of plants and animals that can be found in the Atlantic Ocean. On large rolls of black paper, the students drew out two copies of silhouette of their chosen plant or animal, and coloured both pieces using oil pastels to provide detail. The two pieces were then stapled together around the edges, leaving just enough room to stuff crumpled balls of newspaper and plastic grocery bags inside to create 3D forms. Once stuffed, the opening was stapled shut and the students were left with a sculptural representation of their life form. This process proved to be one of the most enjoyable tasks for the students, and soon we had over twenty objects hanging by fishing line from my classroom ceiling, waiting to be used in the production. Hanging the forms was an organizational decision, as we did not have enough room to store them on tables. But seeing them all up there, hanging from thin threads of see-through thread and gently spinning with the air circulation, was magical. The last project we took on was a decoration for the front of the stage, which we wanted in order to disguise the typical elementary school gymnasium wall we were performing on. Using a volleyball net as our base, students attached collected pieces of recycling and garbage from their classrooms to suggest the

waste that accumulates in our oceans. Without really realizing it, we had checked off a number of the curricular objectives from the dreaded Waste and Our World unit in the grade 4 science curriculum.

On show day, we invited students from kindergarten to grade 7 to view our afternoon dress rehearsal. That evening, the friends and family returned to watch our premiere of The Bluenose. All students, even my visual artists, made appearances on stage at some point throughout the performance, but mostly the students were excited to show off and point out the aspects of the production that they specifically contributed to, like their flags, or their stuffed fish. During a post-mortem for our play a week later, the students told us that what they enjoyed most was being able to make their own decisions about how they participated and what was required in their roles. As teachers, we spoke about how little behavioural management we needed to do, as all students felt purpose and engagement in the process, as well as the communication that was required and met by students coordinating between the different groups who were all in service of the same goals. Viewers of our play would likely not have realized all that went into our 25-minute performance, but to the students and teachers involved, we knew how significant this feat was. For me, it certainly changed the way I approached group projects in the future, and allowed me to understand better what young kids are capable of, when you give them the opportunity to direct their own learning.

Figure 23: A student's rendition of The Bluenose sits on stage prior to the play's premiere, June, 2017. Photo by Alyson Moore.

Reflection: Why I teach the way I do

The Bluenose premiered in June of my first year of teaching. It was the first play that I had ever helped produce, and the first time that I had done any work in set design. Had I not been working with a team of skilled educators, I would never have attempted something so ambitious or outside of my comfort zone as a teacher, and yet, it was truly one of the most rewarding experiences of that year. This project threw me into a space of discomfort and unknowns right from the beginning. At the onset, I regularly wondered whether the kids were old enough to take on such roles, or whether I was "teaching" them enough by stepping aside and allowing them to take on so much leadership of the project. What I soon came to realize however, was that the feelings of discomfort and unknowns that the project gave me, were the same feelings I felt when I was making art, and were also the feelings that my students felt while they were engaged in Arts Immersion learning. These feelings weren't negative, but rather they were the fuel needed to try something new and to take positive risks in the arts. For me, this is what Arts Immersion is all about, and the reason why I teach in this way.

By using art as a vehicle for exploration and learning in a variety of subject areas, topics, and themes, both students and teachers are able to engage in and experience what it means to be an artist. Because of this, the work that we do becomes relevant and meaningful, and students become passionate about doing their best work. At the start, I had felt less like a teacher because I found myself spending less time at the front of the class instructing on a topic. As I became more comfortable with the project however, I learned that I was far more effective on the sidelines as a facilitator, guiding the students through the steps needed to reach their goals, and offering expertise as an artist and subject specialist when the students needed a new skill or concept to help further their plans. Of course, this did not mean sitting back and doing nothing.

Instead, it involved consistent and ongoing formative assessment of student strengths, abilities, and needs, and a knowledgeable understanding of the core curriculum so that elements of the project could be paused, redirected, or highlighted at any point to ensure adequate learning of the prescribed outcomes.

For me, teaching through Arts Immersion has taught me to empower students to direct their own learning, to allow space for emergent learning to occur, and to recognize and prioritize the higher order thinking skills that are required and developed through the process of art making. It allows my practice to always feel fresh and new, as I avoid the staleness of more traditional “print and go” projects. In Arts Immersion, students engage in the arts, and I get to fully immerse myself in the art of teaching.

The Pod

There's an episode in The Office where Pam invites her coworkers to a local art show where she is displaying some work that she had done in art classes. To her disappointment, her work is largely ignored by the visitors to the gallery. At first, only one co-worker shows up, who dismisses her work as "motel art," and just as Pam begins to doubt herself and considers going home, her boss, Michael Scott, shows up and displays genuine awe for her work. He tells Pam that he must buy her painting to hang in their office, and Pam leaves the show with renewed confidence and gratitude for her boss.

I was discussing this episode with my teaching team several years ago, as we had all been binging newly released reruns of The Office on Netflix in our downtime that year. We talked about the power of art to connect and about how art means different things for different people. We also talked about self-expression and the strength of relationships and community. At the time, we were in the middle of the most challenging year that any of us had taught, which was mostly due to having to adjust to two separate moves, staff turnover, and new routines due to our new open-concept facility. We started to joke about how our classroom community at times was like The Office, with so many different characters and funny things happening all the time, when one of us suggested that we should make our own TV show inspired by the sitcom. We laughed about the idea for only a few minutes before we started to think seriously about how we could make that happen. The end of the year was approaching, and we wanted to celebrate and recognize the hard work that everyone had put in by creating a showstopper performance for the end of the year. This seemed like a great way to have fun, entertain, and reflect on the year of change that we had had.

After re-watching the art gallery episode with the students (and fast forwarding through a few select scenes for appropriateness,) we began to brainstorm with them the moments from our school year that were memorable, important, and translatable into a TV sitcom. The ideas were plentiful, and it wasn't long before an entire whiteboard was filled with ideas for content. As a teaching team, we also brainstormed episodes and scenes from the Office that could be adapted for our context. We came up with another list of our favourite moments, and together with the list that the students came up with, we had all the content we needed to start writing scripts. Due to time constraints and the number of students that we were working with, we decided to have the teachers write the scripts with input from the students. I took on two of the four episodes that we wanted to create, and my teaching partner, a theatre artist-in-residence, wrote the other two. Each episode included a "cold open" scene in addition to the main storyline, and each of the four classes took on one episode.

To prepare students for the task that was ahead of them, we began doing workshops in character development, improvisational acting, and storytelling. We also brainstormed a list of jobs that would be needed for the project, and had students sign up for the role that they were most interested in. Some of these jobs included acting, directing, prop and scene development, filming/camera work, music, and more. We watched scenes from a variety of mockumentary style films and television shows and had students start writing confessionals about life in the classroom that would be incorporated into the interview style components of the show. Students began working in their selected groups to rehearse, select filming locations, play with camera angles and image composition, create props, and more.

Our directors met with our actors and cast them for the roles in their given scripts. I was concerned at first that they would base their casting decisions on who their friends were, or who

was more popular, but I quickly realized that I had no reason to worry because they took their role very seriously and wanted to be as fair as possible. On their own, the directors interviewed the actors to see which roles they were most interested in playing, held mini auditions and table readings to feel out the characters, and made their decisions based on that. In my own class, I was startled to discover that they had chosen to cast one of our younger Year 4 students in the lead role. This student had significant learning disabilities related to reading, and I worried that the amount of lines that were required of this role would be too difficult for her to manage. When I gently approached this concern with my directors, they told me that this student rarely got opportunities to perform in lead roles, and they believed she could do it. They wanted to give her the opportunity to shine in front of her peers, and I couldn't have been more proud.

Part way through the production process for what had now turned into a four-part feature length film affectionately referred to as "The Pod" after our open-concept classroom space, one of my teaching partners came to our team with big news. He had reached out to a local movie theatre and rented it out for the night of our premiere. So not only were we going to be able to share our film with the families and staff at our school, but we were going to be doing it in a real-live movie theatre. The students shrieked with excitement and joy when we presented them with this news, and from that point on, everyone was fully committed to the project with a sense of urgency and importance. We had students bring in posters and flyers, made independently on their own time at home, to advertise the show to the school community. We had students arriving at school with costume pieces that they had assembled, without prompting, because they were so excited to be seen on screen. Things were moving so smoothly on the filming side of things that we were able to plan and create even more content to incorporate into the premiere, including three music videos that were shown on either end of the movie, introductory and concluding

scenes where kids presented words that they would use to describe “The Pod,” a live student-led discussion panel for after the film, and a video quiz game and slideshow to be played before the film began while guests filed into their seats in the movie theatre.

On performance day, I arrived early with a small group of students to decorate the movie theatre and set up for the show. We put up a backdrop for taking photos in front of, just like at a Hollywood film premiere, rolled out a red carpet, laid down Hollywood stars on the sidewalk, set up the velvet rope stanchions and assembled our ticket booth with the programs made by students. The movie theatre ran their concession booth for us, so students and their families were able to enjoy popcorn and candy while they watched the film. As students began to arrive in their fanciest clothes, the hum of excitement grew. Soon it was time to begin, and I watched the whole thing unfold from a tiny projection room above the theatre. The feelings of pride, relief, and accomplishment at the end of the evening, both for me and the students, made all of the hard work that had gone into that year worth it.

Figure 24: Students and guests arrive on the red carpet at the premiere of The Pod, June, 2018. Photo by Alyson Moore.

Reflection: The goals I have for myself and my students

I've always considered myself a cautious person and I've never enjoyed taking risks, regardless of whether they are small or large. I prefer to know the whole plan before I begin anything new, and I like to know exactly how it is going to turn out at the end. Arts Immersion is not that, and somehow, that's precisely what I love about it. I know that a project is going to be valuable when I feel the discomfort from not knowing exactly how things are going to turn out. That discomfort is the same feeling I get when I am making art, and usually, the less sure I am about the art the more successful the work is at the end. I also know that my students do their best work when they are pushed just beyond their comfort zones (and provided enough support to succeed,) and I believe that the same is true for teaching.

My goals for my students are therefore to try new things and to be exposed to as many art forms, techniques, ideas, and approaches as possible. I want them to build the confidence to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas through art, and to develop strategies that help them express those things more effectively. Through observing and interpreting art, I also want them to learn to be critical of information that they are presented with and learn how to formulate their own opinions based on research, evidence, and personal values. I want my students to connect with others through their art making and to find creative and novel ways to solve problems they are faced with. I do not expect, nor aim for, that all my students grow up to be professional artists, but I do hope that my students will be confident to call themselves artists at all stages throughout their lives, and that they will continue to live creatively and compassionately.

My goals for myself are not very different. I want to always be challenging myself to continue learning, growing and adapting both as a teacher and as an artist, and to be setting those examples for my students. I strive to teach skills and concepts in context, so that they are

meaningful, relevant, and honouring the voices of those outside of the majority population. I hope to promote an environment where students feel belonging and safety, while also encouraging them to take positive risks in their artmaking and learning. I always try to meet students at whatever ability or level they are at, and then provide the necessary scaffolding to either extend their learning beyond what they currently know, or strengthen the foundational understandings that they are in the process of building. Above all, I want to develop deep and genuine relationships both with the students I work with, their families who support them beyond the classroom, and others in our learning community.

For me, The Pod was an example of when my goals for my students and my goals for myself were not only aligned, but met through meaningful Arts Immersion learning. Throughout the project, the students were engaged in their learning and committed to demonstrating their best work, because they knew that it would pay off in the end when their art was shared with their peers and families at the theatre. They participated in collaborative groupwork that was both necessary and productive, and understood the value of each other's contributions. For both my students and myself, we set goals that were lofty and allowed ourselves to dream big in terms of what our collective potential was. Making The Pod took a lot of time, work, and collaboration, but in the end, we were all so proud of what we had accomplished and it ended up being the perfect way to celebrate our year of growth and change together.

Exquisite Wild

I remember being a child, and flipping back and forth between three pages of Maurice Sendak's "Where the Wild Things Are," almost obsessively. The first page showed the protagonist, Max, in his bedroom at home. The second was the same image of Max's bedroom but with trees growing out of the carpet. On the third page, Max was standing in a jungle without his room in sight. The transformation from the real to the surreal was so intriguing to me, and I would go round about in my head trying to determine if Max's adventure actually happened, or whether it was all his imagination. I empathized with the anger and frustration that he felt at the beginning of the story, and as a young child still learning to regulate my own emotions, I could think back to times when I had felt that resentment also.

Flash forward many years to my first year of university, and I found myself dragging friends and dorm-mates to the movie theatre to see Spike Jonze transform the children's book to the big screen. I was nervous that the film would spoil the book for me, as so many film adaptations tend to do, but was determined to see it anyway because the book was so close to my heart. And so, I found myself at the Scotiabank Theatre in downtown Vancouver, eyes glued to the screen while Sendak's story played out by some of my favourite actors in massive puppet suits. All of the heart of the original book was there for me, and the costumes, music, landscapes and enhanced storyline just magnified everything that I loved about the story.

Nine years later, I was teaching at Calgary Arts Academy and it was announced that the theme of our large-scale winter celebration would be Storytellers. I knew instantly that I wanted to do something involving "Where the Wild Things Are," and after suggesting it to my team, received lots of enthusiasm and ideas. The related concepts of self-expression, self-regulation,

belonging, independence, and adventure suited the needs of our group of students that year, and after playing for them the soundtrack to the Spike Jonze film, the students were hooked, too. I worked with the students to select songs from the album to use in our six-minute medley, and we struggled because we all loved so many of the songs equally. In each song, Karen O's folk-punk ballads sing over top of musical accompaniment that is both playful and whimsy, while also communicating the same raw emotions that are so prevalent in the story. Eventually, we narrowed it down to the songs that we felt best told the narrative of the story, and clipped and combined them into a six-minute track for our performance.

Throughout the creation process, we held discussions, workshops, and micro-projects to further investigate emotional responses, regulation strategies, and the power of our imaginations to provide what we need at any given time. We studied surrealism, and were especially enamored by the popular surrealist parlour game, "Exquisite Corpse." In the game, students take turns drawing a part of a character, then fold over the paper leaving only a couple line fragments visible, for the next student to continue from. In the end, you are left with a hybridized creature that combines elements of realism in ways that create an utterly surreal experience. The students had so much fun playing this game and loved seeing the big reveal at the end of each round, that we began to discuss how we might bring that same experience to the viewers of our performance.

At the same time, we were working with the theme of community and comparing it to ecosystems in nature. We discussed how the Wild Things were a community that looked out for one another, and that in order to work effectively, ecosystems have to show the same balance and symbiosis for the living things inside of it. At this point, the other members of my teaching team

and I recognized that it was a good opportunity to connect with some of the prescribed learning outcomes from our grade five Wetlands unit in science, and so the students started to research different plants and animals that could be found in wetland ecosystems near where they lived, as well as the relationships between those organisms that allow them to survive.

How we decided to bridge the ideas of wetland ecosystems with the surprise reveals of the Exquisite Corpse game, was to have the students create large-scale puppet-like props, that when combined in certain ways, showed wetland critters, but when combined in different ways, created surreal wetland Wild Things. To start, each student made a drawing of the wetland plant or animal that they had been researching. Then, the drawings were magnified onto large sheets of cardboard and cut out around the edges. The students painted the animals with acrylic paint, using a bright and expressionist style of application. Next, the large cardboard plants and animals were cut further into shapes that fit together like a puzzle. Each student received a puzzle piece and rehearsed with their same animal group members how to hold their pieces in such a way that the whole animal can be seen from the audience. Next, they played with different configurations of puzzle pieces to create strange, new species, similar to the creatures they had created in their original Exquisite Corpse drawings. Then, working with our dance artist-in-residence, the students choregraphed their whole movement piece, synced with the soundtrack medley, to retell their own version of the Where the Wild Things Are story.

The scene opens with four students dressed in Max costumes on opposite ends of the stage. They shout, collapse, and then a background image of a wetland appears on the screen behind them. At this point, the music begins and our Maxes start to call more students onto the stage, each one holding their puzzle piece prop. The music pauses, and the students, along with

the track, shout “BE STILL!” At this point, all the students turn around with their props, revealing their original “normal” puzzled-together animals. The music changes, and the animals start to spin and run around in a flurry of colour. They break apart into their puzzle fragments, and then return, this time much closer to the audience. The students in unison freeze and shout “LET THE WILD RUMPUS START!” The animals break apart and become part of a parade of animal fragments. Eventually, the music turns again and the animals reassemble, but in their reconfigured and surreal Exquisite Corpse formations for the finale of the piece. The final track is one called “All is Love,” symbolizing the end of Max’s journey and the return to reality. He waves goodbye to the Wild Things and prepares to face the real world, struggles and all.

Figure 25: Students perform with their exquisite corpse-style puppets, December, 2018. Photo by Josie Chu.

Reflection: How students have responded to my teaching

A question that I hear a lot in my practice, particularly from students who are new to the school and this kind of learning, is "When are we going to do real school?" and "Why aren't we learning anything?" The students who have been around for a while and have been involved in numerous Arts Immersion projects know the answers to both these questions, and sometimes volunteer the answers before I am able to explain. The short answers, the ones that the students offer, are "We're doing it right now," and "We are learning lots! It just feels different than 'normal' school." The students who respond are totally right, although I usually step in at this point to further explain the pedagogy.

Most children who come from different schools have had school experiences that are far more traditional than the one Arts Immersion offers. Even those children who have been learning through Arts Immersion since kindergarten arrive with preconceived notions about what school should look and feel like based on TV shows, movies, and stories from their parents, who likely also attended more traditional settings. The expectation from students is that school should be rigid, difficult, and rarely fun. They anticipate arriving to rows of desks, teachers who stand at the front of the room and lecture, and classmates who are disengaged, disinterested, and lament the amount of homework that is assigned each night. Arts Immersion is none of that. Our classroom is open concept, with tables that are meant for groups and can be moved around to suit any need of the space and the project. At times, a facilitator will lecture briefly on a topic, share images for discussion, and perform a demonstration, but most of the time, students are working independently or in groups on projects, using the steps of the design process to guide their investigations. There are rarely worksheets, and if they are present, they are carefully selected to

serve specific needs or purposes. Timetables are flexible, and will typically show “project time” blocks, rather than individual classes for each of the subject areas.

Arts Immersion involves rigor, but offers support to meet targets. It is often self or group-directed rather than teacher led, and does not involve hours of homework, because collaborative creative inquiry needs to be done at school where students can work together and facilitators can be close by to observe, assess, and support along the way. For these reasons, and because Arts Immersion looks so different than the movies, students often feel that they are not learning. So, I have learned some strategies to help communicate the students’ very real and significant growth throughout a project or year. The first is a very basic teaching strategy, but one that is very effective, which is identifying and displaying the learning goals each day. Although I may not be able to predict all the emergent learnings that will come up throughout a lesson, I usually have a pretty good idea of some of the targets that students will meet and can guide lessons towards others that I feel are necessary and important for their success in the project. I try to also state the subject area that the skill falls under, so that when students go home and parents ask them things like “What are you learning in math?”, the student can respond appropriately, knowing that the measurement they did in a set design project was meeting those goals for mathematics. By discussing these with students ahead of time, they can leave a project block knowing whether they’ve met the goals or not. The second strategy that I use is frequent and detailed reflection. We always end a project with either a written reflection or ‘post mortem,’ which is a theatre term for a group reflection that happens after a project has concluded. Usually this take place as a group discussion or circle meeting. Students reflect on the skills and knowledge points they acquired, the soft skills, such as group work, leadership, and perseverance that they practiced, or

strengths and areas of future growth that they have identified. The last strategy is one that is fairly new for me and takes more time than a written reflection or discussion, but has proven to be very valuable since I began using it. At the end of a project, I will post all of the curricular objectives from each subject area that I assessed as being met throughout the project. I then have the students work in groups to mind-map where each of those skills and knowledge points came into the project, and how they were used. Oftentimes a skill comes up multiple times throughout a project, which is why the web or map style works well. As an additional step, I will sometimes have the students identify the objective that they feel they haven't mastered yet, or perhaps spent the least amount of time on, and as an extension, will have them create their own art-based response that helps them practice or solidify that point before moving on to the next project.

The students who have been through a few cycles of Arts Immersion projects understand the benefits of this kind of learning and are grateful to learn in this way. Some have told me that they have gained confidence by sharing their artwork with others so regularly, others have expressed appreciation for the collaborative aspect of it, which has led them to form friendships with students they might not have otherwise. Still others speak to the gains they've made in reading, writing, or other academic subjects, which they attribute to the fact that every task they take on is meaningful, relevant, and important, leading them to push themselves to doing their best work at all times. These student reflections became even more evident over the past few months while I was teaching from home, online, due to school shutdowns from coronavirus fears. There was novelty for the students in the first few weeks to learn through more traditional methods. However, the novelty quickly wore off and I received weekly emails from most of the students expressing how greatly they missed school and learning through Arts Immersion. Many

asked if we would be able to restart the project that we had just begun prior to school closures once students returned in the new year. What I learned from this process, is that Arts Immersion is more than just a style of teaching and learning. Arts Immersion is about a community of artists who celebrate each other's successes and support each other to reach higher than they thought possible. When students are given the agency and power to direct their own learning, and educators are open to creative exploration and emergent learning along the way, that's when the magic of Arts Immersion occurs.

One Miserable Day

We scared our administration when we told them we wanted our first project of the year to be called “One Miserable Day.” We told them that the group of students we had that year had a thing for the dark and spooky, as well as for ironic humour, which was true. With the students’ help in coming up with the idea, we planned to have a one-day celebration of all things miserable, with six weeks of miserable preparations leading up to it. We planned to read books such as Lemony Snicket’s “A Series of Unfortunate Events,” and “Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day,” and study films such as “Nightmare Before Christmas,” and “The Addams Family.” Our goal was to understand and present a multitude of different ways that people deal with, and at times even relish in, miserable situations.

Luckily, our administration has a lot of trust in us, and with only a few clarifications we were able to go ahead with our miserable plans. Of course, we weren’t really trying to spend six weeks in misery and acute depression. It was a catchy hook for the project, but our real investigations were centered around questions such as: How do people deal with hardship? and What are healthy ways of identifying and dealing with negative emotions? As we faced a new year with new students, we felt it appropriate to consider ways to develop strategies for the students and ourselves that would assist us in maintaining positive outlooks and strengthened resiliency year-round.

Rather than focusing in on one art form and working towards a large presentation in that medium, we decided to work on a variety of smaller art projects that could all be shown in an open-house style event on our One Miserable Day. We began in the art form of creative writing. Students created original characters, complete with personality profiles, complex backstories,

and a network of relationships. Then, they began ideating settings and conflicts for their characters to interact with. The only parameters that we provided were that their character needed to have some kind of hardship fall upon them, and they must use strategies relevant to their character to positively deal with that stress. We reviewed a variety of literary devices and other ways to emote feeling and perspective, and did improv workshops to help us take on different character personalities and communication styles in rehearsal for our writing. The students took to the project with fervor. Students who rarely wrote a sentence were suddenly turning out pages and pages of written narrative, and each story was so uniquely original from all the others. Some characters were human, some not, some settings were contemporary and realistic, while others were set in the past, future, or in alternate universes. When the students got close to finishing their first drafts of the story, we taught them how to use slideshow programs to create e-books of their stories. We played with layout, composition, and illustrations to bring the stories to life, depending on the desires and needs of each student's vision.

Our next mini project was rooted in filmmaking. Through discussions with the students about what conditions often lead to us having a "bad day," we repeatedly heard that the weather is a large component. Rainy days, snowy days, windy days, or any other version of extreme weather can often put us in a bad mood or ruin our original plans, and so students decided to create short films to illustrate these experiences. Working in small groups, they selected an extreme weather pattern such as drought, tornado, heat wave, snowstorm, electrical storm, etc., and wrote and rehearsed scripts where they played the role of news anchors reporting on the event. They spoke about how it made them feel, both good and bad, and in many cases included a whole lot of humour too. One group, who was reporting on floods, filmed the first half of their news report on land, and while they spoke the water slowly rose around them until they were

finishing their news report underwater, while fishes swam around beside them. When the groups were ready to film their shows, we set them up in front of a makeshift green screen and used classroom iPads to record their reports. Later, they selected visuals for the background and worked with a digital artist-in-residence to bring the films to life.

While the students were engaged in the film project, the facilitators recognized a good moment to bring in some more of the Weather Watch unit curriculum to the project, in which students were already involved. We knew we wanted to cover the different types of cloud formations with the students, and so introduced the topic by showing them a large collection of Ansel Adams photography. Most of his black and white photographs of American landscapes also show the sky in various forms, and through his images we began to speak about different types of clouds, different levels of the atmosphere, and how clouds are formed. The students fell in love with Adams' work, and so we decided to work with his images some more in our own art. We printed a large collection of his photographs at about a postcard size. Students selected an image to work with, and glued it into the middle of a large sheet of newsprint. Using charcoal, and thinking about the types of clouds that were already present in the image, students extended the images out beyond the photographs to the edges of the newsprint. By the end, all students could recognize and describe a variety of common cloud formations, and explain how and why they formed in such a way.

We had such great engagement with the cloud drawings, that we decided to do one more cloud inspired piece for the celebration. Inspired by a work by local artists Caitlin Brown and Wayne Garrett in which thousands of lightbulbs are clustered into an installation, with cords hanging down for viewers to interact with, we set about to make our own living cloud installation. As a group we researched the type of cloud we wanted to create (cumulonimbus,)

and researched materials that could be used. We drafted plans, collected supplies, and set to work. In the end, we used an assortment of dollar store paper lanterns, lots of cotton batting, and hot glue to attach the lanterns together into a cloud-like skeleton which was then covered in the batting to make them soft and fluffy. We originally planned to wire our own circuits to add lighting inside the lanterns, but due to a time crunch, ended up using fairy lights bought online to weave through the sculpture and hang down out of the cloud light water droplets. The lights we selected could be controlled by remote control and offered a variety of different strobe settings, so the students selected a pattern that they felt was most like lightning, and looked for thunderclap soundtracks on YouTube to play while the installation was running. We hung it from the classroom ceiling, and on open house day, it was a beautiful, miserable, wonderful sight to see.

Figure 26: Students lay under their storm cloud installation, October, 2019. Photo by Alyson Moore.

Reflection: What, for me, constitutes evidence of learning in Arts Immersion

I never know exactly where we will end up in a project, although I usually do go into the project with some ideas about the themes, big ideas, and connections that we may explore through our art. As an artist, I am always just as interested (and often more interested) in the process of artmaking, as I am in the final products, and for these reasons I don't rely on summative assessments to tell me what my students have learned. While evidence of their learning is often present in those summative pieces, I get a better understanding of their abilities, growth, and understanding through close observation of their decision making throughout the artistic process. I tell my students that every day is judged at the same value as any other day, and so every day is an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in any way possible.

Because I rely so heavily on formative assessments, I like to leave as much time in the day as possible for "doing." This means that my lectures, demonstrations, and other teacher-centered modes of instruction are limited, because when I am speaking, it is difficult to determine exactly what each individual student is understanding. Instead, I emphasize the design process heavily throughout each year, so that students understand that artmaking is a journey from ideating through prototyping and presenting, with many opportunities to reflect and revise along the way. I give them space and time to inquire, explore, brainstorm, and make, so that they have lots of opportunities for emergent learning to occur, and I have lots of opportunities to observe their learning, assess their understanding, and provide relevant in-the-moment feedback to either support or extend their knowledge and skills.

I tend to stray away from overly descriptive rubrics, both because I don't always know which direction our learning will take us throughout the course of an art project, but also because

I don't see the value in limiting artistic expression of understanding to specific points or levels. Instead, I'll state the goals of the day, week, or project ahead of time, leave space for new learning outcomes to arise, and provide students with benchmarks or checklists to determine whether they've considered all of the relevant criteria. Except for where absolutely necessary, I don't tend to prescribe *how* an outcome must be met, but rather state just that the outcome needs to be demonstrated. This provides the ability for differentiation for individual student needs and goals, space for creative expression, and multiple access points and opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning throughout the project. For example, in the One Miserable Day project we asked students to demonstrate their understanding of different cloud formations. They could have demonstrated this through their Severe Weather videos, through their Ansel Adams drawings, through their participation in the cloud light installation, or in any other way throughout the project.

For me, evidence of learning can take many forms. Often, it happens through conversations, whether they be group discussions or one-on-one consults. I ask questions that promote critical thinking and encourage students to elaborate on their ideas until I am satisfied with my assessment of their learning for that skill. Evidence of learning can also take form through writing. Sometimes it is in the creative work they produce, such as in their One Miserable Day stories, but more often it is through written responses and reflections to specific questions or prompts that I provide to guide their expression. For each of the questions or prompts, I carefully construct phrasing aimed to provoke their deepest thinking and consideration for the topic. Beyond speech and writing though, I also look for evidence of learning through their creative output. This can be drawings, diagrams, sculptures, dances,

musical expression, or any other arts-based form of sharing knowledge. Just like how art can be a vehicle for learning, it can also be a mode of communication. Therefore, I am always looking for evidence in their creative work that shows their understanding of the skills that they have encountered, developed, and explored.

In order to do this kind of ongoing formative assessment successfully, a solid understanding of the curricular outcomes, benchmark grade-specific goals, and arts-based skills for that level are required. I need to know the entire curriculum, inside and out, in order to be able to look for indicators "on the spot." I also need to be ready to pull in or direct learning towards specific skills or topics quickly and without a lot of preparation. Because projects are never repeated, I can't rely on pre-made resources or handouts for my lessons. This means that a lot of work throughout the project process is required, as I am continuously adapting and adjusting as we go, but I consider this akin to the artmaking process. Working with a tight group of co-teachers and artists helps significantly in this regard as well. Lastly, in order to document my observations each day, I carry a notebook (both physical and digital) with me to jot down notes or check off objectives as I see students meet them. I also have students upload their work, especially in-progress work and reflections, regularly to an online portfolio which I can visit and provide digital feedback on regularly. This allows the students to really highlight the things that they are most proud of or they feel best demonstrate their learning, which may be different from the things I've observed in class. I also allow students to re-submit, revise, or add to any existing work throughout the year, as they build on their understanding and move towards mastery of a skill or topic.

The Big Three

One of my co-teachers has a rotating background on his computer that shows photographs of some of his favourite installation art pieces. Whenever his computer is connected to the classroom projector, the students are able to see his background image and watch it change throughout the lesson. Images of Yayoi Kusama's infinity rooms, Olafur Eliasson's weather rooms, Ai Weiwei's chair structures, and Christo and Jeanne-Claude's wrapped landscapes were common in the slideshow, and often drummed up conversation among the students. Throughout the year, students would get micro-lessons from my co-teacher, prompted by their questions or comments about the artwork seen. Because of this, neither of us should have been surprised when the students suggested installation art as the main medium for our end of year art show.

Even though the students enjoyed looking at installation art, they weren't quite sure how to define it at the start of our project. They struggled to differentiate it from sculpture, and since each piece is so different, weren't able to come up with common characteristics. After several discussions and looking at more art, they came up with their own working definition, namely, that installation art was about creating an *environment* that promotes interaction with the *senses.* While many visual artworks play with the sense of sight, others play with the sense of sound, such as works by Janet Cardiff. Others, like Campos de Color which features bowls of colourful spices by Sonia Falcone, play off the sense of smell. Still others, like Tomas Saraceno's In Orbit, allow you to physically touch the work and interact with it that way. After examining these and other artworks, and brainstorming some ideas of our own, we decided to center our show around what we called The Big Three senses, namely, sight, sound, and touch.

In small groups we brainstormed a bunch of different ways that we could create immersive experiences that engaged the senses, and as usual, the students' ideas were inspiring, eclectic, and at times a little unrealistic. We teach them that all ideas are good ideas however, and to "yes and" any contribution that someone else offers, and so we began to work together as a group of students, teachers, and artists to finalize our plans for each component of the show. We decided to have three pieces that everyone was involved in, and a few pieces that were led by smaller groups of students. Two of the 'everyone' pieces were both visual in nature. In one piece, students created 2D cardboard shapes based on abstractions of their first names, which were then assembled into a ceiling-height sculpture with all 100 pieces. In the second piece, students each painted a monochromatic self-portrait which was displayed on music stands. Using augmented reality technology, they created virtual animations that would show up on top of their portraits when someone viewed their piece through a camera phone. In the last piece, the sense of sound was primarily used. Students created unique recorded sounds, which were layered into a soundboard. Each sound could be toggled on or off using a switch, and multiple sounds could be played at once to create unique sounding chords. At the show opening, guests were invited to play with the soundboards and compose their own music using the collection of noises that the students created.

For the last two major artworks in the show, students were split into two groups based on the project in which they were most interested in participating. Half the students became known as the Campfire Group, and the other half became known as Living Room Group. Although all adults were assisting with each project, I took the role of lead facilitator role on the Living Room project. In this piece, we wanted to play with the sense of touch. We had this idea to create a

living room setup, but have each item in the living room composed out of a material that would be highly uncommon for that object. For example, a couch made of spikes, or a coffee table made out of bubble wrap. We wanted the pieces to be functional, but in a way that would completely alter the users' experience with that object in that environment. Our team of student artists broke into even smaller groups and each took on an item for the living room. We had a couch, an armchair, a coffee table, a side table, a lamp, curtains, picture frames, and even a photo station! Each was made out of a different unusual material that created a symphony of textures when all combined together. The finishing touch was a projector that was hooked up to a screen at the front of the living room and made to look like a television. When guests sat on the couch, a camera would film them in real time and project the image onto the screen, allowing the guests to stare back at themselves on the TV in the living room.

Our Campfire installation was a culmination of all the senses. It was composed of a large black inflated tent, built with garbage bags that were taped together and fans that were built into the sides to allow inflation. Inside the tent, it was pitch black except for a few pin holes at the top that allowed some light to come in, like stars in the sky. There was a faux fire pit inside, that had lights built in to make it look real, and speakers that played sounds of crackling fire and ambient forest noises. A diffuser sent cedar and campfire smells into the tent, and trail mix was available for snacking on. To sit on, there were sleeping bags and a handmade quilt, with each square featuring one of the student's favourite comfort foods. Lastly, we had a handmade book that had an iPad embedded in it so guests could curl up beside the fire and read a collection of short campfire stories written by the students.

The actual show took place in a rented hall beside our school, and for the opening night, we offered snacks, fizzy drinks, a hanging exhibition statement, and catalogues of the art. The feedback we received from the guests, mainly family members of other students of the school, was phenomenal. But more than that, the student artists who brought the show to life were overwhelmed with the display and proud of their work. As I wandered throughout the exhibition on opening night, I heard students prompting their parents to explain how they felt, what senses were being activated for them, and inviting them to interact with each of the displays in different ways. I watched students explain the process of making each art piece, from start to finish, including all the problems and hiccups that came throughout the process and the ways in which they dealt with these issues. I watched them light up as they themselves interacted with the art pieces, amazed by how everything had come together and excited to see it in a semi-professional space.

Figure 27: A collaborative sculpture stands in front of monochromatic self-portraits, June, 2019. Photo by Alyson Moore.

Reflection: My interests in new techniques, activities, and types of learning

There are many reasons why I endorse Arts Immersion learning for students. From building confidence and problem-solving skills, to creating meaningful interdisciplinary connections, to boosting engagement and motivation, there are a lot of benefits to this method of learning. But beyond the students' gains, I also appreciate the inherent opportunities for artistic exploration and ongoing professional learning for facilitators as well. Each Arts Immersion project that I take on, is something new that I have never done before. In this way, teaching never gets old, and I never get bored. Working collaboratively with the students and my co-teachers allows me to feel more like an artist than an instructor in my role, and with each project I learn more and more about how to support students, how to guide exploration in meaningful ways, and how to balance emergent learning with accountability to provincial curricular guidelines. I get to be creative, collaborative, and artistic in my practice.

Teaching in this way also provides opportunities for me to learn about and engage with new art forms, technologies, concepts, and modalities. The Big Three was no exception. I had never worked with augmented reality software before, and through this project (and the lead of a talented digital artist-in-residence,) I was able to learn enough about the technology that I could use it again in future projects. The inflatable tent was another example of a technology that I had never considered, but once again, working alongside other talented artists offered me that opportunity to learn how to do it so I can adapt the technology in future endeavours. In my own project, Living Room, I learned how to livestream video through a projector, a skill that can be used many times over in future art projects and installations.

Beyond the technical advancements, I also learned about what it takes to put on an art show, from start to finish. While I had been involved in many shows previously, I had never been the head organizer, and doing so allowed me to learn about the whole process, including mapping out the space, installing works, and hosting a reception. I love any activity that gives my students authentic experiences in the arts, and working with them to create The Big Three did exactly that. As a visual artist, I also loved being able to bring contemporary art, ideas, and techniques to the students. I hope to be able to do more of this in future projects.

Our Own New Library

The anticipation was five years in the making. Construction started in 2013, and the new central library branch was due to open November 1, 2018. It seemed like it was all anyone in Calgary could talk about. I remember spending a great deal of time in libraries as a child, but admittedly, hadn't been in one that wasn't part of a university since that time. I couldn't wrap my head around all the buzz for the library. Although I consider myself to be an avid lover and collector of books, my memories of the public libraries brought back smells of musty carpets and dusty books, and the whole concept seemed a bit antiquated in our age of technology. With that being said, the architecture of the building, at least what was visible from the outside, looked worthy of further exploration, and all the public hype around the library convinced me to give them a second chance.

Sure enough, on opening day, Instagram flooded with photographs of winding staircases, bright, geometric windows, and of course, shelves and shelves of books. I avoided the crowds for the first bit, but after a few weeks of holding off, I eventually caved in and made a visit to see what all of the fuss was about. That question was answered for me within moments of arriving. Gone were my memories of dark lit corridors and shushing librarians. Instead, I was welcomed with bright, airy light, stunning architecture, and a buzz of energy from the other guests in the library. There was a trendy café right in the centre of the library, and nearby was a massive children's section complete with indoor playground, life size chess pieces, and maker stations. While I waited in line for my chai tea latte, I pressed a button at a terminal beside the lineup that offered free short stories. Immediately after pressing the button, a receipt sized slip of paper spat out of the terminal with an original, locally written short story. As I marched up the stairs, I saw

art adorning many walls. I observed an entrance to a theatre, as well as extensive technology labs. I walked past offices and studios of artists, historians, elders and authors. I saw workspaces filled with working groups and students. I saw spaces for intercultural and religious practice. I saw safe spaces set up exclusively for teenagers, filled with graphic novels, video game consoles, and art supplies. Most of all, I saw people of all ethnic backgrounds, incomes, generations, cultures, professions, and genders coming together in one space to learn, connect, and explore.

The following day at work, I was discussing my visit with my team and several students who had also recently paid a visit to the new library. The praise was unanimous, and I was encouraged as an educator to see children so excited about spending time at the library. This location also happened to be within walking distance of our building, and so we decided to plan a field trip to visit the library as a whole division. After doing further research online, I learned about a number of other interesting features of the library that I hadn't known about on my visit. Using this information, I compiled a scavenger hunt list to help guide the field trip, and on visit day, provided a list to each parent volunteer so they could lead the search with their assigned group of students. The trip was a success, and both students and parents came back to the school with a multitude of exciting stories to share.

That afternoon, as we were sharing our stories together at the carpet, we came up with the idea to create our own new library that we could share with the other students in the school and with guests. And so, the brainstorming began, and we were underway with our new project. We started by coming up with a list of must haves for our library: automated book return, author visits, cafe, and of course, lots of original literature! We determined which aspects of the project we wanted everyone to be involved with, and began with those items. We started to write

original stories, but to make them a little bit different and more of an experience for the visitors, we used a website called Twine to help us code digital choose your own adventure-style stories. The next mini-project, rooted in dance, explored similar themes by creating opportunities for viewers to interact with the dance piece and affect the narrative story displayed. We also wanted to create an exciting art display for the space, and after reading several stories illustrated by Canadian artist Soyeon Kim, we decided to use her method of photographing dioramas to create the display. Students read, interpreted, and illustrated Indigenous stories using paper layered into a diorama box for this project. Thinking back to the STEM stations and maker spaces in the central library, we next put on our design hats and ideated, designed and prototyped engineering machines that could address real world environmental problems. Lastly, we read, read, and read some more, before putting together book reviews and recommendations that could be offered at the library.

With the bulk of our more structured and big group projects completed, we then opened it up to smaller groups and more creative explorations of things that could be added to our library. The students brainstormed a massive list of exciting components, then narrowed the list down to what was manageable and most interesting before signing up for groups to take on individual tasks. One group who was really interested in mechanics and engineering decided to work on the book return slide. Another group who was more interested in acting decided to research some of their favourite authors and pretend to be them at the library opening. Another group wanted to see more art installations included in the library, and so began to work on creating an art space that fused poetry with visual art and installation. We had our bakers and entrepreneurs who led the café team, and about ten more groups doing similar, yet varied projects. We ran this part of

the project like a studio, leaving space and time for the students to work together on their goals while the facilitators circulated around offering guidance and feedback.

This phase began two weeks before our opening was scheduled, and with two days to spare, the students had wrapped their projects and had them ready to be presented. All that was left was to set up the room, and this is when the magic really happened. I don't remember giving any guidance at this time, although I'm sure either I or a colleague would have provided some kind of structure. Instead, what I remembered was a flurry of excitement, cutting, pasting, hanging, arranging, and other activities happening in all corners of the room. We had brought in a roll of cardboard, in case there was a need for a few finishing items, and within minutes the roll had been demolished as bits of cardboard flew around the room, turning into book shelves, door frames, tables, and any other thing that a ten year old could imagine to do with it. By the end of the day, the preparations were done and we were ready to invite our guests in the following morning. To an outsider, the room probably looked like a hot mess. There was cardboard everywhere, signs and maps hung all over the walls and posts, random contraptions on every table. To us and the students however, it was awesome. Our opening didn't necessarily look like the central library, but it did have the same buzz of excitement, innovation, and play that I felt when I first visited. The opening ran itself, each student knew their role and job within the simulation that we had created. Guests came, interacted with the students, and enjoyed their visit. Some of our students arrived in costumes they had planned together to take on the role of librarians, volunteers, and other staff. Other students worked the café (and unbeknownst to us were accepting real money for their treats as true entrepreneurs) while still others walked around as J. K. Rowling, Roald Dahl, and Robert Munsch. It was messy, noisy, and not at all like those

old-timey versions of libraries I had in my head. But it encapsulated exactly the energy, vision and purpose of new libraries and the spaces they hold in contemporary society.

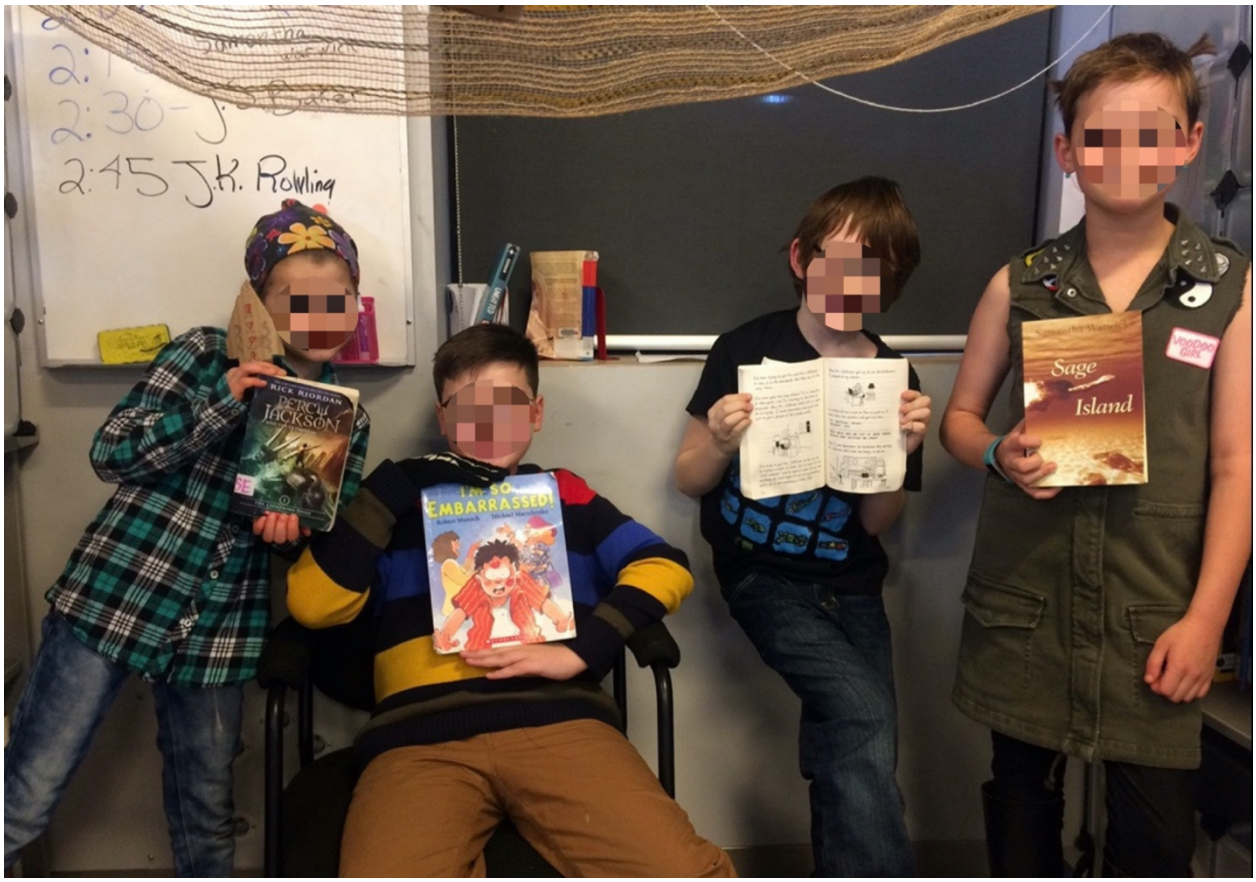

Figure 28: Students act as their favourite authors at the sharing of Our Own New Library, February, 2019. Photo by Juleta Severson-Baker.

Reflection: The ways in which I create an inclusive environment in Arts Immersion

One of the benefits of Arts Immersion learning is that due to the student-led nature of the model, students are able to enter the project and engage with it at whatever level they are capable of or ready for. The projects, whether micro or macro in nature, are not one-size-fits all, and therefore if a student needs to participate at a more foundational level, they are able, and conversely, if a student is ready for the next challenge, they are able to move forward as well. My role then becomes one of monitoring and assessing the current abilities and needs of each student in the room, and directing them towards supports or extensions as needed.

Another benefit of this individualized approach is that students are able to modify, adapt, or redesign tasks to suit their specific goals or interests. While I always try to expose students to as many different art forms, techniques, and approaches as possible, and encourage them to step outside their comfort zone at times to try new things, I also believe there is value in allowing students to begin to develop an evolving personal style and to build on skills that they are most passionate about. In their studies through Arts Immersion, they are able to demonstrate the skills and outcomes in any way that suits them best. For some, that may be through drawing or painting. For others, it may be through writing, dance, acting, music, or any other medium. I find that motivation, effort, and perseverance drastically improves when students are given the opportunity to self-select modes to demonstrate their learning.

In Our Own New Library, I saw this demonstrated when we opened up the project and allowed the students to self-select smaller group projects that they wanted to work on and offer to the larger project. Every group was different, and the ideas they came up with were well beyond the scope of what I could have imagined had I assigned the tasks myself. In almost every

student, motivation and interest lasted well through the creation process and into the final presentation, and the quality of work I received was beyond my expectations. Through the projects, every student had engaged with topics from reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, yet had done so in a more exploratory way through their art making, meaning subject-specific anxieties were lessened or avoided altogether.

While I try to be as inclusive and supportive regarding *what* we are doing as possible, I also believe that a major component of creating an inclusive classroom is in the social culture that is maintained. For me, this is one of the most important things, because if students do not feel safe or accepted in their classroom space, they will never be willing to take creative risks, do their best work, or share their work with others. Therefore, we spend a great deal of time throughout the year cultivating the kind of classroom community that we want to see. Especially since we have so many students and adults in one space, it becomes imperative to ensure that students feel willing and prepared to step into any group, setting, or role that their learning takes them to. Some of the ways that I do this are through regular circle meetings with students, which provide opportunities for problem solving of classroom issues, sharing of achievements, and bonding through simple games and discussions. We talk a lot about our values as a community and ways to promote those values. These are typically around topics such as “How do we make sure everyone feels they belong?” and “What are ways we can show generosity in our community?” When talking about any issue, we also like to consider three different perspectives, namely, those of others, those of ourselves, and those of the environment we are in. By considering how each of those three things will be affected by a decision, we can work towards making decisions that serve our community as a whole, and not just us as individuals. I teach

students early in the year how to solve conflicts with each other using a step-by-step model, and we rehearse it repeatedly throughout the year so that when it comes time to use the model in real life, the students are well trained in the steps for making it work.

Finally, I also believe that an important component of an inclusive teaching practice is by exposing students to a broad range of ideas, artists, perspectives, and experiences. Particularly when it comes to bringing media into the classroom, whether it be books, films, or images of artists' work, I try to ensure that students receive a breadth of representations, especially from those voices and perspectives that do not come from the majority population. Therefore, we hear stories from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, from LGBTQ+ people, from immigrants, from refugees, from survivors, from those with different abilities, and those from a variety of different ages and generations. Whenever possible, we share these stories and perspectives from the primary source, and when we're lucky, we are able to have that individual or group speak to us in person at school or out in the community. I believe that this practice not only allows students who come from a variety of different backgrounds the ability to see representation of their own identities, but also to encourage students to understand issues and ideas from a more global context, to support them in developing empathy for others, and to have a greater sphere of inspiration to draw from in their own art making.

Concluding Reflection

I believe that Arts Immersion is an up and coming topic in arts education research and has the potential to offer meaningful arts instruction to students while also meeting the curricular requirements of other subject areas and providing an education in these areas that is as good or better than would be acquired from traditional learning programs. This paper provides research-based support and context for the implementation of Arts Immersion in school settings. It also presents examples and justification, through the form of personal narratives and reflection, for ways that Arts Immersion could function in a classroom setting. Future research is required to understand how this model might work in more traditional classroom environments, and by different groups of artist-teachers. While the framework may vary in different settings beyond what I have proposed, what is most important is that any Arts Immersion program must be consistently driven by an art form-first mentality so as to retain the integrity of the art form as well as the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary opportunities present within it when art is used as a language in which to investigate other topics.

While the examples provided come from a primary school setting, I am also interested in studying how Arts Immersion programs might work, perhaps with modifications, in secondary settings, especially in the grade 10-12 age range. In my experience, discussions surrounding Arts Immersion's ability to cover the complexity of topics at the high school level and the volume of outcomes required in the upper grades have often arisen, and I am interested in discovering how a blend of traditional, subject-specific instruction and Arts Immersion programming could be used to balance the high school program of studies. I believe that a good starting point for this research would be to return to the French immersion policy documents that show a progression of French immersion programming from 100% of

the time in kindergarten to a 40-80% of the time by high school, and adapt these numbers for an Arts Immersion context (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 64). In this way, students would still be able to develop the subject-specific skills and literacies required to participate in those areas at a high level, but would also be able to apply them in creative and meaningful ways through the production of art. Finally, I suggest future research to focus on tracking the academic progress of Arts Immersion students to determine whether, like French immersion, Arts Immersion students are able to achieve at levels equal or greater to what they would achieve in traditional programs.

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