Pass the Crayons: Leadership, Art Production, and Communities of Practice

ZACH KELEHEAR
University of South Carolina

ABSTRACT: The results of an arts-based leadership (Kelehear, 2006, 2008) practice at a rural middle school in South Carolina are examined. The school principal and art teacher led a day-long staff development and followed up individually to assist teachers to create art as metaphor for individual growth plans as well as school improvement plans. Specifically, the arts-based initiative sought to invite professional conversations that focused on: 1) personal reflections, 2) multiple perspectives, and 3) art making. Findings suggest that when the art teacher and principal work in collaboration, there is real value in an arts-based leadership practice. Also, when led by the art teacher, teacher reflections suggested that as the principal worked alongside the teachers, they felt valued and supported and viewed the principal as authentic and trusting. Additionally, out of the engendered trust, the teachers were emboldened to consider innovative, arts-based approaches to their teaching. Finally, there was evidence that the art teacher was highly effective in introducing innovative leadership practices as teachers. This study is one of several implementation studies emerging from earlier research on arts-based leadership.

Introduction

Recently, a school board member stated to the author that what she needed were school leaders and teachers who could improve student achievement "this year and not next year." This comment reminded the author that school improvement amidst high-stakes assessments is indeed an urgent matter. But in the urgency to change immediately, one middle school found time to practice creating a successful school environment that leads to student achievement and teacher growth. To follow is the story of the efforts of this school's teachers and leaders to reflect on individual practice, critique each other's work, improve schoolwide practice, and create a culture of openness and trust.

Robbins and Alvy (2003) remind us that leaders of schools may find real value in "managing by wandering around" (p. 14). When leaders fail to be present around the school, they can lose perspective on what is really happening versus what they think or hope is happening. Leading a school can be a lonely business, even more so when one is the new principal at the school, and wandering around may indeed help reduce one's isolation.

Upon completing one year at the helm of this small rural middle school near the border of North and South Carolina, the principal, after doing quite a bit of wandering around, began considering ways to lead her staff to work collaboratively and cooperatively. She stated, "I just want people to talk to each other about what is happening in the classrooms, what is working, what is not. Sometimes, I find myself wish-

ing that they would just talk to each other about anything, just so they would communicate with each other."

Building on a theory of arts-based leadership (Kelehear, 2006, 2008a) and meshed into a standards-based approach (Appendix A), the principal committed to focusing on the "form" of leadership as she guided a staff development that would build a community of practice. Arts-based leading was a challenging—and possibly risky in its innovation—notion for her, because she had only recently been introduced to the concept of arts-based leadership in a PhD course from the University of South Carolina. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that something very different was needed to challenge her teachers to see themselves, each other, and the students in fresh ways.

The author (2006, 2008b) has made the claim that teaching, at its best, can be characterized as artistic in nature. Such artful teaching is pedagogically sound, authentic in its approach to and assessment of learning practice, and supportive of experimentation and exploration, but requires an arts-based assessment structure that aligns expectations to practice. To ask teachers to be artful in their classes but to assess them in a way that does not embrace such an approach would be an invalid accounting of teaching practice.

Noting this void in assessment practice for artistic pedagogy, the author (2006, 2008a, 2008c) utilizes art criticism as a basis for assessing teaching as performance. Specifically, he uses the elements of art and principles of design (Feldman, 1995) to frame the analysis and discussions. The seven elements of art (formal qualities of an image) that he utilizes are line, value, shape, form, texture, space, and color. The seven principles of design are emphasis, rhythm, movement, balance, proportion, variety, and harmony/unity. For purposes of this staff development initiative, the principal focused exclusively on the elements of art. It was out of the elements that the principal found a frame and focus for her staff development initiative. And of the seven elements, the principal found form, as a metaphor for perspective, to be the key element as she helped her staff to begin addressing seeing from multiple vantage points.

Coupled with the arts-based leadership theory above is the supporting theory of adult learning. Research has supported the notion that faculties that engage in innovative reflective practice invite learning and developing by both adults and children (Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Murphy, 2002, 2006; Wagner et al., 2006). And as leaders develop the facility to lead for adult learning and not only children's learning, they are creating spaces in schools where adult learning is acknowledged, emphasized, and supported in developmental, intentional, and overt ways (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2009; Mizell, 2006). In fact, as more relational learning begins to appear in reflective practice, adult learning and development will also begin to emerge (Donaldson, 2008). The middle school in this study coupled an arts-based leadership practice with a grounded and substantive adult learning theory to create a place where reflection became the order of the day.

In the spirit of collaboration and shared leading, the principal was eager to have one of her teachers cooperate with her in leading the staff development initiative. One of her more experienced teachers was the art teacher and working with her made great sense to this new leader given that she was utilizing an arts-based approach. And because the art teacher was a connoisseur (Eisner, 1998) of art, asking her to share her expertise by becoming the educational leader helped elevate the role of the arts in general and the art teacher specifically. The principal and art teacher combined their skills and talents and set about creating an arts-based staff development initiative focusing on seeing as an artist. Specifically, the principal wanted two things to emerge from this staff development initiative:

1. She wanted each staff member to reflect on experience in qualitative ways and thereupon formulate a personal professional development improvement plan;
2. She wanted the staff to work together to reflect on the school culture in qualitative ways and then build a comprehensive schoolwide improvement plan that emphasized collaboration and conversation for all stakeholders.

The concept

Effective leadership of schools requires many skills. One key talent for leadership is to be able to observe students, teachers, and other stakeholders from multiple perspectives. Questions that confront school leaders can include queries such as: What is best for my

teachers? How does this choice affect student achievement? What might parents think of this innovation? Being able to observe from three dimensions, so to speak, may be an indicator of artistic leadership. The arts-based approach introduced by the principal and art teacher (Kelehear, 2006) included form as the element that represented one's capacity to see from multiple perspectives and from three dimensions.

For the visual artist, form is the three-dimensional structure of an image (Kelehear, 2006). In this interpretation of form as a formal quality of leadership, this element represents the leader's capacity to see an event, person, or performance from multiple perspectives. In a word, form is empathy. When a school leader walks into a classroom for an observation, for example, can that leader consider the lesson from the observer's perspective, from the teacher's perspective,

and from the student's perspective? If the observer is able to do such, then that person has revealed one element of artistic leadership through the use of form (i.e., empathy). From an organizational perspective, the same application of an arts-based concept (in this case, form) may be helpful. What follows is a description of how the principal led organizational and individual change within an arts-based environment.

The context

Landrum Middle School is located in the upstate region of South Carolina, just off Interstate Highway 26, near the North Carolina border. The school enrolls 265 students in grades 6–8. Other data are included in Table 1 (See Appendix B for the school profile from the Palmetto Academic Challenge Test 2007).

Table 1: Demographic Report: 2007-2008

Number of students (as of 10/02/08)	265
ETH Code = W (White)	224 (84.5%)
ETH Code = B (African-American)	17 (6.4%)
ETH Code = H (Hispanic)	16 (6%)
ETH Code = WB (White/Afr-Amer)	7 (2.6%)
ETH Code = A (Asian)	1 (.4%)
Free or Reduced Meals	122 (46%)
Students served by Special Educ.	43 (16%)
Students served by ESOL	12 (4.5%)

Currently, the school is comprised of 36 faculty and staff members: a principal, a secretary, three custodians, an office assistant, an in-school suspension instructor, 12 core area teachers, nine related arts faculty, a career specialist, two full-time special services teachers, a part-time special services teacher, an assistant for special services, a school nurse, a part-time administrative assistant, and a guidance counselor. Seven of the nine related arts teachers are shared with the high school for chorus, strings, band, and computer keyboarding. Twenty-two percent of the teachers hold advanced degrees.

Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature and utilized those basic skills to analyze reflections, interview participants, and code responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As recommended in the adult learning theory

research (Mizell, 2006), the principal and her teachers maintained reflective journals. At least once a day, the participants were asked to reflect either on their instructional practice, the practice of a peer teacher, or on concerns to be shared with the leader. The basic expectation for all the participants was that they would use the arts-based critique method described in this paper. From these reflective journals, the author conducted content analyses focusing on the frequency of use of the four steps in the critique process. The frequency count helped to determine the ease with which participants practiced the innovative reflective practice. Also, reflecting on the journals enabled the author to consider ways the leader was facilitating a learning community characterized by reflection.

Limitations

The change experienced by the teachers was in the nature of their reflective practices. In particular, the teachers wrote frequently in reflective journals about making art. They discussed with their colleagues and students their art productions as they walked down the halls, worked in the classrooms, and waited on bus duty. And, they were open with and receptive to each other as all were engaged in a very new practice—creating a shared vulnerability. Although the hope of the initiative was that the teachers would also encourage substantive change in the nature of the classroom interaction, in effect modeling for students a new way to consider and question, the certainty of that change is unclear. Follow-up interviews and observations by the leader and researcher are currently under way, with special attention given to the presence of trust as a function of inviting reflective practice. It is not yet clear, however, if the flush of the art initiative is a permanent change in the complexion of the schools or simply a passing excitement. Also, this study will be difficult to replicate, primarily because of the dependence on the art teacher and the arts-based leader, who so carefully acknowledged the role of adult learning theory and change theory (Wagner et al., 2006) in guiding the innovation.

Introducing the concept to the staff

Based on the arts-based model offered by the author (2006), the two school leaders introduced the teachers to the elements of art criticism (Feldman, 1995) and had them develop some basic skills for arts criticism. After some introductory efforts toward offering critiques of paintings, the art teacher led the teachers themselves to paint in the art classroom, to observe student artwork completed at the school, to discuss what they saw, to make 3-D art from clay, and to finish the day working with crayons.

The art teacher was thrilled to have the teachers and the principal in her classroom. Building on the new art knowledge, the two leaders developed a chart (see Chart A, page 5) that included three themes:

1. The name of the element and a picture placed at the top of each column;
2. The meaning of the element as it related to teaching and leading;
3. Some prompting or key questions related to the element of art.

Using the chart as a prop, the art teacher and principal then asked the staff to reflect on the possible meanings of the seven elements of art and to apply, metaphorically, the elements of art to their own skills as a teacher. After considerable discussion about the elements, the leadership team (i.e., the principal and the art teacher) identified one element that they would use to guide their own professional development. This modeling was important as a way to guide the teachers through this innovative process of seeing one's own performance through an arts lens. The principal showed the teachers her professional development plan:

> I created a "bamboo painting" that has the "characteristics of grace and strength" to represent the elements of line and space. These are two areas in which I need to grow as a leader for our school and from a personal perspective as well.
>
> A bamboo painting captures a strong emphasis of line through the foliage patterns and the bold medium of black ink. Consequently, the black ink emphatically stresses positive and negative space.
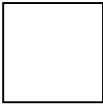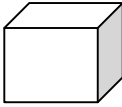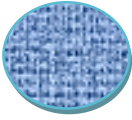>
> With a focus on positive and negative space, the black ink will serve as a goal for me to be very specific as to what needs to be "most important" and not "most pressing." The white space to include items such as testing is important; however, it's the whole child, symbolized by the strong, black ink that can not be forgotten. Multiple intelligences, rigor, learning styles, student engagement are what affect the whole child and his/her learning outcomes.
>
> The lines will serve as a way to narrow the emphasis and concentration. This will come from multiple perspectives of administration, faculty, staff, and students.
>
> In essence, the goal of the bamboo painting is to create a piece of art that conveys a fluid, rhythmic construction. We aim to create rhythm and fluidity that is in sync for the whole child and to do it with the grace and strength that comes from our own personal beliefs and pedagogy.
>
> (Crystal McSwain, February 2008)

Chart A

Line	Value	Shape	Form	Space	Color	Texture
What does it mean?	What does it mean?	What does it mean?	What does it mean?	What does it mean?	What does it mean?	What does it mean?
Helps us to define the relationship with the other person. A long narrow mark/stroke on the surface. Being clear about boundaries and parameters. How do we communicate expectations? An example as our school…Got RED? How do we plan our meeting dates and times? What do we expect from our teams? Are we clear on where our school is going? What needs to become clearer to me as a teacher, leader, and student?	Helps us to bring light to what matters most in schooling. Lightness or darkness of color. Where is our attention—is it on what matters most? Do we confuse what is pressing with what matters most? What is in the background of our personal lives or the lives of our students that needs to come to the light—receive more attention. What is most pressing (light)? What can wait (dark)?	Helps us to develop a capacity to help students learn. Two-dimensional area. May not be about instruction but definitely are important to the success of a school. How are you doing? (health, family). It's typical to put ourselves last—we have to be careful—this will lead to burnout and ineffective instruction. Another example…ment-ors.	Helps us to seek empathy; both the supervisor's and teacher's capacity to understand/feel another person's perspective. Develop active listening skills. Empathy allows us to hear both the content and the feelings in a message. What I hear you saying is… Help me to understand what you mean by… What do you mean by… So you're wondering… Your hunch is that… You're suggesting…	Helps us differentiate positive and negative space. We communicate to students what we consider to be important; what we want to see. Focus on learning outcomes for students and classroom management first! What is your lesson about? What are your goals? What is really important to you? What do you want them to walk away with? How will you know they have it? What will success look like?	Helps us to encourage different teaching styles and respond to different kinds and needs of students. Color blends students, teacher, and curriculum. Do I know my students well? Do I know about their families, interests? How do I respond to the varying needs of my students? Is my curriculum rigorous and relevant?	Helps us to focus on collegiality and collaboration – move away from cliques. Try to bring varying teaching staffs together. Cohesion among staff greatly benefits the students. How do we bring people together ….community, our stakeholders, our parents, volunteers? How do we bring different groups together? Different departments? (related arts to content) …visiting each others' classrooms?

After reflecting on the principal's plan, the teachers set about reflecting on their own experiences, and through shared conversations, each committed to an element that represented their self-identified professional growth area. A byproduct of such an exercise, the principal reflected, was that in working with her staff in this highly unusual approach, they could begin to know each other better, and in such knowing, an atmosphere of trust and mutual regard might emerge. Basically, aside from the art teacher, all the participants were in a similar place of discomfort as they tried to build competence as art critics and apply that knowledge to their own practices of seeing and reflecting.

Then an important transitional moment in the staff development occurred. Thus far, the teachers had talked a great deal about personal growth plans and what they would want to improve. They had used the arts metaphor, and this connection stretched them to think differently about their practice. If they had written this down on paper and submitted it to the principal, then they would have compiled an impressive list of personal growth plans—and as a result, an important school improvement plan. The art teacher, with the principal participating as an equal partner with her teachers, then stretched the staff to consider a medium through which they might represent their growth.

The teachers stared. Quiet overtook the room. The art teacher handed out the crayons. One of the male teachers asked, "Do you want us to draw something?" The art teacher pointed to a poster on the wall that said, "Work with your mind, think with your hands." She asked the participants to consider possible ways they might represent their personal growth plans using the crayons, instead of writing out their growth plans on a form to be turned in to the principal. "Communicate your goals with images, not letters," she remarked. Then she set about supporting the teachers as they imagined ways to create meaning without words. They were providing forms of representation that escaped the restrictions of "words only" thinking (Siegesmund, 2004, 2005).

Thinking about art, thinking about growth

The seven elements were used as a basis for the staff development. These formal qualities of art offered the teachers a new language for describing what they were seeing in their own teaching and in the work of others. The art teacher was trying to develop a basic facility with art criticism in all the teachers. After spending some time with these concepts, the art teacher then provided the staff with crayons and construction paper. She led the teachers in working with each of the elements, practicing and refining the notions of line, shape, form, value, space, texture, and color. The art teacher also introduced other media to the staff and had them create, emphasizing one of the seven elements.

The principal then introduced the notion of leadership as art. Basically, she explained that by using Chart A, the teachers could begin to reflect on practice and describe what was happening in their classrooms with an art metaphor. The teachers, because they had spent time with these concepts in making art, made an easy transition from talking about art to talking about the art of teaching. Upon deeper reflection, led by the art teacher and principal, the teachers began considering what area of the teaching art they would want to develop more fully. This identification became each teacher's professional development plan.

Each of the teachers stood before the class, discussed what they felt good about, and then outlined the area of focus for growth. After each teacher had an opportunity to share, and as they began to write out an action plan for implementation, the principal surprised them all by asking that they capture their focus area for individual growth symbolically. Instead of using words, charts, graphs, etc. (all very good ideas in and of themselves) the principal asked the teachers to make art that communicated their intention. At the end of the day, the teachers gathered in small groups of three to six and began talking about ways, media, and processes that they would use as a form of representation (Siegesmund, 2004, 2005).

The art teacher worked with the teachers, both in individual sessions and during the staff development session, as they attempted to complete the work. A remarkable and surprising finding of this project was that staff began coming to the art teacher's classroom before school, during scheduled planning periods, and after school. They would send students to art class, and instead of going back to an empty classroom to do lesson planning, the teacher would go to art also, sit beside the students, and work on his or her work. The students asked the teachers what they were doing. The

teachers asked the students about their work. Each sought help from the other. The serendipitous conversations significantly affected the school culture, supported trusting relationships, and supported time on task in the art room.

When teachers and students returned to their classrooms, conversations sometimes revolved around art concepts within other content areas. A blended approach to an arts-based view of curriculum emerged. One teacher in a strings classroom, for example, asked his students to describe, analyze, interpret, and judge (i.e., the steps in art criticism taught in the staff development initiative) why they chose to play a particular instrument. First, he had them describe their instruments. He then had them analyze the formal qualities of their instruments. When the students were comfortable with the describing and analyzing, the teacher asked the students to interpret what their choice of instrument might have to say about their preferences, attitudes, likes, and dislikes. And finally, the teacher had the students make judgments about their choices. The teacher made several interesting discoveries.

In the first two stages of art criticism, the teacher found the students comfortable with their tasks. And he noticed that their thinking seemed to correspond to the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (i.e., knowledge and comprehension). In developing the capacity to analyze, however, the students were much more reluctant, or unprepared, to engage in a higher level of cognition. They were moving from basic knowing to advanced understanding. Most striking to the teacher was that although the students were always eager to make judgments, in this process they were forced to delay judgments until the other three stages had been completed. The teacher commented that he was stunned that the art process not only taught content but also encouraged higher levels of thinking. And most important, the students were introduced to the notion of delaying judgments and considering other's perspectives. The strings teacher commented that students are normally very quick to decide, and it was interesting and informative to have a mechanism that discouraged judgments without adequate information. This enlarged emphasis on perspective, captured by the element of form, was found not only in student practice in the strings classroom, but also in teacher practice in the staff development. Some of those teacher reflections are included below.

The school improvement plan

School leaders and teachers bring together individual plans into a coherent body of growth known as the school improvement plan. Hopefully, faculties will recognize the potential behind such plan development. Regrettably, however, many faculties see the school improvement plan as simply another distraction amidst an already complex day of expectations. The staff dutifully completes the forms and one or two "good souls" take on the responsibility of compiling the individual pieces into a schoolwide plan. This principal, however, with her arts-based approach, had a different goal in mind. What she did was have the teachers bring together the individual art projects into a central hall and post them along its entire length. Instead of books on shelves filled with forms and reports, this school built a vision for the school improvement plan that was absolutely dependent on individual growth. Each teacher's art work was placed on the walls for all to see. An observer came into the school and asked about the installation. The principal commented that it represented the school improvement plan and invited the observer to walk around it. And just as the hall was a pathway surrounded by individual art, the school professional development plan might be characterized as a journey framed by individual growth. Briefly, there could be no school improvement without individual growth.

Form, as the formal element emphasized in this initiative, indeed was central to the mission of the staff development. The principal wanted her staff to examine their own practices from multiple perspectives and to consider the school mission from multiple vantage points. In offering a school improvement plan that was three-dimensional, she had appropriately modeled her goal for the school. Teachers could walk down the hall and see not only their own contribution to the larger mission, but equally important, others' contributions.

Unearthing the thinking through reflections

After the artwork had been completed and placed in the school improvement installation, teachers were asked to reflect on their work, their choices, and their

personal and professional growth plans. The principal offered two prompts to help guide the teachers' reflections, "Why did you choose the element of art?" and "Which elements of art capture what you wish you could improve upon?" Reflections by four of the participants, captured in a compilation of reflections at the end of the art production process, reveal some interesting thinking as teachers considered, through art metaphor, areas for growth and development.

A 7th grade teacher, considering shape as a way to understand management of competing needs, commented powerfully:

> I chose the shape of a heart because the heart represents the importance of my family. I used a repetitive pattern of hearts because I wanted to stress the fact that my family is the most important part of my life. My colors were chosen with the help of [my son] Wyatt.

And later she remarked of her son's participation in her project:

> I worry too much about other people's children while letting my own "do his own thing." It proved a point to me when I was coloring my design and he 'just wanted to help'." I spend far too much time taking work things home for these kids when I should be dedicated to him. I thought it was great how his scribbles override my coloring. It reminds me he should be a part of everything in my life.
>
> (Reflection Notebook)

An Administrative Assistant involved in the staff development decided:

> To focus my art project on "Line" and "Form." In deciding on "line," my focus was on communication: How well do I communicate what I want. When I find myself having to re-do, re-teach, etc., makes we wonder how well I communicated initially. I thought "form" went hand-in-hand with "line." The part in the explanation [see chart A above] about hearing both the content and the feelings in a message struck me. I usually hear the content. I need to work on this. With the guidance and suggestion of [the art teacher], I decided to do a radical pattern design.
>
> (Reflection Notebook)

A math and science teacher chose to focus on space and color as metaphors for her growth areas. She reflected:

> In my painting, each object is shown using both positive and negative space, and each object has a different, vibrant color. "Space" struck a chord with me when I realized it had to do with what is really important to me as a teacher, i.e., what I really want my students to walk away with. [Later she says], in my painting each object represents a way in which students can interact with content. [My use of space] ties in [with] the element of color, which I chose because I worry about rigor and relevance. Am I pushing my students hard enough? Are there other ways I can tie the content in with real-world experiences to make it more meaningful for my students? [She then remarked, with considerable insight], this assignment got me thinking about High Schools that Work , and how we're going to be knee-deep in that program next year… I think we're all going to realize (if we haven't already) that the purpose of the [arts-based] models is not to impose a bunch of NEW strategies and methods in our classrooms, but rather to help us take the strategies and methods we all know and love, and just kick them up a notch or two so that our students get the most out of them.
>
> (Reflection Notebook)

A seventh grade teacher constructed a sculpture to represent his professional growth goals. He reflected:

> I used my sculpture to stress my continued need to teach to the whole student, not just the PACT [a standardized test], workbook, or any materials. I also need to work on my ability to be creative with my activities and projects, not just go by the book.
>
> (Reflection Notebook)

A Final Exam

The culminating activity by the participants was modeled after an art critique. The principal and art teacher explained the notion of art criticism (Feldman, 1995) and instructed the participants in the four steps where one describes, analyzes, interprets, and judges an artwork. This process was also reviewed in terms of "seeing" others and performances in classrooms, both on the parts of teachers and students (Kelehear, 2006, 2008a). One art product at a time, the participants

sought to describe, analyze, interpret, and judge each other's work. Afterwards, the artists described, analyzed, interpreted and judged their own work. The participants were intrigued with the differing interpretations that emerged from viewing one piece of art from multiple perspectives. The principal took this opportunity to remind the staff of the role of form and its three-dimensional aspects. There could indeed be different perspectives on a single object, each very different, and all equally "right." This final demonstration phase proved to be a powerful component of the process.

The principal had identified two basic goals in this arts-based process. She asked her staff to determine to what extent the arts-based staff development had addressed these two goals:

1. She wanted each staff member to reflect on experience in qualitative ways and thereupon formulate a personal professional development improvement plan;

2. She wanted the staff to work together to reflect on the school culture in qualitative ways and then build a comprehensive schoolwide improvement plan that emphasized collaboration and conversation for all stakeholders.

As teachers stood before each other and discussed where they were going with their art work, they were making a public statement of what they wanted to do. Other teachers, knowing where each wanted to go, were eager to check up on each other, to support each other, and to talk to each other. The arts-based approach clearly created a space for conversation.

In terms of the schoolwide plan, the installation was an innovative way to take individual interests and combine them into a total picture. As teachers, parents, and students observed the various works of art, individual teacher plans could be identified, but those individual elements were also seen as important to the larger plan. The public presentation of the individual growth plans was a powerful way to commit all observers to the shared growth of the individuals, creating a type of mutual responsibility or bidirectionality for growth (Kelehear & Heid, 2002). As with many long-range plans for school improvement, however, there is a need for ongoing and deliberate support of this initiative in order to sustain the effective interactions.

Closing Reflections

What happened at that middle school was remarkable. Teachers were talking to each other about shared goals and plans. Although it seemed that teachers devoted much time to reflecting on personal challenges and goals, it also seemed that they needed this personal focus before considering the children in their classrooms. One can see the Stages of Concern Theory first articulated by Fuller in 1969 coming to bear as teachers first addressed their own concerns amidst an innovation (e.g., awareness, information, personal, or management) before considering the needs of others (e.g., consequence, collaboration, or refocusing). Even with this shortcoming, students and teachers were indeed talking about art production and were seeking each other out for support and guidance. The leadership of the school shared in an open and authentic way the process of growing, sharing, and discussing individual and schoolwide growth plans. There indeed seemed to be an egalitarian notion to the shared journey of arts-based staff development.

The arts-based approach helped faculty to reflect not only on their own experiences, an important practice in itself, but also to reflect on others' experiences. This innovative approach stretched teachers to consider their colleagues' perspectives and the schoolwide perspectives as well as the students' perspectives. And by standing in front of their colleagues and sharing their artwork as a representation of what direction they wanted to grow toward, the faculty was making a public proclamation that the different perspectives of all members of the school mattered.

In considering form as a matter of perspective, students often can be the best instructors, as they remind the teacher of things that matter. The author's daughter likely provided him with the keenest instruction of all. As a kindergartener, Hannah was thrilled by bugs. She roamed the yard in search of little brown snakes, beetles, or anything else that seemed to live close to the ground. Thinking to help her capture her diminutive trophies, the author gave her a little box, two inches long and one inch high, with a small screen window on the top. That way, the author figured, she could watch her new friends without harming them. As all children will do, however, Hannah took the gift and made it so much more.

She painted the sides, each with a different color, and made her bug's home a place of wonder. Any other bugs that might happen by, she told the author, would surely wish for such a fine home. What Hannah did next, however, surprised the author. She opened the little box and began painting the inside. When asked what she had in mind, she stated with clear conviction that what the bugs were seeing from the inside was just as important as what one might see from the outside. Their viewpoint mattered. Different perspectives matter.

In this little bug box of a school, the principal did more than paint the outside of her school; she engaged her staff to paint the inside as well. The teachers were interested in their personal and professional growth…their insides and their outsides. How the principal viewed the students and teachers mattered. How the teachers viewed the principal and the students mattered. And how the students viewed the principal and the teachers mattered. Multiple perspectives always matter, and in a significant way, the principal was encouraging her school to be OK with multiple perspectives. And in so doing, she was helping this school to be a place of civility, reflection, and acceptance. What a nice place to learn. And that is a change that can be immediate and real…something all good school board members like to see.

Appendix A
Aligning Standards

Element of Art	Art Definition	Leadership Dimension	ISLLC Standard	NSDC Standard	Supervision Standard
Line	A long narrow mark or stroke made on or in a surface	Limits, Boundaries, Parameters, Expectations	Standard #1, #2 Facilitating a shared vision that is shared by school community	Context	#1 Democratic Practice
Value	Lightness or darkness of a color or object	Priority, Focus	#2 Supporting student learning and teacher development	Context, Content & Process	#2 Ethical Practice #7 Clinical Supervision
Shape	Two-dimensional area	Management, Details	#3 Ensuring management of organization, operations, resources	Context	# 8 Teacher Evaluation
Form	Three-dimensional structure; geometric/ free-form	Perspective, Empathy	#5 Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner	Process	# 4 Reflective Practice # 5 Critical Inquiry
Space	Area around, between, above, below, or within an object	Collaboration, Growth, Challenge, Support	#2 Supporting growth of student and teacher within school culture	Process & Content	#3 Collegiality and Collaboration
Color	Property of objects coming from reflected light	Diversity, Openness	#6 Understanding & responding to larger political, social, economic, legal, cultural contexts	Context, Process & Content	#6 Diversity #12 Program Evaluation
Texture	Fee	Tapestry, Bridges, Inclusiveness	#4 Collaborating with families, community members; responding to diverse perspectives	Content	#10 Curriculum Development #11 Action Research

Appendix B

SCHOOL PROFILE	Our School	Change from Last Year	Middle Schools with Students Like Ours	Median Middle School
Students (n= 287)				
Students enrolled in high school credit courses (grades 7 & 8)	11.8%	Down from 15.4%	26.1%	18.2%
Retention rate	1.4%	Up from 0.0%	1.8%	2.2%
Attendance rate	95.9%	Up from 95.6%	95.8%	95.7%
Eligible for gifted and talented	31.6%	Up from 27.8%	22.0%	14.6%
With disabilities other than speech	19.7%	Up from 18.9%	10.8%	11.7%
Older than usual for grade	0.3%	Down from 1.3%	1.4%	2.3%
Out-of-school suspensions or expulsions for violent &/or criminal offenses	0.0%	Down from 1.3%	0.7%	0.7%
Annual dropout rate	0.0%	No change	0.0%	0.0%
Teachers (n= 19)				
Teachers with advanced degrees	42.1%	Up from 38.5%	56.7%	53.6%
Continuing contract teachers	78.9%		75.0%	73.3%
Teachers with emergency or provisional certificates	0.0%	No change	4.5%	5.0%
Teachers returning from previous year	94.4%	No change	84.7%	83.3%
Teacher attendance rate	97.7%	Up from 93.8%	94.7%	95.1%
Average teacher salary	$41,546	Up 2.7%	$43,816	$43,485
Prof. development days/teacher	13.5 days	Up from 10.7 days	12.3 days	12.4 days
School				
Principal's years at school	1.0	Down from 6.0	3.0	3.0
Student-teacher ratio in core subjects	22.5 to 1	Up from 18.6 to 1	22.7 to 1	20.5 to 1
Prime instructional time	92.1%	Up from 88.2%	89.5%	89.3%
Opportunities in the arts	Good	Down from Excellent	Good	Good
SACS accreditation	Yes	No change	Yes	Yes
Parents attending conferences	100.0%	Up from 99.0%	98.5%	97.7%
Character development	Average	Down from Good	Good	Good
Dollars spent per pupil*	$7,801	Up 9.4%	$5,920	$6,602
Percent of expenditures for instruction*	68.6%	Down from 70.1%	67.8%	64.8%
Percent of expenditures for teacher salaries*	67.4%	Up from 65.8%	64.1%	60.0%

* Prior year audited financial data are reported.

Abbreviations for Missing Data

N/A Not Applicable   N/AV Not Available   N/C Not Collected   N/R Not Reported   I/S Insufficient Sample

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