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A black and white photograph showing two figures in a studio, possibly artists, working on a large piece. The figures are silhouetted against a bright background, and their hands are visible as they work on a large, light-colored object.

ARTSPRAXIS

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ARTSPRAXIS

A journal examining innovations in the arts for educational and community contexts

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SPECIAL FOCUS: ASSESSMENT IN ARTS EDUCATION

ARTSPRAXIS responds to the call for a rich dialogue between all those committed to the arts in educational and community contexts. The journal will include contributions from arts educators, therapists, arts agencies, arts administrators, funding bodies, arts scholars, and community artists from diverse settings. The journal emphasizes critical analysis of the arts in society.

ARTSPRAXIS provides a platform for contributors to interrogate why the arts matter and how the arts can be persuasively argued for in a range of domains. The pressing issues which face the arts in society will be deconstructed. Contributors are encouraged to write in a friendly and accessible manner appropriate to a wide readership. Nonetheless, contributions should be informed and scholarly, and must demonstrate the author's knowledge of the material being discussed. Clear compelling arguments are preferred, arguments which are logically and comprehensively supported by the appropriate literature. Authors are encouraged to articulate how their research design best fits the question (s) being examined. Research design includes the full range of quantitative-qualitative methods, including arts-based inquiry; case study, narrative and ethnography; historical and autobiographical; experimental and quasi-experimental analysis; survey and correlation research. Articles which push the boundaries of research design and those which encourage innovative methods of presenting findings are encouraged.

Contributions which seek dialogue across the art forms are welcomed. The genesis of

ARTSPRAXIS has been informed by the results of a literature search which identified over 60 journals in the arts disciplines but few which facilitated dialogue across and between the arts disciplines.

The publication of *ARTSPRAXIS* follows the successful NYU Forum on Assessment in Arts Education in August 2003, which brought together over 130 participants committed to discourse among arts educators. Evaluations of the Forum indicated that this event was a significant one for strengthening the arts in challenging and uncertain times. *ARTSPRAXIS* enables that discourse to continue. The first issue of the journal publishes the leading articles from the NYU Forum.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers should be no longer than 4500 words and conform to APA style manual.

Reviewing Procedures

Each article will be sent to two members of the editorial board. They will provide advice on the following:

- Whether the article should be published with no revisions/with revisions.
- The contribution the article makes to the arts community.
- Specific recommendations to the author about improving the article.
- Other publishing outlets if the article is considered unacceptable.

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Editorial

[PHILIP TAYLOR](#)

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

The launching of a new journal is always a major event in a discipline. So, we welcome the arrival of this timely and important publication in the arts. *ArtsPraxis* is an electronically published periodical posted at the Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions at New York University's website. The journal provides an opportunity for scholars, artists, educators, therapists, administrators and community workers in the arts to have a dialogue and discussion on the pressing issues of the day. *ArtsPraxis* is a deliberate title choice highlighting the critical orientation of the publication to stimulate good and collegial debate across the art forms. I hope you will find the articles provocative and helpful in your own work.

The first issue of *ArtsPraxis* focuses upon a complex issue in the field of arts education, assessment. At the Forum on Arts Education Assessment at NYU in the summer 2003, over a 130 leaders in the arts gathered at our Washington Square campus to interrogate the pressing issues which educators across all levels experience as they make decisions about human achievement. With the current emphasis on standards in arts education it was timely to revisit the question of

whether these liberate or stifle excellence in creative arts praxis. To what extent do the standards facilitate interdisciplinary discourse on arts education assessment?

The Forum was not meant to deify standards or attainment levels but rather to critique them, explore how usefully they can be applied in diverse settings, and equally how problematic they might be. The Forum approached assessment from a multi-arts perspective and profiled creative work in dance, music, and theatre. It was structured around creative work, interdisciplinary panels, workshops, and plenary “Arts Roundtable” sessions. As well, discipline-specific presentations were included where participants could meet with colleagues and consider the following issues:

- What assessment models do arts educators share?
- To what extent do standards liberate or stifle human achievement in arts education?
- Who benefits from national and local assessment standards?
- What contributions have the standards in arts education made to creative arts praxis?
- What are the pressing issues arts educators face when grappling with assessment?

The inaugural issue of *ArtsPraxis* publishes some of the contributions from the NYU Forum. The four contributors neatly highlight the complex material Forum participants were grappling with:

Richard Colwell on Evaluation in the Arts

Colwell argues that assessment depends upon a clear definition of the discipline. Assessment within the reform movement (including standards) and assessment in curricula require a broader approach including a differentiation between program evaluation and evaluation to improve student competence. These and other assessment issues are raised as a means of initiating professional dialogue in contemporary arts assessment and the demands being placed upon the arts.

Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman on Assessing Creativity

Ward-Steinman posits that many music teachers consider improvisation to be a creative musical activity, without questioning whether student improvisations are really “creative.” Others claim that improvisation skill is not dependent on creativity, and suggest that while anyone can create a solo, that solo may or may not be “creative.” No significant correlations were found between the improvisations of college jazz singers and their Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking scores, yet musical creativity emerged as a factor. This factor accounted for a very small amount of variance, suggesting that an effective jazz improvisation solo may not be primarily a creative activity.

Marleen Pennison on Rubrics as an Integrated Tool

Pennison examines assessment experiments which grew from two directions: the need to create clear standards for students, and the need to find a stronger structure for a student-centered, project-based curriculum. These needs led to a study of the assessment techniques developed by Harvard’s Graduate School of Education’s [Project Zero](#), as well as a series of consultations with Heidi Andrade, one of their foremost assessment researchers. The study reveals how students gained a clearer understanding of class standards, became more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and took more responsibility for setting and reaching higher goals in their work. The paper cites examples of student interviews in tandem with the author’s own notes and observations on the benefits of implementing assessment techniques from both sides of the classroom.

Carole Miller and Juliana Saxton on Standards

Miller and Saxton argue how theatre pedagogy demands a constructivist pedagogy built upon questions, discourse, reflection and, if it is to be transformative, action. Most teacher education takes place within pre-service programs and schools that practice the traditional educational model. The authors examine the lack of arts discipline experience that pre-service teachers bring with them. Where, then, is the depth of knowledge and experience to support the application of

standards to student work? How can standards in the art form become internalized and actualized in classrooms?

I hope you find this first issue of *ARTSPRAXIS* illuminating. Please forward to me any responses you might have about this new e-journal and its content.

Evaluation in the Arts Is Sheer Madness

[RICHARD COLWELL](#)

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

ABSTRACT

Arts educators have two opinions on evaluation: they are continually evaluating or they believe the important outcomes of their teaching defy systematic assessment. Assessment depends upon a clear definition of the discipline. Arts educators focused primarily on performance (production) do assess individual and group objectives in terms of product. Assessment within the reform movement (including standards) and assessment in curricula such as DBAE require a broader approach including a differentiation between program evaluation and evaluation to improve student competence. These and other assessment issues are raised as a means of initiating professional dialogue in contemporary arts assessment and the demands being placed upon the arts.

INTRODUCTION

Madness is associated with genius or artists as well as funny farm inmates. Sometimes it applies to educational ventures. Other definitions include “great folly” and “enthusiasm or excitement.” Today’s discussions about evaluation in the arts encompass all of these definitions and more. Evaluation specialists are providing us with challenging results based on research in language arts and mathematics. Non-specialists, including artists and arts supporters have seized upon evaluation as an avenue to promote their idea and/or cause. The primary purpose of this article is to clear-up some of the confusion associated with evaluation in the arts and to advance arguments that evaluation can facilitate teaching and learning in the arts. One approaches madness when one wades through the literature in arts education that relates to evaluation issues. You can find anything. A major problem is that the language used is imprecise. I’ll refer to it as “fuzzy”, fuzzy thinking and fuzzy language. Fuzzy language is important in foreign policy as public language and private meaning are both used; similarly, vagueness has been an aid to promoting the importance of the arts. Policy gurus in the arts and in education find imprecision helpful in that the context and/or situation will affect how policy is implemented. Precision is neither wanted nor valued.

Evaluation is usually associated with reporting the success and/or failure of a process or a product. A clear concept and a precise definition of that process or product are necessary to interpret the results of the evaluation. Evaluation and fuzziness do co-exist but not when it comes to understanding. Goal free evaluation, evaluation without prior objectives, can be extremely valuable; the evaluation being touted and condemned in 2004, however, is associated with objectives, aims, goals, a purpose, standards, and more. Accordingly, I will first wrestle with definitions and the context of arts education to explain how and why we find confusion in the field. This done, I will then devote some space to the relationship of standards and evaluation, discuss the reform movement and the policy thrusts provided by the No Child Left Behind legislation, briefly glance at colleges and teacher education, and, finally, focus on classroom evaluation, which should be the primary evaluation concern of arts educators. Educators are prone to distinguish among testing, measurement, assessment (both authentic and its opposite),

evaluation, and accountability. These important technical definitions are not a concern here except to distinguish between accountability and assessment. I use evaluation and assessment interchangeably. Measurement is thought to imply the use of objective and precise evaluation tools -- although the precision may focus on trivia. In music, the *Seashore Measures of Musical Talents* was considered the gold standard for precision in assessing aptitude, although its primary purpose was actually to provide a holistic glimpse of individuals who should not be encouraged to study music seriously. Thus, at the outset, let me offer the caveat that the field is messy, has been for a long time, and arts professionals continue to have difficulty communicating on the issues among themselves. Evaluation along the lines advocated by education psychologists has not been our forte. Conveying to educators and the public what we mean by arts assessment is difficult. The public sees performance; those educators in systematic evaluation don't understand us. The lack of attention to the technicalities of evaluation is easily explained in John Dewey's terms. Neither arts educators nor their students (including parents) have a felt need. Today's uneasy felt need, if one exists, is to defend the profession, not to change or improve it. Why devote valuable curricular time in teacher education or in the classroom on a topic that will not be used beyond "common-sense" assessments? There is no public outcry that students are not proficient in dance, theatre, the visual arts, or music. There is also no evident concern for the quality of today's arts educators other than the continuing concern that better teachers and better teaching are always needed.

An example of near-madness can be found in the attempts to define arts education clearly evident in the courses allowed by the various states to meet an arts requirement. Languages other than English may be "arts", literature or certain areas of history may be "art". Waivers are common ---what about out of school arts experiences? Similarly confused is the definition of arts education and an arts educator. To the best of my knowledge, there are few individuals, teaching in the schools educated as an arts educator to serve as a clarifying model. The Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (1994) defines the following "standards" as representing the competencies of a high school graduate who has received an adequate education in the arts. Presumably all teachers would exceed these standards.

“They should be able to communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines—dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. This includes knowledge and skills in the use of the basic vocabularies, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of each arts discipline. They should be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency. They should have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and a basic understanding of historical development in the arts disciplines, across the arts as a whole, and within cultures. They should be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines. This includes mixing and matching competencies and understandings in art-making, history and culture, and analysis in any arts-related project” (Consortium, 1994, 18-19).

In the years since 1994, the arts disciplines of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts seem to have ignored this definition. Each has developed subject-matter competencies or “standards” that bear only marginal relationship to the arts standards. Few teachers practicing at any level would be judged proficient or advanced on the arts “standards.”

A recent article by Jessica Davis is typical of the messiness of the relationship of the discipline of evaluation and the discipline of this amorphous “arts education” (Davis, 2003, 28, 30). She rightly laments the position of arts advocates who see the role of evaluation as that of documenting how the arts benefit school achievement, including attendance and motivation, and then proceeds to slam standardized tests (in any subject) en route to promoting the importance of *process* in arts education for all students. I admire Jessica Davis for reminding fellow educators of the importance of the arts and for her “solution” that all students might learn to handle failure through arts experiences. Her argument is useful primarily for advocacy and at the broadest levels of curriculum consideration. Not much on evaluation, the idea that a teacher can be educated in “arts education” is limited to a small number of colleges, primarily Lesley and Harvard Universities in the Boston area, and runs counter to the importance in education of subject matter knowledge. Not only would most music teachers feel

incompetent if assigned to teach a course in visual arts or dance, but most vocal musicians would even be hesitant to assume responsibility for an instrumental music program, whether strings or the band. I have in my test files a draft instrument developed by ETS for Oberlin College,-- undated, but probably from the 1960s, -- that expected music students to have a breadth of knowledge in visual art and music, a test that was quickly dropped due to its difficulty. Oberlin is not your run-of-the mill institution and is noted for its excellence in general education. An understandable argument can be made that subject matter expertise, or at least pedagogical expertise, is uncommon to arts educators across grade levels in a single discipline, a topic I address later.

In this *mélange* termed arts education, including each individual discipline, there are presently, despite ten years of standards, no identifiable common outcomes such as a skill, process, product, or knowledge. There is certainly no corpus of music, art works, plays, or dances (or creators and performers) in each of these fields that would be familiar to students graduating from high school who have participated in present experiences.

Contributing to reader madness, I have digressed from definitions of evaluation to describing the context for any definition. Let me now distinguish the boundary between assessment and accountability. It is accountability that the public wants from the schools. The public wants to know how priorities are established, they want data on the success of those priorities, and they want the consequences (rewards and punishments) for students and teachers to relate to the schools' priorities. The accountability movement was energized by the reports on how little high school students know about geography and American history. Recognition of the lack of historical knowledge led to an investigation of the content of social studies courses, in which critics found an emphasis on multicultural education and an integration of subjects! Marshalling data, they informed the public that ethnic groups in the U.S. grew from 1500 identifiable congeries in 1990 to 5000 in 1996 (Rochester, 2003, 28)! If cultures are to become a curricular subject, each must be well taught so valid comparisons among cultures can be made. Selecting the cultures from among 5000 without offending those not selected would challenge the best teachers. In the same study, integration of visual art with social studies was criticized because there has been a seemingly random selection of topics, topics

that emphasize the superficial or exotic such as clothing styles, food, holiday, religious observances, leisure activities, rituals, and other customs (Rochester, 2003, 45). Rochester states: "More often than not, such features are stressed mainly to provide a sense of difference and to 'celebrate diversity' without much context to give them real meaning. To understand a culture, the curriculum must be designed to explain linkages among family structure, kinship grouping, language, technology, religion, art, and ethnical norms and laws" (45). Having students tie-dye textiles to integrate art and ethnicity in social studies using modern-day cloth and nontoxic commercial dyes is cited to demonstrate inappropriate experiences (51). Leming states that of the 63 articles published in *Social Studies Theory and Research in Social Education* between 1992 and 1997, none examined the influence of social studies curriculum on student acquisition of historical or civic knowledge (Leming, 2003, 136). This is one example from the hundreds of "horror stories" about contemporary education. Accountability is about clarifying the boundaries within the educational establishment for better understanding of responsibility. Linda Crocker is correct that "the tsunami of educational accountability is at our door" (Crocker, 2003, 10).

Schwandt suggests that *accountability* is a technical and contractual notion; *responsibility* in education is a moral notion (Schwandt, 2003, 362). What we want in the arts is responsibility. As an aside, I enjoyed a recent ruling by a North Carolina judge that the state is responsible (accountable) for poor student performance -- not the students, teachers, or schools. When education was truly a local enterprise, the schools and teachers were accountable to the local school board and to the community. The data used to determine accountability was informal. The competence of graduates was common knowledge drawn from their performance in local employment or in higher education. As communities grew into cities and the school committee became responsible for a large number of elementary and secondary schools, accountability required formal measures; lacking these, courses such as art and music could be ignored. Music contests and public displays of art works filled the need to demonstrate their value to the community. Horace Mann is often credited (or blamed) for initiating formal accountability. He was the first state superintendent of instruction (the state was Massachusetts), and he took his position seriously. In visiting Boston schools, he found wretched instruction;

students displayed only superficial knowledge at the annual PTA meeting but with no understanding. Mann ruled that, as a consequence, Boston was to receive no further support from the state unless the teaching was improved (Parsons, Howe, and Neale, 1845). Mann's ideas for assessment were put into place in 1845 and 1846, but abandoned in 1847 because the results were never used (Black and Kline, 2002, 224). In the more than 150 years since Horace Mann, school districts have grown even larger, the state has assumed a greater responsibility for financial support, and the distance between the student and a state legislator is now sufficiently great that the original understanding of accountability has been lost. Today, a five to seven year cycle of assessing a school might be feasible but more frequent assessment is not necessary. Teachers don't change objectives and materials on an annual basis. In 2004, in addition to the state's messing with student learning, there is a federal role in education: the federal government funds around eight percent of the costs, and though this is a small percentage it represents a sizeable amount of money, sufficient to impose federal legislation, most recently No Child Left Behind.

THE REFORM MOVEMENT AND THE CURRICULUM

Reform

There are many individuals and groups who wish to "help" establish the school's priorities and here everything is in play: policy, politics, editorials, set pieces, business, random research reports, books, professional organizations, and journal articles. The reform movement may have been initiated over a concern for student learning and the welfare of kids but today the overriding concern is control of the schools, primarily through controlling the curriculum and testing. Charter schools, vouchers, and home schooling relate to control as well as the approximately 100 extant comprehensive school reform plans among which are the well-known Success for All, Achieve, Comer School Development Program, Coalition of Essential Schools, Modern Red School House, Core Knowledge, Roots and Wings, Audrey Cohen College System of Education, and Achieve. Also wishing to influence the curriculum are advanced placement, state departments of education and accrediting agencies. Data from

evaluations are accumulating on each of these, documenting their relative effectiveness, and it may be important to know the priority of the arts in each program and for each player.

Standards

National standards are the anchors in the reform movement with advocates for change (or control) arguing from published standards. The standards have been challenged in many subjects and subsequently revised, but the standards in the arts have not even been seriously debated. One guess is because those standards are both broad and vague, do little more than describe desired experiences, and can be ignored. The arts standards are not standards; rather they provide broad aims from which teachers (and students) will, it is assumed, derive instructional objectives and the appropriate standards for these objectives. The idea of having standards is popular with the public and 49 states have established content standards in “core” subjects. Core is one of the fuzzies ---it always means at least math and language arts and may include science. Thirty states hold schools accountable using test scores and 23 states can impose sanctions on low performing schools. Nineteen states require exit or end of course examinations for graduation with five additional states preparing such examinations (Crocker, 2003, 6). Although the arts standards are primarily nominal, they do serve to constrict many traditional popular arts experiences in schools. Where the teacher is expected to “cover” all of the standards, the result is that experiences are superficial and produce little understanding. The madness with arts standards occurs because they are promoted at a time when opportunity to learn has been reduced not only for budgetary reasons which may be temporary, but due to increased weight on other subjects and a move to ensure that unwilling and disadvantaged students also become proficient in two or three core subjects. Evaluation measures presently suggested to accompany the voluntary national standards in the arts lack substance and may even be harmful to long-term learning. One concern is that the curriculum and evaluation must be aligned. Of greater importance is alignment of the curriculum and the standards.

Curriculum

Experience and observation indicate that there are two distinct

curricula in music and in drama, one in “required” education and a separate one for “elective” education, each “requiring” its own standards. Without clarity about the curriculum, the fuzzy border of what content belongs in the discipline of music or theatre will prevent any valid progress. The division between required and elective goals is not one of grade level although in practice this tends to be the case. Teaching required music and theatre, at any level, requires competencies not required in elective arts. In music, for example, the subject matter expertise that is expected today of secondary school teachers will require the secondary music teacher to know, in some detail, each of the band and orchestra instruments, guitar, piano, and voice, as well as how to teach individually and in group situations. The curricular distinction becomes clearer when one analyzes teacher education in music where the requirement for high-level musical skills is generalized to all teaching situations; a requirement that contains a message for alternative certification programs in the arts.

The New York Times on October 9th, 2003, interviewed Stephanie Blyth, a star mezzo soprano in the opera world who obtained a music education degree at the Crane School of Music in Potsdam, New York, one of the better institutions for music education in the United States. Not until her practicing teaching experience in elementary school music did she realize that she was ill-equipped and unsuited for success in that field. (She reports that for the following semester she majored in marijuana, [Smith, 2003, 5].) Ms. Blythe had enjoyed singing in her high school chorus but the issues of elementary music are so dissimilar from high school chorus, issues that did not surface in her four years of teacher education, that she began student teaching totally unprepared. Applying this scenario to evaluation, it takes little imagination to believe that assessment techniques for second grade children are not a priority in the music teacher education curriculum. Theatre is almost as diverse. Theatre can be creative drama, language arts, or any subject where language, literature, and their use is emphasized. Creative drama is usually taught in elementary and middle schools with many non-arts objectives. The objectives for understanding theatre, its history, literature, and production are primarily found at the high school level. The dual curriculum is not as noticeable in visual arts because production has been the primary focus of all visual arts education until the introduction of Discipline Based Art Education with its addition of history, analysis/appreciation,

and aesthetics to the arts curriculum. DBAE did broaden the curriculum in many schools although it is not found as a K-12 “program” in most schools. In high school, production reigns supreme. The teaching of dance is so rudimentary that it is difficult to surmise whether the public would be accepting of it as an art in the definition of a well-rounded education.

Given their history, the fuzzy boundaries and fuzzy content of courses in the four art forms is not surprising. Visual arts and music both began in the Boston Public Schools early in the 19th century. Visual arts preceded music because the ability to draw accurately was a necessity in building America in the industrial age. Music was justified as a required subject because of its health benefits and the hidden good of improving congregational singing in Boston’s Protestant churches. Secondary arts have been elective and often extra-curricular. Academic credit for these courses was added more for bureaucratic control than due to a belief that the outcomes were equal to those in trigonometry or English literature. Whether grades in these secondary arts courses should count in a student’s grade point average for graduation or college admission remains controversial in 2004. The secondary arts performance programs are not dependent upon outcomes from K-6 instruction and there is limited content commonality in their curricula across schools or even within a single district. The flexibility that an arts teacher has in making curriculum decisions is unmatched and may explain why arts teachers in American high schools are reluctant to adopt all of the standards and any imposed evaluation based upon these standards. This flexibility is not limited to the secondary schools. In the college curriculum for the prospective arts teacher, there is little commonality in method courses either in objectives, content, or experiences, and only slight commonality in course work on the philosophy of arts education. We have no data in any of the arts that indicates the strength and weaknesses of any of the methods taught nor do we have evidence, other than the ability to model, that the performance experiences of the teacher contribute strongly to student outcomes. Flexibility becomes madness in deciding what to evaluate. Weeden argues that assessment remains the weakest aspect of teaching in most subjects (Weeden, 2002, 41). Only a small leap of faith is needed to be confident that the situation he describes is no better in arts teacher education.

Research by Achinstein working with 37 experienced teacher induction leaders confirmed that new teachers did not know much about assessment; only 35% could align curriculum and standards, 24% knew about reflection and 38% knew how to use assessment to guide their own growth (Achinstein, 2003, 1496). In a charter school in California experimenting with differential salary options for teachers, professional development is based entirely on competence in the visual arts. (In *No Child Left Behind*, the definition of which art(s) to include as a core subject is the responsibility of each state.) To obtain a salary bonus, the arts teacher is to be exemplary in use of traditional art forms (e.g. drawing, painting, collage, design, and exploration in media arts), must promote the use of art forms in other subject areas, use appropriate materials and teaching strategies, implement appropriate student activities, and consistently plan cooperative group projects and individual production to fully engage all students actively (Kellor, 2003, 66). What is expected of arts teachers in California elementary schools borders on the extreme fuzzy, or extreme madness.

No Child Left Behind

The federal legislation that has become known as NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public Law Number 107-110, 2002) is both a political and an accountability document. The intent to have all students at a “proficient” level in core subjects (language arts, math, and science) by 2014 is an admirable goal. Politically, its intention was not only to demonstrate President Bush’s commitment to education but to give school districts and states political “cover” from any fallout from the extensive testing required. Rewards and sanctions come as a result of tests and of annual yearly progress toward student proficiency. The required evaluation is to be reported not only by school, but district, state, region, and nation. Within the school, identifiable groups (e.g. race, SES, gender, and potential) will also be judged. The specific assessments are not mandated and can consist of locally constructed tests, homework assignments, portfolios, interviews, observations, projects, and presentations (Bhola, 2003, 21). The only requirement is that these assessments measure the knowledge and skills deemed valuable and described in policy documents at the local level. It seems obvious that these documents will be state or national, rather than local. The National Assessment of

Educational Progress exam is to be administered periodically and Gerald Bracey argues that this requirement will mean that NAEP's definition of proficient will be the standard, not local or state definitions (Bracey, 2003, 149). The levels established by NAEP in core subjects, however, have been found flawed by any number of groups, ranging from the General Accounting Office, to CRESST(National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing), and the National Academies of Education and Science.

Robert Linn, in his 2003 AERA presidential address, suggests that if progress continues to be made at the same rate as in the past decade, it will be 2056 before 4th grade students will be proficient in math, 2060 for 8th graders and 2166 for high school seniors (Linn, 2003, Chicago, April 23)! There are numerous technical problems inherent in such a massive evaluation effort, and costs to school districts will go well beyond that envisioned by the legislation.

The levels proposed for the arts are even more arbitrary and have not been subjected to any analysis. They were established by a committee that communicated by mail and were intended to initiate a discussion in the profession on performance standards. Although performance standards are the standards of most importance, attention has been focused exclusively on content standards. It is nearly inconceivable that the arts will be tested, although advocates, recognizing that subjects to be tested are subjects that are taught, will suggest the importance of assessment and accountability in the arts and will continue to promote at least an NAEP examination in the arts. The arts do not have "programs" like core subjects; hence program evaluation in any art form is inappropriate except as a case study in a single school. As an arts program is pretty much whatever the teacher decides, great flexibility has been given to arts advocates as they can tailor their claims -- to individual audiences, to outcomes resulting from both in-school or out-of-school instruction, to either arts outcomes or outcomes of character and diligence. NCLB does create a soapbox from which to preach that the curriculum that omits the arts is too narrow, that education in the arts is presently equally unsatisfactory, and that educational balance is critical for full and enlightened participation in American democracy. (In too many cases, however, the public and many arts teachers are satisfied with the status quo.) NCLB also creates an argument for arts specialists. As with the pressures of NCLB testing, the classroom teacher would have to forfeit any time she

has had for arts instruction.

Classroom teachers are wailing about too much testing or testing of the wrong kinds, some of which wailing is prompted by possible consequences for the teacher or the school when comparisons are unfavorable. Neither students nor parents are opposed to today's testing mentality as indicated by the PDK/Gallup Poll (2002) and interviews with students. Sixty-seven percent support annual testing of all students in grades 3-8 and 68 percent favor use of a single national test (PDK 2002 poll). Only 30 percent believe that there is too much testing in the schools. High stakes tests are acceptable to those polled; (PDK/Gallup Poll 2003, 45) the concern is focused more on the use of a single test as the basis for decision-making. Arts educators are caught in the increasing madness over the appropriate role for external exams in student achievement. Kim Marshall, a Boston elementary school principal, reports that only the adoption of the high-stakes state test (MCAS) brought positive changes to his school (Marshall, 2003, 105-113). Similarly, Edward Humes, in *School of Dreams* also reports on the necessity of competition and testing to "make the grade" in a high school that challenges students to their full potential (Humes, 2003). In the midst of all of this, arts educators are pleading for more ambiguity in student lives. But ambiguity is a quality that American society seeks to avoid, bombarded as it is by continuous news reports from all corners of the planet and outer space that shake our thought patterns and assault our stability. The public is not likely to see ambiguity as a critical outcome, even that ambiguity experienced through the arts (Tineke, 2003, 288).

College

College teachers often model the behavior expected of their graduates—the student works in the chemistry laboratory alongside a professional chemist; the drama teacher directs plays; the applied music teacher performs in public; and the teacher educator is expected to be an inspiration in the classroom. Unfortunately, teaching expertise does not distinguish, the faculty in the college of education, because excellent teaching is found across the campus.

Pertinent to this article is the absence of evaluation in American colleges. Evaluation essentially began at the college level in 1985 (Banta 2002, p 1). Of course, college programs have been approved by professional organizations and professors have given mid-semester

and final exams, but college administrators have not employed any mechanism to determine what students have learned as a result of their college majors, how any learning compares with what should have been learned, or what is being learned at comparable institutions. The primary concern has been with quantitative data on drop-outs, transfers, and job placement. Based upon a 1998 survey and returns from 1393 institutions, 78 percent of those institutions admitted to giving no attention to learning outcomes (Peterson and Vaughan, 2002, 31). Preparing for accreditation (69%) was the most important reason for engaging in student assessment (33). Public schools may be overwhelmed with assessment requirements but they lead in experience and knowledge when compared to evaluation in higher education. College administrators are like their colleagues in the public schools in claiming that generic critical thinking and problem solving skills across the curriculum are the important objectives and the reason for general education (Erwin and Wise, 2002, 69). It is no wonder that the “me-too” arts educators and arts advocates include problem solving as an outcome of high school arts even though that objective has never occurred to enrolled students or the arts teacher.

Assessment

A reasonably thorough analysis of educational issues in 2004, with special attention to the extensive clamor about assessment results is that summative assessment is important in the arts but not a high priority. Contests, public performances and exhibitions are an important element in arts education and serve a comparable purpose to the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra’s annual tour to New York City and the accompanying New York Times review. Performance standards in each of the arts are being “globalized” and individuals and groups are compared across international boundaries, a comparison that relates to maintaining standards. Competition and comparisons in the schools can also be educationally beneficial when approached properly. When a second grade child cries because of some type of evaluation process, the evaluation has been ineptly presented (Crocker, 2003, 10).

Formative Evaluation

The primary concern of every teacher is to provide feedback to

students on daily and weekly objectives. The teacher must also keep records. Without documentation even on oral feedback, the teacher (and student) has limited data upon which to individualize instruction and develop improvement strategies. Feedback consists of in-class questions and comments as well as group measures that include written exercises, projects, performances, auditions, and more. Every kind of assessment can be valuable to teaching and learning. A major drawback is that evaluation requires time, time that is already in short supply. The point of formative assessment, the kind the teacher employs regularly in the classroom, is to make instruction more efficacious. If the assessment is employed as it should be, the improved learning will more than make-up for the “lost” time.

Teachers learn about helpful assessment strategies through coursework, professional development, and experience. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the role of learning styles, and even how students learn, remains limited. Nevertheless, this paper, will conclude with a few ideas that have proven successful that reflect what we tentatively know about teaching and learning. First, almost no empirical research exists to support the idea that authentic assessment, self-assessment, or peer assessment is more intrinsically motivating to students than traditional measures (Erwin and Wise, 2002, 70). What we do know, counter to what is published in arts journals, is that students whose motivation in required courses is already low are adversely effected by more challenging assessment tasks. For these students, multiple choice tests are the better option (Wolf, Smith, Birnbaum, 1995, 341-351).

Assessment is not a new topic in the arts; one model is the individual music lesson where the student receives a clear assignment of what is to be accomplished and demonstrates the results of practicing at the next lesson. At this lesson, immediate feedback is provided whenever the teacher believes that an improvement is possible. Often this feedback is accompanied by modeling on the part of the teacher. A similar model is found in theatre and dance. Similarly, visual arts at both the elementary and secondary levels, when production is an objective, is characterized by individual assessment and immediate feedback,---the peripatetic teacher providing feedback on the process and the product. This combination of instruction-assessment continues into the out-of-school situation in the arts and sports, where professionals employ coaches whose primary task is to

identify anything that might interfere with exemplary performance. Rehearsals with dance, theatre, and music groups—including at the Metropolitan Opera—are marked by a well-integrated assessment process, in these cases evaluation dictating instruction. With amateurs, the order is likely reversed: instruction comes first, with the student involved in trial and error and then receiving feedback. Some coaches, instructors, and directors are more adept than others -- indicating the need for both instruction and experience in assessment procedures. Teacher education more often than not fails to provide opportunities and instruction in (1) identifying a general learning problem, (2) selecting the individual(s) where the problem centers, (3) identifying the specific need, and (4) suggesting an appropriate solution --- all based upon student level. Having a single solution to a problem is a first step, having three or more feasible solutions to an instructional issue is learned from instruction and experience. Most problems that learners have in the arts have been previously noted and a range of solutions exist -- one does not need to learn to assess exclusively “on the job.” Unfortunately, the task of assessment is more difficult with young students learning in groups, exacerbated by heterogeneous grouping where a full repertoire of problem identification and solutions needs to be “on-call.”

Fair assessments increase student self-esteem because self-esteem is earned, not given by the teacher. Beran suggests that today’s public school systems shrink from giving students the constant challenge required to move to higher levels of mastery and insight. He believes that “accommodating” to inner city kids (or anyone disadvantaged) results in a loss of self-esteem and respect. “The dumbing down of the curriculum, the unwillingness to make kids learn a body of knowledge and develop basic skills through drill, the easy tests, and lack of consequences for leaving homework undone --all conspire to keep kids’ horizons low, instead of expanding them” (Beran, 2003, 25). As arts teachers know, drill is required in skill development; practicing and rehearsing is our equivalent to homework. A strong predictor for excellence in any art is not a test but knowledge whether the student practices that art at home.

Self-evaluation is to be encouraged but, again, it is overrated. There would be less need for coaches and directors (with professional artists) if self-evaluation were easy and did not interfere with further learning. Hewitt, working in music, found self-evaluation effective only

for improving intonation (Hewitt, 2002, 226). With self-assessment, students tend to focus on how hard they worked and how far they have come. If the student is initially deficient, a difficulty arises between providing a reward for progress and challenging the student so that the deficiency does not continue.

Evaluation in the arts is far more complex than in other subjects due to instruction out of school and the influence of the student's immediate and peer culture. The task is likely to become more complex if the present fuzzy definitions of arts education are expanded further. Visual arts has, for some time, included museum education; with 16,000 museums in the US, and the number of visitors to museums exceeding that of all sporting events combined, separating in and out-of-school learning is complex (Paris, 2002, 38). We know from the research of Anderson (1987) and Hein and Alexander (1998) that students do learn from museum visits. Kerry Freedman has recently published a text advocating that the boundaries of visual arts be expanded even further to include all visual stimuli that one encounters including ads, TV, and graffiti. Talk about controlled madness, at least the responsibility should be shared with humanities!

Any use of evaluation will find resistance among some arts educators who desire the status quo and do not want to risk failure. These individuals have an established power arrangement within the school and any change in resources is a threat. They prefer vague objectives and vague assessments (Taut and Brauns, 2003, 255).

Assessment has more impact on learning when the objectives are clear to both student and teacher. Thus, it is important to establish who defines the norms of the discipline and the criteria for setting performance levels. The voluntary national standards do not provide this clarity, and the professional organizations have not initiated the discussion necessary for setting norms. Lacking norms, outcomes presently differ vastly from school to school. Present arguments over what is quality instructional material emphasize inputs over outputs, thus bypassing emphasis on competencies as outcomes. Research data on causal relationships between instruction and learning do not exist; still students need to know some ways of how to determine what to value, what to attend to, and how to use perception in understanding the arts.

The teacher needs to understand that students come to arts classes with ideas about the relationship between talent and effort.

Today's population is about evenly divided on the importance of each. The youngest students attribute success more to effort than do students above the age of nine or 10. Dweck classifies students as having (1) an entity or fixed theory about ability or (2) basing their learning on an incremental theory, by which she means that ability is malleable. (Dweck, 1999, 20). Weeden, Winger, and Broadfoot (2002) use the term helpless and mastery children. Helpless students are those who are motivated by the desire to be seen to do well; accept the idea that if they fail it is because they are not clever enough; if a task is difficult, there is nothing they can do about it; and they avoid challenges. Feedback from any assessment must differ according to these two student types. Helpless students are hindered by undeserved praise. For group and individual endeavors, mastery students benefit from last-minute emergency meetings when, collectively, the questions are asked: How well are we doing? How well should we be doing at this stage? What must be done to make the performance or exhibition a success?

Assessment criteria must be in language understood by the students and language that indicates the fairness of any assessment. A teacher can prepare for an assessment but has little control over the results, and it is the results that have the most impact on learning. Interpreting the results for students, parents, and school administrators is complex, but this is an area where instruction is available, and it must become part of professional development and teacher education in the arts. It is known that youngsters at the age of five who study piano learn to read music notation in two clefs and with some understanding, yet there are students who have completed required music in elementary school and are unable to make sense of musical notation. Teachers may not understand, nor have been given an education that informs them, what is an appropriate challenge.

Before assessment can be helpful, the curriculum must be aligned with expected standards and with the projected assessment. Core subjects have research data on various strategies for aligning, e.g. Survey of Enacted Curriculum and Council for Basic Education (Bhola, Impara, Buckendahl, 2003, 22.). Where no curriculum exists or is followed, however, the arts are unready to employ the complex assessment strategies found in education journals. For example, in visual arts, Charles Dorn attempted to teach teachers in 50 states how to use rubrics to judge art works. In addition to the rubrics, he reports

that the teachers used their intuitive knowledge in arriving at reliabilities of .345 and .442 after training. Such low reliability indicates the difficulty of arts assessment. Rubrics are best used in summative evaluation, and they need to be established (descriptions written) after competent judges have evaluated work and placed the works in the suggested number of categories. Rubrics are also not generalizable, applying primarily to one population at a time.

Teachers need to be told, and often, that the focus of arts assessment is in the classroom, by the teacher, and that the external assessments produced by today's testing madness do not apply. State tests and the national assessment are not models for classroom testing, but just the opposite, for they do not provide immediate feedback, are not written in student language, and are not aligned with the instruction that has been conducted. Most arts classes have few routines and limited stability and might require frequent changes in assessment strategies. Authentic assessment, in any field, performing a task only once, has limited reliability and a large measurement error and is not, by itself, a valid indicator of what a student has learned or can do. Average or mean scores, such as those published by the state, lead only to acceptance of mediocrity in the arts. Arts students invariably have as their model one who excels in the art form. Students participating in contests do not compare themselves with the average attendee---they want to be compared with the best.

Portfolios cannot be compared within a class or against any standard and hence have limited use. Colleges that have tried them have found them ineffective measures at the end of a course with possibly more value where they can be continued over several semesters and several courses (Palomba, 2002, 210). Observation does not tell us why things do or do not happen, thus, its diagnostic value is limited although it remains important for instruction and other roles in assessment. We need definitions not only of competence but also of incompetent students and teachers if assessment is to fulfill its potential.

Much more can be said; every assessment tool has potential and limitations. These remarks offer only a partial listing of what needs to be considered in a course in evaluation for all teachers in the arts. Evaluation requires understanding and time; when evaluation is employed as a Shock and Awe experience rather than part of daily learning, more negative than positive learning will take place.

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A Model for Teaching Creative Vocal Jazz Improvisation

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ABSTRACT

Many music teachers consider improvisation to be a creative musical activity, without questioning whether student improvisations are really “creative.” Others claim that improvisation skill is not dependent on creativity, and suggest that while anyone can create a solo, that solo may or may not be “creative.” No significant correlations were found between the improvisations of college jazz singers and their Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking scores, yet musical creativity emerged as a factor. This factor accounted for a very small amount of variance, suggesting that an effective jazz improvisation solo may not be primarily a creative activity. A model for teaching creative improvisation is presented.

Many music teachers consider improvisation to be a creative musical activity, without questioning whether student improvisations are really “creative.” Others claim that improvisation skill is not at all dependent

on creativity, and suggest that while anyone can create a solo, that solo may or may not be “creative.” To complicate matters further, teachers are feeling the pressure to teach improvisation because of state and national mandates, yet they lack the background, because their own training did not involve improvisation. They end up seeking out teaching materials and methods that promise to enhance students’ creative skills, and they hope for the best. But what exactly is “creativity”? And if teachers cannot improvise, can they teach creative improvisation?

Let us examine, first, some characteristics of creative thinking, followed by teacher attitudes toward the improvisation standards as stated in The National Standards for Arts Education (1994), and finally, a model for teaching improvisation in the style of vocal jazz.

Creative thinking has traditionally been described as divergent thinking, characterized by fluent, flexible, original, and elaborated thoughts. The standard measure for general creativity, the *Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT)*, 1974/1990), has been criticized in favor of more recent theories of creativity and its assessment. Among the most popular are Amabile’s consensual assessment by experts (1982), as well as those illustrated by Gardner in *Creating Minds* (1993) and by Csikszentmihalyi in *Creativity* (1996). Those who have extended Amabile’s work have found good interjudge reliability among “experts” who refer to a personal definition of “creativity” (Hickey, 2001). One exception, however, was in the case of professional composers, who failed to agree with any other group, or with other composers, on children’s compositional “creativity.”

Similarly, in my own research with “expert” vocal music teachers, there was little agreement on how they described a “creative” jazz improvisation solo. While some used terms that resonate with divergent thinking, such as “imaginative, free” and “making it your own voice,” others aligned more with convergent thinking characteristics including “knowledge of correct jazz scales and chords” and “knowledge of jazz style.” Still others described a creative improvisation as one sung with “confidence and conviction” and “more feeling.” It seems that expert teachers often fail to agree on what constitutes creativity.

If we look to those such as Csikszentmihalyi and Gardner to provide valuable insights into the nature of creative thinking, we find that their focus is not on creativity “with a small c” (Csikszentmihalyi,

1996, p.8), but on the minds of creative giants who have changed the culture of their particular domain. Their focus may not be helpful to teachers who are concerned with enhancing the creative potential of novice improvisers.

Despite the criticisms against the *Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking* (TTCT, 1990), it has been widely used (Davis, 1983), and its reliability and validity are well documented in the test manual. The TTCT assesses general creativity by measuring verbal or figural fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality. I examined relationships between general creativity (TTCT) and improvisational skill of college level jazz singers (Madura, 1991 & 1996) and found no significant correlations. This was particularly surprising because of the 19 improvisational criteria that were rated, nine used creativity terms (or synonyms) borrowed from the TTCT, but with added musical reference: *Rhythmic* flexibility, originality, and elaboration; *Tonal* flexibility, originality, and elaboration; and *Expressive* flexibility (of range, tone color, and dynamics). A synonym for flexibility is variety, and for elaboration, motivic development.

Despite the almost nil correlation between general creativity and improvisation skill, factor analysis did tend to group the flexibility, originality and elaboration items into one factor. Flexibility (or variety) in vocal range, tone quality, and dynamics dominated this factor but also included were flexibility, originality, and elaboration of rhythmic and tonal ideas (Madura, 1992). These divergent/creative thinking characteristics do appear to comprise an aspect of musical improvisation which would be expected.

Startlingly, however, this divergent/creative thinking factor accounted for only 6% of the explained variance strongly suggesting that an effective jazz improvisation solo is not primarily a creative thinking activity. Jazz rhythmic feel (Factor 1) explained 66%, and tonal language (Factor 2) accounted for an additional 8%. So, although an impressive 80% of the variance of vocal jazz improvisation achievement was explained by these three factors, the creative thinking factor meant little (only 6%) to an effective jazz improvisation.

Although many music teachers think of improvisation solely as a creative activity, performance practice from around the world shows that this is not so. Improvisation in Western classical music, as well as in other art musics of the world, such as Indian and Persian, requires that a vast repertoire of stylistically appropriate rhythmic, melodic, and

harmonic patterns be internalized. The language of a musical style is usually learned through years of extensive listening, imitation, practice, and study. In fact, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Gardner (1993) both agree that at least a decade of study in a domain is required before one can make a truly “Creative” (with at large “c”) contribution.

I do not mean to imply that our students cannot be creative in the arts without several years of training. As aspects of a musical style become internalized and automatic, the student can be guided to manipulate those in improvisation. A balance must be achieved between learning the rules of that style (convergent thinking) and having numerous opportunities to “play” with those ideas by varying, combining, and developing them; synthesizing them into something new; or even relaxing all restrictions to encourage the “art of forgetting”(Koestler, 1964, p.190).

Unfortunately, studies have suggested that schools stifle musical originality, and that musical experiences outside school are often the main motivators for creativity (Auh, 1995; Kinney, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996.) Traditional training has placed little value on improvisation and more on note reading and performing written musical works. With the advent of the National Standards for Arts Education (1994), all students in grades K-12 are now expected to learn to improvise and in very specific and ambitious ways. And despite the many valid criticisms of the National Standards (Thibeault, 2003), the fact that school music teachers and students at all levels are trying to improvise, or at the least questioning why their music educations have failed to prepare them to do so, is a good outcome.

Research on musicians’ abilities to teach improvisation according to the National Standards indicates that they are neither prepared nor confident (Wollenzien, 1999; Kirkland, 1996; Jorgensen, 1997; Riveire, 1997.) In a survey I administered to attendees at my vocal jazz conference sessions in 1998, teachers indicated that they felt moderately confident to teach basic improvisation at the elementary school level, but became increasingly insecure with the more advanced improvisation national standards recommended for middle school and high school. To be able to teach improvisation according to these advanced standards, music teachers would have to become proficient at improvising in at least one “style” of music.

I continued to survey music teachers during my summer 2000 workshops. When asked, “How confident are you in your present ability

to improvise jazz?” the mean was 1.8 on a scale from 1 (low) to 4 (high). When asked, “How interested are you in learning to become a better jazz improviser?” the mean was 3.5 out of 4. They also indicated an interest in learning to improvise in the following styles: Classical, world, African, Latin, Gospel, atonal, contemporary, popular, Armenian, Irish, Cajun, and folk. It is clear that the lack of improvisation practice is not for lack of interest but rather for lack of training.

Using the exact wording from the National Standards, teachers were asked, “How confident are you in your ability to teach students to improvise original melodies over given chord progressions?” The mean was 1.8 for jazz and 2.2 for a style other than jazz. When asked, “How confident are you in your ability to teach students to improvise harmonizing parts in jazz style?” the mean was 1.65, and in a style other than jazz, 1.85. It is apparent that teachers are minimally confident in their ability to teach improvisation in any style.

No matter what style of improvisation is to be learned, both convergent and divergent thinking are at play. Without the internalized rules of a musical style, divergent production often sounds out of context. This is frequently heard when a novice jazz singer scats but is obviously unaware of the chord progression and the jazz tonal language.

I propose a model for teaching improvisation. This model organizes the predictors of improvisation achievement (Madura, 1996) into convergent (rule-following) and divergent (freeing) thinking experiences.

Instrument/Voice Lessons (convergent): Musical ideas cannot be fully expressed without technical control of one’s instrument/voice. Because technical limits can stunt creative growth, ongoing study with a teacher and a commitment to practice are essential.

Listening and Accurate Imitation of Models (convergent): This step is paramount in the internalization of any style and should be structured to include rhythmic exercises first, followed by melodic and harmonic. Jazz ear-training methods are available for this purpose. Also invaluable is the exercise of learning and transcribing jazz master solos from recordings. There is no substitute for immersion in the listening (both live and to recordings) and accurate imitating for effective improvisation in any style. This focused activity should start

when the student is young.

Call and Varied Response (divergent): While students are learning a particular style's language through the call and imitated response activities of the previous step, they should also be encouraged to create varied, original, and elaborated responses while keeping some aspect of the call similar. This will simultaneously reinforce both the value of rule-following and the freedom of rule-breaking.

Study of Theoretical Materials (convergent): Because of the plethora of sub-styles that have developed within jazz, learning through listening and imitating alone is no longer sufficient. Cognitive understanding of jazz theory and its notation make learning more efficient and can be gained through formal study.

Performed Improvisations (divergent): It is a fact that scheduled performances motivate musicians to practice. The same is true for improvisation learning. Teachers should feature short improvisations (or memorized transcriptions) by all students in every concert or final class project.

Self-Assessment and Expert Assessment of Improvisations (convergent and divergent): At each stage of the model, self-assessment of tape-recorded improvisations, as well as expert/teacher feedback, should occur. Besides attention to stylistic appropriateness, divergent thinking questions might include: What musical aspects could be varied or developed to make it more interesting? What could be added or deleted to create more drama or suspense? Did you enjoy the experience? If not, what could you do to make the experience more of an expression of yourself?

Flexible Environment (divergent): It goes without saying that this model requires a music classroom that is safe and encouraging for improvisation attempts, but it must be kept in mind that an unchanging environment will eventually result in rigid responses. In order to challenge students to adapt to new and unexpected musical situations and thus achieve higher levels of improvisation skill, open and variable environments should be sought out (Koestler, 1964). Providing students with ample opportunities to participate in jam sessions at

improvisation clinics, festivals, and conferences is vital.

Not included in this model is any reference to the individual personality. As teachers, we want to be able to enhance the creative thinking skills of all students, not only those we consider talented. One major factor that will influence the quality of their creative efforts is their motivation to improvise. Therefore, it is essential that teachers seek out a variety of the very best musical models to inspire their students.

Improvisation is a skill that most musicians wish they had in order to free themselves from the tyranny of the written page. Motivated in large part by the National Standards, music teachers are struggling to address both the lack of improvisation in their own training and the need for instruction for their students. Many are under the false impression that an “anything goes” philosophy is valid for creative improvisation attempts, or that improvisation skill is simply a gift and not a result of “long arduous striving” (Koestler, 1964, p. 201).

There are no short cuts to learning to improvise creatively, but following a model such as this can produce positive results. After teaching a five-day intensive vocal jazz workshop for teachers (n=12), I compared pre- and post-workshop scores and found that their confidence in their ability to improvise jazz increased 40% and their ability to teach students to improvise original melodies over given chord progressions increased 57%.

Despite claims that “improvisation cannot be taught,” it is hoped that this model will give teachers a tangible tool to assist in designing experiences to enhance the creative improvisation potential of their students. It is also my hope that two opposing myths might begin to be dispelled: that “anything goes” in improvisation and that it is a mysterious gift bestowed upon only a talented few. These mind-sets inadvertently permit an easy way out of the dedication and “long arduous striving” on which creative improvisation depends.

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From Both Sides: Assessment Benefits for Teacher and Student

MARLEEN PENNISON

PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS THEATER SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines my past and present experiments with assessment as a vehicle for learning for both teachers and students. Initially, the assessment experiments grew from two directions: the need to create clear standards for students and the need to find a stronger structure for a student-centered, project-based curriculum. These needs led to a study of the assessment techniques developed by Harvard's Graduate School of Education's Project Zero, as well as a series of consultations with Heidi Andrade, one of their foremost assessment researchers. In the semesters that followed, I introduced three assessment tools into my courses: rubrics co-created with students who then used the rubrics as a guide for self- and peer-feedback, process-folios added to student conference materials, and collaborative assessment techniques employed as an alternative method of mentoring project work. As a result of these efforts, students involved in the project classes, as well as in other classes gained a

clearer understanding of class standards, became more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and took more responsibility for setting and reaching higher goals in their work. An additional and unexpected benefit for me, as teacher, was the precise reframing of the class content material that became evident with the helpful magnifying lens of the assessment tools. Thus, what started out to be a simple search for standards and structures quickly evolved into a method by which I was able to articulate tools and skill sets that have been the underpinning of more than twenty-five years of teaching. The paper cites examples of student interviews in tandem with my own notes and observations to look at the benefits of implementing assessment techniques from both sides of the classroom.

When asked for feedback on the process of building and using a rubric in class, one student commented, “Unfortunately, I have never had a good experience with rubrics. It has always limited me because it becomes a physical manifestation of the right way. As an artist, I have continuously and consciously tried to steer away from the rubric.”¹ His reluctance to engage in a process that at first glance seems constrictive shows the basic mistrust some artists feel toward definitions of any type and points to the larger question of how creativity is to be fostered in an educational environment where accountability is a necessary part of the landscape. Of course, the student who demands absolute freedom of expression often at the same time, expects the instructor to provide a foolproof recipe for success. While the contradiction may be apparent, the problem remains: What is the best vehicle through which the process of art can be taught and the results measured?

I have always strongly believed that a project-based class, where the teacher acts as a coach/guide for student-centered problem solving and peer review, provides an ideal vehicle for arts education. To this end, over the past seven years, in addition to the more traditional classes in acting and choreography that I teach, I have been developing a curriculum referred to as “COW,” short for Creating

¹ See Andrade (1991, pp. 91-99) for an excellent introduction to the use of rubrics.

Original Work, that is based solely on project-based work. Here, the student chooses the media to be used, sets the problem/goal, creates the steps to solve the problem, presents the results, reworks the presentation after receiving feedback, and presents a final version of the project. In the process of developing this curriculum, I realized how important students' ability to self-assess is in their educational process, and how a stronger structure for self-assessment, in both a project-based class and in more traditional classes, would be of great benefit.

In project-based classes, the student's ability to self-assess as well as offer non-judgmental assessments of peer work in class discussions is an especially important part of the set of skills being taught. The importance of student self-assessment as an integral part of the learning process in this context is clearly delineated in John Dewey's 1916 classic work, *Democracy and Education*:

Thinking is the method of an educative experience. The essentials of method are therefore identical with the essentials of reflection. They are first that the pupil have a genuine situation of experience—that there be a continuous activity in which he is interested for its own sake; secondly, that a genuine problem develop within this situation as a stimulus to thought; third, that he possess the information and make the observations needed to deal with it; fourth, that suggested solutions occur to him which he shall be responsible for developing in an orderly way; fifth, that he have an opportunity and occasion to test his ideas by application, to make their meaning clear and to discover for himself their validity (Dewey, 1916, p.163) .

One current student describes her experience: "Part of the beauty of this process is the level of self-discipline involved. You are responsible for giving back to yourself, for rehearsing yourself, for listening and not disclaiming yourself, and ultimately, you have a chance not only to formulate rehearsal procedures and strong work habits, but you will have a final product that reflects these elements."

It is pivotal for students to practice taking responsibility for their work process if they are to continue productive work cycles beyond the years spent within the supportive structure of an educational framework. Developing that responsibility begins with the skill to form a challenging question that can fuel the creative process. In their

publication, *Teaching Through Projects*, researchers at Harvard's Project Zero outline the successful use of a project-based curriculum developed for an after-school program that served lower grade school students. Their ideas for structuring project work with a problem-solving framework and the use of ongoing assessment techniques are equally applicable to university level coursework. The authors offer this advice about setting goals, which they consider to be one of the first steps in basic self-assessment:

The kind of sustained work required by relatively long-term endeavors like projects requires that students understand what they are working toward and what they will need to do to get there. Because project work is unfamiliar to many students, the goals of a project and the steps involved in reaching them need to be made explicit from the start (Goodrich, Hatch, Wiatrowski, & Unger, 1995, p.8).

The authors outline a framework for creating and problem solving projects and encourage further reflection after the completion of the work, so the student can take note of how to make improvements with the next project.

Because the framework outlined by the Project Zero researchers mirrored the structure of the project-based course I had been developing myself for several years at the university level, their work encouraged me to further articulate the goals I had set for that curriculum. In general, I felt that my expectations of students and the overall goals for each class could be better articulated.

Soon thereafter, an additional factor pointed to the need for a more formalized method of assessment. The school administration expressed concern that the grade-spread throughout the studio was concentrated too much at the high end; a higher level of accountability was required for measuring the standards for grading.

These two factors, the desire to more clearly outline the goals of the coursework and the need to set clearer standards for grading, led ultimately to a study of the creation and use of rubrics. With the help of Heidi Andrade, a Project Zero researcher and one of the authors of *Teaching Through Projects*, I began to implement rubrics as an integrated learning tool into each of my classes.

In the spring semester of 2002, separate rubrics were co-created

with each section of two university level courses: Choreography for Directors (a required course for second-year directing students) and Creating Original Work (C.O.W.) (a project-based elective for second-year students and an elective or track requirement for third- and fourth-year students). The classes were taught at the Playwrights Horizons Theater School under the auspices of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Undergraduate Drama Department where I have been teaching since 1985. Figures 1-5 contain the rubrics created for these classes. After explained to the class how the grid was structured, we began to create the rubric by assigning names to the four levels of degree, least favorable to most favorable, that run horizontally across the rubric. Each class discussed for some time what those levels meant, and the names chosen reflected the unique identity of each class. A list of criteria was then created that ran vertically down the rubric and identified the most important elements of the course such as participation, collaboration, organization, process, tools, and craft. Finally, each class discussed at length the details of the body of the rubric.

Figure 1. Choreography rubric, section 1, Spring 2002

	blackhole and/or desklamp	headlights	moon	sun
Participation	• 3 or more absences negative, disrespectful	• Some unexcused abs. lots of lates present but stand back	• absences - but excused involved w/out contributing	• ready, willing and able to work. Cooperative receptive
Collaboration	• dictating, negative	• compromises w/a grudge - passive aggressive	• imbalanced sense of contribution	• empathetic, listener, responsible use of time Contribute but not control
Organization	• no batteries	• wrong batteries	• low batteries	• Palm Pilot
Creativity	• plagiarism	• copying well but not exploring	• inconsistent inspiration plays it safe	• moxie, unique
Craft	• huh?	• gets concept but can't apply	• applies concept w/out finesse	• understands and uses tools with finesse - application
Problem Solving	• what problem? or anger	• trying w/ an attitude - wimping out	• Trying hard but not succeeding - great ideas, no follow through	• Work on their feet, has idea + follows through

Figure 2. Choreography rubric, section 2, Spring 2002

criteria	LEVELS			
	smashed	intact	polished	smashing
choreographic tools	not knowing the tools or being able to use them	understands the tools but can't put them to use	understands the tools and puts them to use adequately	knows them and uses them well
problem solving	isn't aware that there's a problem	sees a problem but can't fix it	tries to fix the problem	flexible, open minded, responsive
organization	unprepared, no-show at rehearsal	has it written out but doesn't know where it is	rough edges, but prepared	prepared, ready, rehearsed, has stuff written out neatly, good use of time
creativity	copycat	cliché	moments of good idea but not fully thought out	imaginative, willing to take risks, unique approach.
communication	tunnel vision/ closed off blind to peoples' needs	confused but you're talking anyway, bullshitting	communicating but inefficiently inefficiently	good, collaborator, free exchange of ideas, clarity, articulates ideas
collaboration/ participation	useless dumbass	only physically present, does bare minimum	doing your best when asked	collaborates well, but eager but not annoying
attitudes	"fuck you, I'm going to Starbucks"	"I wish I was at Starbucks"	ready to work	"I came early to class and I brought my passion for choreography"

Figure 3. Choreography rubric, section 3, Spring 2002

	Unfortunate	Pretty Good	Pretty Plain Good	Genius
<u>Criteria</u>				
<u>Participation</u>	Too many absences, coming + doing other	Late sometimes absent sometimes	Spurred absences	always present, punctual, positive active
<u>Collaboration</u>	Nasty, controlling, apathetic	doing what you told half way participating	trying to articulate ideas whether long, wags is clear or not	open to exchanging ideas, comes up with and willing to compromise
<u>Progress</u>	no interest in understanding or applying the tools	understands but does not apply	understands & applies tools but not as polished	understands + can apply the concepts, well
<u>Creativity</u>	apathetic, unwilling to experiment, copies & no variation	copying w/ variation following, having ideas and not following impulse	willing to try but inconsistent, relatively open minded	tries exciting things, willing to risk + fail
<u>Problem solving</u>	giving up if something goes wrong, unaware of problem	identifies problem but can't solve or continue	attempting to fix but showing great frustration	flexibility, calm, think on fit incorporate ideas of others.
<u>Attitude</u>	resistant, negative, putting people down	listens but doesn't really consider	accepting but not really contributing occasionally	Give + receive feedback in a balanced + constructive way, aware of effect on others
<u>Organization</u>	unreliable, unprepared, sloppy	inconsistent, occasionally prepared not together	pre-arranged, gets it but at the last minute	know what day they work, has all material dependable, prepared
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> 2 pm Choreography </div>				

Figure 4. Rubric, Creating Original Work, section 1, Spring 2002

CREATING ORIGINAL WORK 1

	SUCK	ALRIGHT	GOOD	BITCHIN'
Attendance	Missing class without notice. (3 = fail)	Missing class, but giving notice.	Miss class, but make up in 8-10 class.	Present and attentive for every class.
Participation	Not showing work.	Talking in lieu of work.	Combination of talking/performing.	Performing every week.
Discussion	Inattentive to other's work. No commenting.	Non-constructive comment.	Offering "directorial" suggestions.	Watching and commenting in an empathetic and constructive manner.
Physical Support	Refusing to help another or flaking on commitment.	Assist begrudgingly.	Assist only when asked.	Offering assistance, support and time.
Process	No progress, no follow through. Paralyzation.	No exploration of ideas. "Half-assed."	"Money Player"	Exploring ideas, failing and recovering, using critique.
Creativity	Unwilling to experiment.	Following critique or direction verbatim.	Lack of commitment to idea.	Willing to fail and work out of the dark.
Organization	Unable to show because of unpreparedness.	Adaptability- winging it.	Problem solving during class time.	Being prepared for class. Having a prepared crew.
Performance Skill	Staged Reading or on book for final presentation.	Self conscious performance. Lack of rehearsal.	"Money Player."	Prepared and committed. A good performance.
Final Product	No show. Different show.	Undertime, on book, under-rehearsed.	Overtime, or missing one element of "bitchin" piece.	10 mn. Well organized, well rehearsed piece.

Figure 5. Rubric, Creating Original Work, section 2, Spring 2002

CREATING ORIGINAL WORK 2				
	AMERICAN POO	ADEQUATE	WELL DONE	EXCEPTIONAL
Attendance	Missing class with no notice. (3 = fail)	Missing class, giving notice. Leaving early.	Miss class, but make up in 6-8 class.	Present and attentive for every class.
Participation	Not showing work.	Talking in lieu of work. "Bullshit."	Combination of talking/performing.	Performing every week.
Discussion	Inattentive to other's work. Doing other work.	Distracted, inconsistent attention.	Less vocal, but attentive.	Engaged and responsive. Actively participating in discussion.
Physical Support	Self centered.	Occasional button push.	Assisting with set up and clean up.	Giving time to another's project.
Process	Paralyzation.	New ideas every week- the kleenex approach.	Reaching only first draft stage of material.	Exploring material, taking risks, editing, fully realized piece.
Personal Process	Closed minded to feedback.	Following critique or direction verbatim.	Experimentation without rehearsal.	Incorporates and uses feedback as springboard.
Organization	Unable to show because of unpreparedness.	Adaptability- winging it.	Problem solving during class time.	Being prepared for class. Having a prepared crew.
Product	No show. Different show.	Undertime, under-rehearsed last minute show.	Overtime without cuts.	10 mn. Entertaining, engaging, organized, and well designed piece.

Although the list of criteria was similar from class to class, the variations and separate descriptions used in each class reflected the individual class discussions that were an important part of the process. As the students voiced their opinions and negotiated the details of the rubric to capture their joint vision on paper, they assumed more responsibility for their work and, in doing so, made their peers equally accountable for the standards being set. For example, the ability to work well with people in a team setting is an important skill for theater practitioners. In developing the descriptions for levels of “Collaboration,” the students were able to articulate to each other what makes a working relationship more and less productive. Having verbalized these ideas openly to each other, the students had to become more accountable for their behavior in rehearsals and design meetings.

The rubrics were also helpful to me as a teacher, as they soon became a basis for discussion during individual student conferences at mid-term. The rubrics were used to identify specific areas where students needed help and to discuss what steps might be taken to address those problems. To facilitate this process, the student mapped out his/her position within the various levels of each criterion, and we would discuss ways in which the student could work toward a better understanding or application of the material being taught. For final evaluations at the end of that semester, I handed out a single choreography rubric that represented the work of all three sections (see Figure 6). Note that the layout of the rubric was altered in one small way at this point. To place more emphasis on the most positive descriptions, the horizontal descriptors were listed from most positive to least positive rather than the reverse. Meanwhile, as the initial rubrics developed for the C.O.W. class were more detailed, these rubrics remained the same. Students marked their position among the descriptors on the rubric and were encouraged to add additional comments regarding their work in prose on the back of the page.

Figure 6. Combined rubric, Choreography, Spring 2002

Choreography Spring 2002	4 Sun/Smashing/Genius	3 Moon/Polished/Pretty Damn Good	2 Headlights/Intact/Pretty Good	1 Black Hole/Desk Lamp/Smashed/Unfortunate
Participation	Always present, punctual	Mostly present, excused absences	Late at times, some absences, some excused absences	Three absences
Preparation	Well rehearsed, written material clear, knows the schedule and is ready to work	Prepared, but still rough Procrastinates	Somewhat prepared, or prepares inconsistently Not well organized	Unprepared, under-rehearsed, sloppy work
Collaboration	Free exchange of ideas, not overbearing with opinions, communicates well, willing to compromise, empathetic, listener, responsible use of time, contributes—but doesn't control	Communicates, but not always efficiently; tries to articulate ideas, but not always clear; imbalanced sense of contribution	Doing what you're told to do, compromises ideas—but with a grudge, or displays passive aggressive or manipulative behavior, doesn't always use time well	Controlling, dictatorial, or apathetic, resistant to other people's ideas, unreliable, No show at rehearsal
Attitude	Cooperative, receptive, positive, dependable, enthusiastic, ready, willing, able	Helpful to others when asked, involved—not always contributing to energy of class, ready to work	Physically present, does bare minimum, blasé	Negative, disrespectful, closed off to other people's needs, tunnel vision, coming to class and doing other things
Creativity	Willing to risk and fail, tries new ideas, imaginative, unique approach	Moments of good ideas—not fully thought out, willing to try— but inconsistent inspiration, relatively open-minded, plays it safe	Cliché, having ideas—but, not following impulses, copying with variations, not able to explore material	Unwilling to experiment with new ideas, copycat, plagiarism
Choreographic Tools (Craft)	Applies the concepts with consistency, work shows finesse	Applies the concepts, but not consistently, work shows adequate design	Concepts applied in a very rough, inconsistent way Lacking design	Does not apply the concepts
Problem Solving	Flexibility, work "on their feet", follows through with ideas	Attempting to fix problem, not always succeeding, inconsistent follow through, not always able to be flexible or is sometimes frustrated by process	Identifies problem, but can't solve it, gets stuck, little or no follow through	Isn't aware of the problem, gives up on process, shows frustration or anger
Communication (Discussion)	Gives and receives feedback in a balanced way, aware of how others are affected, comments show clear understanding of choreographic concepts	Sometimes contributes to discussions, comments show inconsistent understanding of choreographic concepts	Confused, but tries to talk anyway, contributes to discussions occasionally	Rarely contributes to discussion, no understanding of choreographic concepts
Project Production Value	Costumes, props, sound—well integrated and well designed.	Elements of costumes, props, sound—integration and design with some success	Inconsistent or little use of production elements.	No elements.
Use of Text	Text well integrated with movement, tells the story, supports the design concept.	Use of text integrated with movement, but not always.	Text used inconsistently. Story or design concept unclear.	Text not well used, unclear.

After this first semester of rubric use, some of the benefits being sought, such as clearer standards for grading and better goal-setting, were immediately apparent. The rubrics clearly outlined the expectations of each aspect of the class, from levels of participation in class discussions to how and in what way students would collaborate on assignments. Students responded very positively to the process of laying out specific criteria that would be used in grading their work. In response to this, one student noted, “I am glad to see on paper what I need to work on rather than a value for my work.”

The process of creating rubrics with the classes and using them for mid-term conferences and final evaluations was repeated in the following fall semester with incoming students who were new to the process (see Figures 7-10). Because the classes involved were year-long courses, the rubrics were carried over in the spring semester, re-evaluated, and modified.

In re-evaluating the rubrics, the content of the course was viewed in greater detail. Here, the choreography rubric posed a particular challenge to me as teacher. In the choreography class, unlike in the C.O.W. class, when the initial criteria of the rubrics were developed with the students, important content aspects of the course had not been fully articulated. At that time, with students who had little working knowledge or vocabulary of the material to be covered in the class, this seemed an impossible task. As it stood, the five choreographic tools introduced in the first semester were still represented as a single criterion—“Tools.” These tools needed to be broken down, a process referred to as “unpacking the rubric.” In addition, I felt that a criterion dealing with the fundamental skill of physical awareness, which was not represented in the rubric, needed to be included.

Figure 7. Choreography rubric, section 1, Fall 2002

9:00	Cream of the Crop	Pick of the Litter	Salt of the Earth	Pain in the Ass
Attendance	Always Present Never Late	Sometimes Late Excused Absences	Some Absences Often Late	3 Absences
Participation	Willingly Engaged Passionate	Without full commitment/ Guarded	Little energy/ Distracted	Doesn't give a shit/ Negative/ Being an obstacle
Collaboration	Good sense of give and take/ Facilitates the work of others/ Empathetic/Generous	Some control issues/	Sometimes negative or too controlling/ Difficulty compromising	Selfish/ Obstacle/ Obstinate/ Destructive/ Irresponsible
Organization	Clear concept/ Ability to communicate ideas/ Very well prepared	Not fully prepared/ Not always able to communicate/ Mushy/ Not specific enough	Somewhat prepared/ Not able to communicate ideas/ Unprofessional attitude	Not prepared/ Non-communicative/ Rude/ Frustrated/ Not specific
Process	Faith in working from the unknown/ Confident balanced attitude/ Good problem solving	Identify problem, can't solve it/ Lack of balance/ Not enough confidence and/or information	Non-specific identification of problem/ Overwhelmed or stuck in unproductive habits	Defeated/ Despairing/ Unaware/ What Problem?
Tools	Open to risk/	Understands theory/ Not applying fully in practice	Tries, but doesn't get it	Not using tools/ Being safe

Figure 8. Choreography rubric, section 2, Fall 2002

2:00	Cowabunga	Tubular	Hang Loose	Wipe Out
Attendance	Always Present Never Late	Sometimes Late Excused Absences	Some Absences Often late	3 Absences
Focus/ Participation	Ready to work/ Involved/ Connected Positive Energy Takes direction well	Mostly cowabunga, But sometimes wiped out	Mostly wiped out, But sometimes cowbunga	Sleepy/ Disconnected/ Disruptive/Negative Uncooperative
Collaboration	Leader who listens/ Doesn't control/ Open to new ideas/ Facilitates/ Willing to compromise/ Very professional	Good ideas, but doesn't take control/ Too directorial	Neutral/ Ineffective/ or Indifferent attitude "Whatever"	Stubborn/ Doesn't Contribute/ No compromise/ Lazy/ Negative/ Unprofessional
Organization	Plan ahead/ Well prepared home work/ Manages time well	Not good time management/ Notes, but not clear/ Frustrated/ No clear concept	Inefficient/ No confidence	Making it up/ Not prepared at all
Process	Experiments with material/ Aware of developing a process/ Asking questions/ Self-motivated/ Problem solving	Difficulty being flexible/ Not easily problem solving/ Tries	Inconsistent Tries, but gives up Passive engagement	Gives up/ Easily discouraged/ Unwilling/ Disinterested
Tools	Takes risks/ Integrates tools/ Understands theory	Some understanding of theory/ Not always able to put it into practice	Fake or weak understanding of theory/ Inconsistent in practice	What tools? Close-minded

Figure 9. Choreography rubric, section 3, 2002

4:00	Oscars	Golden Globe	People's Choice	Razzie's Award
Attendance	Always present Never late	Excused Absences Sometimes Late	Absences Often Late	3 Absences
Participation	Mentally present/ Constructive/Positive energy Involved	Mostly Oscar, Sometimes Razzie	Mostly Razzie, Sometimes Oscar	Reading Magazine/ Distracted/ Disruptive/ Negative energy
Collaboration	Committed to give and take/ Open to new ideas/ Willing to explore material/ Motivates, doesn't control/ Balanced attitude/ Nurture/ Facilitate/Inspire	Mostly Oscar, Sometimes Razzie	Not helping, Not hindering	Takes away from the process/ Destructive/ Close-minded/ Lazy/Uninvolved/ Irresponsible
Organization	Well prepared/ Well equipped	Some preparation/ Not really ready to work/ Still kinks in concept/ Not completely clear	Last minute/ Little, but some preparation	Clueless/ Incompetent/ Unfocused/ No notes/ no preparation
Process	Open to experimenting/ Problem solving/Flexible Perseverance/ Concentrated	Knows problem, Can't solve it/ Tries	Knows problem, doesn't try to solve it/ Indifferent/ Overwhelmed Not aware of problem	Devoid of process/ Disengaged in work
Tools	Understands theory/ Using tools/ Communicating using vocabulary	Some understanding/ Some use/ Knows what should be done, can't always do it/ Sees the goal, and tries	Less use of tools/ Less understanding/ Not as much effort to problem solve	What tool? No understanding No use No care

Figure 10. Rubric, Creating Original Work, Fall 2002

COW FALL 2002

	EPIC	WELL DONE	RARE	UNDERCOOKED, MAD COW
ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION	Present, attentive and engaged.	Present, but not participating. Mostly there.	Inconsistent, wishy-washy. Absent, but called.	Present, but disruptive or inattentive. Absent, no call.
DISCUSSION	Insightful, empathetic and observant. (Talk show host)	Mostly. Observant, but directorial. (Mom- self involved)	Listening, not sharing. Completely directorial. (Howard Stern)	Inattentive or negative. (Telemarketer)
PHYSICAL SUPPORT	Aware and forthcoming. Ready, willing and able to help.	Mostly helpful. Helps when asked.	Half-assed assistance. Poor attitude.	Just sits. Flake. Leaves own mess.
PROCESS	Willingness to fail. Works consistently. Faith in process.	Less committed. Mental rehearsal.	Uncommitted. Not invested. Spinning wheels.	Indulges self in own despair.
ORGANIZATION	Well communicated needs. Props, music, cue sheets, rehearsed.	Works on the fly. Not enough copies, etc. Unrehearsed props.	Disorganized. 15 mn. setups. No props.	Flake. Helen returns the equipment.
PRODUCTION VALUE	Made visual design choices: costumes, lights, and props.	Most design elements.	Few design elements.	The ink's not dry. No performance.
FINISHED PRODUCT	Revised and rehearsed 10 mn. piece.	Mostly rehearsed. 13 mn. or 15 mn.	Last minute additions. 20 mn.	Change piece. No show.

Therefore, in the second semester, as the students understood the nature of the rubric and the course tools, I was able to elucidate the course content at a more detailed level and created a second, advanced, instructor-driven rubric based on the rubric used during the first semester. Thus, the students were given a two-page modified rubric that included a breakdown of the choreographic tools on the second page (see Figure 11). This exercise revealed the benefit of using the rubric to elucidate course content from the instructor's point of view. The process of unpacking, or breaking down, each individual tool brought into focus a clear way for me to articulate the relationship between the skills of physical awareness and the use of choreographic tools, a connection that directors who do not have a strong background in physical work have a hard time understanding.

Tracing steps from a sophisticated use of each tool to its fundamental source made it easy to identify the skills needed to apply each tool at different levels and pinpoint the way in which each tool is based in physical perception. Having identified the source, the entry point for the student was clearer. For example, the basic source of rhythm is the ability to hear and follow a pulse in text or music or, even more fundamentally, to be conscious of the rhythm of a breath. From that point, the tool of rhythm can be expanded to include the ability to communicate that pulse to actors in rehearsal, build small movement phrases, eventually create complex overlays of movement phrases that employ choreographic devices like cannon, and develop other skills that make it possible for choreographers to manipulate large numbers of dancers in interesting spatial patterns. As each specific tool was unpacked in a similar way, the exercise clearly identified the new criterion "Physical Awareness" as the source of each of the newly unpacked "Choreographic Tools."

Figure 11. Combined rubric, Choreography, Spring 2003

Choreography	4	3	2	1
Attendance	Always Present Never Late	Sometimes Late Excused Absences	Some Absences Often Late	3 Absences
Participation	Willingly Engaged/ Passionate Ready to work/ Involved Connected/ Positive Energy Takes direction well Open to new ideas	Engaged without full commitment Inconsistent focus Guarded	Low energy Distracted Unwilling to experiment	Negative energy Being an obstacle Disconnected Disruptive
Collaboration	Good sense of give and take Facilitates the work of others Empathetic/Generous Leadership without control Good listening skills Willing to compromise	Sometimes too directorial Overly controlling Too critical at times Difficulty compromising Inattentive listener Shows partiality	Negative or too controlling Neutral/ Ineffective Tunes out and goes along Indifferent attitude "Whatever" Frustrated with peers	Selfish Obstacle Obstinate Destructive Irresponsible Unresponsive
Organization	Clear concept Communicates ideas well Very well prepared/ rehearsed Plans ahead Manages time well Helpful/Mindful of Bigger Picture	Not fully prepared Not always able to communicate Mushy/ Not specific Doesn't always use time well Sometimes shortsighted	Somewhat prepared Not able to communicate ideas Misuses others' time Shortsighted Unaware	Not prepared Non-communicative Not specific Irresponsible
Process	Faith in working from the unknown Self-motivated Strong sense of perseverance Confident balanced attitude Aware of developing a process Asking questions Creating steps/following through Good problem solving skills Experiments with material Open to risk	Sometimes afraid of failing Not enough confidence and/or information Difficulty setting goals Can't identify problem Identify problem, can't create steps to solve it Problems with follow through Hesitant to take risks	Stuck in fear of failure No confidence Too result oriented Non-specific or no identification of problem or goals Overwhelmed or stuck in unproductive habits Judges ideas before trying Little or no follow through Little or no risk Blames externals at times	Paralyzed Defeated Disengaged in process Not aware of or unwilling to set goals Gives up No attempt to follow through Blames externals
Physical Awareness	Skills associated with awareness: Rhythmically responsive Sensory aware/able to express a range of movement qualities Flexible movement range/able to translate images into shapes Centered in relation to gravity Spatially aware Sequences, imitates, and invents movement or gesture	Some theoretical understanding of skills Some vocabulary use related to skills Physically articulate, strong in most skills, but weak in others	Limited theoretical understanding of skills Limited vocabulary use Limited physical articulation, strong in some skills, weak in many, but working to acquire skills	Mistaken or no theoretical understanding of skills Little or no vocabulary use Physically inarticulate, and not willing to work to acquire skills (Continued)

Figure 11. Combined rubric, Choreography, Spring 2003 (Continued)

Rhythm	Hears pulse in music Maps out music well Internalizes and accurately holds pulse without listening to the music Accurately counts and communicates pulse of music Keys design elements in relation to music changes Applies rhythm to images and descriptions of movement or gestures Uses rhythm to guide energy of cast in warm up or as improvisational tool Experiments with rhythm as basis of exploration	Some theory Some use of vocabulary Not applying fully in practice	Fake or weak understanding of theory Little or no vocabulary Inconsistent in practice	Little or no understanding of theory Wrong or no use of vocabulary or tools
Texture	Sensory aware Internalizes and expresses sensory information through movement and gesture Creates movement metaphors evocative of sensory experience Uses texture to guide energy of cast in warm up or as improvisational tool Experiments with texture as basis of exploration	Some theory Some use of vocabulary Not applying fully in practice	Fake or weak understanding of theory Little or no vocabulary Inconsistent in practice	Little or no understanding of theory Wrong or no use of vocabulary or tools
Shape	Visually aware of the elements of shape: circular, angular Uses shape to guide actors/designers through interpretation of script Employs vocabulary of visual design elements to communicate ideas Experiments with shape as basis of exploration	Some theory Some use of vocabulary Not applying fully in practice	Fake or weak understanding of theory Little or no vocabulary Inconsistent in practice	Little or no understanding of theory Wrong or no use of vocabulary or tools
Weight	Kinesthetically aware of elements of weight Uses weight to guide energy of cast in warm up or as improvisational tool Employs images of weight as part of vocabulary Experiments with weight as basis of exploration	Some theory Some use of vocabulary Not applying fully in practice	Fake or weak understanding of theory Little or no vocabulary Inconsistent in practice	Little or no understanding of theory Wrong or no use of vocabulary or tools
Space	Kinesthetically and visually aware of spatial elements: positive and negative space, tension lines, territory Applies spatial elements to images and descriptions of movement, body language, or gestures Uses spatial elements to guide actors/designers through interpretation of script Uses space to guide energy of cast in warm up or as improvisational tool Employs spatial imagery as part of vocabulary Experiments with space as basis of exploration	Some theory Some use of vocabulary Not applying fully in practice	Fake or weak understanding of theory Little or no vocabulary Inconsistent in practice	Little or no understanding of theory Wrong or no use of vocabulary or tools

The newly created rubric provided a tangible outline that made it easier for students to grasp the seemingly intangible concepts of physical training. Dance educator Margaret H'Doubler, in her book *Dance: A Creative Art Experience*, stresses the importance of sense perception as the source of more complex movement concepts. She closes the chapter entitled "Form and Content" with the following assertion:

In building from the simple, immature beginnings to more finished art results, we must not lose sight of the importance of the elementary, sensorial type of human response. ...It is necessary, through the conditioning processes of education and training, to lead away from it and beyond it, but we must keep in mind that it is a physiological necessity and that it remains the indispensable source upon which later art developments depend (H'Doubler, 1940, p.130).

The unpacked rubric helped students understand and work with subtle ideas such as this.

With the use of the modified choreography rubric over the course of the spring semester, the students' skills showed marked improvement. Not only did their conscious use of choreographic vocabulary in class discussions increase, but the students were more aware of when and how tools were being applied in class assignments. They began to integrate choreographic concepts with their process as directors and saw more purpose in developing their own level of physical awareness. A number of directors began to use the choreographic tool portion of the rubric as a checklist in rehearsals to ensure they were applying the concepts in practice.

In this second year of experimenting with assessment, the Creating Original Work class also benefited in many ways from the use of rubrics (see Figure 12). Here, the benefits came as less of a surprise to me as I was more aware of how integral self-assessment is to project-based work. The category "Process" evolved into a very detailed criterion that held specific advice about possible future pitfalls when it was unpacked. "Physical Support," a category unique to this class, allowed students to place value on technical assistance given to each other in rehearsals and presentations.

Figure 12. Rubric, Creating Original Work, Spring 2003

COW	4	3	2	1
Attendance Participation	Always present Never late Willingly engaged Passionate Ready to work Involved Connected Positive Energy	Sometimes late Excused absences/calls in Makes up absences Engaged without full commitment Inconsistent focus	Some Absences/calls in Late often Low energy Distracted	3 Absences Does not call in absences Negative energy Disconnected Disruptive Inattentive
Discussion	Useful/ non-directorial comments Empathetic/ non-judgmental Good listening skills Emotionally supportive	Comments too directorial at times At times too critical/judgmental Sometimes inattentive	Comments too often/ or too infrequently Mostly directorial Passively critical Shows partiality/frustration/indifference	Inattentive or negative comments
Physical Support	Ready, willing, able to help in class setups/ clean up Anticipates problems Volunteers as designer Volunteers as s.m.	Helps when asked Sometimes anticipates	Only helps when asked Sometimes avoids problems Reluctant attitude	Never helps, always avoids Creates problems, leaves mess for others
Organization	Clear concept Communicates ideas well Very well prepared/ rehearsed Plans ahead Manages time well Helpful/mindful of Bigger Picture	Not fully prepared Unrehearsed material Not always able to communicate Mushy/ Not specific Doesn't always use time well Sometimes shortsighted	Somewhat prepared Mental rehearsal Unrehearsed material Wrong or no props, music, etc. Not able to communicate ideas Misuses others' time Too long setup, unprepared cleanup Shortsighted Unaware	Not prepared Non-communicative Not specific Irresponsible Makes excuses Blames other people
Process	Faith in working from the unknown Self-motivated Strong sense of perseverance Confident balanced attitude Aware of developing a process Asking questions Creating steps/ following through Good problem solving skills Experiments with material Open to risk	Sometimes afraid of failing Not enough confidence and/or information Difficulty setting goals Can't identify problem Identify problem, can't create steps to solve it Doesn't ask hard questions Problems with follow through Hesitant to take risks	Stuck in fear of failure Wheel spinning No confidence Too result oriented Non-specific or no identification of problem or goals Overwhelmed or stuck in unproductive habits Doesn't pose enough questions Judges ideas before trying Little or no follow through Little or no risk Blames externals at times	Paralyzed Defeated Disengaged in process Not aware of or unwilling to set goals Gives up No attempt to follow through Blames externals

The rubric work significantly raised the standards of the class, not only from the point of view of project content, but also from the point of view of identifying modes of ethically responsible behavior. The students invested more time in their projects, worked more consistently to problem solve their ideas, and held each other accountable for the atmosphere of the class. In addition, creating a rubric became a vehicle for students with project experience to share what they had learned with incoming students.

As the long-term goals of the class became clearer, students gained a better understanding of how to build on what they had learned from one project to the next. Because they could articulate for themselves what it was they were working on, they looked forward to the possibility of improvement with the next project, and, therefore, were better able to set more challenging goals for future projects. The assessment tools were teaching the students how to track their own progress in an articulate and responsible way.

In the past three years, since the idea of assessment was first introduced to the C.O.W. class, the class expanded from one section to two, and in the last year it became an alternative track, or major area of study in which a student can continue and extend project work through the second, third, and fourth years of study. Originally, C.O.W. projects were limited to a ten-minute solo work. Students now have the option of extending their projects to include a larger number of cast members and an extended length, ranging from ten minutes to one hour. There is no doubt that the implementation of assessment tools contributed to this expansion. By encouraging students to invest more time and energy in their project work, the use of assessment tools led to a natural expansion of the curriculum offered to them within the program.

As the number of projects increased among the third- and fourth-year C.O.W. students, I was able to implement two other assessment techniques. Drawing on the work of Steven Seidel, current director of Project Zero, I decided to put in place a mid-term collaborative assessment panel.² The panel consisted of four professionals from theater-related fields including design, choreography, and directing, who viewed third- and fourth-year C.O.W. works-in-progress and offered feedback to the project creators. A student who participated in the mid-term assessment by the panel commented on his experience: “Knowing that I would have to show something to a panel of people I knew (mostly) and respected gave me enough drive to push through my frustration and get something out there, and I ended up discovering the structure of my piece because of it. The feedback from the panel was also invaluable in terms of learning at that still early stage, what exactly was getting across to an audience and what was not. It was great that the panel knew nothing about my piece before seeing the rough draft; that fresh eye was obviously super important.”

A second new assessment tool, the use of process-folios, was also included in the C.O.W. classes as part of the mid-term and final evaluations. Based on the work of Howard Gardner, founder of Project Zero, the process-folios were aimed at allowing students to share the process of creating their projects in greater detail.³ The associated work took the form of a variety of media. In one case, a student shared a drawing he had made of the inner life of the character he was working on (see Figure 13). The final project was a spoken monologue.

In another case, a student with a more cinematic approach shared the storyboard that outlined his solo project (see Figure 14). His project ultimately incorporated video work with live-spoken text. Students have become more inclusive in their own view of what feeds their process, a critical awareness in learning to move the creation of a project forward.

Having invested a good deal of time, both in and out of the classroom, in the creation and investigation of assessment techniques over the last several years, it is clear that the return has been well

² Steven Seidel has written extensively on the subject of collaborative assessment. His working paper “Collaborative Assessment Conferences for the Consideration of Project Work” describes this technique and, in particular, gives excellent guidelines for panel members to follow in their discussion of the work (1991, p. 7).

³ See Gardner (1990, Table 2, p.i) for a concise outline of this technique

worth the effort. In all, the benefits derived from the assessment experiments for both teacher and students were more far reaching in scope than I had ever imagined when I first set out to establish clear standards for evaluating student work. Although the use of rubrics, a collaborative assessment panel, and process-folios did not totally resolve the inherent conflict of grading a creative process, these assessment tools created an environment in which the creative process and accountability mutually flourished.

Figure 13. Drawing by Michael Newman. Used by permission.

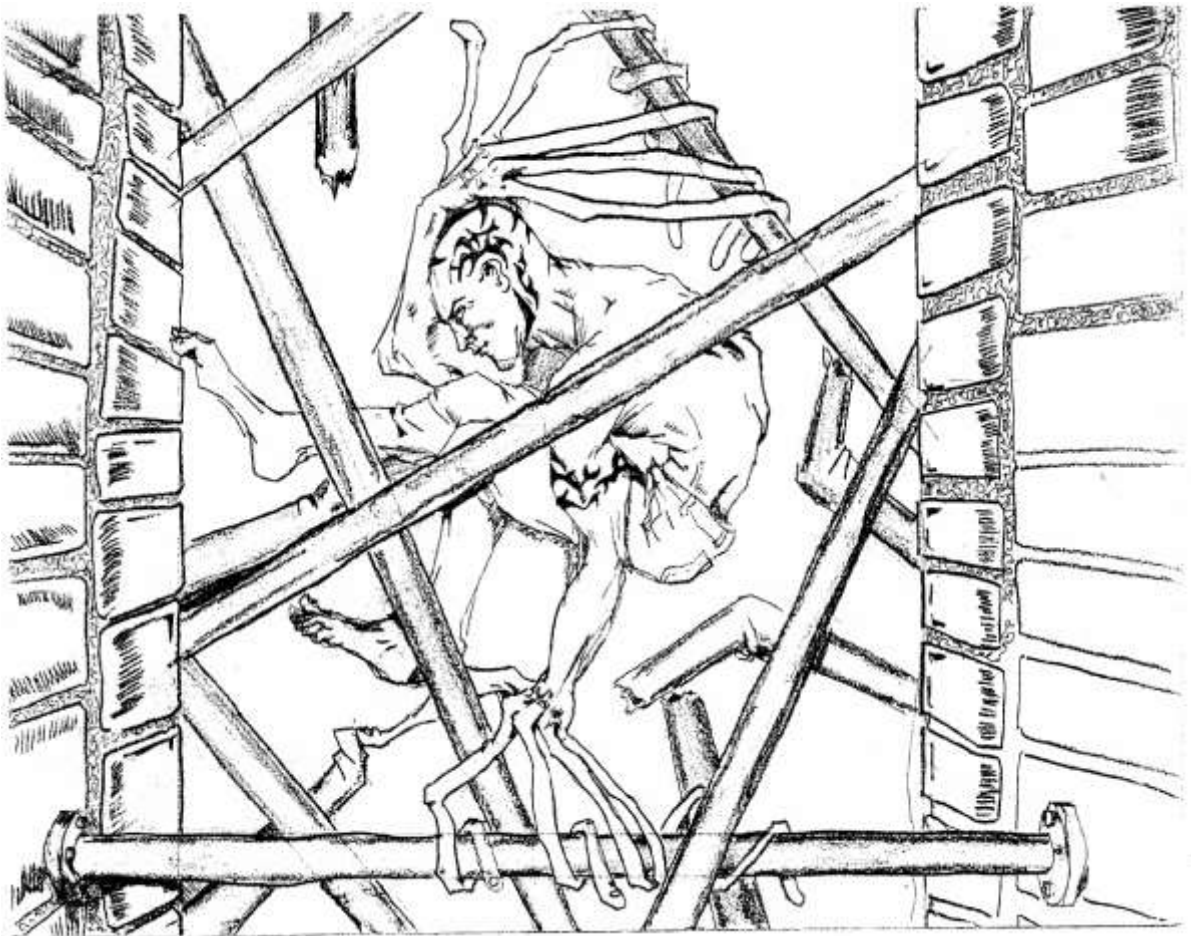


Figure 14. Storyboard by Dylan Dawson. Used by permission.



In closing, I would point out that, not surprisingly, problems remain that point to the need for further investigations—the first being the influence of student grade-consciousness on the rubric process. At the end of the semester, when final evaluations were due, knowing that the more detailed rubric was also a grading instrument inhibited some students from mapping their position among the criteria in an honest way. One student who was taking the choreography class as a required course commented that, “As a student who is being given a grade, I have difficulty being honest when I know that my negative comments about myself may reflect on my grade...it’s a strange public school throwback that I can’t shake.” In counterpoint, another student referred to the rubric saying, “What I like about it is that it does give me a chance to be honest about where I am [in relation to learning skills] that you may not always get to see in class.”

Honest self-evaluation became an important issue because the higher learning values of the rubric process itself seemed endangered without it. Class discussions ensued about whether or not realistic self-assessment should be considered a new criterion. Here was my argument: Because the teacher is conceivably in the position of seeing the progress in a student or lack thereof and can judge whether or not a student is being realistic about their work, the student who marked the highest level of each description in order to get a better grade would not necessarily succeed but would definitely be losing the real benefit of the assessment process. Therefore, honest self-evaluation needed to be seen as a value in itself as well as part of grade consideration.

“You really have to do some honest soul-searching to provide honest answers, which (I think) is an important thing to do”, reacted one student, while another added, “...after being released by the freedom of no wrong if honest—the [rubric] exercise is very revealing.” It was important to make honesty a value to be considered. . . It seemed a new criterion was in the making. As that was the final day of class, it was obvious the discussion would continue with the creation of a new rubric in the upcoming fall semester. I reminded myself again how the value of a rubric lies in its use as an ongoing process, a means of communication that, at its best, is created and maintained with each new class. The fact that new criteria appear and take on importance as the need becomes apparent, shows that the rubric itself is a grid only seemingly fixed in time and space. When used as an

integrated learning tool, it is a map filled with possibilities, fixed yet fluid, not unlike a piece of choreography.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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Marleen Pennison is the Artistic Director of Marleen Pennison and Dancers, Inc. In this role, she is regarded as a leader of the narrative form in dance. Her choreography fuses movement and text to create danced short stories and plays. Under her direction, the company has been produced to high critical acclaim since 1975. As a teacher, Ms. Pennison brings to her students more than twenty-five years of experience in teaching dance and theater to adults and children: From 1974-77, Ms. Pennison taught dance and theater for the Ethical Culture Schools. She served as an instructor for the National Shakespeare Company Theater Conservatory from 1974-78 and directed the Movement Program at the Stella Adler Theatre Conservatory from 1977-85. Since 1985, Ms. Pennison has remained on the faculty of the Playwrights Horizons Theater School where she serves as Director of New Programs and teaches under the auspices of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Standards: The Illusion of Comfort

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ABSTRACT

This paper raises three concerns: 1. Pedagogy. Effective drama demands a constructivist pedagogy (Wagner, 1998), one built upon questions, discourse, reflection, and, if it is to be transformative, action (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Unfortunately, most teacher education takes place within pre-service programmes and schools that practice the traditional educational model (Windschitl, 2002). When many drama/theatre teachers have little experience with a still anomalous pedagogy and can receive little knowledgeable support for their teaching, what in their drama teaching are they valuing and assessing? 2. The art form. We know of the lack of theatre experience that pre-service teachers bring with them (Miller & Saxton, 2000), and this is exacerbated by the limited courses offered in theatre/drama within generalist teacher education programmes. There are theatre requirements for entry into secondary school theatre/dramatic arts pre-service teacher education, but the quality and content varies significantly in depth, extent and practice, depending upon locale and

the focus of the degree. Where then is the depth of knowledge and experience to support the application of standards to student work?

3. Standards application. Given the above, how can standards in the art form become internalized and actualized in our classrooms?

STANDARDS

The root of the word, "standard", comes from the old French, *estende*, meaning "to extend". We like to think of this root because it changes the meaning of standards from the definition that refers to something that we can see, like a flag, or a stump of a tree (its 12th and 13th century meanings) because those are such static (and possibly accomplishable) images. The original idea of "extend" implies something that is always on the move, always stretching. Standards then become more like Charles Taylor's (1991) "horizons of significance"—changing and reshaping themselves into new challenges as experience and circumstance dictate.

This paper examines three questions in relation to the matter of standards and assessment. The first is the question of the drama and theatre experience that pre-service teachers bring with them.

Many colleges and faculties of education do not ask for any arts experiences or courses as part of entrance requirements, and there are few (if any) courses required within the teacher education programs to fill in these gaps. When teachers are told that they have to teach the arts, they fall back on what they know or were perhaps exposed to--folk dances, colouring, playing percussion and putting on plays. This is certainly true for most elementary generalists in drama education (Wetterstrand, 1999; Miller & Saxton, 2000). These teachers tend to rely on "how to" books, black line masters, and lesson aids that are structured to meet the particular standards that the authors deem to be important. While there are theatre requirements for those pre-service teachers pursuing credentials in secondary school theatre/dramatic arts, the quality and content within the degrees vary in depth, extent and practice, depending upon the particular locales.

Our research (2000) suggests that the first three to five years of a teacher's career are focused on his/her own survival in the classroom. Add into that all-encompassing drive little or no classroom experience to fall back upon, a mixed bag of content knowledge from their pre-service education, an absence of mentors in arts education within most levels, and it becomes clear that the opportunities for developing practice leading to effective teaching are limited. In addition, for the secondary teacher, s/he is very often the only teacher responsible for the drama programme. This isolation mitigates against the development of a sense of teacher efficacy and the nurture of a passion for the discipline. Bad habits can breed behind closed doors.

The second question relates to pedagogy. Effective drama/theatre education demands a constructivist pedagogy (Wagner, 1998); one built upon questions, discourse, reflection, and, if it is to be transformative, action (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Shugurensky, 2001; Shakatko & Walker, 1999). Five principles act as guides:

- Teachers seek and value their students' points of view.
- Classroom activities challenge students' suppositions.
- Teachers pose problems of emerging relevance.
- Teachers build lessons around primary concepts and "big" ideas.
- Teachers assess student learning in the context of daily teaching.

Key factors in building a constructivist-centered classroom are non-judgmental feedback, authenticity and context (Brooks & Brooks, 1999).

Unfortunately, most institutional learning takes place within traditional pedagogical structures: pre-service teacher education the schools and institutions and the teachers who reflect that tradition in their classrooms. The question therefore becomes, what is being valued, and how is it being assessed when drama/theatre teachers in the field have had little or no experience with that pedagogy and receive little administrative support for their teaching?

The third question is that of standards and how such a positive concept has been subsumed into standardization, a completely different concept and one that, for the most part, is antithetical to effectively taught programs. What do we learn when we are working

inside an effective drama context? How do we hone our "crap detectors", and how do we discover what is effective and affective practice? Debra McLachlan (2001), in looking at a year-long course in devising with her senior students asked them what they felt they were learning. At first, they talked about what they had learned about creating a play, producing, and then performing it. Soon, however, they began to talk about other things like: tolerance; self-direction; focus; self-discipline; the ability not only to generate ideas but to combine them with other's ideas; the capacity to consider numerous possibilities without premature self-censure; and the pleasure in taking risks by experimenting and exploring, thoughts, incidentally, we heard echoed by the Creative Arts Team Youth Theatre in their talk-back (Paul Caplan Centre, Friday, August 1, 2003) as well as by the New York City choir students (NYU Forum on Assessment, Sunday, August 3, 2003).

"What do we learn when we engage in the arts" was the question central to *Champions of Change* (1998), a longitudinal study of some 19,000 low socio-economic status students, K-12. In every case, students who had highly enriched arts programs in school did better than students who had only some arts programming. Students who had only some arts programming did better than those students with none. Students in drama/theatre programs did better at reading and developed a stronger sense of self-identity than students who had not been exposed. The bar graphs are there for those who need to see the "hard data". What the researchers found among a great many very interesting findings were what they call "Habits of Mind" and "Personal Dispositions". Note how similar these are to McLachlan's students' findings. Note also that they offer an excellent set of expectations:

Habits of Mind

- The ability to imagine new possibilities.
- The ability to develop theories that predict the consequences of actions.
- The ability to explore relationships from multiple perspectives.
- The ability to explore ideas, meaning and emotion through multiple forms.
- The ability to reflect upon, assess and adjust behaviour.
- The ability to sustain coherent collaborative action.
- A generosity of spirit; that is to say, to be forgiving of mistakes

through. recognizing that the process is long-term rather than immediate.

- The ability to elaborate detail with infinite patience.

Personal Dispositions

- Persistence and resilience.
- Risk-taking.
- Focus and discipline.
- Respect for authentic achievement; that is to say, "junk" is not easily accepted.
- Deep and active engagement with the arts is seen as comprehensive learning.
- A great sense of joy in the challenges; a delicious sense of achievement in the effective completion of the task.

(Richard Deasy, 2001)

So, to review: the knowledge and experiences of many teachers in drama/theatre education is , to put it kindly, limited. The kind of teaching that effective drama/theatre programmes require is generally not addressed in teacher education institutions. But effective teaching can lead to ways of working that do enhance learning for most students. Let us turn now to the question of standards and their accompanying standardization activities and see how they fit into what we have been discussing.

We are told there is a "national" problem in education for which we must find a national solution. In parentheses, we do feel that we can reflect on what has, heretofore, been an American educational discussion, as it is now in vigorous debate in the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as in Canada. This national problem, suggests Elliot Eisner (2001), leads to the use of highly rationalized procedures. Rationalization means to make logical and coherent by reorganizing in order to eliminate waste of labour, time and materials. Rationalization of teaching practices, therefore, is predicated on the ability to control and predict; it downplays those parts of our practice that do not offer themselves to control and prediction. This means that classroom interactions in which such things as individual differences, personal qualities, ideas, orientations and temperaments are brought into play, will have less time and attention, if for no other reason than that they complicate assessment.

In an article in *The Guardian* (Monday, July, 14, 2003), the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to education for the UN commission on human rights, suggested that the British government was in technical breach of the convention because of the current policies on testing. Such tests, noted Dr. Katarina Tomasevski, "were designed to fulfill government objectives rather than meet the needs of children." The thing which Dr. Tomasevski finds "particularly intriguing in the United Kingdom is the ideology which underpins the whole movement. . . [it] is about target-setting and delivery. . . [it] comes from a command and control economy [best exemplified by] the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. . . very strange" (p. 7). Put that way and by such a highly experienced officer, it is "very strange" indeed, now that we come to think of it!

Rationalization (or standardization), because it has so much to do with measurement, promotes comparison and comparisons (as we all know) can be invidious, especially when we are comparing test results that do not take into account cultural difference, instructional values or community values, teacher and/or student interests and needs. Standardization relies upon incentives that are designed by someone (or ones) other than those for whom the incentives are intended. When authority lies somewhere else, if the results are not effective, both school and teacher survival may be at risk.

We know the results of national standardization: the curriculum is narrowed; tests come to define our priorities; certain subjects are privileged over others. Those of us who practice in the arts know which subjects are privileged, and it ain't the arts! Eisner (2001) goes on to make three points that tell us what is happening in our schools.

- The pressure to succeed in high-stakes testing means cutting corners, dealing with schooling in ways that may interfere with principled teaching and learning.
- The need to succeed leads to students and teachers confining learning to just what will be needed to accomplish the test. Such things as risk-taking, exploration, speculating, hypothesizing and uncertainty; "the opportunity," as Eric Booth (1998) puts it, 'to not know things for a while'-- these are activities that have little or no place in the test-driven classroom. As a result,
- The practice of conversation is diminishing and the quality of

conversation is dropping. "In the process of rationalization," writes Eisner (2001), "education has become a commodity" (p. 379, 370).

For Eisner (and for many of us, we would posit) the goal of schooling is not what students achieve in the short term but "what they do with what they learn when they can do what they want to do" That is the real measure of educational achievement. In a good education, getting it right for ourselves is the best reward. It is the process of work from which we derive our satisfaction; it is the journey more than the arrival that matters.

If we produce, as we are in danger of doing, a generation of young people who have lost the art of conversation, of self-motivation, who see their lives valuable only in response to some kind of extrinsic reward system which they have had no part in setting up, who have, in fact, discovered through their education that taking time to think about, to question, to fail, to move around an issue and see it from different points of view is not valued; if we allow ourselves to become teachers who no longer have the skills of improvisation, take pleasure in surprise, value a diversity of perspectives and a richness of outcomes; if we allow ourselves to bend to political expediencies and "educational" directives that have little or nothing to do with what we know to be education, then we must accept that our culture will be changed, that our ideas of what is democracy will shift significantly and the brains of the young people we teach will be significantly altered.

Scott Thompson (2001) uses the metaphor of the good and bad twins to describe the educational reform movement. Under the evil twin (aka, high-stakes, standardized, test-based reform) what gets "lost" is precisely that rich, high level teaching and learning that the "good" twin (authentic standards-based reform) aims to promote. Authentic standards-based reform is that under which "all students achieve as much of their creative, intellectual and social potential as possible. . . in a system of learning communities dedicated to developing and refining common learning standards in order to prepare each student to live successfully and contribute actively . . ." (p. 360).

As with any research, write Rath, Panchella and Van Ness (1971), the final question is always about assessment and application:

All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than

another if it:

- Permits students to make informed choices in carrying out the activity and to reflect on the consequences of their choices.
- Assigns students active roles in the learning situation rather than passive ones.
- Asks students to engage in inquiry into ideas, application of intellectual processes or current problems, or to examine them in a new setting.
- Recognizes completion of the activity may be accomplished successfully by students at several different levels of ability.
- Involves students and teachers in risk-taking.

This implies to us the kinds of standards that embrace the sorts of learning that drama and theatre education promote and that lie at the heart of good practice and, incidentally, good citizenship.

However, it's all very well for us to prate on about the good things that may accrue through effectively taught drama/theatre education, but we have to accept the fact that many of pre-service teachers have little of our experience in the discipline. How can they begin to talk about (let alone meet and exceed) standards if they have no understanding of the knowledge, skills and understandings being assessed? With all the good research on the power of the arts to enhance learning, it's a bit depressing to face this truth. It does leave us wondering if a discussion on the matter of standards and how they may be applied to classrooms of learners isn't just a little premature when we have yet to put into place that critical mass of competent and confident teachers of the arts.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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