

Work/Life: Elementary Visual Art Teachers
Talk About Their Workplace Conditions

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. James Bequette and Dr. Timothy Lensmire, Advisers

December 2011

Acknowledgements

Much appreciated love and support from Mom (Sara) and Auntie (Laura), Husband (KB) and dear friends (Sue, Shirley, Cimmie, Rose). Thank you.

Dr. Audrey Appelsies, for jump-starting the writing process with encouragement and interest when the battery went; and my dissertation writing partner, Rachelle Haroldson, who provided invaluable support during the last year. Thank you.

Jessie Eastman, who with her broad knowledge of the way things work saved me many times. Thank you.

My committee members James Bequette, Timothy Lensmire, Faith Clover and Lori Helman and “Dr. Maggie” Diblasio. Thank you.

And, much appreciation to the art teachers who enthusiastically made time to share their experiences. Thank you.

Dedication

To my proud parents Sara Derrick Herring,
aka, Cool Ma and Laura Derrick Webb, aka, Auntie Laura

and

To the elementary visual art teachers who live this life

Abstract

Although workplace conditions are a factor in teacher attrition there has been little written about the working conditions of visual art teachers at the elementary school level. By illuminating the work life of the elementary visual art teacher, this qualitative study examines the under-researched area of the work life of elementary visual art teachers. It addresses this question: What are the working conditions, job satisfaction and morale of elementary visual arts teachers? Through interviews with elementary visual art teachers, I examine three of the areas that affect their working conditions, specifically their participation in decision making, their efficacy, and the essential resources available to them. Morale and job satisfaction are considered in relation to working conditions.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As a visual art teacher for more than 20 years, I was aware that there was a discrepancy in the way art teachers were regarded in the schools where I taught. The work that art teachers performed, as well as their contributions to education, was considered frivolous and unimportant. It seemed that education generalists, administrators, and others were unaware of the total amount of energy, time, and money art teachers poured into their classrooms and students to make their art programs functional and successful. Nor were they concerned with what art teachers needed in terms of professional development and were not prepared to provide the necessary resources for art teachers to perform their jobs. My purpose is to illuminate the work life of elementary visual art teachers.

The Problem and Rationale

While many teachers may experience adverse working conditions, I look specifically at the conditions under which art teachers spend their work lives and the attitudinal affects of those conditions.

Teachers sit in a precarious position. They are professionals, with a high degree of education, and they are perceived as public servants rather than public employees. Likewise, art educators are professionals who are perceived to be servants, as well.

Within the hierarchy of education, art educators have been perceived to be the servants of the curriculum.

Teaching is a tough job. The people who choose to teach art are educated as artists and art educators. After their education they enter the profession to discover that their jobs are continually threatened, and that they have to justify, everyday, the place of art in the curriculum and in the school. Further, they find their job is more physically demanding than they imagined and that it consumes more preparation time than administrators will schedule. In addition, many art teachers face chronic underfunding or inconsistent funding even within districts.

My study examined elementary visual art teachers and their working conditions, their self-assessed level of satisfaction, and their morale. This area is not often examined, leaving a gap in the scholarship on this segment of our teaching community.

“To Move Forward: An Affirmation of Continuing Commitment to Arts Education” was published April, 2001, by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, International Council of Fine Arts Deans, and the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations. This document presented an assessment of the accomplishments that have been made in seven areas of arts education: arts and college/university admissions, national standards, teacher credentials, generalist teachers, specialist arts teacher preparation, professional development, and research.

In order to strengthen and provide a more unified direction for the future, the Consortium made recommendations in each area to move the arts agenda forward (NAEA, 2001). While teaching environments are not mentioned directly, the authors

included in the area of research “professional issues that affect teacher recruitment, preparation and retention” (2001). Documentation of and commentary about professional issues in art education needs to be developed because these issues are real and valid aspects of teaching art, and we should prepare future teachers for the real workplace.

Prior to this document, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) formulated their Visual Arts Research Agenda for the 21st Century. While there is a lack of clarity about what the Consortium considers as professional issues, the NAEA research agenda speaks directly to the need for research on instructional settings. The instructional setting is the teacher’s workplace, including the classroom, school site or building, the principal and colleagues, and the community from which the students come. It is where the art teacher spends her work life.

During the 1980s there was concern about teacher burnout, stress, and other issues related to health, job satisfaction and morale. This concern continued into the early 1990s before the national attitudes towards teachers changed and political entities ushered in a decades-long, critical, public scrutiny of teachers and the profession. This brought an impetus to change—reform—to meet demands for accountability. The now decades-long scrutiny had produced “reform” and “accountability” as the new buzzwords for education. In the public sector accountability means increased accounting, measuring, reporting, and interpretation of student outcomes and teachers’ work. This reform and accountability movement contrasts with efforts made on behalf of teachers just in the past decade.

The concern about teachers in the 1980s led to at least one large survey and report

on teacher working conditions, Conditions and Resources for Teaching (CART), in 1988, which was conducted and published by the National Education Association (NEA). This survey defined and measured characteristics of teacher workplace conditions. Today, much of the discourse on school improvement and reform continues to be related to student achievement, curriculum, teaching methods, and an intensifying search for solutions to the problem of teacher retention. The Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), produced by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) since 1985, has been conducted regularly and its focus has been on teacher demand and shortage, teacher and administrator characteristics, school programs, and general conditions in schools across the nation (NCES). It provides the most extensive and comprehensive picture of schools in the United States by surveying the nation's educational personnel in each state. The NCES is the entity within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Educational Sciences that collects and analyzes data related to education. Its Common Core of Data consists of five surveys completed annually by state departments of education. However, the information is general, and its scope has further widened to include statistics on science and math among other subjects of interest.

While these surveys and reports provide the big picture of education and the information is useful, there is a need for studies that examine the work life and working conditions of the visual arts teacher in particular. Studies, such as the 2001 NAEA commissioned and Educational Research Service conducted research, *Art teachers in Secondary Schools: A National Survey*, gives us a better picture of secondary art teachers. Unlike other surveys that were sent to principals, this survey was sent directly to visual

arts teachers at secondary schools. However, the elementary visual art teachers have not been surveyed in this manner, nor have there been qualitative studies that examine their working conditions at the elementary level.

We should be concerned with workplace conditions of elementary art teachers. In the past elementary art educators have been so relieved that our programs were included in the school curriculum that we have accepted unacceptable working conditions, such as inadequate time and budgets, and now these conditions have become deeply ingrained in the fiber of the school culture. More often than not, there is only one visual art teacher per school building and that person is solely responsible for the art program. Since art programs are unique as well, others at the school site may be empathetic, yet, not be able to discern the depth and complexity of his/her work life. It is worthwhile to study how these conditions affect the satisfaction and morale of elementary visual art teachers.

Morale and Job Satisfaction

Both morale and job satisfaction have been ill-defined concepts. Morale is quite a different concept than job satisfaction and it is a difficult concept. According to Linda Evans (1998), morale is a future-oriented and anticipatory concept. She defines morale as: a state of mind determined by the individual's anticipation of the extent of satisfaction of those needs which s/he perceives as significantly affecting his/her total work situation. Evans looks at morale as an individual rather than a group phenomenon and makes a clear distinction between morale and job satisfaction (1998). Morale may be a determinant in a teacher's outlook and future plans to stay in a position or move on.

Antithetically, Evans states that job satisfaction is "a state of mind determined by

the extent to which the individual perceives his/her job related needs to being met” (1998, p. 13). While morale is future oriented and pervasive, job satisfaction is present oriented and situational. Other perspectives on job satisfaction range from simplistic to complex.

In his book, *Job Satisfaction: Application, Assessment, Causes and Consequences* (1997), Paul Spector defines job satisfaction more simply as “the degree to which people like their jobs” (Spector, p. vii, 1997). This definition is too simplistic to encompass all of the variables present or lacking that make people “like” their jobs and want to remain in them. However, *Job Satisfaction Among America’s Teachers: Effects of Workplace Conditions, Background Characteristics, and Teacher Compensation*, a statistical analysis report published by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 1997), defines job satisfaction as “an affective reaction to an individual’s work situation,” which, in a sense concurs with Evans (1998). Job satisfaction, it continues, can be related to specific outcomes, such as productivity, which can “disrupt the school environment and result in the shift of valuable educational resources away from” instruction and towards staff replacement (NCES, 1997). Although the concepts of morale and job satisfaction may be different, the consequences of low morale and job dissatisfaction may be similar.

Susan Black in “Morale Matters” (2001) states that research shows when teacher morale is high or low it is reflected in student achievement, respectively. Additionally, lowered achievement is accompanied by the surfacing of other teacher problems, such as indifference toward others, cynical attitudes towards students, reduced initiative, more preoccupation with leaving for a better job, excessive use of sick leave, and depression.

Black continues, “discouraged teachers are a drain on a school system” and the teachers’ attitudes are often signs of an “unhealthy school organization” (2001, p. 42). School buildings unable to recruit and retain people with high quality teaching skills would perhaps suffer low student success, and since continuity is a desired attribute in education, low commitment by teachers means less personal investment as they plan to move on (Black, 2001). Although Black is describing a difficult situation for teachers in general, other research may show a varying relationship between morale and job performance.

Low morale does not necessarily mean poor job performance (Manning & Curtis, 1988)—the personality of the teacher is also a factor to be considered. A teacher with a phenomenal work ethic, for instance, may exhibit high job performance while experiencing low morale. However, high job performance may not last indefinitely without the experience of personal satisfaction; commitment will eventually deteriorate and job performance will decline (Manning & Curtis, 1988). According to George Manning, Professor of Psychology and Business, and Kent Curtis, Professor of Organizational Leadership at Northern Kentucky University, high morale and low job performance is a more workable situation because low performance may be alleviated by training, effective supervisory practices, and counseling. The ideal, of course, is to have both high morale and high job performance. Working conditions that could affect the morale and performance of teachers should be examined in detail.

Teacher Working Conditions

In 1985, the NEA conducted a study in which the purpose was to “empirically

identify the specific problems teachers have with the working conditions of schools” (NEA, 1988, p. 29). In the opinion of the NEA researchers “working conditions are important because they have an impact on the quality of teaching” (p. 29). The premise is that better performance is more likely to occur when teachers are satisfied and highly committed to staying in teaching.

In their chapter “Teacher Working Conditions” from *Teachers and Their Workplaces: Commitment, Performance, and Productivity* (Louis & Smith, 1990), Louis and Smith discuss two perspectives on improving the conditions under which teachers work: the professionalization stream or model of reform and the quality of work life (QWL) stream. In the professionalization stream, while espousing both extrinsic and intrinsic features, the goal is to improve the status and authority of teachers. They state that this view dominated policy discussions, and these discussions ignored sources of work satisfaction that were advocated by good teachers.

In their discussion of the quality of work life stream, which they define as being “concerned with restructuring and enhancing a teacher’s daily experiences,” the theorists note that they draw from the social psychological literature on quality of work life (QWL) (p. 34). They believe that the QWL stream is more useful than the professional models because it “directly tackles the analysis of job characteristics that makes them more or less satisfying to the individual, while promoting effectiveness in performance” (p. 34).

While educational reform literature is consistent with the conceptual frameworks used to study the quality of work life (QWL) in other organizational and professional

contexts, the social science research and literature provides a more detailed definition of QWL through the use of more complex models “which relate organizational contexts to quality of work life and other factors” (Louis & Smith, 1990, p. 35). This may speak to the question of how reforming working conditions might contribute to a more professional work life and career for teachers.

Louis and Smith (1990) identified seven criteria from the quality of work life indicators of organizational literature that were consistent with the issues of educational reform literature. They are the following:

- Respect from relevant adults
- Participation in decision making
- Frequent and stimulating professional interaction
- A high sense of efficacy
- Use of skills and knowledge
- Resources to carry out the job
- Goal congruence

These characteristics or similar indicators appear to be common to research on work life and job satisfaction and are also believed to affect the productivity of teachers. These indicators can be applied in the work place conditions of art teachers. Four of these indicators will be examined from the point of view of the art educator: professional interaction, participation in decision making, resources to carry out the job, and a high sense of efficacy.

Indicator 1: Respect from relevant adults.

According to Louis and Smith (1990), teachers will not remain highly committed if they do not get respect from relevant adults; this includes colleagues, building and district administrators, and parents, among others. Further, a lack of respect from parents, perhaps influenced by political rhetoric, is partially responsible for the “demoralization of the teaching force” (p. 35), making it a less attractive choice of profession.

Indicator 2: Participation in Decision making.

The arts educator is rarely consulted about scheduling classes or determining how much time is necessary to deliver a quality arts program (Mims & Lankford, 1995). Nevertheless, these issues have a direct impact on the job of the art educator. There may be other areas in which decision making has an impact on teachers’ jobs.

The “Conditions And Resources of Teaching” (CART) survey sorted decision making areas into five groups (Bacharach, 1988, p. 19):

- Organizational policies (hiring, testing, budget development, for example)
- Student-teacher interface (rights, discipline, grading policies)
- Teacher development and evaluation (staff development)
- Work allocation (school assignments)

Teaching process (curriculum, texts—availability and usage, pedagogy)

While the effects on the art teacher may be indirect in some of these areas, the cumulative effect of decisions that do not include the voice of the art teacher may erode his or her commitment and morale.

Indicator 3: Resources to carry out the job.

The CART survey defines a resource as anything needed to perform one's job. (CART, 1988). Resources for the art teacher might include classroom/facilities, time, money, and curriculum. The classroom is usually the last component on the list of resources for the visual art teacher (the term "art on a cart" and its connotations are well known to art educators). Even so, a classroom designated for visual arts is one of the most important and essential components for student achievement and rigorous study of the subject.

Time

Time, both quantity and quality, is a resource and an issue for art teachers. Art teachers generally need four types of time:

- Daily lesson planning—choosing and organizing lessons, which may include research, locating, downloading, or making visuals;
- Daily preparation time—selecting, gathering and making samples, in addition to preparing materials for student use (cutting paper, making patterns, wedging clay, getting out and mixing paints, and so on) and putting away materials and equipment and cleaning up after students;
- Instructional time—this is the time spent teaching the lesson, assessing and grading student work, taking care of paperwork, and contacting parents;
- Presentation preparation—selecting student work to be displayed, preparing the work for display by mounting or matting, designing the display (bulletin boards, for example).

Art teachers are provided with an average of four hours per week, designated as lesson planning time, 29 instructional contact hours per school year (Mims & Lankford, 1995), but this includes no preparation time or presentation time. Yet, there is the expectation that displays, art shows, bulletin boards (throughout the building) will happen and paper and patterns will be cut for student use (daily preparation). These expectations leave the art teacher no choice but to use personal time.

In addition to the unwritten expectation that art teachers use personal time to teach, they are sometimes also pressured into service that goes beyond the duties for which art teachers are hired and paid. Since many art teachers may also be practicing and professional artists, there may be conflicted feelings if principals request artistic services (designing a brochure for publication, for example) for which no compensation is offered. There is already zero time in the daily schedule to accommodate the requests, which translates into use of the art teacher's personal time. Andy Hargreaves (1994) examines time from a wider and more profound angle. He states that "time is a fundamental dimension through which teachers' work is constructed and interpreted by themselves, their colleagues and those who administer and supervise them" (p. 95). He then identifies and analyzes four interrelated dimensions of time: technical-rational (can be managed, manipulated, organized or reorganized in order to accommodate selected educational purposes), micro-political (how time distributions reflect dominant configurations of power and status within schools and school systems, that is, higher-status subjects are allocated more time than lower-status subjects), phenomenological (the subjective aspect of time which varies from person to person), and sociopolitical time (the administrative

dominance of teachers' time, administrative control of teachers' work, and the curriculum implementation process). These four dimensions of time can also be observed in the art teacher's work life (pp. 96-107).

Money

More often than not, "resources" refers to money. Mims and Lankford's survey of elementary art teachers (1995) reports that 45% of the teachers described their budget as adequate to meet their goals, with another 8% reporting a generous budget. This left 48% of the teachers surveyed with inadequate budgets. Of the allocated funds, teachers spent 89% of their budget on consumable and expendable materials and 11% on non-consumables, which include instructional materials. Consequently, the use of personal money to purchase curriculum and instructional materials, especially visuals was essential.

Curriculum Availability

It is reasonable to expect a curriculum to be in place. However, what happens when the curriculum is missing or non-existent? The district may not have allocated funds for curriculum development or purchase, and this results in a large portion of teachers' time spent creating curriculum or using personal finances to purchase curriculum materials.

Also, according to CART, proper job design is essential for effective job performance, and a primary component of job design is the assurance that resources to perform the tasks be available. A lack of resources may undermine even the highly motivated teacher and can result in frustration and lower motivation of the employee

(Bacharach, 1988).

Kaufhold, Alvarez and Arnold's study (2006) examines the frustration and burnout of special education teachers in South Texas. The researchers state that either federal funding is insufficient or is not reaching the students, which means that the teachers are not receiving adequate financial support. Kaufhold, Alvarez, and Arnold concluded that "the lack of sufficient supplies, coupled with the necessity of using out-of-pocket money in order to accomplish their teaching tasks caused a high degree of frustration which, in some teachers, led to burn out" (p. 161). These findings may be comparable to the conditions of elementary visual arts teachers.

Indicator 4: A high sense of efficacy.

There are two salient perspectives on teacher efficacy. Guskey and Passaro (1994) define efficacy as the "teachers' belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be considered difficult or unmotivated," and Tschannen-Moran et al. define efficacy as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Cowley, 2001). Ultimately, for many teachers, their primary purpose is to impact the lives of their students. Teachers want to make a difference. Knowing that they are capable of accomplishing their purpose may elevate and sustain their level of satisfaction even when other factors threaten to sever their commitment and crush their morale.

Teacher Retention

As the focus on teacher retention has intensified in recent years, working

conditions have received more attention because it has been cited by teachers as one of the reasons they leave their positions in schools, districts, and the profession, generally. Richard Ingersoll (2002) has studied national data to analyze the issues of teacher supply, demand and quality. He concludes that although problems of teacher quality and quantity are among the most important, they “are among the least understood” (p. 1). In 2003, The College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas at Austin hosted the “K-16 Arts Education Summit.” It was reported that up to 40% of all certified arts teachers leave the profession within 3-5 years, which is outpacing the enrollment in teacher education programs (College of Fine Arts, 2003). This compares favorably with the national numbers for educators in general.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) looked at first year teachers’ decisions to leave the profession and report that 28% left after the first year because of dissatisfaction due to discipline, administrative support and autonomy, while 78% left because of inadequate salaries. The study results point to “policy amenable” issues (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Further, these studies suggest that focusing on retention would be a wise investment for improving schools. Ingersoll and Smith’s findings concur with research conducted on teacher attrition by Doune Macdonald.

In “Teacher attrition: A review of the literature,” Macdonald (1999) asserts that, “conditions of service impact upon attrition when they fail to be sufficient for teachers to remain in the profession” after accounting for low salaries (p. 840). Macdonald also found that efforts to professionalize teaching worldwide did not increase teachers’ commitment and sense of power, but, instead, according to reports from Europe,

Australia, and the U.S.A., teachers have become dissatisfied with burdensome administrative tasks and the expectations for curriculum change, increased levels of accountability, surveillance, and role conflict (p. 840).

While describing sub-standard conditions which are stressful for teachers in less developed countries, it became obvious that some of the conditions are comparable to those here in the U.S.A., such as classrooms in disrepair, poor lighting, inadequate furniture, overcrowding, increasing levels of student violence, students grouped in classes with a wide range of learning needs, and social and family difficulties (p. 841).

Macdonald suggested that improving working conditions might offset relatively low salaries for some teachers. These strategies are to repair and upgrade buildings and teacher accommodations, reduce class size, increase parental and community support, and improve relationships with colleagues and administrative personnel. While some improvements may be costly, their implementation outweighs the cost of other options (p. 845).

While these issues have been discussed and studied they have not been a part of an academic discourse within the field of art education. To paraphrase a quote from the Southeastern Center for Teaching Quality (2004): Art teacher working conditions are art student learning conditions. We should first know what those conditions are, how teachers feel about them, and the attitudinal affects they have.

Theoretical Stance

It can be argued that elementary art teachers are somehow *oppressed*, given their status and working conditions. Many, except for those extraordinary art educators such as Elizabeth Willette described in the book *Real Lives: Art Teachers and The Cultures of Schools*, have to finesse and finagle to survive (Anderson, 2000). Willette is included among six art teachers whose stories Anderson uses as “models for how art teachers operate in the cultures of school“ (p. 5).

Art teachers tend to be discriminated against because many people look upon art education as unnecessary. Arthur Efland asks why the arts are accorded such scant attention in schools. He argues that education policies and practices are contingent upon what is valued in society and conceptions of intellectual accomplishment and what it entails. He believes society sees the arts as making lighter demands on the intellect and that education in the arts takes resources and time away from “serious” subjects, a view Efland rigorously opposes (2002, p. 2). Eliot Eisner (2003) expresses the sentiment another way:

In schools, we place a premium on the use of words and on the use of numbers. Literacy and numeracy, as they are referred to, are regarded as not only the primary processes we wish to promote, but also the most sophisticated manifestations of human intelligence. As a result, this view—often unarticulated, but expressed in the choices we make about what to teach and about how much time to devote to doing so—has

substantial implications for the breadth of our curriculum and for the equity of our treatment of students whose aptitudes are irrelevant to the school's priorities (Eisner, 2003, p. 652).

According to Eisner, the emphasis is placed on language arts and math in our educational systems, leaving students who do not succeed or excel in those areas at a disadvantage and placing limits on their cognitive life. The privileging of math and language arts has resulted in a narrowed curriculum, particularly in schools that do not perform well. Often those schools are located in poor or urban districts where there is a surreal focus on math and language arts, resulting in the reduction or exclusion of the arts, especially visual art, leaving limited or no avenues for students to engage in learning about the artistic world or about artistic expression generally. These issues are about power and equity for teachers and their students. It is about the power of those who make decisions that affect teachers and students without regard for equity.

Rubin and Rubin describe what it means to follow a critical approach to research, "For those who accept the critical paradigm, the truth they study is the reality of oppression. Research is about documenting how that oppression has been experienced and how ordinary people can understand the causes of the prejudice, poverty, or humiliation they have suffered" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 25). Rubin and Rubin continue and quote Kincheloe and McLaren to say that this type of research should lead to action to alleviate the problems caused by oppression and connect individual troubles to broader issues of power, justice and democracy (Kincheloe & McLaren cited in Rubin & Rubin, p. 25, 2005). Although there are elements of the critical paradigm that are

suitable for my research, I vacillated in applying this theory to my research. I initially embraced the ideology in the very early stages of the study, but I later rejected it with the thought that the document would not lead to action or change; and, although I have used the word *oppression*, it seems a too-heavy and loaded word for my purpose. However, the research does seek to educate and inform; it acknowledges the conditions of visual art teachers and examines the causes and the nature of those conditions which links them to the ultimate purpose of my research, advocating for the equitable treatment of elementary visual art teachers.

I have rejected the postmodernist stance. Some postmodernists argue that a “researcher’s view is only one among many and has no more legitimacy than the views of the people being studied” (Rubin, p. 27). This is reminiscent of comments usually made by lay people about abstract art, such as “I could do that!” or “ Any kid could do that!” However, it was the artist’s conception, and the artist who followed through and expounded upon the idea. In other words, neither of these views acknowledges the research, grounding and conceptual development that preceded the work of art or the study. It may be useful, however, to establish a frame of reference from which to understand the situational factors *of* the people who are studied.

Patton (1990) believes that one does not have to choose a theoretical perspective, as “ not all questions are theory based” (p. 89). “Practical questions,” he continues, “of people working to make the world a better place can be addressed without placing the study in one of the theoretical frameworks” (p. 89), unless, one is a graduate student, Patton cautions. I did not feel compelled to declare a theoretical framework because I

could not fit my ideas for my research with the theories that I was exploring.

Nevertheless it was necessary to provide an underlying structure for the study.

I chose a theoretical stance that was more clearly applicable to my research goals. The concept of deskilling, the process of reducing the level of skill needed to carry out a job, was the initial thread that led me to the intensification thesis, the process by which employers extract the most work for the least expenditure. Deskilling, a consequence of intensification, did not exactly resonate and define the situations that the art teachers in my study described; therefore, it was necessary to look beyond the characteristics of deskilling and intensification to the context of their development. Placing deskilling and intensification of work into a theoretical context provides a better understanding of the concept and its affect on teachers' work.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The purpose of this section is to provide a context in which to understand the development of intensification, from which comparisons may be drawn to the conditions of art teachers, a class of educated workers. As the elementary visual art teachers discussed their work experiences, they concomitantly described the phenomenon of intensification. Simply put, intensification is a practice employers use to extract the most labor from their employees while expending the least capital. Decisions that school district administrators make, especially financial decisions, affect art teachers both directly and indirectly, and intensification of art teachers' work is one result of these decisions. To understand the context in which intensification developed, I read the work

of Michael Apple and Magali Sarfatti Larson. Magali Sarfatti Larson discussed the application of intensification in her thesis “Proletarianization of Educated Labor” (1980), and Michael Apple narrowed the focus of the intensification thesis in his book *Teachers and Texts* (1988) to apply specifically to education.

In her thesis, Larson presents a historical and sociological account of changes that have impacted the nature of work from the pre-industrial skilled craftsman to the educated mental worker of the twentieth century. Larson states that the purpose of the paper was to examine and elaborate on problems of educated workers, “at the level of work,” which includes work opportunities and labor markets, work conditions and the work process, the activity we call “work” (p. 132). She describes the process of alienation of the ‘head from hand’ during industrialization and the bifurcation that developed when formal education became a desired characteristic for employees.

Proletarianization describes the process whereby workers are subjugated by and for technology in the service of wealth and power. While Larson examines this process in relation to workers and labor in general, these concepts do apply to education and to teachers in particular. Larson’s work helps to draw parallels between the education complex and the business complex.

Proletarianization is the process of stripping away the independence of the individual worker and their authority to control all aspects of the work. Over time, the meaning of work was reduced to wages as the industrial complex sought to multiply and control production. Now work is degraded and skill respected only as it is perfected for efficiency in the production process. In the “Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848),”

Karl Marx proclaimed that “the bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers (Marx, 1948, p. 16). This statement encapsulates the idea of proletarianization.

Larson invokes Marxist theory as she defines the proletarianization process: “in Marxist theory proletarianization is the complex historical process which produces a working class, locking it into subordination to and conflict with a capitalist class” (p. 134). Proletarianization does not materialize all at once. Larson details the stages of the process as manufacture, specialization and mechanization.

Manufacture represents the beginning of proletarianization. In the beginning manufacturing was based on handicraft production by assembled laborers in the capitalist industry (Larson, p. 134, 135). Large-scale employment of workers by the capitalist employer required a “socialization of the labor process” through the common use of the instruments of production (p. 135). This is also the beginning of alienation—the worker is now working in an alien and alienating environment. In comparison, teaching began as a one-on-one apprenticeship which graduated to the one-room schoolhouse and eventually into large urban and suburban districts, large complexes with many employees.

In the next phase, the sale of labor power allowed capitalist manufacturing to reorganize and revolutionize labor through specialization. Specialization instituted a system whereby the manufacture of a product was “broken into fractionalized activities.” Assembly is separated, leading to increased “detail dexterity” for the worker—the worker

perfects the fractional/partial skills through repetition which, in turn, increases accuracy and speed (Larson, p. 135). Because tasks differed in complexity and prestige, a “hierarchy of labor-powers” developed along with a corresponding “scale of wages” (p. 135). “The redefinition and redistribution of skills” resulted in “redefined differential wages” (p. 135).

In comparison to manufacturing, education and schools themselves are specialized entities. Elementary schools specialize in the education of children aged six through twelve years. Within elementary schools there are specializations, such as reading and special education, and high schools are the essence of specialization. Over the years, wages have become equalized, but subjects that are deemed “essential,” such as language arts and math, are privileged, as are the teachers of those subjects.

Mechanization followed specialization as the invention and use of machinery facilitated large-scale production through the use of the assembly line (p. 136). The revolution of the production process by advances in the machinery completed the proletarianization of labor. Since workers no longer needed to have physical strength or to have been previously trained in a craft, the use of machinery made it possible for women and children to enter the labor market as unskilled labor and become “unskilled servants of the new machines” (p. 137). Larson states that the “degradation of industrial skills by modern machinery” created a new labor market well supplied with “interchangeable and eminently replaceable” workers. In turn, this depressed wages and further displaced the adult male craftsman, changing the focus of the labor movement from craft to industrial organization (p. 137). The second phase of mechanization also

brought about the complete separation of “head from hand”; “management and planning are removed from the shop floor and taken to ‘the offices’,” subsequently setting the stage for increased professionalization as the number of college graduates hired for management grew (p. 138).

In comparison, by the 1700s in America, teaching was largely part-time employment for white, well-educated men whose students were white boys in settings beyond the home and where learning to read was to ensure religious knowledge (Boyle, 2004). Teaching was part-time, for young, white males up to the 1850’s when industry pulled them to work with higher wages. Industrialization brought work opportunities for men to earn higher wages, creating openings for women to enter the field of teaching. This will be explored further during the discussion of Apple’s work.

The last phase in the process is alienation. According to Erich Fromm, alienation is “experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object” (Marx’s Concept of Man, 1961). This may also be interpreted as a state of powerlessness which workers experience for various reasons. The process of proletarianization Larson discusses includes four dimensions of alienation: economic, organizational, technical and political.

The economic dimension of alienation concerns the sale of labor power; the sale of labor implies the interrelationship of time, task, skill and speed. The organizational dimension is characterized by the “forced cooperation” of manufacture that controls the workers’ skills by devaluing them and restraining skill advancement. According to Larson, “the dispossession of control over the execution of work” defines technical

alienation, which is “fused” with economic, organizational, and technical alienation to constitute “the classic proletarian condition” (p. 139). Political alienation is set aside as a special dimension. It is after “massive deskilling” when workers resorted to political action after they had been divorced from any decision making about the production process.

Therefore, proletarianization can be defined as the process of stripping away the independence of the individual worker and usurping the authority to control all aspects of the work. The meaning of work was reduced to wages as the industrial complex sought to multiply and control production. Work was degraded and skill respected only as it was perfected for efficiency in the production process.

The Educated Worker

Today, teachers are educated and may be considered mental workers, and embody some characteristics of a profession. Teacher organizations struggle with standards that advance the professional standing of teachers, while the state and universities advance their own agendas. According to Larson the strategies adopted by professionalization leaders were of two types: “the creation and control of a protected market” and “collective occupational ascension” (p. 141). She states that the goal of the professional movement was to establish a system of training that is the mandatory point of entry into professional practice (p. 142). This created the system of “standardized and uniform training of professional procedures”—a monopoly that controlled opportunity, status and work privilege and, consequently, expertise (p. 142). This project, says Larson, required

the state's backing and cooperation and the "transformation of society and culture" (p. 142). The state and the university play significant and complementary roles in the establishment of requirements for certification and licensing of educators. Teachers' professional organizations, moving toward professionalizing teachers, also established standards in their fields.

Larson describes three tendencies of large bureaucratized work organizations that compare similarly with teachers' experiences: 1) rigidity in the division of labor, 2) intensification, and 3) routinization. The first tendency was to increase and rigidify the division of labor, the effect being the delegation of routinized or menial tasks to lower level workers and multiplying lateral specializations, which may be of a lower or similar level (p. 163). While art teachers acquire the same amount of education as other teachers, elementary art teachers are often assigned a lower status. Because of this, they are more frequently scheduled for lunchroom and bus duty and other "menial" tasks. Larson says that this tendency is "contradictory" because it "elevates" the "specialized skills at the same time that it narrows the sphere of work and increases dependence on the bureaucratic whole" (p. 163).

Intensification of educated labor, she says, can be compared to the "speed-ups" in manufacturing industry—limited periods of inactivity or preparation between tasks for lower level employees (p. 163). For the higher level workers, "it's the volume of work that fills the pores of the working day" (p. 163). Intensification, Larson explains, "represents one of the most tangible ways in which the work privileges of educated workers are eroded" (p. 166). "Chronic work overload" is considered the most frequently

occurring source of intensification for mental labor; however, its form and consequences are dependent on the work setting (p. 166).

Limited down-time and work overload are common for art teachers at the elementary level. No teacher in the study taught less than 500 students per week. In fact, teaching 700 to 800 students per week was often the standard. Yet, no accommodations for large numbers of students were made, such as adding another teacher, providing more storage space for student work, or giving the teacher more preparation time.

Proletarianization of Teachers' Work

Michael Apple delves directly into the proletarianization of teachers' work from the perspective of gender and class. While Larson explains the entry of women into the workforce and the proletarianization process, her focus was not the effects of race, gender and class. Apple acknowledges that teachers are a "gendered class of workers who are more apt to be proletarianized than men," (Apple, 1986, p. 33) and recognizes that it could be the "sexist practices of recruitment and promotion" (p. 33). Apple contends that class and gender cannot be discounted in the proletarianization process. Although men monopolized the visual arts beyond the educational setting, their presence is minimized as teachers of elementary visual art.

Apple describes educators as being semi-autonomous employees, those who have some power to self-govern, which is applicable to art teachers, if only in the sense that there was little or no downward pressure to use specific curricula. Art educators wrote their own curriculum and were able to interpret standards to fit their classes and teaching

styles at the classroom level. Professionalization efforts at the national level, however, have included standards movements and curriculum movements (a more recent example is Discipline-Based Art Education and Visual Culture) that reach the classroom through art teachers who were educated in those teaching philosophies.

Apple enters the discussion at the point of unskilled labor entering the workforce, and he draws comparisons between teachers' work before and after it became "feminized." During this process of "feminization," much like Larson's separation of "head from hand," it is the males who move into the supervisory and administrative positions that control teachers' labor. That "schools have tended to be largely organized around male leadership and female teachers" is a social fact that runs throughout patriarchal society (Apple, p. 35).

While women were not completely absent from the leadership of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), the majority of the thirty-one presidents since 1948 were men (National Art Education Association, 2011). Certainly this follows with other agencies that control teachers' work—that is, state legislatures, school superintendents, state and district art coordinators, supervisors, and consultants. In more recent years, women have entered into this arena in larger numbers.

As the financial crisis tightens in schools, so does the intensification of work. Apple reiterates the ways in which intensification erodes the work of teachers (Apple, p. 41). The symptoms of intensification that he enumerates are consistent with the descriptions of the elementary art teachers in the study and my own experiences as an elementary visual art teacher. The symptoms vary, he says, "from the trivial to the more

complex—ranging from being allowed no time at all even to go to the bathroom, have a cup of coffee or relax, to having a total absence of time to keep up with one’s field. We can see intensification most visible in mental labor in the chronic sense of work overload that has escalated over time” (p. 41).

Apple further discusses the intensification symptoms outside of education, the causes and effects of intensification on teachers, and the effects of intensification on “non-manual” workers. “Leisure and self-direction are lost” and community tends to be redefined around the needs of the labor process (p. 42). Chronic work overload led to the learning or relearning of skills; financial crises led to worker downsizing and the use of the fewer remaining employees to handle the same amount of work, all of which usurp time that cannot be used to maintain knowledge and skills in one’s own field (p. 42). Apple contends that intensification’s most significant effect is the reduction of the quality of service (p. 42).

Aspects of intensification in teaching tend to be found in schools that are “dominated by behaviorally pre-specified curricula, repeated testing and strict and reductive accountability systems” (p. 43). Apple describes a study wherein the teachers were consumed with evaluating, grading and testing. This intensification added hours onto their school day and forced them to take work home. He says that “there is so much to do that simply accomplishing what is specified requires nearly all of one’s efforts,” resulting in the attitude of “just getting it done” without time for creativity or imagination (p. 44).

This account is consistent with the workplace descriptions of the elementary art

teachers in the District, particularly after *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) was enacted and their school became labeled as making inadequate progress. Focus and pressure were applied to language arts and math, subjects that were tested and for which failure meant severe consequences. Although this did not directly affect art teachers, the repercussions ricocheted throughout the school, causing worry and concern about the shared consequences.

Meanwhile, the structure of the art teacher workday and workplace seems unchanged when compared to this depiction by W. Lambert Brittain, writing in 1976:

The elementary art teacher today is usually overworked. Rarely is there the opportunity to get to know children well enough to be able to call a few by name, since, after all, during the week hundreds of children are seen. And in some cases, an additional load is put on the art teacher in the way of lunchroom duties, in-service training sessions, programs for the PTA, talks before the local community art club, and of course the important art displays in schools and in the community. Some attempts are made at developing a bridge with the social studies program, ordering materials that have gone up in price, attending a local conference for new art ideas, and scrounging around for trash for collage materials (Brittain, 1976).

Brittain's depiction is strikingly similar to the accounts given thirty years later by the elementary art teachers participating in this study about their work lives.

Other Research on Teacher Working Conditions

It is perplexing that art educators and researchers, to my knowledge, have not taken up the examination of working conditions in the field in the way that researchers have in some other disciplines, such as social work, special education, and music. Music teachers are the most closely related to visual art teachers because they have similar positions within the elementary school setting, and, therefore, similar working conditions. *Intensification And The Vocal Health Of An Elementary General Music Teacher*, a dissertation by Mary Lynn Morrissey (2004), resonated with me and led to my investigation of intensification and its relation to the work lives of art teachers. Special education researchers have studied burnout, job satisfaction and morale of teachers in their field and have written extensively about these issues. *Predictors of Burnout and Self-Efficacy among Special Education Teachers* (2010), by Alyson M. Martin, was concerned with the effect of burnout and decreased levels of self efficacy on teacher retention.

Charlie Naylor, a senior researcher with the British Columbia Federation of Teachers, examined international research and educational publications to assess issues related to teacher workload and the accompanying stress. He found that there was a connection between the societal trends toward overworking and the intensification of teacher's work (2007). The study was a response to the high levels of stress accompanied by low job satisfaction among teachers in British Columbia. He believed that work overload concerns could best be addressed through collective bargaining. Perhaps that is

the perspective held by researchers in visual art education: that their focus should be primarily on the practice of teaching art. However, given the low status assigned to art, it is unlikely that other teacher organizations will take up specific art teacher-related concerns.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Research Questions

My research questions for this project are as follows:

- What are the working conditions of elementary visual art teachers?
- What are the effects of workplace conditions on job satisfaction and morale of elementary visual art teachers?

I discovered that to answer the question, determining the workplace conditions and work life of an art teacher was essential. This study is a qualitative research project, a naturalistic inquiry that obtains information from observations and in-depth interviews (Rubin & Rubin, p. 19, 2005).

The interviews gave each of the art teachers space to tell of their experiences, and they illuminate a perspective frequently invisible or dismissed: how visual art teachers spend their work lives and under what conditions they do so. In-depth interviews allow scholars to explore various aspects of a teacher's work life and allow them to see the various conditions and circumstances in which art teachers find themselves in a way that a quantitative inquiry cannot.

The Setting

The state in which I did my research has a population of 5,231,106 with 1,152,508 of the population concentrated in the metropolitan area. It has a large number of universities that make for an active intellectual community; one of the universities was

especially prominent in educating the visual art teachers in the study. For a state of its size, it has a vibrant and rich artistic community. There are many theaters and musical venues in addition to the two major art museums, several smaller art museums, and many art galleries in the metropolitan area.

There have been well-established state art standards for over twenty years, and, elementary visual arts teachers have been employed in the district I studied since the 1970's. In the urban school district that I studied, which will be referred to as The District, art and music teachers have been disparagingly referred to as prep teachers or prep providers for the last 30 years. Since their positions came about as the result of a strike by teachers in 1970 and included preparation time in the settlement, art, music, and physical education teachers' classes have been viewed as a place to drop off kids while classroom generalists, planned their lessons.

The District had 45 elementary schools, 39 of which have art teachers. Of those 39 positions, there were six full-time positions as of the 2006-07 school year (MDE, 2007) –the other positions were part-time. The suburban districts in the study had as few as one elementary visual art teacher serving one elementary school, while other districts had several art teachers that were full and part-time.

The Sample

For the study a purposive sample of teachers from the greater metropolitan area was selected on the following bases:

- Passed the critical tenure and probationary period
- Built some confidence and a sense of efficacy in their teaching skills

- Taught in more than one school building
- Served under the direction of several administrators
- Had experiences with different staffs
- Worked with K-6 students over two or more years

The teachers that were selected were visual arts teachers who previously taught or currently teach at the elementary level, grades K-6, in public schools in the metropolitan area. I interviewed four teachers for the pilot study and an additional eleven teachers for the final study. Two of the teachers were previous elementary art teachers while the others currently taught at the elementary level. Five of the teachers taught in the same district as I had, though, I did not know all of them well. Six of the teachers responded to a letter inviting participation in the study. The others were personally asked to participate. I interviewed most of the teachers in their teaching space and others were interviewed at a public library. All of the participants had taught at least seven years, two had less than ten years of teaching experience, and eight had twenty years or more of classroom teaching experience.

I asked about their paths to becoming art teachers and discovered that many of the teachers did not plan to be art educators or art teachers, particularly at the elementary level, but found that they liked teaching (some needed to have a consistent income) and returned to school to obtain a teaching certificate and later pursued advanced degrees in art education.

A few of the teachers, Jacob, Joe, Leslie and Susan, exhibit and sell their art

while the other teachers were minimally involved in practicing art beyond the classroom.

Table 1

Roster Of The Visual Art Teacher Participants

Name	Years Taught	Location of District	Grade Level/ Type of School	Student Population
Anna	9	Suburban	K-6 Arts Magnet	500
Bob	20	Suburban	K-5	650
Donna	28	Inner-rung	K-6	700
Jacob	23	Urban	K5 IB	520
Jamal	18	Suburban	K-5	800
Joan*	22	Urban	K-8 Arts Magnet	650
Joe	25	Urban	K8	650
Katherine*	18	Urban	K-5 Language Emersion	550
Lacy	17	Suburban	K-6	820
Leslie	38	Suburban	K-5	500
Magdalena	13	Urban	K-5	750
Nathaniel	20	Urban	K-5 Environmental/ Special Education	550
Sandra	7	Suburban	K-6	600
Susan*	32	Urban	Retired	N/A
Terri	16	Urban	K-8 Open	750

*Pilot Study participant

Data Collection

I submitted an application to conduct research to the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and received approval for the proposed study.

Data collected by the state Department of Education was one source used to identify and select a sample. The data listed elementary school addresses in the metropolitan area from which I selected forty elementary schools that reported an art teacher on staff. I addressed the study “invitation to participate” letter to the visual art teacher and mailed the letters to the schools. I received six responses with contact information, which I used to set appointments to meet with them for the interview. I emailed, called or personally invited nine others to participate in the study so as to provide a more diverse sample in terms of race, experience and district socio-economic level. All participants were requested to sign consent forms and verbal consent was also recorded at the beginning of the interview. The in-depth interview was recorded with an audio digital recorder and a computer for back-up. One participant’s interview was accidentally erased although notes taken soon after the interview provided data and some of her responses were included in the pilot study. To preserve anonymity, the names of the state, cities, districts and schools were changed or eliminated, and pseudonyms were used to preserve the identity of the teachers. The interviews, approximately one hour and fifteen minutes each, were the primary sources of data. Guideline questions were used to focus the interview. While most of the questions remained the same throughout, I rephrased some to provide strength and clarity. After I finished all of the interviews, I

transcribed all the recordings the recordings except for two that I sent to a transcription service. I printed the transcriptions to facilitate examination of the data during analysis.

Analysis

After transcribing, I printed the transcripts and began the coding process by identifying the categories that I had anticipated. Initially, participation in decision making, resources, efficacy, and morale and job satisfaction were the categories that I used to structure the questions. However, it became clear that I had to broaden the scope of the questions and leave space for concepts that might emerge during analysis.

During the first phase of analysis, I considered the work of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983) and her creation of portraiture as a method of qualitative investigation. I began to write narratives from the transcripts that examined the responses of individual art teachers. These narratives constructed a holistic, more intact description of the teachers. However, for me, this posed a structural problem in developing a format for the dissertation. With some assistance, I developed an organizational plan that led to the second phase of the analysis.

During the second phase, the categories and themes took precedence and I began making comparisons and connections across the sample. I developed a chart delineating the categories. The chart included the categories of decision making, professional development and interaction, resources, competency/efficacy and moral and job satisfaction; the themes for each category are listed below.

While writing, I was comparing the experiences of the teachers to each other and to my own. I found that those experiences led to a better understanding of the

experiences of the teachers since the impetus for this research came directly from my experiences as an elementary visual art teacher.

My Role and Background as the Researcher

As a twenty-seven year veteran art teacher, I have worked under some very stressful conditions; in particular, a lack of classroom space and funding as well as a lack of professionalism from coworkers. But I did not know whether my situation was unique. I wanted to investigate the work-life experiences of other art teachers. I wanted to examine and document experiences to find what is common or unique about art teachers' situations. My sample included teachers from the school district where I last worked as an art teacher. Currently, I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota where I have taught several classes and supervised student teachers. I am also a reserve teacher working in several area school districts.

I wanted to hear other teachers' voices. While I strongly identified with the teachers, I avoided expressing my views and experiences in order to prevent responses that may mirror my own. I did let the participants know that I am an advocate of professional treatment of art teachers and that I believed that we should not have to fight a daily battle for a place in the curriculum and for the legitimacy of art education.

I have previously conducted a mail survey to satisfy a requirement for the MA degree that examined elementary art teachers' experiences with site-based management in my school district. More recently I conducted a pilot case study for this research project that included interviews with four participants.

Additional preparation takes the form of quantitative and qualitative research

design courses, including focus groups, a survey and an interviewing course, as required for the PhD degree.

Pilot Study

While there are other factors that describe working conditions, four indicators—decision making, efficacy, resources, and commitment—provide a broad basis from which to focus research. This pilot study looks at these four factors.

While many teachers may experience adverse working conditions, I look specifically at the conditions under which elementary art teachers spend their work lives and the attitudinal affects of those conditions. I conducted three pilot interviews with art teachers from the District and an additional interview with a teacher from another urban district. I constructed questions based on four of the criteria identified by Louis and Smith; decision making, efficacy, resources, and commitment (1990) to guide the conversation with Magdalena, Susan, Katrina, and Joan (pseudonyms). I transcribed the recorded conversations for analysis. Much of what the teachers had to say about those areas provided insight and clarity to the areas and corroborates the analysis of research on teachers in general.

Speaking about resources, Magdalena, says, “time and money are the hardest” issues for her. As discussed in the Mims & Lankford (1995) article in which they reported their survey findings, Magdalena (like other teachers) is spending her own money to supplement the inadequate budget allocated by the school (much more than \$250, which is the income tax standard deduction for teachers). It is widely known and perhaps expected among teachers that we compensate for the inadequate funding because

we want our students to have sufficient and appropriate materials with which to work. In subsequent interviews, I have learned that teachers are spending large amounts of money to subsidize their art programs. Susan, a 32-year veteran teacher in the SP district, practicing artist, and community studio art teacher, says she spends \$3,000 to \$4,000 on materials, which she “shares” with her art students at school. Katherine spent about \$900 and Joan says she spends between \$1200 to \$1500 per year. When I asked Joan how she felt about spending that amount of her money yearly, she replied that as long as the school is contributing, she is matching their contributions. She also expressed a similar notion of sharing.

Magdalena’s most profound statements were made during the conversation about time. Her teaching load, 25 classes per week (55 minutes per class), approximately 750 students, is divided between two schools. She says that she is fortunate because the days are consecutive full days at each school. (Some teachers have a split position that requires unreimbursed travel from one school to another during the school day). That, however, does not make up for the lack of real planning time. Magdalena’s preparation time is spent clearing and setting out materials, transitioning from morning to afternoon classes. This corroborates the working conditions survey of teachers in North Carolina conducted in 2000, 2004 and 2006. Inadequate time proved to be the most frustrating of working conditions for teachers (Southeastern Center for Teaching, 2004). None of the teachers that I interviewed thus far used planning time at school to actually plan lessons. None of the teachers take a full lunch—two of the teachers, Susan and Katherine, do not sit down during lunch—they eat in their classrooms. Susan says that she works from the

moment she steps in the school until she leaves. Magdalena offers, “When I get to school I am so busy—from the minute I get there to the minute I leave.” Katherine says: “I work 80 hours per week. Fifty hours at school and another 30 at home” (Katherine, interview, December 8, 2007).

Joan expresses dismay at the additional burden placed on her and the teachers at her school. Her school was designated by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) as not making adequate yearly progress (AYP), a designation which carries with it a host of remedial details that usurp teachers’ time and energy. What has suffered is Joan’s capacity to collaborate with her colleagues, which was an essential aspect of her curriculum planning.

Needless to say, participation in decision making, while important and desired, is almost an impossibility considering the other demands on teachers’ time. On the other hand, Magdalena says professional development and interaction with other art teachers are essential to her wellbeing as a teacher. Those opportunities presented through grants are highly regarded by Magdalena and she frequently takes advantage of them. Joan’s program is funded through various grants, as well.

As for morale and future plans, Magdalena does not describe herself as having low morale. She does recognize that many other teachers have low morale. Continuing in the profession as an art teacher is not how she would describe her future either. She says, “to be honest, I don’t think that I can make thirty years!” Katherine describes her morale at her current location as high, and in fact has instigated activities to improve the morale of the staff at her school.

CHAPTER 3

Elementary Visual Art Teacher Portraits

Portraiture as a research methodology borrows from the painted portrait.

Portraiture, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot, seeks to join the scientific inquiry of social science with the representation of art (Lawrence-Lightfoot, Davis, 1997). Jessica Hoffman Davis (Davis, 2003), a researcher at Harvard University describes the research portrait as a written narrative that is *imprinted* with the researcher's understanding of and relationship with the subject. The portrait seeks to balance elements of context, thematic structure, relationship and voice into an aesthetic. The challenge is to balance the whole and to construct a narrative that authentically portrays a central story. Davis contrasts case studies that focus on strengths and weakness with "the good whole" of portraiture (Davis, 2003), which, by design, seeks "to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, Davis, p. 3, 1997). The portraits created by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis are the result of extended research projects which may last a year or more.

The following portraits represent a cross section of art teacher perspectives about their work lives. These stories are compelling because of what they reveal about the teachers and their workplaces. These five stories of elementary visual art teachers allowed me to present an intact description of their work lives. Jacob, Leslie, Donna, Nathaniel and Terri have each exposed a different dimension of the work of visual art teachers.

Jacob: Interviewed June 4, 2009.

Jacob's story illustrates the effects of poor administration on art teacher working conditions.

23 years. Jacob has taught elementary art in the District for 23 years. He has taught one year "up north" and one year in the West Metro area as well. He is a formally trained artist who has a BA and an MA in Fine Arts, and he later returned to school and earned a BS degree in art education from the state university. Over the course of his career, he has served as a district mentor for art teachers, as a union steward at one of his sites, and he was a leadership team member. He is also on the District's curriculum writing team for art. Currently, Jacob teaches at an International Baccalaureate elementary school in the District. There are about 500 students registered at this relatively new school whose population has a large Somali, African-American and Hispanic presence, 41 and 34 percent, respectively. The remainder of the school population consists of white (21 percent), Asian (3 percent), and Native American students (1 percent). He has taught at this school for a total of 4 years, and this is his second year teaching full-time at this site.

Today, Jacob described his morale as "poor." "I'm getting burned out being a prep provider. I want to teach art . . . I am burned out [on] that revolving door assembly line kind of just being a prep provider." We are discussing contributing factors to his morale as Jacob continues, saying that his enthusiasm and desire to teach are "blocked off—a lot of road closures and detours A lot of walls and doors that you have to go through to get a decent job at the elementary level. And to move to

high school seems next to impossible” as he has been trying for six years.

To understand the irritation of being a “prep provider,” particularly the way that Jacob is at his school, is to understand how the term came into widespread and persistent use. The teachers in the District went on strike in 1970. As a part of the settlement, elementary teachers won the right to preparation time during the duty day. To accomplish this, visual art, music and physical education teachers were hired to teach when the generalist teachers were planning their lessons. Thus, arts teachers were hired to provide time for generalist teachers to prepare for their classes. But, as years progressed an attitude of superiority became ingrained, cemented into the foundation of the elementary art teacher’s presence in the District’s schools.

When art teachers were hired, there was not the acknowledgement that they were indeed professionally-trained teachers even though, in some instances, the art teachers were even more extensively trained, taking the same education courses as the elementary education teachers in addition to studio art and art history classes. Some colleges did not have an art education major, therefore, art education students majored in education and minored in art. This characteristic seemed to be irrelevant because the main purpose for the art teacher was to provide time for the generalist teachers to plan for teaching, thus, the label “prep provider” or “prep teacher” came into use when referring to the arts and physical education teachers. Since there was no particular motivation to acknowledge visual art teachers as professional educators, there was no reason to acknowledge that their subject matter and their classes had substance and curriculum, nor was there any reason to believe that they were, thus, entitled to the

same considerations as non-visual art teachers.

So, when Jacob refers to himself as a “prep provider” he is describing how the administrators make him feel despite his accomplishments and expertise in the field. He is not speaking about his beliefs about how the job of art teacher should be viewed and lived. He is speaking about how external forces exert control over his work as an art teacher: they control the schedule, the budget and his control demonstrates the lack of respect shown for a teacher’s life work.

When discussing his relationship with his principal, he says, “to be quite honest, I don’t feel a lot of trust, and I don’t feel any sort of respect for what I do.” He adds that the assistant principal is more fair-minded and that he does not get the sense from the assistant principal that he is “just a filler,” which the principal has called specialists at his site. The principal’s sentiments about specialists are reflected in her statement that “we can do anything we want with their schedules. They’re not really a classroom teacher.”

Those are the kinds of statements that give Jacob discomfort and a distrust of the principal. He contrasts his feelings about the current administration with the former Principal C. at this school and the central administration: “Professional, open-minded, high standards for students and staff. I felt far more respected. I felt I could approach him and disagree with him without fear of retribution.” This is how he describes Principal C. He continues, “Things would be laid out to you logically, why this was not going to work with what we need to do with the program. He says that Principal C.

and one other former principal were the best principals he had ever worked for.

This past school year Jacob was pleased with his resources. He is happy to have a classroom with a storage room, a kiln room and an office. These are well deserved; it is his first ‘real’ art classroom in the District and the first since his first year of teaching. He spent the first four years in the District on a cart. The next seven years he shared a “very small room” in the community center (these are attached to the school buildings in some areas). At four other schools, he was on a cart as a part-time teacher and at one other school the lunchroom served as his teaching space.

This school, built in 1997, is one of the newer schools in the District, and this art room was designed with the art teacher in mind. The second floor room at the end of the hall has natural light from windows facing several directions, wall display space, enough space to accommodate a large class, and a flexible teaching space. The District, through grants and other funding, has upgraded the classroom technology. That means Jacob has a document camera, an LCD projector, and an interactive white board, about which he is especially enthusiastic and which has become an essential art classroom tool for him. While teachers in other districts have enjoyed the use of the tools for years, this is the first year that Jacob has had the opportunity to benefit from their use.

As mentioned before, Jacob’s school is an International Baccalaureate (IB) primary years school. The philosophy of the IB program (to foster tolerance and inter-cultural understanding) is one that Jacob agrees with. He points out that the standards for IB visual arts are congruent with district and state standards and that they make philosophical sense. He also credits the IB program for the decrease in the number of

students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, creating a more balanced student body. But these positive attributes of the IB program are overshadowed by the lack of respect that the administration shows his specific program. The lingering view of art class is that it is fun and relaxing for the kids and a break for the teachers, that art class is unstructured, that it possesses neither academic rigor nor a planned curriculum. Because art is seen in this way, administrators schedule art classes in a haphazard fashion, not bothering to take into consideration the art teachers' professional needs or the requirements of a sound pedagogy.

Jacob does not see all of the kids in the school, all of the kids in a class or even all the kids in a grade level. The way that he describes his contact with students seems jumbled. He sees some classes on a grade level in different parts of the school year and some grade level classes twice per week while the majority of students come once per week for 55 minutes. This awkward scheduling of the classes is to accommodate the language classes, he says.

This is frustrating and challenging: "I see myself as a professional, as trying to deliver the information that I know and what's available in the curriculum, so, I find it very difficult to do that." Jacob does not think that he sees the kids enough to build the kind of program that he, as a professional, would like to see. "It's just a revolving door, the kids are in and out and it's all kind of assembly line." Jacob repeats this several times throughout the interview. "So you don't have time to be in-depth with what you are doing with the students . . . time and again, kids are leaving half-finished projects." Jacob says that there is so much to be done within the class period that there is no time

for reflection—he won't see the students again for at least another week. Because of these things, he is considering restructuring the classes and how he delivers a lesson.

Throughout the interview, Jacob repeatedly called his classes “a revolving door” and an “assembly line.” He also voiced his genuine concern that there was insufficient time for “in-depth” teaching and learning. Moreover, Jacob associated these conditions with his role as a “prep provider,” which leads me to believe that this is a critical issue for him. It is exacerbated by the blatant lack of respect shown for his art program and a seemingly diminished capacity for understanding the place for arts and the contribution that the arts make to society.

Since the school has not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) per *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) there is “all that pressure, so, everything's focused on math and reading. Of course, at the elementary level they always want to know what are you doing to incorporate math and reading.” But, Jacob maintains that he is not a math teacher nor a reading teacher. His encounter with the work of Daniel Pink confirms his belief—“I'm totally convinced that people don't get it. That art isn't there to help math and reading. Art is there to help develop a person's brain. . . not necessarily to become an artist . . . but to be congruent in our society.” He wants to focus on art.

Time has come to be a frustrating issue for Jacob. It determines everything from how he delivers a lesson to whether or how much he participates in decision making. While he is on the leadership team, he says it has devolved into a more “informal, informational organization instead of a decision making body” since the change in the school's administration. He came to the conclusion that it is the combination of a lack of

time and opportunity that prevents him from participating as much as he would like. He explains that at his previous sites where he had spent the most time, “I was more involved there, as far as decision making and policy making, and I personally felt that I had more impact on the good of the school . . . ” Jacob adds that he probably would be more involved because he enjoyed being union steward where he was previously.

Perhaps another reason that he does not fully participate is that he does not trust that his input would be heard or “valued for its pros and cons. It feels like they’ve got their minds made up.” He also says that he has the impression that they do not want to hear what he has to say.

Jacob is a competent professional. He is a practicing artist as well as an experienced educator. And, he is humble—“I was brought up to be humble.” Raised in a rural area “you don’t tell how good you are.” So, when I ask if he felt competent as an art teacher his answer was tempered with humility. He says “Yes,” he feels he is competent and has felt competent since his second year. He attributes the feeling of competence to his involvement in writing a curriculum at his first elementary job up north. When he moved to the city to teach, that experience, his experience as a graduate teaching assistant and his enthusiasm carried through to his elementary teaching position. But what intimidated him was discipline in the urban setting, which he attributes to how the city is portrayed in the media. He says that it took a while, but now, he is more comfortable teaching in the city, but his comfort is also dependent on the type and level of support from the administration, “I’m not intimidated” by the behavior of “the urban kids any more. I found out it’s like anybody else. . . .As far as

the art part, I feel very competent with that. I am always trying to improve and grow.”

Jacob says his continued practice as an artist, at least 3 hours per week, informs his practice as a teacher and adds to his sense of competency. He adds that when he feels less competent it is “usually [about] something that is introduced by some sort of administration, such as the standard thing. [I] want to feel competent doing it.” Jacob continues, “and if you feel like you’re being pushed into doing this and you have to do it and they don’t really—I don’t think they are thoughtful enough in any particular diverse area to answer the questions or help you develop the skills so that you feel comfortable doing these things. I did not like TAP.”

This train of thought leads to a brief discussion of TAP. TAP, Teacher Advancement Program, which is a research-based school improvement model designed to attract, retain and motivate exemplary teachers. It provides teachers with additional opportunities to earn alternative compensation through job-embedded professional-development activities such as mentoring, coaching, study groups and classroom observations (Raham, 2008). These descriptions are from the District’s web site and a Canadian study of teacher evaluation and compensation in the United States. However, I was unable to find evidence of an assessment of how teachers navigate the program, since there are several components, including what teachers think of the program or whether the program is resulting in the desired outcomes. It was also not clear if there was thoughtful consideration of how the specialists would be included.

Jacob’s experience with TAP, from his description, was inconsistent and did not include evaluators in art education. Most of those included in decision making were in

administration, and he felt that the motivation for bringing the program back to the school was money. This is what Jacob had to say about his experience with this particular program: “Four people came in to do observations from TAP.” He says none of them agreed on his performance, “Some people thought I sucked at it, some people thought I was fine, some thought I was great at it.” He felt that “it was supposed to be objective and it wasn’t.” He continues, “I felt degraded because of the scores and grades that they gave you. I don’t think that this fairly reflects at all how I am as an art teacher.” What Jacob is saying contradicts the purpose of quality assurance programs for teachers and could undermine their sense of efficacy.

Despite Jacob’s admission that his morale, at this point, is low, he has not considered quitting the District. He is committed to providing an income for his family, and he believes that he is well paid, “I feel adequately reimbursed for [my] skills.” If income were not an issue, he does say that he is “pretty close” to that point where he would say he would not return, and he specifically states that a “lack of respect, [from the administration]” and the administration’s “lack of intuitiveness of what it takes for me to do my job” are the primary reasons.

People with low morale can perform their jobs at high levels (Manning & Curtis, 1988). So, it isn’t surprising that Jacob says he separates his feelings of low morale, “When the kids come through the door that’s me as a professional as a teacher.” Perhaps Jacob can weather low morale because he has a high sense of efficacy, he had previously been respected by administrators, teachers and parents, and because he is able to derive satisfaction from different sources. The primary source of satisfaction is the success he

sees teaching kids.

He gets the most satisfaction “when kids get it. You have a concept, you develop a lesson, you try to deliver it . . . And when kids get [it] and they can tell you what it means, and they can put it in their art work and use it . . . It feels good. You’ve done your job. The kids get it. You feel a warm fuzzy inside.” This is how Jacob describes the satisfaction he gets from his job. It is the “satisfaction that you’ve passed [knowledge] on to another generation.”

Terri: Interviewed April 28, 2009.

Terri’s story represents what could be. It provides some inspiration to see a school that is dedicated to embedding the arts in the curriculum.

Terri has worked with and taught the visual arts in various capacities. She worked as an arts administrator with the Girl Scouts, an organizer for art programs, an artist-in-residence, a visiting artist in schools, and a teacher in community art centers. She did this all before becoming a public school teacher. As a public school teacher, she taught gifted and talented students for ten years. At her current open school, Terri has taught arts integration (using art to study other disciplines), and she has taught visual art full-time for the last five years.

It seems that Terri has found a place where she is comfortable and productive in her work. In her building she feels respected, appreciated and integral to the functioning of the school. In fact, she feels a sense of responsibility, responsibility to

the kids, first and foremost, and then to the school. For Terri, responsibility is a key component in defining herself as an art teacher and as a member of the staff. She affirms that after “fifteen years, I feel the responsibility to step up into a leadership position.”

She describes the leadership in her building as a “shared activity [among the] administration, parents and teachers.” Indicating that the powerbase really is equally shared, “it’s really a third, a third, a third.” While she was not currently on the management team, she had been in previous years. However, that does not mean that she feels disconnected. She now serves on the “theme committee which looks at climate issues and how we can have an overarching big idea” that will guide instruction and assess its progress during the year, and they also plan some workshops for the school. Terri also is in charge of the arts planning committee, and she remarks that there’s representation from all different levels of the school. Terri is very much involved in the leadership and decision making at her school.

Terri also shares bus duty with the principal and she feels that she has his attention when she needs it. It is a mutual relationship because he looks to her (among others and especially the arts) to inform him about the climate of the school. She says that the arts teachers can “get a feel” for the school climate, perhaps because they see all of the students in the school. While she views him as the administrator, “definitely in charge,” whose judgment she can rely on, she also views him as a mentor, friend and a collaborator.

The school Leadership Council comes with a year’s commitment to monthly

meetings, which she has chosen not to do because she has enough other opportunities to participate in leadership. Terri says, “I haven’t chosen to do that yet. I kind of feel that I have enough leadership opportunities at my door.”

For Terri, participation in decision making takes the form of leadership and responsibility. This means she takes responsibility for getting to know the students — in 16 years she has had two full rounds of K-8 students—and to “use that knowledge to lead.” In doing what she calls ‘life work,’ “we’re always thinking what’s best for the kids, what fits our students. What we need to work on next, like a good parent does, trying to figure out what’s the lesson to be learned next . . . continually making it better and better and better.”

The most empowering aspect of her position is that she can make important decisions about the art program and usually gets approval from the principal, unless it conflicts with other teams, in which case, the teams work it out. Here, again, Terri applies the concept of responsibility: “the responsibility of defining the art curriculum is mine. I know those kids and that’s my first responsibility to make sure they have a working knowledge of the visual art curriculum.”

District staff development is not a high priority for Terri because it often does not incorporate information that she can connect to. Many of the district workshops for fine arts are connected to “some overarching district concept” such as literacy or math. She has a high interest in arts integration, but feels that it is not hurting her to see the other education philosophies in the district. As Terri puts it, “it does not hurt me to go to a workshop that I don’t really connect to, it helps me see how other folks are working

in the district—kind of what’s important to them.”

The staff development that the teachers at her school have developed seems more appropriate for her needs. It is often centered on some aspect of the Responsive Classroom (an approach to teaching academic and social competencies in elementary school). However, I’ve interviewed other art teachers from a variety of districts that have voiced a similar complaint. They complain that often district workshops do not address their interests as arts educators. Others have viewed them as a waste of their time and find the meetings that they set for themselves more productive. Terri says the professional-development meetings that are planned by the District are “hardly ever mediocre, it’s either thumbs up or thumbs down.” She would also like to see a wider scope of what art teachers are creating with the curriculum that they are using, to be presented and shared at the meetings.

As with other elementary visual art teachers, her day is “busy, very busy!” She arrives early and stays late. The student day lasts from 7:30 am to 1:45pm. She arrives about 7 and usually leaves between four and five p.m. adding that it is rare that she leaves early (2:30) which makes her normal day about nine hours. This includes time for planning, instruction, meetings, and bus duty.

Terri teaches in a “wonderful” room at one of the older school buildings in the District. The room is large with high ceilings and a wall of windows that provide an abundance of light, which she thinks “is important for an art room, especially in the winter—it is inviting for the kids, it energizes them.” The room reflects the Responsive Classroom philosophy that builds in student responsibility. Cubbies are used to store

materials, or tools, as she calls them, so that all 800 kids know where they are and so that they are open for all to use. Although she still has a closet for “those consumables that are just too tempting,” noting that her digital camera is put away.

The teachers at Terri’s school create the curriculum—they do not teach from textbooks. The district provides a textbook for art teachers that she uses as a reference for age appropriate vocabulary and concepts; she creates her curriculum to fit her students and the overall theme of the school’s curriculum. With about 830 children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade, the school is one of three with the open school philosophy. It has a low poverty rate (20% free and reduced lunch) and 35% minority and 65% white student body population. “It is an eclectic mix, when we all come together here, it looks like the United Nations.” The school has multi-grade classrooms and a curriculum that incorporates inquiry-based and project-based learning as components.

Terri talks about her time resources in two ways: her time preparing for the students and her time with the students. The student contact time is from 7:30 am to 1:45 pm. Terri arrives at 7:00, which gives her half an hour to prepare mentally before the students arrive. She uses that half hour to “gather her thoughts and do some visualizations about what the classes are going to look like.” That time, she says, is important to get herself organized and to think through how she will present certain aspects of the lesson. “When I think about time, it’s all centered around what I need to do to make that class rich.” Some things are written down in the plan book; some of it “just comes up as I rethink the class. And then, when I am in class, I’m theirs.” She

notes that her time in class is very physical and that she has to manage her time outside of school, which means that she needs to get enough rest. Her focus on rest is a self-control issue; to be ready for work she must end her day at a certain time.

Time with the students means a class time of 55 minutes, 12 days in a row, 3 times per year, for grades K-6, and of 50 minutes, 20 days in a row, 2 times per year for grades 7 and 8. Terri thinks this is perfect. She works with the schedule to support the depth of learning that would be prohibited in what she calls a “snapshot” curriculum when all 800 students come each week. She is positive about the schedule: “So, I can really go deep with projects because of the schedule. I wouldn’t be able to do that if I was seeing all 800 kids each week. Then what we’re looking at is [a] snapshots kind of thing. A snapshot kind of curriculum. You know, drop in drop out. There’s no depth to that.” Her school is a little more restricted than the traditional open school. In the open-progressive stance that her school has negotiated, in-depth learning is a vital component. This philosophy is reflected in the schedule, Terri says, because “the scheduling really does support me being able to work in-depth.”

At this school, the art schedule really seems to reflect all of the components of its philosophy, components such as, open schools, responsive classrooms, and progressive education, to accomplish the goal of deep student learning and Terri’s goal of keeping kids engaged and connected to the visual language of art. “My goal as a teacher is to keep kids engaged in art. I am not into producing . . . a lot of artists.” Either way she says it would be wonderful if “they stay connected to art. They see this visual language as one that’s for them to use as they see fit.”

Terri feels that the resources she has at her disposal help her to achieve her goals as an art teacher. In addition to time, money and curriculum, she feels that she can call on other resources within the school and the district, choosing those that fit her need at the time.

Teaching and teaching art is Terri's "life work." Being competent as a teacher, she realizes, may mean that she has to sacrifice her "own personal creativity" and funnel it into the classroom. She says that as an art teacher she is good because she understands that it is a process and that she is working on the process. She is "allowing" herself to say that because she recognizes the effort that she is putting into it. On her way to becoming a competent teacher, she felt that she needed to show herself kindness as well as show the students kindness. She says that it was about fifteen years into working with students, not necessarily as the art teacher, that she really felt competent. "I knew the first 10 years that I wasn't competent, I was talking way too much." She's learned, "What you need is a few key questions and a few really targeted demonstrations, illustrations, and art pieces to look at."

She assesses her competency by the children's artwork. That is more complex than it sounds. She realizes that it is what she does as a teacher that affects the outcome. "Recognizing when an idea or material does not work and figuring out why by watching the students and listening to the questions that they ask you, because," she says, "that is what is informing you about what you need to change before teaching it again." She says her schedule "is perfect for honing practice."

While Terri believes that she is in a very good place—she's well suited to her

school, she does not want for resources, she has a good relationship with the principal, she feels respected and her voice is heard—she does feel that her work at this school is preparing her for other work that is “calling” her.

When Terri thinks of leaving her current job, it is not because of any dissatisfaction. Aside from the flight of “fantasy of living on a farm with a big studio doing art all day,” she would like to teach art at a hospital for terminally ill children. She believes that she has the ability to really see kids and that it is being developed for a more difficult emotional work in a place where children would continue to learn and create art and “once they passed the family would have things that they could hold on to.” This, Terri says, is calling her.

Terri’s strong sense of responsibility and purpose, that she is doing important “life work,” contributes to her high morale. She sees her work as valuable to the students, the district and beyond. Terri says that she had better have high morale, which she relates to having “a positive outlook on life,” while, to her, low morale would mean depression. And for Terri, depression would mean that she would stop teaching because as a teacher, she should stay away from children in that state of mind. She says that children “deserve to have optimism all surrounding them. They’ll find out sooner or later the hard things of life. But, let’s give them a childhood where it’s a little softer, a little kinder, where it’s a little happier. You know, you’ve gotta have some of that in you to give it.”

Since Terri’s school follows the Responsive Classroom philosophy, it is important to note that research conducted at the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

in 2001-2003 found that teachers “felt more effective and more positive about teaching” (<http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/about/research.html>, 2006). Responsive Classroom teachers, according to the study, felt more effective in discipline, and teachers who used more Responsive Classroom practices also felt more able to create a positive school climate and influence decision making at their school (Rimm-Kaufman, 2006, p. 10).

Nathaniel: Interviewed June 29, 2009.

Nathaniel speaks to the universal need to be valued and to belong and how it effects his morale and job satisfaction.

“That I am part of something that is bigger than myself, too. I am part of this very important thing, education. That I’m a part of something that is really important to humanity. That I find satisfying. That teachers are important. I am a part of a profession that is critical to our world.”

Nathaniel has been teaching art at his school for 18 years. The school is special. It has a history of serving children with disabilities, and it does so to this day. Originally, when the school was established it was a facility especially “for handicapped elementary school children to encourage independence and self sufficiency” (fieldguide.fmr.org, 2005). After a bill passed the state legislature in 1919 to provide aid for handicapped children, the land for the school was donated in 1920 and the building dedicated in 1924. Today, the school also houses a magnet school as well as children with disabilities. Nathaniel adapted well to both.

A native of the state, Nathaniel went to college to become an art teacher, However his master's degree is in human development; he has also studied art therapy and psychology, and he is just "a practicum and a measures course" away from a counseling license. This does not mean that he intends to leave art education. He is also one of two art teachers to be certified by the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) in the District. National Board Certification is an advanced teaching credential that complements the state's license.

As an active member of the staff, he has held several leadership positions: site-based management team chair, staff development chair, and building union steward. Since these are voluntary positions, and he is choosing his level of involvement, they are not impositions and he is comfortable with the amount of time that he spends on these committees.

Participating in committee work is meaningful to him because it is one way that he feels valued and needed at his school and in his career. That, he says, is "something that we all seek out in our careers, no matter what your job is." According to Lloyd Andrews a sense of belonging, or "the urge to belong might be the strongest and most basic of human drives" (1985, p. 9) and it is associated with high morale. Nathaniel's sense of the place of belonging seems in keeping with Andrews's statement.

As for major decisions about his art program "I pretty much make the decisions in my art program," says Nathaniel, and he adds that he is given quite a bit of freedom. In fact, he was a part of a recent decision to keep the art room in its current location because it would have reduced inclusion for the special students with disabilities if it had moved.

His school is home to a program serving children with severe and profound to moderate disabilities and he teaches the children as a class. Some are mainstreamed into the regular education classes, therefore, this was an important consideration in making that decision.

Working with children with severe and profound disabilities challenges his skills as an art teacher. This challenge reaches the core of Nathaniel as a teacher. He sought and invented strategies for students to participate in the art making process at their level of ability. He has assembled, innovated and invented tools for the special students and created a space for them within the larger art program.

Staff development has changed over the years in Nathaniel's district. It went from no staff development committee at his school (teachers submitted their receipts for staff development activities to the office and they would be reimbursed through staff development funds), to a staff development committee that required an application and approval process, which ensured that the activity fit with the goals or mission of the school and district.

"It just burned my gullet!" he says of a time when he gave a presentation on special education at the National Art Education Association (NAEA) convention, and his request for funding was fully denied even though he represented his school district. Since he was on the staff development committee and was the union steward at his school he knew that there were staff development funds available, he wondered about the reasons for not supporting him.

A possible reason is that in this school system there has mandated district-level staff development at the Institute for Learning (IFL), in which all teachers must participate. Nathaniel says this is an effort to move district teachers in “the same direction” and to have them “speaking the same language.” In that case, perhaps, staff development funds are reserved for experiences relevant to the goals of the District. Nathaniel points out the costs of this narrowing of focus: a loss of diverse learning and sharing among teachers. Teachers once pursued their interests and brought what they learned and experienced back to the district and shared with others. This is how Nathaniel expressed his concern:

IFL (Institute for Learning) is something that all teachers, regardless of their experience their subject matter, regardless of what they’re teaching [participate in]. It’s mandated staff development from [the District,] and it’s what our staff development money is being spent on. So it is an effort to get us moving in one direction. I mean there’s pros and cons to that. The pro is that we’re moving in one direction and we’re all speaking the same language within the construct. There is opportunity for other kinds of things, but there isn’t the freedom to pursue it—I couldn’t go to an art therapy conference. It moves us in one direction, but the costs—the cost is that there isn’t the diversity being brought to the table. That the music teacher is pursuing her interests and brings it back to the school; the art teacher pursues something else and brings it back to the school; or teachers that have a special interest in . . . and brings it back to the

school, so there isn't this diverse kind of staff development.

Today this district has moved from a more open model where individuals were allowed to attend workshops and conferences that increased their own knowledge and skills to a model in which professional-development funds are spent more strategically, and are focused on the district's mission and goals. The answer, Nathaniel submits, is more to the center, but at the moment, staff development does not meet his needs as an art teacher. While he tries to be positive, something can be learned from it, on the other hand, "my time would have been better spent doing other things." Other than the one day of professional development during which all the arts teachers meet, there is little interaction among art teachers in the District, Even though Nathaniel remembers working by email with another art teacher on his Professional-Development Plan (PDP) (the evaluation process for teachers in the District).

Productive interactions are informal at Nathaniel's school. He makes it a point to go to the teachers' lounge for lunch break especially for the social aspect. Another teacher once told him that those social interactions are important to becoming part of the community. In terms of curriculum, they do that on the fly and in the hallway, without a formal sit down meeting. Staff meetings at the school have become more tailored to staff development. With the availability of computers and access to the Internet, many principals regularly send out email to staff members, forgoing the need to meet. While interactions with colleagues are important to one's work life, having the resources to perform the job is essential. We discussed the resources, which were available to him, starting with the curriculum.

A curriculum is the foundation of an arts program. It carries the vision and philosophy of the arts program through the lessons and artifacts, which are included. There was no curriculum in place at the school when Nathaniel arrived at the school, which meant that he used what he had or he purchased curriculum materials with personal funds. About ten years ago the district purchased a comprehensive curriculum package with classroom sets of books. This was the first time in about twenty years that there was a curriculum for visual art teachers. Nathaniel uses the curriculum and thinks it is a good curriculum, but supposes that it is now time to update and refresh the curriculum.

Teachers need money to implement the curriculum. Many art teachers in the district were allotted about \$500 per year to fund an art program that serves 400-800 students in kindergarten through sixth or through eighth grades. Since this is not enough, teachers supplement the budget with their own personal finances. Of the persons that I interviewed, Nathaniel was the only person who asked for donations to fund the art program at his school.

While he does not remember the amount that he was given, he recalled that “it was as little as possible.” At first Nathaniel would go, with his list, to the principal who immediately said, “Well, well, where can we cut back?” It was a negotiation that he remembers as “a constant struggle.” “Why don’t you ask the parents for money?” the principal eventually suggested, and it turned out to be a salient solution to a long-term budget deficiency. This helped Nathaniel in two ways: 1) He no longer had to endure the process of negotiating every year for money to adequately fund the art program, and

2) the donations from parents generated a substantial amount of money, enough to fully fund the art and music programs at the school. Nathaniel describes the negotiation between him and the principal:

I've forgotten the amount. I just remember that no matter what it was, it was just going to be as little as possible. You had to go and negotiate with him. I remember going with my list at the beginning of the year, 'J. I need this stuff,' and he's like, 'well, well, where can we cut it back?' Because I knew where he was going to come with it, I said, 'we could start September with blue crayons, and then October we can move to blue and red crayons.' I just remember it being a constant struggle.

The donation started out at \$15 and has increased to \$25. "I've been doing this for the last twelve to fourteen years. Just asking parents for money at the beginning of the year." He used to actually ask for "donations" but, after a weak response, dropped it and just requested the money for each student. "I used to call it a donation, but I didn't get a good response. So, I stopped calling it a donation—although it is a donation. I just say 'Please send \$25' for each student—we call it the art-music fund. I just send out the request." It is also his preference is to ask for funds directly rather than have a fundraiser because a fundraiser requires the purchase of items that people may not want or need. He nets about \$4,000 per year.

It may be important to note that this school is not considered to have a high poverty rate, and the site is located in a middle- to upper middle- class neighborhood. But that makes no difference to Nathaniel, because he says that he would make the

request for donations even if he were at a high poverty school. He feels that every parent can and should contribute to their child's art class. "Quite honestly," he says, "if I was at a school with a higher poverty level, I would still do this, because there isn't anybody out there who can't afford \$25 a year for their children's art class. There isn't anybody out there who can't afford that." It should also be noted that the practice of requesting an art fee, fundraisers, or donations was not encouraged at all schools in the District, which left art teachers no choice but to use their personal funds to supply their art rooms.

When talking with parents about the art fund, he lets them know that in combination with district funds, "we have more than enough materials for your students to really be exposed to a wide variety of materials."

Most of the teachers that I interviewed taught in spaces that were intended for other purposes. This is the case at Nathaniel's school.

His classroom was the home economics classroom when it was built in the early 1920's as a school for crippled children. The Tudor style building has historic value and, by his description, is beautiful, which seems to offset the small size of his classroom. The room does boast a wall of windows and a storage room and 3 sinks—"one more would be nice to really get them through fast" Nathaniel acknowledges, and "It would be nice if my room was a little bigger" to better accommodate the students with disabilities and the relatively large classes that rotate through each hour.

Movement and walking space is further restricted by tables, chairs, materials

and equipment. To be sure, 30 kids in a kindergarten class seems overcrowded. This is an increase from the 19 and 20 class size limits of the 1990's when residents of the District voted to increase taxes to support a reduction in class sizes K-12. However, it is low compared to the 56 kindergarteners in his class at his first teaching job in an East-coast urban district.

When the class size goes up elementary art teachers do not normally get teacher's assistants unless the class has mainstreamed special education students. There is no relief or assistance with the tasks that need to be performed by the art teacher.

But, what really upsets Nathaniel is the number of certified staff in the building that is peripheral to the classroom. They do not teach a class of students. They are literacy coaches, environmental people, and so on; they are not responsible for children directly. He says those five people could better serve the school by teaching a classroom at each grade level to assist in reducing class size. "That would be the smartest thing to do."

[I wonder if having Teachers and Principals on Special Assignment (TOSA/POSA) and academic coaches on staff is somehow an affront to the experienced teachers in the school who may feel that this is not what they need to be effective educators.]

There was a time when the District funded reduced class sizes. The city's taxpayers voted positively, four times, on a referendum to fund class-size reduction before it was taken up in the legislature. As years progressed, the class-size numbers

crept upwards—a few kids here and there, and exceptions and exemptions became common. Finally, when the district hit deep financial trouble, less money was allocated to class size reduction and teachers were laid off in some instances (class size reduction created jobs).

Class reduction did not always translate into smaller classes for art teachers. Mainstreaming students during specialists classes or combining classes—when a large home classroom is split during general instructional time, but they then come to art class together— can increase the class size for an art teacher. So what happened to those funds for class size reduction? Nathaniel guesses that those funds and an increase in funds from the legislature in recent years are being spent elsewhere, maybe on the IFL (Institute for Learning), coaches, TOSAs and POSAs (Teachers and Principals on Special Assignment). These are decisions that affect art teachers and they are completely out of our control.

Over time Nathaniel's resources have been consistent and that is important because, "It profoundly affects my ability to promote my program and for kids to enjoy the subject matter." For the first time Nathaniel is thinking of leaving his school; he wants to realize his desire to teach at the high school level. After 20 years at the elementary level, which he loves, he is ready for different challenges. He mentioned earlier in our conversation that the pace of elementary art is "boom, boom, boom; high school can be more of a cerebral challenge."

In previous attempts to move to the high school level, he did not have the seniority necessary to bid into a position. He has the credentials (National Board

Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, NBPTS), the experience and the seniority to move, but now the District has changed its process to make seniority virtually irrelevant. The hiring team for a school interviews the candidate and then selects the one that they want to hire. Despite his qualifications Nathaniel “feels like they are looking for somebody else.” He is thinking that he may have to leave the District—but not the profession—to find a position teaching art in high school.

When asked about his morale he says, “I’m good” and he attributes this to feeling valued, needed, wanted. He feels that if those needs are not met, that it would have a profound effect on work, and he started to say that it would be “impossible to . . . [teach].” Nathaniel speaks of an aspect of morale that Andrews says is under in the studies on morale (1985). His views on morale are one thread that runs through practice as a teacher—having a sense of belonging and value are essential to well being.

Leslie: Interviewed May 13, 2009.

Leslie, now retired, stood for innovation and empowerment. As an active member of her education community she was instrumental in instituting technology use, first for visual art teachers, and then for her district.

With each interview I grow some. I get a different perspective on teachers. I would describe Leslie as a feminist and a leader in her district. She is not only a leader for art teachers but also for teachers and women in her district. She was able to position herself on the forefront of technology, and before that she was able to make

administrators see the value in normalizing and increasing funding for the elementary art programs in her district.

Initially, Leslie went to the Pratt Institute and graduated as an industrial designer; her first job was designing toys. She felt that she needed to understand education better to create sound toys that would appeal to children. She taught for about a year and “decided [that] I liked that much better than design, and so I went back to school to get certified to teach.” Leslie pursued her BS in Education, as well as an MA and a PhD in art education from the university. She was active at the district level around curriculum issues, which is her primary interest.

She worked as an art educator for 38 years, and over this time she has developed a treasure trove of curriculum materials. However, she recently had decided that as her retirement approaches, she would be “focused more on the classroom and less on . . . politics,” meaning that she is spending less of her time in district and school meetings and initiatives. Over the years she has worked on the district-wide curriculum, joint policy and time study committees, served as union vice-president at the school level, and she has been on site-based and on-staff development committees. Being on these committees felt empowering for her. she was instrumental in affecting policy change and, with foresight, brought the use of technology to art teachers and their classrooms. Some of the things that she advocated were eventually adopted for general education teachers as well. There was little or no pressure to be on committees and Leslie says that she spent no more than two or three hours per month for most committees. Her participation in decision making was most meaningful when she had “the ability to

perceive the problems and then come up with solutions and have the solutions implemented.” Both insightfully and realistically, she adds that it is complex and people have different perspectives: “You’ll only have a piece of it, a limited picture of it, and so all you can do is advocate for those things that you believe in. But, you have to be cognizant of the fact that people have different perspectives, and so you’re not always going to have things your way.”

For Leslie, involvement in the decision-making process resulted in real accomplishments in her district, which, in turn, lead to feelings of empowerment. It would also be accurate to say that she was a leader in her district. At her current school there are about 500 students. For the first time, she is teaching full-time at one school. In this smaller district, it was common for teachers to work part-time at two schools, so when the district increased the specialists classes to one hour, this paved the way for teachers to have full-time positions at a single school. Moving to a smaller room meant that Leslie had to simplify and reduce. One of the elements that allowed her to do this was technology. In the past, it was necessary for art teachers to purchase and store visuals and prints, which took lots of money and space.

Leslie began using PowerPoint presentation software in the late 1990s after she attended a workshop offered by her district. This was a pivotal point in the way she constructed and presented her art lessons and eventually how her classroom was organized.

To show the PowerPoint presentations required a computer and a screen, or in her case, a television. As technology evolved, so did Leslie’s use of technology.

Making a time investment at the initial developing stages of a lesson, subsequently, meant less time preparing when she taught the lessons again. When the district allocated funds for new textbooks, the art teachers thought that the money could be spent another way. “So we went to the board and we said, instead of spending that money on that, we want to get projectors for all the art rooms. And so we got projectors for all the art rooms and then art teachers started doing that [designing PowerPoint lessons and showing them from their computers]. More and more people saw that and then eventually it became a district technology goal.” The combination of PowerPoint, the availability of computers, the ability to share and store lessons and to communicate over the internet and intranet allowed the teachers in this district to develop and share curricula and strengthen their art program in the process. This group of art teachers met on their own time approximately once per month.

Leslie says the key to good schools lies with the principal:

I’ve decided probably, the focus needs to be principals. I think the most important people anywhere in terms of education are the principals. Not the upper level administrators, but the principals—gosh, I’ve worked with 25 or 30 in my overall career. They set the tone. They support you or they don’t support you. . . . I’ll be in one school and absolutely feel like I am swimming uphill and in another school and just feel so supported and so respected and it just makes all the difference. If I was to focus in improving education I think that’s where you have to put your money and your energy is principals.

Over the course of her career, she has worked with about ten principals in her

district, and the majority of them have been supportive. Her current principal “a wonderful” leader, was an artist and another admitted to his lack of knowledge about the arts and asked Leslie what he should be looking for. She, of course, used this opportunity to educate him. She supplied him with articles that gave him an idea of her teaching philosophy and enabled him to understand her perspective. Leslie’s ability to communicate and advocate for herself as a teacher of visual art enabled supportive relationships with principals.

Leslie, who is now standing with the door wide open to a rich new life in retirement, describes her morale as high. And she immediately connects her morale to being an empowered person.

Donna: Interviewed May 14, 2009.

Donna is an inspiring teacher in a different way than Terri. She is energetic and so dedicated that she occasionally sleeps at school if she has a big show or program coming up. And, still, after 28 years, she is enthusiastic about teaching.

Donna came to teaching art after several other majors, one of which was music. Though she loved music, when she got to college she found it was “very competitive and cold . . . cutthroat.” She also liked art and in high school she entered competitions and won awards, but she did not see art as a career choice. “I always thought art was fun and a nice hobby, but I never thought I’d do it for my life, for a job.” She took art courses in college as she was exploring and “*Wow*. These people are warm and inviting

and helpful and opening my eyes to things I hadn't seen." It was in one of the art courses in college that she found a supportive teacher who encouraged her to develop her skills. "So then I have an art professor who writes me a note, 'You could do really well in art.' When a teacher gives you one positive note like that means a lot."

Though her interest in art led her to her first position as a junior high school art teacher, it was a phenomenal principal at Donna's second position who provided the hook. Donna says, "I really didn't believe I would teach in an elementary school, but when I came to interview I was just so in love with the school and the way people were friendly. It was kind of an unusual school. It was old, but it had all these wooden signs with carved slogans all over it. And the one that caught my eye was right over the principal's office: 'God don't make no junk.'" She was so influenced by the principal, the atmosphere and tone that he had created in the school that 20 years later in her new building she has dedicated the new art room to him.

Donna has been on decision-making committees at her school. She was on the original organizing committee when her school became an International Baccalaureate (IB) site, but makes light of the fact that they were to be paid with "left over money" from that budget. It was to be divvied-up for all the hours that the teachers worked, only, there wasn't anything left. She spent three years on the leadership committee.

Donna says that her school is good about "letting" teachers have input. And she says about the schedule, "they like to let us think we're helpful" and describes it as a "puzzle that's locked in (Donna, interview, May 14,2009)."

As in some other schools the music teachers here seem to have more input in what is included in the final schedule. The reasons that Donna gives to justify their input is that “there are two of them and they need to have some common prep-time and they present concerts and need to work with grade levels which means they need the schedule to be a certain way,” leaving the other specialists to work around it.

Since Donna is the only elementary art teacher in her district, professional development most often does not meet her needs as a specialist. Professional development is administered within the context of the school’s priorities for student and teacher development. This is not unusual. Most of the other art teachers have voiced similar sentiments about professional development. Teachers in the District do meet at least once per year, but the topics are often not relevant to their needs as art teachers.

When we started the interview, the first thing that Donna asked me was “Did you go to the convention? (The National Art Education Association, NAEA, had recently convened in the city.) She went to the convention and was both excited to have attended and irritated that the district had paid for the high school art teachers to attend and had not paid for the elementary teacher to attend. This inequity was not a small concern for Donna because she had to use her personal funds and her personal time to attend the conference. Since the high school teachers’ expenses were all paid by their district, including the registration, substitute, and parking, she felt indignant that they did not fully take advantage of the opportunity, either by only going to a few sessions or by not attending the conference at all. “They did not go to most of it. One of them skipped it entirely so that money was just lost; one of them went to just pieces . . . ”

Nevertheless, this did not diminish her enthusiasm and she says, “I had a fabulous experience. Yes, some of it wasn’t geared to me, but mostly I was very thankful to have been at [the conference].”

Meanwhile, at the district level, Donna seldom meets with other art teachers but she feels a kinship whenever she is fortunate to attend a meeting with other art teachers. “You’re with people who are like you. So many other teachers are not like art teachers; once in a while you find them, but otherwise, they’re a whole different type of person!”

While Donna is isolated, in terms of being the only elementary art teacher in her district, she is vital to the school community. While she has mastered the art of being an elementary visual art teacher, but, when it comes to saying that she is competent, Donna hesitates. She contemplates. She questions. She deliberates. She qualifies her perception of her competence with exceptions. But, eventually, she admits to being competent about seven or so years into her teaching career. She says that she now feels competent because of the things that she has experienced in the art room. She has “had everything happen in the art room that could happen.” Some things happen so many times that she can predict when things are going to happen. Knowing about many things in art makes her feel good, but knowing the developmental stages of children is essential for planning the curriculum, she says.

Donna has mastered the art of teaching elementary school art and she has thought about what would happen to the art program if she were to take another job in the district. Would there be someone who could perform at her level of competence? “Who would come in and do what I do?” Her undergraduate art instructor took her under his

wing and said to her,

You really seem to love everything about life. You seem like one of those people who could do well in a one-room school house teaching everything. I said yes! That's exactly what I want to do! . . . you know in art you really do everything because art touches on all aspects of all humanity and all learning and he showed me how science and art work, how math and art work. Of course, I kind of knew it but, he really showed me (Donna, interview, May 14, 2009).

In addition to her BS degrees in Religion and Psychology, Donna plays the guitar and writes music. She incorporates her music and writing skills into her practice by creating songs that complement lessons in her curriculum. Indeed, it would take a unique person to do what she does.

Donna is a high-energy teacher. It seems that she is working all of the time. She leaves home by 6 a.m. to get to school around 7, her ideal time. She comes to the school at least six days per week and when there is an upcoming event (a choir concert, for example) she will spend the night at school (she keeps her sleeping bag and blankets in a cabinet) working straight through the night. "I see no reason to drive [home] and come back 2 hours later." It is a 45-minute drive at best.

All in all, she works at the school building about 55 hours per week, on the conservative side. But, that does not include work that she may take home, such as grading, matting, cutting paper, things that she can easily carry. If she does not stay

after school during the week, she has to come at least one day of the weekend. Donna has had volunteers and helpers, but in the time it takes to instruct them on what needs to be done Donna feels that she could do it herself. It is for a similar reason that she does not take time off from school (except for maternity leave, she has missed only five days in 28 years), the preparation for the substitute takes a substantial amount of precious time. Other teachers have also said that the amount of time it takes to prepare for a substitute is prohibitive—they would rather just go into work.

Elementary art teachers teach at least five grades and more if it is a K-8 school. So, the teacher writes a separate lesson plan for each grade, and then prepares the materials for each class and makes them readily available; she then writes the precautions (no chalk or paint, for example), locks down the room and hopes that there will not be a “renegade” substitute who secretly wants to teach art because “it would be fun” and ignores the teacher’s plans. In that case the planning time was wasted and the room is a wreck.

Built within the last five years, Donna’s teaching space is new and she was able to advocate for changes in the design that made more sense for an art room. She is highly satisfied with her space—it is a dream art room on the second floor of the building. The room is large with computer and technology areas, a kiln room and a storage room, and an office/teacher work area that is not enclosed, but set off from the classroom. The room is well lit and has natural light as well. Since the room is above the library, soundproofing was added after Donna voiced her concerns that her classes, which sometimes used various types of noisy equipment and tools, could disturb the

classes below.

Contrarily, her teaching space for the previous 22 years was in the basement of an older building. It was a cramped room, half the size of the current room with no windows and no ventilation. Mold and other unidentified microbes permeated the room. This environment caused serious health problems—a liver transplant was being considered. Fortunately, a new building was built and six months after the school moved into the new building, normal kidney functioning returned. She recalls her experience this way:

The biggest problem for me was there were no windows. It was hard for me to be in there twenty years without any windows and so there was no ventilation. And if you looked behind and inside of things there was mold and all kinds of things growing behind whatever. And there was asbestos on the flooring and they were telling us, as long as you don't bother it, it'll be fine, but there were pieces of it coming up all the time. So, I never knew how to feel about that. And I can tell you horror stories about my liver and everything. Being in that room, I was told I might have to have a liver transplant, and I didn't know it was coming from that. The year we moved over here, six months later my liver went back to being perfect and fine.

This was alarming, considering that many teachers have spent their work lives in unhealthy teaching environments. This is one teacher who thrived despite her conditions.

CHAPTER 4

Working Conditions

Decision Making

The purpose of this section is to determine the ways in which elementary visual art teachers participated in the decision-making process within their schools and districts. Decision-making is layered, I found. It encompasses school and district level policymaking and implementation that affect a range of faculty, staff and students.

Leadership Team

It was not very long ago that teachers were not allowed to be involved in the decision-making aspect of their work life; decisions were made in the upper echelons of the legislature and by the school board and district administration, far away from the classroom. Teachers were expected to comply and implement the decisions in their classrooms. However, over time, the process evolved so that teachers—the employees implementing the policies and who are closest to the students—should be involved in the decision making process, and it gave impetus to the idea of shared decision-making and site-based management.

Although schools involved teachers in the organization and operation of the school through committees, such as curriculum, staff development, and climate, the principal was ultimately the administrator responsible for making decisions at the building level and was not obliged to solicit input from teachers. The shared decision-making model, on the other hand, was based on the premise that to improve education

and student achievement, teachers should be involved in meaningful ways in the decision-making process. Some districts made the effort to move to site-based management, pushing many decisions to the school site.

This process included teachers, but was broadened to include parents and in some cases students. Site leadership or site-based management teams were generally comprised of administration, teacher representatives, and parent representatives who were engaged in decisions concerning budgets, staffing and curriculum at the school; teachers were even included on hiring teams for their school, as well. This process was a time-consuming endeavor, and since many meetings took place beyond the teacher workday, teachers often received compensation for their time. Six of the teachers in this study had served on the leadership teams at some point in their careers.

Leslie was the most involved and influential at the school and the district level. She was most interested in curriculum development; however, her engagement in committee work was varied. “I’ve been our union’s vice-president for a while—for about five years. I was the union vice-president on what we call our joint policy committee, which is a board member and principals and teachers, where we decide—or we make decisions, discuss and make decisions about things that aren’t contractual.” She was on committees at the schools where she taught and she was on one committee “that include[d] parents and teachers and sometimes students, that kind of govern[ed] general policy and culture of the school (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

Nathaniel, Joan and Jacob have served on their school’s site leadership teams. Nathaniel, who has taught art at his school for eighteen years, had been the chair of the

site-based council, the chair of the staff-development committee, and the union steward. Joan, also at her school for 18 years, was currently on her site council and had been on the instructional committee. However, when she became one of two union stewards she decided to resign from the instructional committee because, she thought, “I can’t be on every committee. It was way too much.”

Jacob, new to his school (he was part-time there before becoming a full-time staff member) was on the leadership team, but he noted, “It’s changed since I’ve been here. It’s been more of an informal informational organization instead of a decision-making body since the new administration [came] here.” Another team, in addition to the leadership team at his school, is the principal’s advisory, which is made up of representatives, he explains, “So, we have meetings with our representative which goes back to the principal. That’s basically the only way I’ve got impact at this point.” He added that he was more involved in decision-making and policy-making at schools where he had previously taught, and that he had enjoyed being steward there, as well.

Terri feels integral to her school. She does not currently serve on the leadership team, but has in the past. She feels very connected to the principal and her school is structured and operates in an atmosphere of collaboration and consensus. She described how she views her role in the decision-making process at her school:

Because I’ve been here fifteen years, I feel responsibility to step up to a leadership position. Our leadership is a shared activity between administration, parents and teachers. And, I would say in terms of that powerbase, it’s really a third, a third, a third. Our management team is

something that happens once a week—I'm not on that this year, have been on it in the past. If I have something happening in the arts field, I can go to that management team and chat with them (Terri, interviewed April 28, 2009).

She further explained that the management team coordinates information and disseminates it via email to the staff and faculty. The faculty signed an agreement to read the notes in exchange for the elimination of weekly faculty meetings.

Lacy and Bob aspired to be on the instructional leadership teams at their schools in their district, however, there is an interview process to become a member. Bob said that it is a “well-paid position—\$4,000 a year.” That team, he said, was responsible for “all of the testing, going over scores, and placing students, and so they have a fair amount of work to do.”

Lacy was concerned that at her school the specialists are not represented on the team—she applied and was denied. “Currently, there is a person who is assigned to us, to be our representative on the committee, but she isn't a specialist. She tries to do the best job she can, but she doesn't know all the things about being a specialist that would be helpful when you're sitting in the meeting.” Lacy was very frustrated and discouraged that her voice as an educator was being disregarded in decisions that greatly affected her.

And, last, there was Katherine. She talked about her desire to serve in a leadership position:

I have never had leadership on a committee. I had wanted to but they would always say ‘we need you on this committee.’ They always put me on another team. I haven’t been able to choose the team I wanted to work on. I have not been happy with that because there are certain areas in the school that hold more power than others. I always felt that the art teacher would have more power had she been on leadership (Katherine, interview, December 8, 2007).

Committee Membership

The visual art teachers served on a range of committees at their school sites. In addition to the site leadership teams, they mentioned their membership on the climate, International Baccalaureate, staff development, arts planning and parent involvement committees. The teachers were more likely to say that they were on the climate committee or some version of it, such as school environment.

Committee membership was more an expectation than a directive; therefore, membership on various committees was voluntary. The teachers rarely served on more than two committees at any one time, and most were comfortable with one.

To be practical, in light of the fact that she was part-time at two schools, Magdalena limited her participation on committees:

I would say being at two schools is very hard. [At] my other school, I am not even there on the days that they have staff meetings. So I never have gone to a staff meeting there. And that’s when a lot of staff—a lot of

decision-making takes place. At this school I am here three days of five—I am here a little bit more than half time. I feel like I participate a little bit more. I would say the biggest way [is that] we have a grant for the humanities and fine arts [which] is considered a part of that. Because we have this grant, I feel like they ask for my input, and I get to participate, and I can use the funding from the grant. I feel like my subject is supported through the grant, as far as decision making.

Magdalena continued,

One other thing about being at two schools: in a way, not so much is asked of me on the flip side, in a good way; I am part-time at both schools. Sometimes they don't expect that I'm on multiple committees. Sometimes you kind of feel left out; you never know what's going on unless someone specifically tells you. Things are decided or come up [with] at the last minute, and you are just not there when those things are talked about. So sometimes you feel bad or hear about things at the very last minute. But then too, those things are very time consuming. It's a lot to keep up with the students. Sometimes it's been kind of nice not to be a part of all those meetings.

She acknowledges, as the other teachers have, that she could be more involved, “If I wanted to be a bigger part [in decision making], you can always be more involved. In that way, it's probably me too. I just get so caught up in trying to do things for my classes.” (Magdalena, interview, April 25, 2006)

Joe was another teacher who did not commit to regular committee membership. He said that he needed that time after school to work in his classroom. He admits to an interest in the climate of the building and a “big interest” in parent involvement: “Last year I was [the parent] liaison—I was the parent involvement department.” The following year the school hired a parent liaison whose work he admired and respected. Joe proudly reveals, “I’ve become her support person. I do stuff with her and I help her in any way that I can.” (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

Since committee membership was voluntary, the teachers in this study did not feel overwhelmed or overextended in their commitments. They were able to select the committees that they wanted to join based on interest and the amount of time that they were able to commit to the group.

Meaningfulness

The teachers derived meaning from participation on committees in the school organization. Nathaniel said that he felt “valued and that’s something we all seek out in our career, no matter what your job is. That you’re valued and needed.” Terri said she felt a sense of responsibility from knowing the kids and using that knowledge to continually make school better for the kids. Anna said that it was meaningful because the “arts are always on the chopping block, and I think it’s really important to be a good advocate for your school’s visual arts program.” Meaningfulness lies in problem solving for Leslie,

I guess for me, meaningful participation in joint efforts; if you came up

with a solution to whatever problem you're looking at and the solution is implemented. You're on committees many times where you work very hard to come up with a solution, but then the solution, for one reason or another cannot or is not implemented. I would say that the ability to perceive the problems and then come up with solutions and have the solutions implemented (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

Schools could probably function without committees, but having committees, like having an art program, has positive effects school-wide. Committees establish a sense of community in the school setting and enrich the organization with a sense of cooperation and responsibility for the school.

Conversely, committee work can usurp time and energy from other important tasks that art teachers must perform. Additionally, most committees are peripheral to the core of decision-making that affects teachers' work lives. Although teachers had participated at various levels of the decision-making process, most of the teachers had little voice or their voice was ignored when it came to the one aspect of their work lives about which they wanted to be heard: time.

The schedule emerged as a point of tension for all of the teachers with the exception of Terri. This primary aspect of work is the one that few in the key decision-making positions understand or think that it is necessary to address, especially from the perspective of art teachers. The implications are profound. The introduction of the NCLB made this situation worse. It gave license to denigrate any subject that was not math and reading. For teachers in the District, all time was spent focusing on these

subjects. All decisions must relate to the perfection of math and reading scores and to the closing of the gap.

Professional Development

Professional development is essential for teachers to learn new skills, improve and maintain skills, stay current in their field and maintain their practice.

District sponsored professional development for visual arts teachers differed between districts. For some participants it was non-existent, irrelevant or an afterthought. Their in-district staff development was most often administered at the building level, while once per year they met with other art teachers at district-wide professional development events. When the art teachers attended professional-development meetings at their schools, they were more likely to say that the activity was irrelevant or that it did not meet their needs as an art teacher. Contrarily, professional-development opportunities sponsored by other organizations was said to be much more relevant to their work and was more beneficial for them as art teachers.

On the heels of the NCLB, the state's governor used the opportunity to institute reforms to teacher pay. In 2005, the governor proposed and the legislature enacted the Quality Compensation program, or Q Comp, as the statewide program is commonly known. Individual districts voluntarily apply—about fifty districts currently participate. The districts have to be approved to participate and receive the additional \$260 per pupil (MDE website).

There are five components to Q Comp: career ladder/advancement options, job

embedded professional development, teacher evaluation, performance pay and an alternative salary schedule (MDE). The local districts with teachers' unions design the program for their district. Each district distinguishes itself by renaming the program.

ATPPS or Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System is the District's alternative salary schedule required by Q Comp, and TAP is the job-embedded professional-development component required by Q Comp. TAP or Teacher Advancement Program is the District's program to improve teacher effectiveness through "focus, alignment, embedded staff development, mentoring, coaching, consistency and professional planning time" (FAQ, MPS).

All of the teachers worked in districts that subscribed to Q Comp. Donna, Leslie, Lacy, Jacob and Joe mentioned aspects of the program and pointed out its successes and failures.

Donna said that she felt it pulled money away from other things that would have been more valuable to her. She thought that the small groups, peer coaching and feedback that she received was a good thing, but "the money is just silly." She added that they get about \$600, before taxes, "for doing an awful lot of paperwork."

Lacy also mentioned the paperwork. She said of Q Comp in her district, "It's another hoop to jump through. It's nice to watch other people teach, and I think I gain something from that. It's a lot of paperwork, too."

"Wonderful," is what Leslie said about her district's version of Q Comp. She continued,

They've come up with a great system. You have a mentor, you work with a peer coach . . . The district has broad areas that they want—and, these come from the research about what makes an effective teacher. You choose a few of those areas, and you do a little research, participant research, and they come in and observe you. You tell them exactly what it is you are trying to do so that they can observe and see if you're doing what you think you're doing. The system is really great. You also have to do something that shows how you're supporting the school-wide goals. So, the [Q Comp] system is great, and it also allows for interaction with administrators and other people in terms of improving your teaching (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

By fulfilling all the requirements, she adds, teachers could make extra money, “could be a couple of thousand dollars if you jump through all the hoops properly.”

A counterpoint to Leslie's experience is Jacob's experience with the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) component. It was his feeling that it was poorly executed, and from his and Joe's description, it felt more like an evaluation by superiors than by a coach or mentor.

He does not conceal his disdain for the program. “I did not like TAP,” he acknowledged. It had been discontinued at his current site, but “there are people at this site who want to get the money for it,” so they want to bring the program back. He had valid reasons for rejecting this process. Firstly, four different evaluators observed him and none agreed on his performance; secondly, none of the evaluators were art educators;

and third, the instruments used to score and grade performance made him feel degraded. “I tell you, I felt degraded because of the scores and grades that they gave [me]. I don’t think it fairly reflects at all how I am as an art teacher” (Jacob, interview, June 4, 2009).

“That TAP crap,” was Joe’s initial expression. He then pulled back and tried to find the positive aspects of the process. He explained that the program was “trying to give the skills to teach research-based”; teachers interpreting scores and developing instruction based on the computer-generated reports.

He continued, “But it’s so convoluted. We have to go into the computer—we’re completely technology based. We get assignments; we have to respond to them. I don’t have time for that. So, I am perpetually behind.”

He said this is not helpful, but on second thought added “If I think I already know ninety percent of this, that means that there is ten percent I don’t know.” He described his relationship with his mentor/coach. They do interact and discuss the observation and the scores she gives him on the rubric. He acknowledges that these activities do not meet his needs as an art educator. “You can always tell when the specialists stuff has been attached because it’s generally for classroom teachers—even the process for the research” (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

Indeed, that is correct. The FAQ page (FAQ, the District) states that “TAP is a professional development delivery model . . . used for professional development around PBIS, POL, CFC Collins Writing, Text Talk, NUA,” specifically. Specialists are dealt with on question 26 (of 28): “Cluster [group] configurations are decided by the

site,” and “those teachers should be considered when configuring clusters.” The feeling conveyed through choice of words and position on the sheet does feel like an afterthought—Tacked on.

There were professional-development opportunities that were embraced by the teachers. The Center was highly regarded for professional development by teachers in the study. They reported that they grew professionally, and that they enjoyed and needed the association and connection with other art teachers; they learned from the planned activities, classes and workshops offered and presented at the center, and from the other art teachers who attended as well.

Anna described her experience with the Center, “That was really a great thing because we met at different locations around the city with the Center’s program. They had guest speakers and you really got to network with people outside of your district and hear about their arts programs.”

Because her district doesn’t provide a lot of professional development, Lacy went to the Center, “The Center was really my main source of my professional development with other art educators. I used to go to the Center, [but] their funding was drastically cut; I’ve really missed that this year.”

Schools that are not making AYP (adequate yearly progress) per *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) have added requirements and had pressure put on them. There were two teachers in the study who taught at schools in the District that were designated as needing Corrective Action or that had been restructured (“fresh-started”). Most schools do make

AYP, therefore the effects of the law for those teachers are not as extreme.

Joan taught at an arts magnet school in the District. She was most affected by the enforcement of the NCLB policies that had been instituted. She spoke about the collaborative atmosphere at her school before the time and resources were directed to improving language arts and math. She described her school at the fourth-stage of not making AYP:

We are required on Monday's, Wednesdays and Thursdays [to] have meetings. Thursdays are team meetings, where we have to meet with our [team] . . . the specialists meet or sometimes the specialists are assigned to either a primary, intermediate, or middle school. You're in one of those learning communities . . . sometimes we meet just as specialists. Every Wednesday we have to meet for an hour and a half after school. And the hour and a half is like learning committees. You're split up with not only the specialists, but also with other grade levels. It's trying to bring up reading scores and math scores, and how to integrate. I mean people are really burned out about it. And, on Mondays we have meetings too. The biggest complaint that anybody has is 'When do we get to just work on our own planning?'" (Joan, interview, December 2, 2007).

Joan questioned why the specialists had to be consumed with reading and math. She recognized the need to raise the scores, but those intensive efforts diminished her ability to "work on arts issues." Planning for arts functions became limited by time. She further states that, "I feel, not discouraged, but it's just very disheartening to every time

have to do this reading and math . . . these meetings, to me, feel a little bit just like wasted time” (Joan, interview, December 2, 2007).

Professional/staff development and convening with their art teacher colleagues was deemed to be essential to their work as art teachers. But, district-sponsored professional development has not been sufficient or specific to the needs of the teachers. Therefore, art teachers developed their own networks in which they discussed and shared what was pertinent to their work lives. Some formed online communities using email and their district’s intranet to access curriculum.

Not having an arts coordinator can make it harder for arts specialists to meet and coordinate within a district. When Lacy's district neglected to inform the teachers that they had to plan their own in-service, they complained. Lacy relates the circumstances, “We didn’t have our before school starts half-day. Every other year we had a half-day of all the other art teachers being together. We did not have that in the fall. They said that was because we did not organize it. There was miscommunication with that.” She said that the teachers usually met during workshop week so there would not have been any additional costs. When the art teachers complained, the District asked, “Why didn’t you call a meeting?” When they said that they did not have a coordinator, the teachers were authorized to select a teacher to serve as their coordinator. The coordinator position was part-time because whoever took the position still taught full-time. Lacy compares this situation to music, “In music, they have a person. A percentage of their job at the district level [is taking care of] all the music stuff. They would not let art have that” (Lacy, interview, April 28, 2009). The coordinator is paid hourly with a cap on the number of

hours that s/he can claim for the coordinator position. Despite the limited resources, Lacy thinks that the coordinator is doing a good job in her position.

Leslie's district was an exception among these art teachers. She said that the art teachers "get a pretty good amount of time to get together to decide on curriculum and other issues." She noted that district-wide staff development met about three times per year as well as during the week before school starts. Those meetings address district initiatives, such as reading or language arts, but also allow time for "job alike" meetings. In addition to that the art teachers meet on their own time once per month to further discuss issues specific to their work. Leslie elaborates on the importance of interacting with arts educators:

Oh, it's essential. I think it's really important. Really. That's the one thing we have worked for and tried to develop was—well, it's called 'job alike' here . . . so, the District does make time for that. Of course, it's important enough that we get at least two hours a month just meeting so that we can—we've tried to design a curriculum that has very clear guidelines, concepts, et cetera that everybody has agreed to cover over the five-year period. But, we also want it flexible enough that each person can share these things . . . as art teachers we like to get together and bring examples of a lesson and . . . then we'll kind of talk about [assessing student work] so that we can kind of more and more get on the same page in terms of assessments (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

Leslie also reveals that in addition to the once-per-month meetings on their own time

and the three or four district-wide meetings, during the curriculum review cycle for the discipline “more resources are freed up so that we can actually get substitutes and meet to work on curriculum.” She adds, “I’d say we value that really highly.”

Lack of time and a reduction of professional-development opportunities by limiting the funds and restricting the subject matter provide little incentive and make it more difficult for teachers to maintain and upgrade their skills. When teachers’ work is intensified in this way, it is more likely that they will turn to a prepackaged curriculum, another example of deskilling educated workers.

Resources

An employer is obligated to provide workers with the resources to carry out the job. In this study, time, money and space are the major resources required by the art teacher to perform the job. Each of these resources has more than one dimension. Time for the teacher is divided into two categories: teacher contact (time with students) and teacher preparation (time without students). Funding comes from the state and is filtered to the schools and eventually to the art teacher. Space refers primarily to the teaching space.

Time

Time is often an area of contention for teachers in general. For visual art teachers there is rarely enough time to accomplish tasks within the duty day. There is always one more thing to be done. The teachers that I interviewed spent inordinate amounts of time

working beyond the official school day. They reside on various points along the spectrum from an additional one to two hours per day to an additional forty hours added per forty hour work week.

On the short end, for example, are teachers who spent one hour before school and/or an hour after school at the building. This does not include tasks such as time shopping for materials, preparation work, and research carried out at the library or online. On the long end of the spectrum, teachers such as Katherine worked the equivalent of another full-time job, a total of eighty hours per week. After completing tasks that had to be done at the school site, Donna then went home and continued to work on tasks that could be accomplished without regard to location. Donna takes work home and goes back to school on the weekends and she estimates that she works about fifty-five hours or more per week. Additionally, she says that if she does not stay late during the week, she will have to come both days of the weekend instead of just one.

I'm sure other people in the school work really hard too, but they'll say that I put in a double week. You can't possibly service all those children as one person and get everything prepared and everything cleaned up, everything graded . . . I'd put in at least another fifteen hours for sure when my body is actually in the building. If it's not in the evenings, it's on the weekends. I'd say fifty-five hours minimum of me working here. But if I'm honest about it, the amount of things I take home to do, then there's some more hours added in (Donna, interview, May 14, 2009).

All the teachers had a preparation time that lasted usually between forty-five and

fifty five minutes. In most cases this time was used as transition time, cleaning up, setting up for the next classes. This is how Magdalena describes her use of that time:

Planning time is really not a part of my day. My prep time is used to put away things from my morning classes, get things out for my afternoon classes. That's not prepping materials, that's just physically moving things from the morning and getting things out for the afternoon. It's not cleaning up anything; it's just getting things in stacks ready for the next classes (Magdalena, interview, April 25, 2006).

Joe says, "This takes as long as it takes. You know, if I have to put in a twelve-hour day, I'll put in a twelve-hour day. If I can do what I need to do in two hours and be out of here, I do that too" (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

It must be conceded that fifty-five minutes is inadequate to prepare for teaching art classes. That segment of time seems to be used to carry out custodial chores at the elementary level. Joe says that he gets paperwork done during his preparation time. An observer in his class commented, "Once the kids get on task, you start doing something else." He replied, "If I didn't do something else in preparation for the next class, it wouldn't get done." He explains his reasoning:

So, if my kids are on task—and art is something that part of it is private—if you're doing what you need to do I'm going to leave you alone. So, while they are working I'm going to start preparing. It does not mean that I don't have control of this class, that I am not attending. I'm going to

interact with you, it's just if I can find ten minutes to do something, that's what I'm going to do (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

I asked him how much more time he thought would be enough time, and he related a story about art educators visiting from China. He said their model was an eight-hour day “it's a longer day—and four hours of the day they would have to prepare. The second half of the day they would teach. And the kids were involved with aides and support staff for that four hours in the morning. Four hours in the afternoon they would teach their classes . . . that gave you a big chunk of time to prepare.” Joe has had first-hand experience with this type of scheduling model when he taught at a high school. “I'd have all morning to prepare for classes in the afternoon, and that worked wonderfully.” He concluded that, “time is real valuable, and I wish it were configured differently” (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

Money

It matters how much it really costs to run an art program, though it is not certain that those who control the funding know the costs. Even though a school may have an art program and an art teacher, there is no guarantee that it will be adequately funded. It was apparent that the art budget allocations had no connection to the actual needs or requirements of the program. The funds come from the District to the school. Once there, the school's administrator can decide to allot funds to the art program starting from an amount of zero dollars. There was no consistency from administrator to administrator, school to school or one year to the other (even though there is a recommendation of \$2.50 per pupil).

The District's art teachers in this study had budgets that were less than one thousand dollars for up to 800 students. If the teacher is on staff at a K-8 school, the budget has to cover both elementary and middle school. To run the programs, they found it necessary to supplement their allocation. Most often the additional funds were personal funds that ranged from a few hundred to thousands of dollars per school year. Art teachers in other districts were funded at a rate of \$1,500 or more per year, and they were less likely to spend their own money to supply the basic needs of the program. They spent \$100-\$300, if any at all.

Nathaniel was the District's exception. He raised substantial amounts of money for his art program by appealing directly to the parents. While his principal encouraged fundraising, other principals did not. In some cases there were policies banning fundraisers such as candy sales or other items, which left fewer options for teachers. Nathaniel does not remember the exact amount of his budget prior to asking for donations, but he remembers that it was inadequate and that negotiating was a constant struggle. He recounted this anecdote:

When I first started, it was kind of a real problem. You know art materials are expensive. You can give a classroom teacher 300 bucks and that could work. But, you know an art teacher needs more than 300 bucks. We're seeing ninety kids a day, a pint of paint isn't going to go very far. Art materials can be expensive, and I know it can be a big issue (Nathaniel, interview, June 29, 2009).

Nathaniel did not start out asking for \$25, he started with \$15 and said that it was

J.'s idea, his then principal. He prefers going directly to parents because the arts programs keep all of the funds. He pointed out that with fundraisers the proceeds are split with the sponsoring company, this way the arts programs keep all of the four thousand dollars that they net.

Nathaniel is, again, the exception. Art teachers who needed additional funds were most likely to spend their own money to supplement the program. Magdalena did not want to disclose her budget or the amount she spent personally, but it was well above the approximately \$250 income tax credit for teachers.

Joan estimated that she spent \$1,500 or more per school year. Susan estimates \$5,000 while Jacob estimates between \$300 and \$400 while acknowledging that it does depend on other factors. These teachers are on staff in an urban district where the art budgets are decidedly lower than the suburban districts, that is \$500-\$1,000 dollars per year for 500 or more students.

Joe, who is resourceful at obtaining funds and materials, spends his personal money as well:

I spend well over two thousand dollars a year, well over. Closer to three on this program, and sometimes even more than that. I try to use other resources, but if I spend any money it's because it's what I want to do. So the drill, all of that equipment is mine. The saw, the drill, I got a TV in the storeroom, it's mine. Because, if I want this program to run properly, these are things I have to get. Software, lumber, I bought. It came out of my pocket because this is what I want them to do, this is what I want them to learn, and I'm not going to let something like

resources or purchase orders—they could bog me down. Some things I will turn in a receipt; for other things I don't care. It's what I want them to do (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

Jacob was well aware that the administration in a building made a difference in how the art program was funded. He says, "It depends on the administration. My first year in the District we had \$100. Anything above that, you had to show why you needed it. The next administrator went by the state guidelines, which back in the nineties was two dollars fifty cents per student—it's higher now." Now, eighteen years later, he recalled his reaction when he was new to his current school and the principal at that time gave him his budget, "The first time I came here I was flabbergasted. The administrator here asked, 'Is \$1,800 dollars enough?' I've never had \$1,800. He was very astute as to what you need to have a program." An administrator that is sensitive to the financial needs of the arts program is rare. Jacob sums up his experience in the District this way: "It's all how astute the administrator is in the building [about] what it takes to make a program that deals with consumables, and the way they value the program."

Few of the teachers had any influence on the amount of money that they were allocated to manage their art programs. Although, once they received the money they had full control over its application to the art program. The teachers were empowered by the authority and responsibility.

Anna saw it as showing leadership, taking the role of department chair, making the decisions about the tools and materials that would shape the art program. While, in terms of leadership, Leslie, was notable in the kind of change she affected in her district.

Her budget for a population of 500 to 600 students varied from \$2,500 on the low end to \$6,000 thousand on the high end, “when the PTA throws in a couple thou.” This funding did not happen automatically. Leslie took the initiative to make a presentation to all of the principals in her district illustrating what it takes to administer a basic art curriculum. Here, she explains how she approached them:

About fifteen or eighteen years ago I made a presentation to all the principals showing what we need to do our curriculum at a basic level. What I did was [show] things like how many sheets of construction paper would a kid need or what percentage of a brush would you use? Let’s say a brush lasts five years, so a kid in one year’s time might use a fifth of a brush. And, maybe 100 kids are using that brush. I actually went through that kind of thinking and wrote up an explanation . . . and showed them how much it really costs to do a basic curriculum and not do anything fancy. It figured at that time to be almost seven bucks a student. So they started figuring out—they could see that they were all over the map. One school might get four thousand and another school might get two thousand dollars. And my principal at the time was funding—I was getting less than anybody was and that was one of the incentives to do this presentation. So once we did that presentation, we kind of got a commitment from the principals to try to, at least roughly, use that [seven dollars] as a guide (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

Leslie said after that presentation, the allocations became more consistent across

the district, and she also acknowledged that her district had good resources over all.

Donna works in an inner-ring suburb in which the population of the school has drastically changed, because the community has changed. When she first started, Donna received about three thousand dollars. She says, “I had a great budget for a while. It was up to three thousand dollars in about 1988. And, then it got bumped way up to fifty-five hundred, which was really good for me.” Her funding remained at that level for about seven years. With that kind of budget she could include art magazines and she felt she could buy enough supplies to last. “When markers started running out, I could actually get some more instead of trying to soak them in paint thinner.” But, when her district went into “statutory operating debt,” she said, “We had all kinds of problems. They made everyone’s budget be cut by forty percent. And, then, a couple of years later we lost a little more.” She continued,

I don’t know if it ended up being fifty percent. Then in the meantime, years were going by and supplies were getting more expensive so I feel like I was going in the hole more. Now, at this point, I’ve only made it back up to thirty-four hundred. So, when you compare . . . fifty-five hundred with thirty-five hundred it does not buy what it should.

Everything’s more expensive (Donna, interview, May 14, 2009).

Over the years, Donna has consistently spent one thousand or more of her personal funds on the art program.

Anna started the program at the arts magnet in her district. It is the only

elementary art program in her district; the school was established using a grant award to encourage desegregation. Originally, eight thousand dollars per year of grant funds were budgeted for the visual art program for each of the first three years; after that, there would be no more. She said she spent on the conservative side, about four or five thousand a year. She left after the third year, but heard from her successor that there was “hardly any money left.” Anna speculated that the money was used for other purposes based on comments such as “we found money in the grant for . . . ” made by administrators and other teachers.

Nevertheless, whether the art teachers in this study had generous or negligible budgets and spent their own money, they were mindful and conscious of materials and very often conservative in their usage. The teachers were open for donations, collected materials and supplies, are reused and repurposed materials to stretch their budgets and materials. Here are some teachers’ statements describing how they extended their budgets:

“There’s no delicate way to say it, I’m a supply pimp and principals is my ‘ho’s. Where this comes from is I’m a Taurus; Taurus’ are hoarders. They say we’re materialistic. We are not materialistic; we hoard stuff. I have enough supplies in this room to run this program for two years. Every opportunity I get I take it. I go to the print shop and say ‘you got any scrap paper? But, I use stuff judiciously. We do not waste. That’s the way I run this ship. I do not ever want to be at wants for anything. I’ll take stuff that people don’t need (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

Donna describes her efforts to preserve paint by “digging out the pieces of old watercolor paint and trying to put them in a new pan:

With glue sticks, take out the little tiny bit that’s left and stuff it into a new one, create a new glue stick out of a few old ones. That’s the kind of stuff I’d spend an awful lot of time on. I’m a hoarder so I have kept every little piece of everything so I can put some old things together with some new things. Then I’ve, over the years, found some places to get things inexpensively. There was an art scraps store that I got a lot of things from. I’ve been lucky to have things donated—white roles of paper—I can do so many things on those. They came from a paper company (Donna, interview, May 14, 2009).

Other teachers such as Lacy and Bob have additional options. They have access to a district foundation and are able to get grants for extras or special projects. Anna’s parents and artists donated materials and reusable items.

Generally, art teachers had no influence on budget allocations, but they did have the autonomy to spend the funds as they thought appropriate for their art programs.

Teaching Space

All of the teachers in this study had a classroom. Some had converted spaces, while others taught in spaces that were built as art rooms. In the not-too-distant past, having an art room was a luxury for an art teacher. “Art on a cart” was a true catch phrase for teachers who were not assigned a teaching space. For the most part, that has

changed in this state. Most administrators understand the necessity of a teaching space for an art teacher and attempt to provide one at the school sites.

The teaching spaces ranged from the very old to brand new—built within the last decade. Spaces in the older buildings tended to be smaller and lacked storage but had other features, which made them inviting spaces. The newer spaces were larger and built as art rooms, therefore including design features that were conducive to the study of visual art.

Magdalena, who teaches at two schools, has a classroom space at each school. She shares the space with the music teacher. Here, she describes her space:

I am fortunate that at both my schools I have a room, but at both schools I have to share the rooms. At this school the room is also used for band. You can see all the musical stands and drums, and, so space is tight. I do love both my rooms. Both have sinks, and, for the most part, I have enough storage space. The teachers who share the room are respectful of my things—not to touch or take anything that they know is art. I have two really nice rooms with big windows all across one wall. K. was built in the '50s and this school is at least 100 years old (Magdalena, interview, April 25, 2006).

The teachers who now have art rooms are very appreciative because they had once taught in inferior spaces. Donna, Joe, Jacob and Sandra had relatively new spaces built within the last ten years. All of them had previously taught in spaces that were

makeshift and difficult, and in some cases, unhealthy.

Donna taught for more than 20 years in the basement of an old building. She said her “original art room was not so wonderful.” It was roughly half of the size of the current room and was hazardous to her health.

Joe had taught in a home economics room with cooking stoves and a room that kept switching from computer to art and back again. It was fully carpeted and had a wall of windows facing a hallway. But, now, he is in a dream space—three rooms in one—including a 37-station computer lab. Here he describes his experiences with art rooms.

They do weird things with art rooms. At W. when I was there in the mid-‘80s, the art room was the home [economics] room. And, it was next door to the art room, which was the music room. Every year I would say, ‘Why can’t we just switch back? Because that’s where the ceramic kiln is; there are ovens and stuff in here and I can’t really use those, but I could sure use that ceramic kiln.’ ‘Oh you can go in there and use it when they are not having music [was their reply].’ So, that’s W. A., the art room was the computer room, was the art room, was the computer room again. So it had this ugly, crappy, and by then rotten carpet in there—they needed carpet for the computers. Next to the art room was the kitchen, so I didn’t have any problem with that. But this is the first art room in my career in [the District] that I’ve ever been in that was the art room!

Jacob started on a cart in the District. He also taught in a lunchroom and for seven years he taught in a shared space at the community park center. He said this about his teaching spaces:

When I first started out I was on a cart and then after four years on a cart, I was put into a park center, which I had to share with the people at the park center—a very small room. I think it was there in that particular setting—I was there for at least a minimum seven years. Then I was in a small room at K. The other areas, I was there part-time. At N. I was on a cart, S. I was on a cart, at A. I was in the lunchroom. And other than this particular school, as far as [the District] goes, this particular site has been the best I've ever had. I've got a huge room, there's a kiln room, there's a storeroom, and I have an office. The physical facilities at this site are unbeatable (Jacob, interview, June 4, 2009).

I see Jacob's situation as a balancing of suitable classroom facilities against soul crushing administration. If he had to, how would he choose? There is further discussion about Jacob in the section on morale and job satisfaction.

Storage in most of the newer rooms was adequate. The teachers in the new rooms were more than satisfied with the spaces. However, they mentioned a few details that input from an art teacher would have helped to avoid.

For instance, the depth of Joe's cabinets measures the exact size of a sheet of construction paper. That means that the door will not close without damaging the paper.

Turned so that it fits, the paper takes up more shelf space. He says more storage is needed and higher quality furniture. “Whoever ordered these chairs,” he says, “I hope they got some kind of kick back because these chairs have a life expectancy of about two years.” So far, he has had to replace about half of the chairs in less than six years.

Lacy and Anna had spacious, well-designed rooms in buildings of about 20 to 30 years old. However, the rooms were sliced to make room for other classes. The decision to reduce the size of their rooms was decided without their input.

To Anna the decision was an affront because the decision was made outside of the appropriate committee by the principal and a few teachers. She said that, “it did not seem like a very ethical process.” Another reason Anna felt deeply about this was because she had input on its design and she organized her teaching to take full advantage of the room’s features. Additionally, she said that she loved the space, “It was very, *very* nice.” Then she described how well the room organization worked for her, as a teacher, and for the students.

Since she was changing schools for the next year, Anna felt that the reduction in the space was timed, “because I’m leaving it’ll be easier because the next person won’t know what it’s like to work with a bunch of space” (Anna, interview, June 30, 2009).

Lacy’s large classroom was reduced by half, and that smaller space created a storage and logistics problem. Lacy’s school had to build new storage closets outside in the hallway to accommodate supplies and materials. The downsized room eliminated her book corner as well, as she explains:

Last year I had a room twice this size, but they are very crowded here. So, they had to close the divider wall—there’s another class on what was the other half of my room. It’s now a math room. It’s been a challenge. I guess I should be lucky that I have a room at all and not a cart. But, it is a challenge to serve 850 kids . . .

I used to be able to have different areas like the printmaking area . . . I used to have an area where they could sit and read these books and that was part of the grant, that there was a book corner. I have the books but I don’t have the corner anymore . . . so, space is an issue. My storage is out in the hallway. If I need something I have to go out in the hallway, and, I can’t leave my class to go out into the hallway to get [it] (Lacy, interview, April 28, 2009).

The location of the newly-built storage closets increased time used for preparations because everything must be inside the classroom. She further explains that the books are being damaged because the students have to sit at the art tables while reading. Also, the light tables, which were helpful for students, are no longer used because there is no place for them.

That Lacy believes that she is “lucky” to have a room speaks to two issues: 1) how art is viewed at the school and in the District, and 2) the insecurity brought about by the actions of administrators. Lacy believed that her work space could be eliminated at any moment by administrators who devalue art and art teachers’ physical and pedagogical spaces. “Luck” invokes whim, not purpose and deliberateness.

Nathaniel and Magdalena had the smallest rooms. Nathaniel's room was the 'cooking room' when it was a school for special children in the earlier part of the century. However, despite the size, he likes the space, and he said the beauty of the building compensates for the room. He said, "I'm saying it's small, and it is small, but we also have this beautiful school. It's this beautiful old building built in the 1930's or 1940's. It's this long Tudor building. It has historic value" (Nathaniel, interview, June 29, 2009). Like Nathaniel's building, Magdalena's school is an older building as well.

One of Magdalena's classrooms was in the basement and can only be described as tiny. But her organization of the area optimized the use of the available space. I interviewed her at K. school, and I also visited her other schools on different occasions. Her descriptions of both schools are at the beginning of the section.

Art teaching spaces and classrooms appear to be expendable. According to the participants in this study, art teaching spaces can be repurposed, eliminated, shared, compacted, moved, and/or sliced into bits at any moment a perceived need arises. Often the change is made and the art teacher is informed after the fact.

Joe was prophetic about the future of his room "I have no delusions: this school is six years old. By the time it is fifteen years old, this will be three rooms."

The decision to change the teaching spaces is rarely based on a disciplinary need or requirement for the teaching of art. Rather, the change is made to satisfy the needs of other disciplines in the school building. Art teachers have had to adapt to the challenges that changes in their spaces bring: inadequate sinks or no sinks, no kiln, or space for a

kiln, inappropriate furniture or furniture that is in disrepair, no storage space for materials or student work, and no space for teacher planning and preparation or workspace.

The decisions that are made about art teaching spaces send messages subconsciously to students, parents, and the public about visual art and its place in the school.

Questions that may be asked about art teaching spaces include, does planning around the obstacles presented by teaching spaces add to the difficulty of the job, if so, how? Does it increase the creativity of the teacher, increase his or her level of frustration or usurp time needed for planning curriculum and attending to the discipline of teaching?

Clearly, the level of concern about job satisfaction and morale by administrators for the effect that their decisions have on their art teacher employees is inconsistent from school to school.

The Schedule

For the most part, art teachers had no say in the scheduling of their classes. Several of the teachers reported that the music teacher, alone or with the physical education teacher, made the schedule, and had greater influence or had major input in the schedule. Most teachers felt frustration when it to their schedules, but seemed especially frustrated that they were not involved in the process of scheduling.

I make a distinction between scheduling and the schedule because scheduling encompasses the decision-making process, including who designs it. The schedule is the

product of that process. Often an administrator, such as the assistant principal, the principal in a smaller school, will make the schedule with several other people. However, while the administration may ask for input, it is often ignored or the needs of other disciplines and classroom generalists are privileged (as Lacy has recalled). At Bob's school, reading and math are privileged: "It's just the way they can schedule the classes. A lot has to do with how the special ed. teacher can teach reading and math with the different grade levels . . . you have to take into consideration Title I. It's a matter of when they can plug in specialists' times" (Bob, interview, June 3, 2009).

While asking for input gives the appearance of consideration, when that input is ignored teachers feel resentment or tricked. Donna expresses her feelings about her experience: "Well, they like to let us think we're helpful with the schedule, but in the end it's pretty much a puzzle that's locked in. I know the music teachers have a lot more to say about it because it's two of them and they need to have some common prep and they do more concerts and they need to have certain grade levels for that to work. So, they get kind of blocked in but I think phy ed and myself, we just get whatever happens." Anna links her inconsistent schedule with the decision making and partiality toward other disciplines: "Every single year I was there my schedule was different. So, that's another thing that I would add about the decision making process at this school. For some reason they have always let the music teacher make the schedule. That had been a tradition at that school because she was a specialist and also good chums with the phy ed teachers and since they were the two big electives" (Anna, interview, June 30, 2009).

In previous years at other schools Joe had been satisfied with his schedule, but

this year the K-8 school had been “fresh started” as a result of not making adequate yearly progress (AYP). His frustration lies in the fact that a person inexperienced at the task designed the schedule. “Our schedule,” he says, “is done by someone learning to do schedules and really shouldn’t be doing them. They don’t make sense.” He suggests that the person who made the schedule was serving her own self-interests. He also explains why the initial schedule did not work for specialists: “We were complaining because our sixth grades had thirty nine kids in a class, and you would spend thirty minutes dealing with discipline.” In this case the principal was able to be responsive to the needs of specialists by changing the classes and adding more staff.

Lacy was quite disheartened with the schedule and the process. She was concerned that the student contact hours would not be enough and that she would not be able to bond with her students. Here, she reflects upon her efforts to be engaged with scheduling and how it affected her:

The thing I’m thinking about now is figuring out schedules and how often students are going to have each subject and what my schedule is going to look like. Each year I do submit to administration what I think would be best and there’s always reasons why that can’t happen . . . There might be an announcement, ‘Bring your ideas to administration,’ and I do bring my ideas, but [administrators say] ‘Oh, we can’t do that because . . . ’ There’s a long list of reasons (Lacy, interview, April 28, 2009).

There seems to be a feeling of duplicity since the administrators rebuffed Lacy’s efforts. Even so, her efforts to be engaged with the scheduling process increased

and she strengthened her resolve to develop a workable class schedule:

It was last year that I wanted to try to figure this out in a way that was going to work for as many people as possible. I know you can't make everybody happy, but I was confident that if I knew all the parameters that I could figure out a solution. I spent a lot of time last spring meeting with all the people in the decision-making process. Still, here we are in a six-day rotation—I only see my students once every six days. I have 850 students. Not feeling confident about the role of art education in this school (Lacy, interview, April 28, 2009).

Lacy's disappointment that her efforts were not implemented, acknowledged or respected is apparent. Later in the interview, she further explains why she is discontented with the schedule, "I'm very upset about having 850 students. I'd like to bond with students, but I don't know all their names at the end of the year because there's just so many, and I see them so infrequently. I see them about three times a month." Here, Lacy voices another issue for elementary visual art teachers, which I will address later, and that is class load. She illustrates how these two elements are related and can have an effect on morale and job satisfaction.

Nevertheless, there are other concerns with the scheduling of art classes. Most of the teachers did not have passing time between classes, it is, as Joe says, "box cars." Classes appear one right after the other without a break. Teachers' schedules were generally five classes per day in a three-two or two-three configuration punctuated by lunch and preparation time. Two or three hours without a break was the norm, and it

exacerbated the hectic tone of the day. Here, Magdalena describes her day:

When I get to school I am so busy from the minute I get there to the minute I leave. All my students I see fifty-five minutes a week. It's good, but it's still a very small amount. I don't have passing time at my schools. I literally have one class lined up, ready to leave for their teacher to pick them up, and outside my door, the other teacher has their class lined up ready to walk in. I have to have everything in perfect little stacks, ready for classes. That's all my prep time is used for, clearing things away, emptying the drying racks so the afternoon classes have room to put stuff. That's what my prep time is used for (Magdalena, interview, April 25, 2006).

Magdalena voices the experience of many other art teachers whose days are harried and crammed with classes. Nevertheless, there was Terri.

While Terri did not have input into her schedule (because it was in place before she became a teacher at this school), she was the most content with the way her class schedule was configured. She said that, "The scheduling really does support me being able to work in-depth," and it fits with her school's philosophy. Explaining the details of her schedule, Terri continues:

I have fifty-five minutes, and I see the kids three times a year if they are kindergarten through sixth grade. I'll see them for twelve days in a row. My 7th and 8th graders I'll have a fifty minute class, and I see them twice a

year for twenty days in a row. It's kinda like block scheduling. It's for art projects because I can introduce some vocabulary or concepts one day, we start using it, bam. Come right away the next day a few key questions to get them warmed up on that track, then boom, it's a work-day. Next day they come we can do a formative assessment, taking a piece or two of their work putting it under the document camera and talk about [it]. So, I can really go in deep with projects because of the schedule. I wouldn't be able to do that if I was seeing all 800 kids each week. Then what we're looking at is snap shots kind of thing. Snapshot kind of curriculum, drop in-drop out. There's no depth to that; the scheduling would not prohibit that depth (Terri, interview, April 28, 2009).

Terri seems to have what many art teachers require and desire most: a viable schedule developed with the discipline, teacher and students in mind.

Jacob voices his opposition to the kind of schedule that promotes the "snapshot" curriculum as well. But scheduling, driven by the attitude that the arts do not deserve a legitimate place in the curriculum leads to the idea that it does not matter how it is scheduled. The principal at his school has directly stated that "They're just filler. We can do anything we want with their schedules" (Jacob, interview, June 4, 2009). That statement illustrates that principals are aware of the power that they have to control teachers' work lives. The hope for art education is that principals' attitudes are tempered with an informed and inclusive view whereby they may make intelligent decisions with the school community.

The Workload

Workload refers to how many students and classrooms an art teacher is responsible for at a given school site, and it determines if the teacher will be part-time or full-time, how often the teacher sees the students, the organization of storage, and classroom management. One factor in the scheduling of classes for the elementary visual art teacher is the workload, that is, the number of children that receive art instruction in a week. The workload for elementary art teachers is usually more than 500 students per week because an art teacher will instruct the entire school. Art teachers may be full-time or part-time at one or more sites. The workload presents the clearest illustration of intensification of teachers work.

For an art teacher to be employed full-time, it means preparing for and teaching 500 to 850 students per week. If there are not enough classes of students at one school, less than 23 or 24 rooms, for example, the art teacher may become part-time at the building and will have to work at two or more school buildings to be considered full-time. This adds another layer to the teacher's already busy day. She is then setting up and maintaining two or three classrooms per week. If the teacher is fortunate and the schools have worked out a schedule in which she is working whole days at a site—that is, she begins the day and ends the day at the same site—it circumvents the problems inherent to travelling between two schools in a single day.

It is exhausting to travel between two schools on a single day affirms Magdalena,

who traveled between three schools at one time and spent four years juggling two. When she was traveling between schools, the schools combined her lunchtime with travel time so she was often eating lunch in the car on the way to the second school. Once there, she began the day over again.

The visual art teachers were not reimbursed for travel or mileage, as were special education teachers in the District. The discrepancy, as explained by the District, occurred because the art teachers chose those positions (instead of being placed by the District), therefore there was no obligation to reimburse teachers for mileage. On the surface this seems biased, and further investigation may prove that there was a plausible explanation for it. But, for now, this is an additional expense for some art teachers.

Another concern for art teachers who split their time between multiple schools is the feeling that they are not a member of either staff. Magdalena, the only person in the study teaching in a split position, articulates her experience: “I would say being at two schools is very hard. I am not even there on the days that they have staff meetings, so I never have gone to a staff meeting there.” She continues, “Sometimes you kind of feel left out, you never know what’s going on unless someone specifically tells you” (Magdalena, interview, April 25, 2006). She also “feels bad” because she does not have time to get to know the teachers better at any of her schools. It seems that Magdalena feels alienated from her colleagues at both schools.

Storage space is another issue that relates to the workload and scheduling. When the workload consists of hundreds of students, space to store unfinished work has to be considered when organizing the classroom. Teachers, such as Terri, who taught a portion

of the school population at a time, found that this alleviated the problem of storing hundreds of pieces of artwork from one week to the next.

Lacy worried that with 850 kids she would not be able to develop the kind of relationships she thinks are important to have with students. Worse yet, the specialists at her school met with students on a rotation schedule, which meant that she saw the students about three times a month; she was very concerned that she would not even learn their names.

Before the schedule and classes were readjusted at Joe's school, he said that with "thirty nine kids in a class, you would spend thirty minutes dealing with discipline." When the adjustments were made, the class size went down to 25 and "discipline problems went down to nothing" (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008). Large class sizes and class loads can impair even the most adept teacher's ability to form relationships and manage discipline. It is not merely the numbers of students, but it is the combination of students in the classes that impact teachers' ability to manage the class.

Although other teachers had concerns about student behavior and discipline, they were unrelated to workload. Those will be addressed in another section.

Most elementary classroom generalists teach the same 20 to 30 students per day while specialists teach about 150 different students per day, 750 students per week. They begin and end class five times per day, sometimes with five different grade levels and they teach without transition time between classes and grade levels. They have little or no input about their schedules. For these reasons it is vital that administrators and others who are charged with the scheduling task configure the art schedule with the discipline

and the characteristics of the job at the forefront.

These characteristics, that is, class loads of 500-800 students and split positions clearly illustrate intensification of the work of elementary visual art teachers. While there are solutions to the work overload problem, many in administration do not recognize the problem as a problem, especially not as a problem with a resolution. The solution could be as straightforward as hiring another teacher, however there needs to be an impetus to improve the work lives of art teachers.

Technology Access

As technology has impacted the world, it has also impacted visual art teachers. Technology emerged as an invaluable tool in the work life of these visual art teachers. It released them from being dependent only on district resources. Technology plus the Internet increased art teachers' access to many far-reaching resources. Whether it was low technology or early technology, i.e., the projector (opaque, slide, overhead, 8 or 16mm film projectors), television, audio tape recorder/player, video cassette recorder/player, or high technology and current technology, i.e., computers, digital audio and video recorders and players, LCD projectors, document cameras, interactive whiteboards, its introduction changed the way that art teachers worked.

As I interviewed these teachers and visited their environments as well as supervised student teachers in diverse districts, I realized how impoverished some districts were, particularly the District when compared with other districts. Even schools within districts showed discrepancies in student and teacher access to technology and the Internet.

Suburban District A started developing technology plans in 1995 and established a framework to guide its technology development and implementation plans. The District lagged behind its suburban counterparts in the implementation and maintenance of current technology. In recent years, grants and other funds have provided districts with the means to upgrade and expand their capacity and purchase current technology for educators and students.

Competency

How teachers define their competence reflects upon their efficacy. In this section I look at what the teachers use as measures to determine their own competency. The teachers struggled with this question more than any of the others. They paused and reflected upon their practice as art educators. They pondered how to define their competence.

This question raised more questions about competency and efficacy. Are feelings about competency linked to self-esteem? Content knowledge? Some of the teachers seemed to think competency is linked to confidence, or how much confidence one has in her ability. I did learn that teachers' feelings about their competence fluctuate, and they may feel competent overall, but have areas of uncertainty.

The teachers in this study said that they felt competent for a variety of reasons: their artistic practice, content knowledge, their skill in organizing their classrooms and materials for effective use, the results that they get from students and the quality of student work, their ability to match curriculum and lessons to students' abilities, age or

grade level, and their feedback from parents.

Areas that made them feel less competent or where their competence fluctuated were with the addition of a new curriculum, new or different media or tools, district imposed requirements, and when teaching students with special needs without training or practice and when dealing with student discipline and behavior.

The less experienced teachers, Anna and Sandra, had a more difficult time defining competency for themselves. Feeling competent is not straightforward; it does not have a singular component. One of the components of competency, however, is confidence. The teachers linked confidence and competence instinctively. But confidence is not sufficient to declare competence. Confidence is merely a belief that one can perform, while competence is one's actual ability to perform certain tasks and skills at a level that is satisfactory and acceptable, in this case, to oneself.

Upon reflection, many of the more experienced teachers, felt confident but not competent in their first years of teaching. They poured a lot of energy into developing curriculum and getting a "feel" for elementary students. They may have come from other fields; some began teaching without an education background, although they may have been fine artists or designers. They returned to school, many at the university, and received a teaching certificate or a BA degree, and some continued and earned the Master of Arts in art education.

The teachers tended to feel competent after the fourth year, although some of the teachers said that they felt competent sooner. "The fifth year," Magdalena recalled, "I had the cleanup down, I knew what the kids were capable of. I [could] teach something

to their level—I wouldn't have older kids do something too easy. So, I'd say those first four years there was a lot of experimentation—not intentionally, accidentally. It was hard to gauge timing and teaching to their level and not teach above or below. Also, those first few years in the District I didn't have a curriculum.” She said when they adopted a curriculum it was exceedingly beneficial to her.” (Magdalena, interview, April 25, 2006).

Leslie began her career as a toy designer, but thought in order to design sound educational toys it would be beneficial to learn more about education and children. Leslie, the teacher with the most experience, discussed the elements that contributed to her feeling competent. Here she described her first years:

I was working on mysteries without any clues. When I first started teaching in a parochial school, I had classes of forty kids in an old tiered choir loft. I didn't have any training as an art teacher, so I muddled through. But, it was so cool. I just really loved it. I mean it just uses everything you got. A job that is challenging and interesting at the same time. I went back to school. I got certified to teach art. That helped a lot. Helped me feel more confident” (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

She became an art consultant; she demonstrated lessons that grade level teachers would replicate with their students. Because she could not teach a lesson twice, over the six years that she was in that district, Leslie said she “built up a big library of lesson ideas. I developed my own curriculum.”

Leslie returned to the university for the MA and PhD in art education. In the

1980s she also began teaching as an art teacher—"I was really a classroom teacher: I wasn't an art consultant anymore." It was about that time that she was introduced to DBAE, Discipline Based Art Education. This was when she said she "really started to feel competent when DBAE came around. I suddenly realized what I was really teaching." Before that, "You're floundering—are you trying to develop creativity? Or, are you trying to develop good citizens?" Leslie places this at about seven years into her career as an art teacher.

Jacob said that he first felt competent about his second year teaching elementary art. After he had worked as a teaching assistant at the university and had spent a year as part of a curriculum-writing team during his first year of teaching, he felt that he was competent. Those experiences helped him to feel competent earlier in his career.

Several of the teachers linked competence with experience. Donna considers experience and curriculum development elements that make her feel competent. Because she taught at a junior high school the first two years, Donna does not count them when determining when she first felt competent. "I suppose it took me about five or six years before I said I have a great curriculum," she said, and it was about then that she was awarded teacher of the year in her district, something that she had not sought. As she continued to consider the notion of competence, she put the years at ten before she felt competent. In the end she said, "Honestly, I have a long ways to go." Donna says that she has experienced many things in the art room. "I've had everything happen in the art room that could happen, I think. Over and over to the point where . . . I can foresee what might happen. Like [I] almost can see the future with that student walking with the

paint.” Perhaps that is a component of competency—the ability to anticipate and predict events in the classroom. Donna continued, “I feel good about knowing a lot of different things about art. I think I know what the brain development is [of] students at certain levels. I have a good idea of what’s going to work at [which] level. I try to write songs about most things I teach, and that’s what makes them remember. They don’t forget when they learn that way.” She has created hundreds of songs. Yet, Donna does not think of herself as an expert. “Just me raw, doing it, I’m doing the best I can with what I have. But, don’t feel as competent as I could be if I had all the resources and all the training. That’s why I like going to that art education conference, anything I can take in. It’s so wonderful because then at least pieces of it can go out to my children” (Donna, interview, May 14, 2009).

The dialogue with Donna raises some questions about our internal beliefs, what we feel about ourselves and expect from ourselves versus what others observe and expect from us. From the outside we might view these educators as exceptional artists and teachers, the ones to emulate; but they struggle to define themselves as competent. Perhaps competency is an ill-defined concept of teachers’ abilities and skills.

Terri spoke of her teaching with a reverence and respect for what she does as a teacher. This is what she said about competence:

Yes, I’m working on it. A lot of this stuff is life work . . . in terms of giving yourself an entire life to learn it. I’m good at it because I now understand it’s a process, and I am working on the process. And, I respect the effort that I’m putting into it. It’s enough effort where I am allowing

myself to say that, yeah, I'm good at it. Now, if all of a sudden I go off the deep end and start creating art at night instead of resting, well, then, my art teaching is going to suffer. So, in a way I have to hold my own personal creativity back and funnel it into the classroom (Terri, interview, April 28, 2009).

Terri expresses the idea that one does not just become competent and remain there without a conscious and continuous effort to do so. She said that it took her twenty years to get to this place. It is important to note that Terri was not always a classroom art teacher in a school. While she did not start as an art teacher she worked in a parochial school as a teacher and in community in arts related fields before teaching in the public schools. Once there, she was an arts integration specialist (wrote curriculum for integrating science, social studies and art in the classroom) and taught students who were gifted and talented. At her current school, she has taught art for five years.

Terri said of her first ten years that she knew she was not competent "I was talking way too much in the classroom." She has learned that "what you need is a few key questions and a few really targeted demonstrations, illustrations, art pieces [for students] to look at."

"Yes," Joe immediately answered when I asked him. "The time I finally figured this out was ten years ago." He continued to tell about when he first began to feel competent:

I thought I was an okay teacher, '96, '97, '98. I was trying to learn and

get stuff together before that. Now, what happened in the mid to late '90's was things happened in repetition over and over again, so what made me feel competent was a behavior problem. This kid came in. I recognized the behavior. I knew where this was going, and I was able to sidestep it. It was like, 'Go [Joe], you saw that coming a mile away.' And, I sidestepped it in one of those board certification rubric teacher kind of things—'I redirected him in a positive way that netted a performance out of him that I desired.' This [stuff] works! Let me try it again. So, all it is [is] experience, and from that experience I see a lot of things coming from a mile away (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

Joe's account illustrates competence very well. Here, again, it is linked with experience, but it is also linked with an acquired knowledge, and in this case, knowledge of behavior management techniques.

Behavior Management

Several teachers mentioned behavior management as an area that had the potential to make them feel less competent. Donna related that without the behavior management plan and support she receives at her school, she would "feel like an island" on her own. "Our school has a wonderful all-school discipline policy," she stated, and then explained how it worked, and she then added, "I just think the consistency of that is so great . . . I think if I didn't have that structure it might be way more difficult. I've had this for many, many years" (Donna, interview, May 14, 2009).

This illustrates the importance of administrative support for teachers. Unfortunately, in some of the most challenging schools teachers are not afforded consistent support. Lack of support from administrators has been cited as one factor for teacher attrition.

Jacob, who initially taught in a rural area, said that discipline in the urban setting intimidated him because of what he had seen and heard in the media. He said, “As far as dealing with discipline at the elementary, that took a while. And I don’t feel that I am super competent at it, now mainly because of how [the] administration seems to support—or lack of support, it feels like,” he added, “I’m not intimidated by the discipline of the urban kids anymore, I found out it’s like anybody else. As long as you are honest and consistent and try to have some fun with the kids.” Donna and Jacob expressed the importance of administrative support in successful policies and their implementation.

“I think behavior is hard,” Magdalena said. “I feel like most of the times things go pretty well, but I still think it’s hard. And behavior does get in the way of teaching or having projects turn out super well, or have the kids learn everything that I’m trying to get across to them because behavior gets in the way.”

The other teachers in the study did not indicate that student behavior was a concern in their schools, neither was it an obstruction to their teaching or a barrier to their feelings of competence. The more experienced art teachers were more likely to say that they were competent as teachers, and the male teachers in the study tended to say they were competent at an earlier time in their career than the female teachers. While

competence, or efficacy as it is also called, may not be at the forefront of the teacher's mind, they continuously involve themselves in activities that help to maintain and increase their level of competence.

Morale and Job Satisfaction

Morale and job satisfaction are conditions often affected by working conditions. It was important to examine the working conditions to understand how and what working conditions are applied to these affective conditions.

Morale

For this study morale is considered to be: 1) personal and individual rather than a group phenomenon, 2) changing—raising or lowering—over time spent in the same organization, and 3) manifesting in symptoms that can reflect a dysfunctional organization. I asked the teachers to assess their personal morale, even though morale is often thought of as a group phenomenon, such as that found in a corps of workers. Consequently, some of the art teachers did not address the state of their own morale, or they talked about the morale of their colleagues in relation to their own morale. Upon further probing, the art teachers began to consider the level of their own morale. Once we narrowed the focus of morale to the personal feelings of the art teacher, they were able to think about and give an assessment of their morale at that point in time, gauge if their morale had changed over time, and think about what it meant for their future plans.

Magdalena, an art teacher in the District, is one of the teachers who took the

broader view of morale as a group phenomenon, and she assessed the District's morale as "awfully low," at the time of the interview in 2006. She reflects on the factors that contributed to the state of low morale:

The whole thing with losing our superintendent, also, with so many schools in our district closing; times [multiplied by] people who have been realigned and how many times you have to go to bidding—I've been 3 times in the last four years, and; I would say lack of funding, much bigger classes; lack of staff development opportunities . . . so, I would say that morale is really low . . . With classroom teachers I think morale is so low because of testing and NCLB [No Child Left Behind]; comparing our schools to the private schools, the charter schools . . . I would say it is an overall atmosphere (Magdalena, interview, April 25, 2006).

Magdalena's description characterizes intensification of teachers' work in the District, particularly the increased class sizes, which speaks to work overload, and reduced opportunities for teachers to maintain their skills. Magdalena mentioned realignment and bidding, two processes that caused a high degree of stress and friction between teachers and the district administration. Realignment was a one-time, rancorous process of placing teachers with multiple certifications in staff and faculty positions without their consent, and bidding is the hiring process in which teachers "bid" on positions into which they would like to transfer. Other schools in the District experienced intensification of their work, induced by administrative policies, as well.

Joan, also an art teacher in the District, said she was feeling burned out. She

described the atmosphere at her school and the impact of NCLB on teachers and herself, especially on the ability of teachers to collaborate. There was the collective feeling of not having enough time and never being “caught up” with work. Then, there was the introduction of Learning Communities and evaluations that made her feel incompetent even though she had been a successful art teacher for many years. Finally, there was the NCLB label of not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) placed on the school for the last three years, which was accompanied by the threat of dismantling or “fresh starting” the school and dispersing the staff. Joan was actively considering leaving at the time of the interview in 2006.

I asked the teachers to characterize their morale as high, low, or in-between. They also talked about the factors that contributed to their self-assessment of their morale. It is important to note that morale can fluctuate; it is not constant over time. Morale can vary depending upon external circumstances.

The teachers who assessed their morale as high, good, or excellent shared some of the conditions that contributed to their current state. Nathaniel said that “feeling valued, needed and wanted” was essential to his morale, while Sandra said that “good friends in the building, good kids, good families. It’s a great place to come to work everyday.” Bob affirmed that “the people around you that you work with,” as a contributing factor, and that the people in his unit are supportive and that they have fun. He said that the staff at his building was a “good mix of people, young and old, and experienced and less experienced,” and as a staff they just “gel.” “It’s been a good place to work,” he said. These teachers seem to be experiencing what Evans (1998) refers to as “job comfort” or

job satisfaction, which she says extends into morale (1998, p. 13).

Some of the teachers who currently say they have high morale had in the past experienced low morale, and the contributing factors were similar to those who are currently experiencing low morale. Bob is one of those teachers. He said that “the schedule was unbelievably tough . . . the class sizes were unbelievably huge.” Though he was at the middle school at the time, he now says, “I think coming to elementary has rejuvenated me. I've been pretty happy here” (Bob, interview, June 3, 2009).

The teachers who assessed their morale as “not good,” or “low” stated that these outside influences had an effect on their morale:

- The administration’s attitude toward the discipline; changes in administration;
- A relocation of their classroom or changes to the classroom, especially involuntary
- A relocation to a different site, especially involuntary
- The schedule and scheduling, especially when they had no input or their input was ignored
- Their feelings of stagnation—exacerbated by changes in district policies
- Racial discrimination, prejudice and inequality

Defining morale is troublesome because there are different perspectives that lead to misconceptions. One misconception that I encountered in the study was that low morale is depression. Depression may be present in a person with low morale, and it may

accompany the condition of low morale, however, depression and low morale are disparate conditions with different root causes and remedies. For Terri, though, low morale would mean depression, and depression, for her means that she could not function as an art teacher.

Long-term plans to leave their district or art education were virtually unaffected by low morale. Teachers who identified themselves as having low morale felt that they had too many years in their districts to leave. Jacob feels a responsibility to his family and to the field of art education. He has not thought of leaving the District, “I like the diversity of kids...I like the IB (International Baccalaureate, the program at the school where he teaches), it’s worldly,” he says. But, he adds, “I am burned out teaching [at the] elementary level (Jacob, interview, June 4, 2009).”

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is more than how well one likes one’s job. It encompasses the tools and tasks that are required to perform the job, working conditions, salary and benefits. However, the way that I phrased the question, “What gives you satisfaction at your job, or what do you find satisfying about your job?” elicited two types of responses that came from a different perspective than I had anticipated. However, art teachers’ responses provided greater insight into their beliefs about the impact of their pedagogy on the lives of children.

One type of response centered on the student behavioral responses and the second type of response centered on art teacher behaviors. When I asked the art teachers the

following question directly, “What gives you satisfaction in your job?” I was surprised that few of the teachers in the interview explicitly said the act of teaching or performing “teacherly” activities such as preparing materials (cutting paper, wedging clay, making patterns curriculum writing/lesson planning displaying work or hanging a show organizing the room, or presenting information), was what gave them satisfaction—though it was clear throughout the interviews that these teacherly behaviors appealed to them in some way. I construed from the level of involvement in these activities, that they obtained some satisfaction or fulfillment.

The answers that the art teachers gave reflected student outcomes or student responses to the teacherly behaviors that they had performed in and out of the classroom. Most of the teachers (Anna, Lacy, Jamal, Donna, Joe, and Nathaniel) responded to the prompt without acknowledging their role as the teacher. Anna commented that when she hears “nice comments from parents . . . because they are not in school, so, they’re from an outsider’s perspective” it gives her satisfaction (Anna, interview, June 30, 2009).

Lacy addressed the classroom atmosphere, and she said that,

When the students are happy about what they are doing and they feel positive about being in here and sometimes you get a class where the atmosphere is really positive. And that’s really nice to be around. They are interested in what they are doing or they are at least willing to give it their best shot. And people treat each other with respect and help each other. Just to be a part of kids that are in a positive state of mind like that is just very rewarding (Lacy, interview, April 28, 2009).

Jamal found it satisfying “when the kids are making things, and they enjoy making it, start to make connections between vocabulary words that you would hear and they got it in their classroom; they remembered something from a previous year. Those kinds of things—I get more out of that” (Jamal, interview, April 23, 2009). Donna spoke to the development of the students, “Well, for sure the students, that’s the big thing. As hard and tough as some of them are, they’re really just all joys . . . it’s great to see their progress and find out how they’re becoming well-rounded human beings, and they come back [to visit]” (Donna, interview, May 14, 2009).

For Joe, who often partners with organizations around the city, it is the “students for whom that light bulb comes on. [And] Students who get a lot of accolades and praise” as he says:

My favorite thing is when the cameras come on and they stick the microphone out and my kids are all lined up and whatever they are doing is behind them . . . and people are interested in them . . . I step into the background. I have no ego. It’s not about me it’s the kids, it’s about the school. That is a turn on. I get a rush from that (Joe, interview, February 29, 2008).

“What I find satisfying about my job,” says Nathaniel, “is when all those kindergarteners are lined up, and they’re just so excited about coming into art class they just about pee their pants, and then I tell ‘em that we’re going to work with clay . . . that’s probably the most satisfying thing. Yeah, for children to find pleasure and joy in art making. That is really satisfying” (Nathaniel, interview, June 29, 2009).

All of those art teachers had worked to create the classroom atmosphere that produced these kinds of responses from children and from which they ultimately derived satisfaction. But this is only part of the equation. Some of the teachers did acknowledge their role in how the students respond. Jacob said, “When kids get it. You have a concept, something simple like . . . you develop a lesson, you try to deliver it in such a way [that] kids get [it] and they can tell you what it means and they put it in their art work. And they use it” (Jacob, interview, June 4, 2009).

Leslie found satisfaction in being able to invent ways that children would participate, be successful and empowered. “If you take a student who is not confident,” she says, “and make them feel really good about what they are doing. Okay, that’s when I say I’m product oriented, I can, I feel like I can make projects where . . . students, if they listen, they will be successful . . . When students are really proud of what they do, they can really start to feel empowered about that” (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

She continued to further explain how she finds satisfaction:

The most challenging part about teaching art at the elementary level is you take these really complex concepts, that in the fine art world that even aestheticians and critics have not settled on what the answers are, and you try to abstract these concepts down so first or second graders can understand it, but you want it still to be true. That challenge is really exciting to me . . . And, of course the introduction of technology, I am enjoying coming up with power points that people say they use and find useful (Leslie, interview, June 29, 2009).

Leslie's responses really embody and articulate the idea that teachers derive personal satisfaction from the teacherly behaviors in which they engage as aspects of their pedagogy.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

It is evident that the research is limited on art educators, especially in the terms of understanding how their work environment, morale/job satisfaction and resources effect their efficacy. The National Art Education Association recognizes this need and has put forth in “Recommendations 5 and 6” of its research agenda that all issues related to instruction, including decision making and program support, and “issues related to various settings and contexts in which art education occurs” be addressed (NAEA, 1996, p. 6). However, research that specifically examined the work life and working conditions qualitatively was virtually nonexistent. Nevertheless, this research has enlightened me.

Revisiting my research question I found that the emphasis had changed from morale and job satisfaction to defining and examining the elements of a teacher’s work life—the workday, the workload, the resources, professional development and interaction with other art teachers, efficacy and decision making—and the role they affected in morale and job satisfaction. These teachers were committed to education and to being in the classroom. Despite the problematic constraints of being an art teacher, practical changes in their workplaces would ease some of the tensions that they felt. The changes that they would make were not salary related, for while they thought that their salaries were adequate and average they did not feel that it was true compensation for the actual work that they performed. The changes they would make would be practical, related to improving the educational experience for their students. Acknowledgment by educators and administrators that teaching art is highly stressful and labor intensive, who may

subsequently institute strategies that can alleviate untenable conditions. Strategies that range from not increasing costs to those that increase costs nominally include:

1. Respect for art programs and for the field of art education.

Preparing future teachers would be the ideal setting for instilling the value of art education. Many elementary teacher education programs require an arts methods course. Perhaps it is here that we art educators may unabashedly advocate for the visual arts—for equitable treatment of visual art teachers.

2. Consistent and fair scheduling.

To achieve this would require major shifts in the paradigm. Educational values are embedded in the school schedule. Instilling respect for the place of the arts in the curriculum takes intention, persistence and time. Inviting visual art teachers to participate in the planning of the school day and inquiring about their scheduling requirements as educators would be a beginning.

3. The addition of teaching or educational assistants in their classrooms.

Given the average workload of art teachers, teaching assistants would be welcomed additions to the art classroom. There are different means for achieving this. Institute a partnership between the university and school districts in which pre-service art and general education teachers or work-study students would work in the classrooms of art teachers for one or two semesters, or a corps of volunteers specifically trained for art and coordinated centrally within a district are two possibilities that require little or no funding. Hiring teaching assistants is viable if the funding can be secured.

4. Realistic workloads

For larger schools and K-8 schools, additional art faculty should be hired. Two full-time teachers in schools of 700 or more would significantly reduce work overload. K-8 schools, which function as both elementary and middle schools, in particular, need to consider hiring an art teacher for the middle school and another for the elementary to accommodate schedules.

5. Adequate funding for art programs.

Researching the costs for maintaining an art program then establishing minimum funding for school art programs would facilitate a consistent level throughout the school district and would alleviate some funding discrepancies within districts.

These changes require shifts in attitudes and in understanding the value of the visual arts; attitude change is time intensive. However, those attitudinal changes would facilitate the transformation of the quality of the art teacher's work life into one planned with the discipline in mind.

While I had experience as an elementary visual art teacher and ideas about what it was like for others to be visual art teachers at the elementary level, I learned invaluable lessons from the participants in the study. Also, I constantly compared my experiences with those of the participants. I thought that I worked long hours, that is, until I met Katherine and Donna who often worked the equivalent of two full-time jobs. I thought I was organized, until I interviewed Jamal in his workspace—his storage and organization was like an art store! I knew my budget was inadequate at \$500 per year for 700 students, but I was shocked to learn that outside of the District, teachers regularly enjoyed budgets

totaling more than \$1500 per year! I learned the importance of empowerment from Leslie, and about the security and assuredness that emanates from being an embedded agent of the arts, from Terri. For Donna, who writes art themed songs for her students, has computer software written for her classes, who digs out the last bits in the glue sticks and stuffs it into the tube to make a new glue stick (to conserve), who keeps her pillow and blanket handy in case she has to sleep over to get a project finished, I have great admiration for the total dedication that she shows for her students, career, and visual art.

One issue that I did not take up in this study was the dearth of people of color in art education (as it is in education in general). People of color who dare to become art educators (African Americans, in particular, constitute less than 3 % of art educators (NCES, 2004)) will have an additional layer of discrimination with which to contend. Anna spoke of the way in which negative racial attitudes impacted her morale and Nathaniel related his feelings about being disadvantaged in his job search in the District because of his race. These questions were difficult for me to ask. I realized it was because I had never talked about race, verbally, with people of a different race. This line of discussion should be explored more thoroughly in further research.

Education is subject to trends and politics at every level. The current focus on student achievement and accountability has continued to capture the headlines and has eclipsed other issues of importance. Among those issues is the quality of the work life of teachers. School districts are, after all, employers; therefore, their responsibilities are twofold. The school organization is accountable to students and to teachers should provide a quality education and a quality work environment, respectively. These two

factors are interdependent. Crucial to this venture is the creation and maintenance of work places that reflect the relationship of job satisfaction, morale, and commitment of teachers to the overall goal of a quality education for children. As my work evolves, it is important to find ways for the research to impact administrators in a way that will help them grasp the importance of the work life of visual art teachers to the health of their educational organizations.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Pilot Study

- In what ways do you participate in decision making in your building? If not what keeps you from participating? Do you want to participate more/less? In what ways?
- What kinds of professional interactions do you have with your colleagues? Do these activities meet your needs as an educator? How important is professional interaction with other arts educators to you as an educator?
- Do you feel competent as an art teacher? Can you tell me about the first time you felt competent—or did you always feel competent as an art teacher? How do you assess your competency? What makes you feel competent? Or less competent?
- In terms of resources, how would you describe the availability of curriculum, materials, space, time allocation? Has this been consistent over the past six years? How does this affect your ability to perform your job?
- Have you ever thought of leaving your job in your current school district? Leaving the profession of art education? If so, what were the circumstances?
- How do you feel the majority of your colleagues show their view of you as a professional?
- How important is it for you to have high morale? How would you characterize your morale at this time? What do you think contributes to your morale at this time?
- Over the past six years has your morale changed? If so, in what ways has it changed? To what do you attribute these changes?
- What gives you satisfaction in your job? Please prioritize in order of importance.
- Do you plan to retire as a k-12 art teacher? Do you always want to be in the classroom, as a teacher?
- What is your dream for art teaching, art education?
- What would be your ideal as an art teacher? How close have you been to achieving this ideal?