

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 386 416

SO 025 424

AUTHOR Altman, Mary; Caddy, John
 TITLE Rural Arts Collaborations: The Experience of Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities.
 INSTITUTION Blandin Foundation, Grand Rapids, MN.; Community Programs in the Arts, St. Paul, MN.
 REPORT NO ISBN-0-927663-22-8
 PUB DATE 94
 NOTE 208p.
 AVAILABLE FROM COMPAS, 304 Landmark Center, 75 West Fifth Street, St. Paul, MN 55102 (\$10, plus \$3 shipping/handling).
 PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Art; Art Activities; *Art Education; *Artists; Art Therapy; Community Cooperation; Community Involvement; *Community Programs; *Community Resources; Cultural Exchange; Elementary Secondary Education; Human Resources; Intercultural Programs; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Rural Population; Rural Schools; School Community Relationship
 IDENTIFIERS *Minnesota

ABSTRACT

This book describes the process and results of a 5 year arts initiative, Artists in Minnesota Schools and Communities (AMSC). Based on the premise that rural communities hold an undervalued wealth of artistic and cultural resources rarely tapped by schools, the project piloted a variety of models for integrating art in the educational experiences of students and community members. This document organizes the report of AMSC efforts into five parts. Part 1 introduces the founders and philosophic rationale for this initiative. Part 2 lays out the concepts and operations for selection, support, and evaluation of the 13 pilot sites. The selection sites provide a range of themes and approaches to project implementation. Part 3 presents the model projects by their themes. "Artist/Teacher Collaborations" offers cooperative learning situations. "What We Cherish Here" defines and commemorates the values and uniqueness of community. "Cultural Sharing" focuses on pluralistic communities. "Interdisciplinary Education" and "Ways of Sharing Art" look at art roles in the larger educational and community arena. And "Healing Dreams" (in a unique school setting) reports on work in a hospice setting. Part 4 identifies project findings: (1) generalization of rural communities is inappropriate; (2) local artist participation is important to the community's ability to develop successful and lasting art education programs; (3) collaboration, working together toward a common goal; (4) inclusion, the incorporation of many voices, are key factors in planning and developing successful art education programs; (5) the level of local autonomy and degree of AMSC involvement must vary from site to site; and (6) continuation was identified as an area needing more developed strategies for support of future projects. Part 5: "Recommendations for the Future," completes the report. Appendixes are: "Table One: Summary of Project Information"; "Table Two: Summary of Project Budget Information"; "Map of Model Project Sites"; and a 50-item bibliography. (MM)

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RURAL ARTS COLLABORATIONS: The Experience of Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities

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RURAL ARTS COLLABORATIONS

The Experience of Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities

BY MARY ALTMAN AND JOHN CADDY

A Partnership of COMPAS and the Blandin Foundation

1994

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ISBN 0-927663-22-8

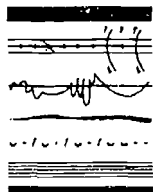
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Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities is a partnership of COMPAS and the Blandin Foundation.



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This activity is made possible
in part by a grant provided by the
Minnesota State Arts Board
through an appropriation by the
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COMPAS programs are made possible in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature. COMPAS is an affiliate of United Arts.

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Acknowledgements

Over the last five years, a number of people have influenced and contributed to the Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) program and to the ideas represented in this publication.

- Thank you to COMPAS staff, past and present, who have lent ongoing encouragement and conscientious criticism, including Mary Becker, Carol Bergeland, Marty Case, Jim Dusso, Juanita Espinosa, Daniel Gabriel, Michael Garcia, Randolph Jennings, Molly LaBerge, Milagros Llauger, Jeff Prauer, Jo Svendsen, Margret Swanson, and Tana Yarano.
- COMPAS is especially grateful to Todd Driscoll and the Blandin Foundation, for their support, their flexibility and their ongoing sensitivity to the needs of rural Minnesota communities.
- This publication owes a great deal to Mary Ellen Spector, her evaluation of the AMSC program, and her perceptive ideas.
- Thank you to the thirteen essay writers who captured the spirit and unique qualities of each community's project.
- Special thanks to Dawn Gelle, AMSC Program Associate, for her editing and production assistance on this publication.

This book is dedicated to the students, teachers, artists, administrators and community members throughout rural Minnesota who welcomed us into their schools, studios and communities. We appreciate their hard work, patience, trust and openness to new ideas. Their endeavors are the heart of the AMSC program. We have been honored to be part of their creative efforts.

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PART ONE:
Setting The Stage

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COMPAS AND THE BLANDIN FOUNDATION: A Partnership

—*Randolph Jennings*

THE EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Hardly a day goes by without some media report of the failures of American education. If it is not declining test scores, it is an escalating dropout rate. If it is not the deteriorating condition of school buildings, it is the lack of new technological equipment and methods. If it is not problems rooted in the increasing cultural diversity of our schools, it is the inability of schools to deliver graduates properly trained to meet the rapidly changing specifications of the business community and its narrow notions of "competitiveness." If it is not the problems of financing education, it is the difficulties of attracting and retaining talented teachers or of stimulating parental involvement.

The vitality of thought is in adventure. Ideas won't keep. Something must be done about them. When the idea is new, its custodians have fervor, live for it, and, if need be, die for it.

—*Alfred North Whitehead*

Occasionally there are positive stories. There are reports about the successes of special programs designed to support and nurture groups of children particularly at risk of being mishandled by the system: children of color, learners with special needs, latch-key children. There are reports of the integration of social services into the school setting, a story of institutional success often told in the context of the further failure of families to take care of their own. There are the human-interest features on individual educators who achieve, seemingly against all odds, real success in their classrooms, who truly engage children in learning, who are the passionate, committed teachers we all remember our one or two most influential teachers to have been.

Aside from the occasional book by a Tracy Kidder or a Jonathan Kozol, only rarely is there any attempt to describe or understand what really goes on in the classroom—and even fewer attempts to change what children learn and how they learn it. The general public is given no chance to examine the outmoded materials and approaches with which most teachers cope. The public is denied any real opportunity to experience or understand the intricate ways in which the school day is broken into component pieces, governed by bells, and is (too frequently) dismissive of any sustained efforts to integrate areas of knowledge, to engage children in projects or activities that require time, diligence, patience and imagination.

There is an irony in the fact that while the reporting on education has tended to respond primarily to the crisis-of-the-moment, the last decade has seen the development of some fundamental changes in the core ideas that shape the school environment.

Significant among these changes have been:

- The effort to decentralize school decision-making and empower teachers as full partners in the process of creating change and improvement in the education of children;
- The need to help children develop their thinking skills, to make school learning more than simple, functional training in service of outmoded economic circumstances;
- The need to broaden the core curriculum to include material that reflects the wide diversity of sources on which contemporary American culture draws;
- The need to change the character of student-teacher interaction, to make the learning process more interesting and more of a collaborative effort;
- The need to make students more responsible for their own learning;
- The need to develop testing and assessment procedures that will accurately and meaningfully capture students' achievements;
- The need for schools to draw on the creative and intellectual resources of their own communities.

There are, of course, myriad other changes taking place in education all the time. As a social function, education is buffeted by more competing forces than perhaps any other institution. It is an area in which nearly anyone can claim a compelling interest.

Education is also a field that studies itself more intensively than any other, though it may be among the worst at disseminating its findings and replicating its successes. Too often the real innovations are known only to the *cognoscenti*—the policy-makers, the leaders, the researchers—but not to the practitioners, the parents or the general public. The result is that the benefits of innovation are dim guidance, not adequately illuminating the path to change and improvement in the institution of education.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY: STILL VIABLE

In some ways, rural issues and rural life are treated in much the same way as education issues: most of the reporting chronicles the decline of America's rural communities and the threats to the viability of a rural life. To be sure, these are difficult times for many, if not most rural communities. The impact of agricultural consolidation has been widely reported; the struggles of rural communities to find new economic engines that will create new jobs are known; and the flight of many rural people to urban areas has been observed for decades. In the bad-news-or-no-news era in which we seem to be living, the story that is not told often enough is of the vitality that remains in rural communities.

This book describes this vitality. The Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) program began with the premise that there were working artists living in communities all across Minnesota, who would be perfectly able to work and teach in their local schools. This may not seem like such a radical idea—and it isn't—except that the arts and cultural life of the state is dominated by arts and cultural organizations based in Minneapolis and St. Paul. There is an urban assumption that art in rural Minnesota is likely to be bad wildlife art, or obscure folk art of one sort or another, and that any artist worth his or her salt lives in the Twin Cities.

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This is not true.

Two particularly important aspects of art in rural communities are:

- The extent to which artistic activity is legitimately rooted in a connection to the natural world;
- The high level of community involvement in artistic activities.

This is not to say that all rural art-making is about wildlife, nor that in a small community so many people become involved in a civic theater production that there is no one left in town to be in the audience. It merely reflects the fact that good art is made of the materials and ideas with which the artist is familiar, and that there really is a community in the phrase "rural community." Add these two factors together, and you find a rich, creative cultural life in many rural communities.

THE AMSC PROJECTS: PUTTING ARTS, EDUCATION, AND RURAL TOGETHER

The successes of the pilot AMSC projects have drawn much of their strength from the power of new ideas and new activities in places where children, artists and teachers had been languishing for the lack of real arts education.

For quite some time schools in all communities have been forced to make hard choices about how much arts and cultural work to preserve in the face of overwhelming financial obstacles. The constant pressure to cut budgets has made it difficult for new ideas about arts education to emerge. The time and energy consumed in fighting the rear-guard action of defending even the smallest level of arts education against further erosion has prevented teachers, school administrators, and school board members from reaching into their own communities to find practicing artists and others who have expertise and knowledge on which schools could draw.

Arts education, particularly in rural settings where there is no "easy" access to the extracurricular cultural resources of an urban area, has become an environment desperately in need of the vitality of thought—and sense of adventure—Whitehead describes.

Rural communities hold an undervalued wealth of artistic and cultural resources that are rarely used in schools and are often not fully appreciated by the community as a whole. Though the wide range of projects and partnerships formed under the AMSC banner to cultivate and use these resources were only vaguely imagined in 1988, they represent exactly the sort of adventure the Blandin Foundation and COMPAS have allowed themselves to discover.

THE PARTNERS: BLANDIN FOUNDATION AND COMPAS

The partnership between the Blandin Foundation and COMPAS is in many ways a natural, logical fit.

The Blandin Foundation is a private foundation which was established in 1941 by Charles K. Blandin, owner of the Blandin Paper Company in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The Blandin Foundation is now an independent foundation, funding programming in rural Minnesota through grant-making, conferences and leadership.

The mission of the Blandin Foundation is to strengthen rural communities in Minnesota. One of the foundation's primary goals is to help create viable rural communities throughout Minnesota. A guiding principle of the Foundation, "to establish working partnerships with others," leads directly to the current partnership. These goals and principles are characteristic; over the years the Foundation has taken on an activist role,

identifying problems and investing in potential solutions, rather than simply responding to requests for financial support. It has had considerable success supporting community-based programming and initiatives designed to cultivate leadership in rural communities. These initiatives are capacity-building in that they encourage communities to recognize and utilize the strengths they already have.

Since 1985, the Foundation has trained rural Minnesota community leaders through the Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP). The purpose of this program is to nurture and develop individuals and teams who can help their communities face the future realistically, plan creatively and work cooperatively. The Leadership Program, a six-day leadership retreat and two-day follow-up workshops, helps rural leaders work more efficiently and effectively on projects ranging from joint economic development ventures to interactive telecommunications.

COMPAS is a community arts agency with twenty-five years of experience in providing participatory arts activities that employ professional artists in schools, community centers, battered women's shelters, prisons, and to work with seniors. COMPAS has developed a broad portfolio of programs designed to empower individual and community participation in the arts. Its mission is to provide arts opportunities to the general community, with a special focus on those who have traditionally faced barriers to full participation in the arts. In defining barriers, COMPAS has long considered the difficulties faced by rural communities—such as isolation and distance, economic stress, and lack of "traditional" outlets for arts activities—to be among the most significant, and has extended a number of its programs to address these needs. In recent years, COMPAS has also begun to demonstrate ways in which the arts can help address vital social issues such as racism and cultural diversity. COMPAS' experience has been such that even in communities with little apparent racial or ethnic diversity there are still tremendous needs for cultural awareness, and in some communities a need to draw out and deal with cultural, racial, and ethnic divisions that simmer below the surface of community life. COMPAS' arts programming has been a powerful catalyst in exploring these issues.

In addition to its long-standing interest in rural communities, COMPAS also brought extensive experience in arts education activities to the partnership. The agency's first program was Poets-in-the-Schools; the Minnesota program was one of the first three funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Over the years, Poets-in-the-Schools explored many ways in which writers and artists could contribute their skills, experience and perspective to students and their teachers. The PITS program was one of the pioneers in developing and promoting the artist residency model now widely in use in schools across the country—a model that included direct work between an artist and students, some teacher in-service activity, and some form of community involvement. Minnesota PITS later evolved into WITS—Writers-in-the-Schools—as prose writers were added to the roster, which in turn evolved into WAITS—Writers & Artists in the Schools—as all artistic disciplines became involved in residencies.

Over the years, COMPAS has produced artists' residencies in thousands of Minnesota schools. Out of this work evolved several other initiatives, including programs devoted to linking artists more directly with teachers. The Dialogue program, developed in partnership with the St. Paul Schools, provided extensive teacher training in the writing process, drawing on professional writers to work closely with teachers on ways to change and enrich the ways in which writing is taught and used in classrooms. This program was replicated with great success in the Bemidji schools, where teachers had long been active in using the writing process. COMPAS also developed short institutes for teachers in visual arts, using the basic Dialogue program model of

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linking working artists and teachers to design new forms of arts activity for the classroom. All of these programs shared a common belief that arts should be taught in a dynamic, participatory way, and that the engagement of student creativity would help motivate students' interest in other areas of their school experience.

THE FOCUS ON ARTS EDUCATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

In 1986-87, the Blandin Foundation surveyed and met with Northern Minnesota arts organizations. This effort was designed to help the Foundation understand the needs of rural arts organizations, and to better focus the Foundation's efforts to support the arts, which represents 8-10% of the Foundation's work. One of

the issues that emerged from these discussions was the need to improve arts education in rural schools and communities.

We were not interested in art for art's sake, or in creating lots of little painters, dancers, and singers across the state. Our interest was in how creativity can enhance students' classroom experience, and in helping youngsters learn to understand the arts through increased contact with artists and their community.

*—Todd Driscoll, Senior Program Officer,
Blandin Foundation*

We selected a partner organization with a mission to serve the underserved—which by definition includes rural communities—and negotiated an experimental program that we felt would strengthen rural communities. ...We felt strongly that we wanted to explore many new approaches. Foundation dollars are risk dollars; they ought to be used to explore new ideas.

—Todd Driscoll

Though the scope of the AMSC project was broader than the Foundation's previous support in arts education, this was not Blandin's first efforts in the area. Throughout the 1980s, the Blandin Foundation had been an active supporter of the organizing efforts of the Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) run by the Minnesota Alliance for Arts in Education (MAAE). Through this program, school districts throughout the state worked to identify curriculum in all arts disciplines and establish action plans to implement these curricular goals. While this initiative reached a significant number of communities, many in rural Minnesota, it did not exhaust the many possible ways to strengthen or change arts education and paid little attention to enriching the direct creative experiences of students in the classroom or to practicing artists.

To further explore the arts education environment, the Foundation held a one-day meeting in late 1987 with staff from MAAE, the Minnesota State Arts Board's Arts in Education program (MSAB-AIE), and the COMPAS Arts Education program. Much of the discussion centered on students' experience of the arts, rather than on curriculum. In most school arts programs there is a tremendous gulf between "real" arts work (meaning artistic and creative work as it is practiced in the world outside schools) and most activities in a typical arts curriculum (for example, the types of formulaic, holiday-oriented drawing or painting projects most students are led through in their early elementary years). As the conversation turned to what could be done to address the situation, a number of formidable obstacles within schools were identified: shortage of funds, rigidity of schools' behavior, lack of new ideas (or a lack of support for teachers willing to try new ideas), and a perceived lack of local creative resources in rural communities.

Each of the organizations represented in the meeting had a

different approach to addressing these obstacles. MAAE was working on changes within the system: rewriting arts education curriculum, supporting the retention of arts education specialist positions within schools, and creating leadership groups within local districts to advocate for arts education. The MSAB Arts in Education program was focused on grant-making to individual schools to hire artists from the MSAB-AIE Artist Roster to conduct residencies. COMPAS was using working artists to conduct residencies and teacher training programs focused on improving students' creative experiences and the communication of practitioner knowledge in the arts.

As the Foundation completed its information gathering process, it invited COMPAS to join in partnership with the Foundation to create a program that would focus directly on creating new approaches to meeting the creative needs of children, teachers and schools in rural communities.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PARTNERSHIP

In the missions of both the Blandin Foundation and COMPAS there is a strong desire to support the development of local leadership, to empower people to find ideas, expertise, energy, and even financial resources within their own communities. Very early in the development of the AMSC program some of the basic operating assumptions that underlie these goals were put to the test.

As the AMSC program was originally conceived, COMPAS intended to take a direct role in designing and producing the programming in each of the communities. But almost from the beginning COMPAS' role became that of process facilitator and catalyst, with the communities taking on the direct responsibilities for designing and producing their own programming with local artistic and creative resources. The initial eight AMSC sites were widely varied in their needs, their resources, and their ideas, and were not hesitant about expressing them.

The first set of projects launched a learning process in which COMPAS and the Foundation gained new insights into community organizing in rural communities, into the intellectual vitality of rural communities, and into the creativity and imagination people brought to bear on the problems of arts education and of rural artists. Even in economically impoverished communities there is a powerful commitment to the local schools—a unifying thread that brings disparate people and agendas together.

In the beginning we didn't know exactly what we would find. We knew there were artists all over the state, and from our years of conducting residencies we knew there was a strong interest in arts education. But we really worked hard to meet specific local needs rather than apply our Writers & Artists in the Schools model. ...We set out to explore several different definitions of what "rural" meant—we needed to explore these differences—and to confront the perception that there were no "arts" in rural settings. There are arts and artists everywhere.

—Molly LaBerge, Founder of COMPAS

Initially we [COMPAS staff] had several well-thought-out models that were completely blown apart by the community groups—in good ways, growing around and beyond our expectations.

—Jeff Prauer, Executive Director,
COMPAS

PART ONE: Setting The Stage

THE PARTNERS' COMMITMENT TO THE AMSC PROGRAM

From the beginning both the Foundation and COMPAS were committed to a long effort. The initial program funding covered a three-and-a-half year period, and was subsequently extended for an additional year, with more funds allocated to disseminating the findings of the pilot projects. There was a clear sense that this was an evolutionary experiment, and that there would be some—perhaps many—areas in which the activities and the results could not be predicted. This is in keeping with the long-term, capacity-building focus of both organizations.

The 1991 Blandin Foundation annual report quotes David Campbell of the Center for Creative Leadership: "Anything worth doing takes about ten years." Though it is too soon to tell if the AMSC initiatives will last ten years, they are clearly designed to empower community involvement in arts education over time. It is this deeply rooted commitment to change that drives the Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities program.

Randolph Jennings is the former director of COMPAS' Arts Education Programs. He is currently a consultant in educational publishing and is the editor of Fire in the Eyes of Youth: The Humanities in American Education.

A Case for the Arts in Education

—John Caddy

The importance of arts in education may seem self-evident. The practicing artist, the arts educator, the patron, and the arts funder **know** what a crucial role the arts play in developing whole human beings.

But knowing in this experiential sense is not enough. We must make the case for arts in education explicitly, and never assume that our experienced truth will satisfy others not so engaged.

We live in a time when the social responsibilities given schools grow larger every day. This means continually increasing competition for shrinking school dollars. Each new program generates its own array of vocal proponents, and all compete for their share of the budget. The common result of this double bind is cuts in some traditional elements of curriculum. Arts in education has proven vulnerable to such cuts.

Current attempts to reduce the role of arts in education reflect and continue an old American division. To the philistine and the pragmatist alike, the arts in schools have always seemed an easy target. Surely, they say, beauty, while nice, is a luxury. As clearly, they say, the arts won't put bread on students' future tables. It's not that we don't appreciate this artsy stuff, the argument goes, but tough times mean tough choices.

True enough: choices are tough right now. So instead of taking the importance of arts to be self-evident, we must all be prepared to advocate for the arts. The pluralistic nature of American society has never been more publicly evident. More direct and more public confrontations in the competition for school dollars accompany our new openness.

We must be ready to make the case for arts in education in many ways, to a variety of audiences. We must recognize that any argument's persuasiveness varies with societal groups and with the prevailing climate. No single traditional argument will be broadly effective. Happily, there are many compelling ways to advocate not only for including arts in the curriculum, but for demonstrating them to be crucial.

We think it helpful, then, to briefly consider various arguments and suggest their persuasive strengths and problems. Each has played a part in shaping the Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) program:

- The classic argument is "Art for Art's Sake"; we will consider its problems, but suggest its surviving power;

...art establishes the basic human truths which must serve as the touchstone of our judgment.

—John F. Kennedy

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- Another traditional set of arguments stems from pragmatics: "Art for Practical Benefits." Here we will emphasize the abilities which the study of the arts develops, in terms of critical thinking, citizenship, skills needed in business, and pluralism;
- A third major set is considered as "Art for Educating the Whole Child," in which we summarize recent learning from educational research, learning theorists, and projects in interdisciplinary and holistic education, and the psychology of motivation and self-esteem.

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

The most traditional, and perhaps least examined argument, is from aesthetics. The most traditional version is: Art is worthy of inclusion in the curriculum because beauty is its own reward and Art is its own justification: Art for Art's sake.

The effectiveness of the aesthetic argument in the current American climate of opinion is problematic. While it is an easy target for the usual education baiters, more importantly, it has become a necessary target for some whose motives are not to eliminate arts, but to broaden their definition.

Art for Art's Sake has been attacked as being part of Eurocentric, exclusive, high-culture expectations of the genteel tradition. As the arts have been traditionally taught in our public schools and colleges, it is hard to disagree. The curricular definition of art has been largely limited to the artistic tradition that began with the Classic Greeks, and the schools have been much slower than artists to recognize the wonder and value of both other ancient traditions and the variety of contemporary traditions from all continents.

It may be that such a limitation on what is allowed to be art was inevitable in the period of European exploration, conquest, and manifest destiny. We no longer live in that period. The curriculum, partly from habit and partly from politics, reflects a huge time-lag between the practice of the living arts, whether painting or poetry, music or drama, and what art we tell students is worthy.

Another aspect of our American school tradition is the "genteel" tradition, in which we conceive of "gentility" as the primary social goal, and at its core this classist tradition is convinced that "good breeding" is not something one can learn; one must inherit it. The best one can hope from the masses is a creditable imitation, but that is reason enough to include the classic arts in school curriculum. Many have argued that the American Revolution never ended: the populists and moneyed still struggle.

This "Art for Art's Sake" tradition, then, can be seen in practice to be exclusionary rather than egalitarian. One focus of the Euro-cultural tradition is its emphasis on genius; another, its assumption that talent is inherent, not practice-able. Art, this tradition claims, is largely an accident of genetics, and the common person's attention to art should be as a grateful consumer, looking up from the throng.

Other critics have called attention to this tradition's racial sub-text: white art is good, art from other cultures is less so. White art shows genius, art from other cultures is expressive and entertaining—and may be allowed to influence white art.

Feminists have persuasively argued a male chauvinist sub-text: the tradition, the canon, is largely male, and has an interest in perpetuating itself.

Two other perceived exclusions inherent in the traditional aesthetic have particular importance to the current AMSC project.

"Art" means fine arts, high culture, and fine arts do not include crafts, the practical arts. Functional art

has always been difficult for the tradition to accept. True art, it's been held, has no obvious purpose but to be. Can furniture be art? Can sculpture be functional? There is a disguised gender issue here as well: domestic arts (read "women's crafts") such as weaving, knitting, and quilting, while pretty, the fine arts tradition exclaims, cannot approach true art.

Further, fine arts do not include folk arts. Fine arts, the tradition says, include dance, but hardly square dance or polka. They include studio painting, but not Norwegian rosmaling, and so on.

Both of these exclusions are sensed as powerful and predictable by rural people, especially when seeking funding for arts projects.

Clearly, then, there is much and vocal controversy about the aesthetic tradition as interpreted by American schools. The objections can be answered, and blunted, but the choices to be made are not easy ones, for in limited time, with limited resources, to include something new will exclude something old.

As clearly, the definition and perception of "art" must be broadened. The old argument needs to be re-cast for our time, for our diverse culture. The re-casting must make the argument **inclusive**: the Eurocentric must become global, the singular plural, the gender orientation more generous. The canon must be widened, and the wisdom in art must shine from many traditions.

We must respond to these well-founded objections. We must expand arts curricula to fit what we say are our ideals. But as this loud struggle goes on, we must not let the din deafen us to the power of the original case. Thousands of years of human experience have told us, tell us now, that the arts are among our finest achievements, are centrally important to knowing what it is to be human. The celebration, the empathic healing, the wild exuberance of the arts—all these are worthy, for their own sakes.

How can we persuade ourselves that this is still true?

ART FOR SURVIVAL: WISDOM, BEAUTY AND HOPE

Our society has become skilled at transmitting information to our young. But technodazzle blinds us to a crucial problem: we are becoming less and less competent at transferring **wisdom** from generation to generation. If the arts comprise the highest human achievement, what can be learned from them? Certainly more than information.

When we listen to the blues, when we tell a child a parable or a Coyote tale, we invoke a timeless wisdom. As we touch an African carving, or view Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* or Monet's *Waterlilies*, we learn something essential about what it is to be human. When we dance, when we sing, we discover the wisdom of the body, the mantra of the metabolism. A culture's stories and songs, paintings, sculptures and dances, its patterns and motifs all transmit through time its collective wisdom.

A simple and clear contemporary re-statement of the argument from aesthetics can still have great power: In a media-rich society in which children are constantly barraged with images of pain and greed and ugliness, it is crucial to their well-being to bal-

Art is perhaps humanity's most essential, most universal language. It is not a frill, but a necessary part of communication. Indeed, the quality of civilization can be measured by the breadth of the symbols used. We need words, music, dance and the visual arts to give expression to the profound urgings of the human spirit.

—Ernest L. Boyer, educator

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ance the scales with attention to the **beautiful**—art for the survival of the spirit. We are more than bellies attached to greed. Beauty is perhaps a reward, but it is surely an antidote to the wildly unbalanced view of humanity delivered to us by our mass culture.

One result of such balancing can be the development of aesthetic judgment—not to argue the merits of a painting or symphony, but to help make quality-of-life decisions which are enormous and necessary decisions for coming generations. How much of the natural environment should be preserved? What does an acceptable human environment look like? Our children have a greater need to define what it is to be human than people ever have had.

Innovation is perhaps the most discussed but least well-practiced process in the world. It is an operative process, not only creative but executional. It requires the mental capacity to displace old perceptions and ways with new and frequently improved ones. Artists constantly experiment—an ongoing process of innovation in which some efforts succeed and others fail...People who respect and understand this process are often innovative themselves in their fields.

—William F. Kieschnick, CEO,
Atlantic Richfield Corp.

These are precisely the skills that characterize our most complex adult life tasks. ...The cultivation of judgment and the ability to be flexibly purposive is best achieved when the tasks and content children encounter in school provide the space for such skills to operate.

—Elliot Eisner, researcher

Hope is in short supply among our young. Ecology, population issues, famine, war, the collapse of the idea of progress, the collapse of families, hard problems *ad infinitum*. Add these to the media's ability to overwhelm us with disaster, and children feel helpless, hopeless. Experiencing art, and especially making art in performance or creation, is wonderfully **active**; we remind ourselves that we **can** make, **can** share, **can** respond with joy as well as grief. These are abilities children forget, or fail to develop, when they are only passive receivers of the media's litany of disaster.

There is a more directly personal connection of art and hope. Children in pain often believe that "no one else could know how I feel, no other has ever felt this way." The arts, whether musical, literary, visual or kinesthetic, give each child this knowledge through a process of identification and empathy: "Others have been here, felt this, too. I am not alone." This is the necessary condition for hope.

ART FOR PRACTICAL BENEFITS

A second series of arguments for arts in education is **pragmatic**: a focus on the arts as practical. Art is important for its effects on people in everyday life. This argument also takes several forms. Each keys on what the arts teach us, and give us practice in, that is relevant to and **transfers** to not only our leisure but our daily occupations. The concepts experienced in the study and making of art are re-conceived as broad **thinking skills**:

- Imagination;
- Innovation;
- Experimentation;
- Problem-Solving.

The arts' place in education thus focuses on the future: Given the breakneck pace of societal change, the arts teach skills

of great use to children who will live in a society we can't predict, who will have to deal with problems and issues which we can only guess.

Further, the arts teach us generalizable skills of great use to children who live as both consumers in a capitalist society, and citizens of a democratic society: the arts become part of the tradition of teaching *critical thinking* in language arts, social studies, and science—how not to get taken in, how to recognize manipulations, whether in advertising or in a political speech.

Far too much of the school curriculum teaches children that there are always yes/no answers to problems. What matters is correctness, which is arrived at simply through binary choices. While it is possible to get through school operating with this belief, it does not make it possible to get through life.

The arts add a fifth thinking skill to the four listed above: *tolerance for ambiguity*. What could be more crucial in a pluralistic society? What could be more critical in a society racing through an information explosion? Experience in making art, especially, teaches us that meaning is more often multiple than singular, and that there is sometimes tension among the meanings. Ambiguities reflect the world as it exists, reflect our minds as they do function, and the physical and biological sciences are just now catching up to what artists have intuited for millennia. The arts teach us that this ambiguity can enrich rather than frustrate us. In no other element of school curriculum do students routinely learn to

Many people think of the arts as a million miles away from anything as practical as a better mousetrap or as serious as science. But the arts, just like good science or practical problem-solving, require tremendously flexible thinking. ...art-making involves children in experiments and taking risks, leading them out of their "ho-hum" approach to things and experiences.

—Dennie Palmer Wolf, *Project Zero*

A poet's use of metaphor is not essentially different from a TV commercial's use; what differs is their purpose. If a consumer can use and recognize metaphor, you know how it works, and are unlikely to be manipulated by that use. Similarly, if a political speech smears a candidate by telling us that "my opponent no longer beats his dog," a citizen familiar with the psychology of language and the literary tradition recognizes the language trick being used—I've seen that before!—and is able to see its dis-logic.

—John Caddy, *poet*

In the world beyond the classroom the mass media constructs and controls the culture. The Clarence Thomas hearings; the William Kennedy Smith trial; Magic Johnson's press conference; the presidential primaries...Our sense of who we are and what we value is based to a large degree on pictures and perceptions created by the media. If children are socialized by the media into this value system and belief structure, educators must respond by helping them think clearly about the relationship between pictures and print, words and images. Until they have those competencies, they cannot be truly literate in an information age dominated by images.

—David Considine, *Professor, Media Studies/Instructional Technology, Appalachian State University*

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tolerate and even cherish ambiguity—yet the world in its nature has always been highly ambiguous—in life science, physics and technology, in business, and in the human sciences.

These arguments from practicality, most often put forward by business leaders, often carry a global economy perspective. If we are to deal well with people from a huge variety of human cultures—and we had better do so—then we must grasp as well as we can their spiritual and emotional lives. It doesn't matter whether our motives are humanitarian or commercial or both. It is the nature of art to speak to our emotional selves as well as our thinking selves. A culture's drama, dance, music, stories, sculptures, crafts and poems are the surest path to empathy and understanding. The argument becomes one in favor of pluralistic, multicultural education, of course, but from a somewhat different social agenda.

ART FOR EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD

By breaking through our inhibitions through inspired creative work, we share a common experience that helps us learn to see beyond stereotypes.

—Naa-Abashie Ankrah, dancer

A third set of arguments stems from the "whole child" conception of education. They summon a persuasive case for arts in schools. Holistic arguments for arts education are supported by considerable research, but are among the least articulated arguments. They are sometimes taken for granted by the education community, and are often completely unknown to the lay community.

The passive learning required in many academic classrooms is a perfect mirror of the television/VCR society. An actor performs for an inert audience. The teacher is a full chalice, the students are empty cups. The teacher talks, and the students are filled—supposedly. Some students do survive such a learning context, but it deadens them: what is primarily learned is the sad game called School. Learning the rules of the school game as a *primary learning* fosters the cynicism of our society.

For most students passive learning is difficult and inefficient; most learn best by doing, by making, by being actors rather than audience. For other students, including our brightest and our most marginalized, passive learning of the school game is actively refused. This is in part a refusal to become cynical.

Another consideration here is our society's analytic/reductionist habit. In our thinking and in our practice, we seem to love making separations. We think of the scientific, technological and the practical as belonging to one realm of life, and the artistic and religious, the natural and the magical as belonging to quite another realm. The first realm is daily; the second is occasional, if we have time for it at all.

In this social context, it is hard for us to realize that in many human cultures, the arts are not separated from everyday life. Nor are the arts separated from one another. Instead, the arts are seen to flow from daily life, and the general concerns of the community, just as practical work does. Holistic education suggests that we can usefully echo such traditions to create active learning environments for children which enables them to make connections.

THE ARTS AS INTERDISCIPLINARY BRIDGE

Interdisciplinary education is a broad term for various efforts to break down the curricular boxes and

adamant schedules we have imposed on both teachers' and students' minds.

For many superficially sound reasons, the school day and the school curriculum have been divided and sub-divided, *reductio ad absurdum*. Now we have math, now we have social science, now we have language arts. And when we have language arts: now spelling, now grammar, now we read, now we write. We take things apart and box up the pieces, and schedule them tightly. Schools are excellent at reducing any subject to its constituents and teaching them separately.

But once Humpty Dumpty is in pieces, schools don't put things back together again—and rarely even notice the yolk all over the floor. The painful result is that students do not learn to make connections among various subjects and disciplines. This, in turn, makes it very difficult to apply what they learn to their lives. Our school practice contradicts many of our stated educational goals, such as flexibility and the ability to make choices from perceived alternatives.

The arts are one of the few elements of school curriculum which can overarch and bridge the various disciplines. Moreover, they can do this in a way which motivates children to learn in all subjects. The arts can connect things together for children.

We must remind ourselves that learning is most efficient when the whole person is involved—the cognitive, the emotional, the kinesthetic. Arts ensure this holistic involvement. Music, stories and poems and drama, film, sculpture, painting, dance, crafts—all demand the participation of the whole self. The arts, in practice, combine the senses: they let the vision speak, let words dance, let the muscles sculpt.

It is this sense of wholeness that both motivates and transfers to other learning. Art makes multiple demands on students that exemplify that connectedness, and enables them, by example, to break through the walls of the curricular boxes into which educational practice has reduced our knowledge.

Recent research clearly shows that when the arts are a strong component of the school environment, overall academic performance improves. Drop out rates decline and absenteeism declines. And contrary to expectations, these results are found in all sorts of school settings,

The conscious and unconscious processes underlying creativity are essentially combinatorial activities—the bringing together of previously separate areas of knowledge and experience. The scientist's purpose is to achieve synthesis; the artist aims at a juxtaposition of the familiar and the eternal; the humorist's game is to contrive a collision...Laughter can be described as the "Haha reaction"; the discoverer's Eureka cry as the "Aha! reaction"; and the delight of the aesthetic and cathartic experience as the "Ah...reaction."

—Arthur Koestler, *novelist*

The Latin *cogito*, "to think," comes from *coagitare*, "to shake together"

Some skills taught only in the arts are as important to science as to art: Playing, abstracting, building models and recognizing patterns. Non-verbal skills allow people to imagine and visualize new realities before they can be proven by logic or scientific experiment.

—Morris Tanenbaum, *Vice Chairman, AT&T*

We learn what we want to learn. We learn well what we perceive as helpful, interesting and/or rewarding—this is what is retained in long-term memory.

—Paul McLean, *brain researcher*

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not just in settings with a high proportion of at-risk students.

These research results have been variously explained.

For example, practice in the arts may help integrate neurological functions, thereby aiding learning and performance in other subject areas. We are learning that experience can and does play a role in shaping and changing the structure of the cerebral cortex. The arts are naturally multi-sensory and interactive.

Howard Gardner's work in Harvard University's Project Zero suggests how creativity and comprehension in the arts nurture the intellect and address a variety of human intelligences and learning styles—kinesthetic, visual or auditory, global or analytic, random or sequential learners.

...the basic motivation of the creative scientist is the exploratory drive. Yet every great artist has an element of the explorer in him: the poet does not "manipulate words" as the behaviorists would have it, he explores the emotive and descriptive potentialities of language; the painter is engaged, throughout his life, in learning to see ...This is the first point to retain, if we wish to overcome the deplorable split into the "two cultures"—and to reaffirm the continuity.

—Arthur Koestler

The actual practice of the arts can engage the imagination, foster flexible ways of thinking, develop disciplined effort, and build self-confidence.

—The College Board

Whatever the explanations, there is a clearly established direct correlation between arts-based learning and enhanced student achievement.

ARTS FOR MOTIVATION AND SELF WORTH

How do the arts motivate children? How do they empower children?

As we have seen, art-making and performance embrace all learning styles; real success is more possible for more children. Motivation to continue and to take risks derives from success.

Art helps make us whole. Art insists on joining our intellects, our emotions, our senses, our bodies. Art re-unites the schools' destructive separation of these central elements of our humanity. Art honors everything within us. Success in making art makes us feel whole.

Art increases self worth. Improved motivation and increased success inevitably yield a positive sense of self, and play a large part in repairing psychological damage that can paralyze children and make it extraordinarily difficult to learn.

Art engages the personal. It asks performers and makers alike for their personal interpretations of experience. Art celebrates and validates our unique emotional and intellectual responses to common human experience, and at the same time gives us tools to bridge otherness and share that experience. This validation of the importance of the personal, over time, can greatly improve self worth.

HOW ART TRANSFORMS US: SHARED POISON-CHANGING

ART IS A TRANSFORMER OF EXPERIENCE:

One basic motive for art and personal expression is poison-changing. Life is often painful and confusing and filled with loss. Poison-changing is the astonishing human ability to accept whatever life throws at us, and convert it, transform it within ourselves into power and learning and beauty in the act of making art. This transformation allows catharsis. Consider the paradox of blues music, of tragic poems and plays, of *Guernica*.

ART IS A SHARING OF EXPERIENCE:

Another basic motive for art and personal expression is celebration. When we are moved to joy and delight, we are moved to share it (although often we don't know how, so we buy a greeting card).

EXPRESSED PAIN SHRINKS; EXPRESSED JOY GROWS:

When the hammer hits our thumbs, we must express. It feels better when we do; the pain shrinks.

When we are awed by beauty or surprised by joy, we also express. It feels larger, more complete when we do.

Whether or not the expression is shared, it feels better having expressed. Shared pain, however, shrinks more; shared delight expands more.

THE CRAFT OF ART:

The more accurate our self-expression, the more it satisfies. To be sincere is necessary but not sufficient. Learning the "tools" of an art, the skills and techniques and tricks, enables us to "speak" more powerfully, both to the self and to other. Well made art can pare through any thickness of skin.

THE TRANSFORMING AND SHARING OF EXPERIENCE

HELPS US LEARN OUR OWN STRENGTH:

In this process of making and sharing art well, we combine three things: the relief of "getting it said," the knowledge of having "said" it powerfully, and the sense of having been understood, of having bonded emotionally with an other for a moment.

Making art and sharing our making, whether to change poisons or to celebrate, changes the way we see ourselves. It bonds us with what is outside the self, which seems to be a basic human need. Learning ways to transform experience is a survival trait—and we feel good when we recognize our own strength.

—John Caddy

A Case For Artists in the Classroom

—John Caddy

We are often asked to identify the impact of the residency work of writers and artists, to specify the niche into which the work will fit. It is a frustrating task, because to rely on the "facts"—the events and workshops and classes—and the "results"—the murals and books and songs and poems—ignores the smaller moments of magic in which shy children blossom, or troubled children succeed. But to rely only on the magic of these personal triumphs gives short shrift to the intellectual stimulation an artist brings to the classroom, to the persuasive force of working knowledge, presented by practitioners for whom art and art-making is both life and livelihood.

—Randolph Jennings, former Director,
Arts Education Programs, COMPAS

WITNESS

COMPAS has twenty-five years of experience in placing artists into classrooms, staff development settings, penal institutions, senior citizen programs, battered women's shelters, and a wide variety of other community settings. We know, from this long experience, that the presence of the live artist makes a large difference in results, whether in classroom writing and painting, large community murals, or in music-making and dance.

In support of the artist's role, then, we make an argument from experience, or if you will, Witness. This is a kind of argument whose power depends upon singular evidence—narrative, anecdote—subjective experience—and the human singularity of that evidence is what gives an argument from Witness its power to connect with the reader's life.

We insist upon the value of the artist's presence in the classroom. But saying the artist is valuable is never meant to disqualify the teacher—both are necessary. Teachers, however, have motives different from artists, play necessarily different roles with students, and are generalists rather than specialists. Above all, teachers carry an enormous load of tasks and community expectations that a visiting artist does not.

The artist in the classroom has some freedoms the regular teacher does not, which can work to the students' advantage. Artists also have some different approaches—ways of engaging their art forms day to day—which can also benefit students. Artists have a different perspective on the nature of the world. Like ecologists, for example, they see connections everywhere. For another,

they see the world not as entirely comprehensible, but as mysterious and protean.

Why does the practicing artist's presence make a difference? How do artists empower children? We will explore the nature and value of the artist's classroom presence by looking in detail at the following:

- The presence of the non-judgmental stranger;
- What artists expect;
- The artist's classroom role;
- Process and product expectations and goals;
- Everything connects: the artist's way of seeing;
- Exemplifying the ambiguous and mysterious;
- Self-esteem and motivation: valuing children's art as art;
- Valuing personal expression;
- Artists in staff development.

THE PRESENCE OF THE NON-JUDGMENTAL STRANGER

The artist in residence is in some ways a low-risk stranger, one who is unlikely to pass judgment. People often feel more free to express and take risks when they know the relationship will not be long-term. It is oddly freeing for students to know that the artist/student relationship is temporary, even though it may be filled with creative fire and emotional energy. The classroom teacher, by contrast, is in a more precarious relational position: the degree of personal risk he or she can take, and students are likely to take, is much lower. The teacher, in other words, is in relationship for the long-term, and must relate in diverse ways; the visiting artist has the powerful luxury of a clear and limited role.

The stranger is less judgmental than those we know well. The visiting artist tends to accept anything he or she "hears" as legitimate and OK.

ARTISTS' EXPECTATIONS

Artists have different and powerful classroom expectations.

Children live up to adults' expectations, or what they perceive as an adult's expectations. Their regular classroom teacher's expectations—as perceived by both teacher and students—are colored by much prior experience. Some expectations are inevitably negative in the competitive, graded context of school. Creation and self-expression, however, are cel-

...this evaluation clearly found that the artists were responsible for much of the real student progress. The artists' abilities and unique approach to the students were major program strengths. The strong teacher and student support and enthusiasm for the artists demonstrated the unique contributions of the artists.

—Mary Ellen Spector, AMSC Evaluator

I like to encourage looking closely at the world around us and inside us. Observing flowers closely, what their world is like. Observing ourselves closely, feeling what colors could best describe us. Integrating observation, intuition and imagination into a creative event. Remembering that we can never be "wrong" when we are expressing ourselves.

—Marce Wood, visual artist

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We take it for granted that students can and will write well. We know this to be true, and our belief is felt by the children, who suddenly believe it too. That's simple—but like much magic, not as easy as it looks.

—*John Caddy, poet*

I try to validate all student experiences. To give myself and others permission to explore is my biggest quest. From experimentation and unjudged exploration come true discovery and creative expression. The “mistakes” oftentimes are our greatest gifts for discovery. I say, there are no mistakes, we learn from everything.

—*Gary Fey, visual artist*

When I step into a classroom I want to make its walls disappear. I want to toss those desks into the heaving sea of experience and make their occupants struggle for the shore.

—*Daniel Gabriel, writer, Director,
Writers & Artists in the Schools (WAITS),
COMPAS*

When the artist engages students' imaginations, two higher levels of learning are engaged: Spontaneity and creativity. These tools are essential to the life of the artist. They provide opportunities for individual personal development and enhancing self-esteem.

—*Marcia McEachron, visual artist*

expository activities rather than competitive, and necessarily seek diverging personal “answers” rather than converging toward a single “correct” answer.

One powerful thing the artist does is expect children and adult novices to make art well.

Artists in the classroom do not expect children to sort themselves out on a grading curve. They expect children to do well because of what the artists have learned, from their own experience and from COMPAS' experience.

COMPAS artists have twenty-five years of witness as a program backing them up. In the aggregate, at any given time, COMPAS artists total some hundreds of years of classroom experience. All this experience, richly reported in writing a thousand times over, bears witness to an astonishing ability in almost all persons to be expressive, to use art media well, to not just practice skills but actually make art, quickly, powerfully, and authentically.

Uninformed by this experience, school tradition and much current practice assume that children can't really make “true” art. They can only have some fun and develop some skills that may help them make art when they're grown up.

It does not occur to artists, especially those who have worked with younger children, that children will be incapable of performing the artistic making. Artists know that a novel way of seeing is half the battle. The artists know that children can, they expect that children can, they work with an utter confidence that children can make art—so the children live up to that expectation.

THE ARTIST'S ROLE

The artist's role differs essentially from the usual teacher role.

The teacher, when asking children to create art, must take off the “expert” hat and put on the “creator” hat—a difficult role shift. For example, built into any artistic process is the assumption that many attempts will fail and some will succeed. You might say that artists are

masters of “developmental errors.” This is a difficult assumption for students to grasp in a system in which children expect to either succeed or fail. It is difficult for teachers to persuade their students that this general school expectation, which children have learned well and long, is different when they are making art. Saying it is so doesn’t make it so in the student’s mind.

On the other hand, the artist is a practitioner—there is no role to shift; he or she tends to be believed when the claim is made: much of what you will try won’t work—but risking the attempt is the only way to discover the delight of successful creation.

The artist wants to share with children his or her delight in the unpredictability of making. Experiment! Discovery! Risk it!

The artist’s role makes it more possible to risk the personal—because all art is personally expressive, personally interpretive. The artist asks children to do an expressive performance and lowers that risk by sharing examples of his or her own work, which is inevitably personal in nature.

PROCESS AND PRODUCT EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS

Another aspect of expectations is the artist’s **process orientation**. The teacher’s role focuses on product, grades being the primary one. Most teachers know this doesn’t make much sense, that the process learned is what will be useful in the future, but our whole school tradition makes a process-orientation difficult—unless you come in from the outside.

Making the product all-important risks all students’ success: developmental errors are self-perceived as failures and discouragement wrecks motivation.

Creative artists know that we cast about, try this, try that, blunder, follow blind alleys, and now and then step into a blazing light. Explorers never expect to find treasure on every expedition. It is the going, not only the arrival. It’s the joy of an absolutely unpredictable going.

The artist makes art, and asks students to make art, hands-on. When making things hands-on in the

The artist brings two unique and valuable forces to the classroom: first, the passion and purpose of a life dedicated to living out a commitment to an imaginative and creative intellectual life, a life for which art and art-making are central. The second is an absolute willingness to help each student explore and express him- or herself, to discover personal curiosity as necessary and sufficient reason to want to learn, to test ideas and take risks.

—*Randolph Jennings*

So often children dare not risk putting hand to paper, so often we dare not attempt magic. So we teach them ways to believe: that the heart’s magic is possible to communicate in words, that each of us can do it, given the urge to share ourselves.

—*John Caddy*

Were I to hold the truth in my hand, I would let it go for the positive joy of seeking.

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

What I’m really after is to develop a group experience of creativity. I use source material to experience this group process—not as a means to an end. We are not so much worried about where we are going, as much as we are about how we are going to get there.

—*Ross Sutter, musician*

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usual school setting, students are typically first taught a concept or generalization, then asked to "create" to help learn that concept. Such a hands-on activity exists in service to abstractions from the curriculum.

The children have taught me that we make too much of the differences between the work of "ordinary" and "gifted" people. Working with COMPAS, we writers and artists are continually drawing parallels between the creative work of children and our work as committed adult artists and writers. Every COMPAS writer can tell about children who have difficulty in academic settings experiencing success in writing poems, memols, or stories, where they can pursue problems that have many possible solutions. ...When we model our approaches to artistic problems and involve children in creative work, the children, in all their diversity, respond.

—Susan Marie Swanson, poet

The kind of attitude I want to take with me when I go into a classroom to teach writing is one where no one knows what will happen next.

—John Minczeski, poet

...the solution to a problem is not always to follow the rhyme, the pattern, the expected. Art-making processes are vehicles for learning and discovery. Rather than being about learning to find the common correct answer, art-making is learning to work thoughtfully and find one's own answer.

—Lou Ferreri, visual artist

Though there is nothing inherently wrong with such a practice, the making is clearly secondary. The teacher, in this context, primarily wants the abstraction learned.

The artist, in contrast, is primarily interested in the art-making. Since children survive day to day by accurately "reading" adult expectations and agendas, the hands-on making tends to be stronger and more free in the presence of the artist.

In a residency, the act of making is honored in and of itself, not as a means toward a larger end. Here is the educational bonus: The artist knows intuitively that we learn most efficiently by making first, then abstracting from what was made afterward. This is usually a more effective sequence for learning the principle or abstraction than the teacher is typically using—although the sequence may seem contrary to logic.

EVERYTHING CONNECTS: THE ARTIST'S WAY OF SEEING

The artist's way of seeing and understanding is different in a way that empowers students. The artist is naturally inclined to connect experience, to weave things together, to pay attention to apparently random connections, indeed, to assume that everything is connected to everything—because that stance yields power. The artist's source material is likely to be from anywhere and everywhere. Schools, in contrast, are in their nature and tradition basically analytic and tend to separate things. Another way of putting this: artists expect the world to be ambiguous, and learn to be comfortable with that—even though it is not neat and controllable. This aspect of artists' ways of seeing flows naturally into interdisciplinary approaches to learning.

EXEMPLIFYING THE AMBIGUOUS AND MYSTERIOUS

Another way artists empower students is in their use of examples. Artists tend to use examples from the art form to which they have a personal and emotional commitment. The examples chosen from student work are likely to be praised for stretching out, breaking rules, risking the personal, risking what is not quite understood by the creator. Such exemplification is not only honest—strong art happens this way—but it is convincing. It motivates learning.

In contrast, when a teacher praises student work, it is tempting to praise work which makes a good general example and is easily understood. The experimenter, the rule-stretcher, the student who has bridged her heart and mind in a new way is more likely to be overlooked.

The nature of schools makes it likely that teacher examples, on the other hand, will come from a text, from received knowledge. And textbooks, by their very nature, seek to de-mystify experience. The stance of many learning materials suggests to students that we know more and control more than we actually do. The artist is more likely to acknowledge the ambiguities of life and mysteries of the human heart.

SELF-ESTEEM AND MOTIVATION: VALUING CHILDREN'S ART AS ART

The motivation the artist creates, and the success to which the artist can lead students, can be enormous.

As suggested above, the artist tends to accept and encourage a wide variety of learning styles, not so much because that is good educational practice, but because making art is inherently multisensory and interdisciplinary. Art-making requires experiment and innovation, and in its nature values nuance and choosing.

The practicing artist in any field is more likely than

I come into the classroom with something I really love and am deeply connected with. I don't teach from books. I teach from my gut. For me art-making is a very deeply felt experience, and because it's so important to me, it becomes very important to the students.

—Barbara Krefl, visual artist

**To me, a poem is like a bird,
swaying back and forth in the air.
Then it lands, and then you hold it.**

—Andrea Smith, grade 4

My goal is to inspire people to believe in themselves, especially those people whose voices are least heard in our culture. I want to uncover beaten down self-esteem and offer moments of joy and creativity. I think every one of us harbors a spirit of creativity. For a few, that spirit is nurtured, for many it is discounted and overruled. I think valuing our own creativity is the key to empowerment. I want the world to be a richer place for all of us.

—Sadie Green, writer

Music is the source of spiritual, emotional and intellectual nourishment. Once we realize the full potential of music and the other arts, we will no longer isolate them from other "academic" subjects. On the contrary, they will be thought of as one unit.

—Douglas Ewart, musician

PART ONE: Setting The Stage

the teacher to value what children produce as art. Not cute kids' stuff, not attempts toward art, not practice for later adult art, but legitimate art that stands up to disciplined criticism. Children's art qualifies.

We teach them the joy of having communicated well and powerfully. We teach them to let the power of language give them goose bumps, stir the hair on the neck.

—*John Caddy*

The mass culture is a river, and strong sense of self worth is the only bobber which can keep you afloat. Self worth is gained by doing, not watching; emulating, not idolizing. The folk arts, the arts of the people, are natural gateways to a life of doing. Folk music and dance, an inextricably linked pair, build community between participants, and mutual respect grows.

—*Paul Wilson, folk musician*

In twenty-five years of witnessing the results of residency, COMPAS and similar agencies across the country have learned that children's art is valuable and legitimate art. Children's fresh perceptions and new eyes offer us much: insight, excitement, wonderfully unpredictable leaps to connections tired eyes no longer easily make, but recognize immediately as valid. This is a powerful learning.

It was an unexpected learning. The first residency programs for children focused on creating larger audiences for a particular art form, not on the value and legitimacy of children's art. We really have learned something we did not expect.

Artists beginning residency work hear about this powerful learning. Some are, at first, skeptical—like most adults. This is difficult stuff to communicate; everyone is an expert on children. And against the popular perception, artists tend to be hard-headed and devoted to craft; they are natural skeptics. But as beginning residency artists take part in various training programs, classroom observations and internships, they quickly gain this insight—and for many artists, children's real art becomes a source of renewal for the practicing professional.

This attitude toward children's art—that it is valuable for itself, as Art—quickly communicates itself in the classroom. The artist takes it for granted; the children begin to do the same. This creates strong motivation and leads to increased success.

The artists find they don't have to be tempted to unduly praise an unsuccessful effort, because there are so many successful ones.

The artists also, by example, show children that many first attempts are fruitless and don't go anywhere, but that some become wonderful. So risking, attempting, playing, messing up and not getting anywhere are demonstrated in the arts residency to be part and parcel of the art-making process.

This is the difference between "developmental errors" and mistakes. The errors—false starts, blurts, jerks, oops!—will and must be made; they are part of the art-making process. For kids, this is a crucial learning that transfers throughout the curriculum.

VALUING PERSONAL EXPRESSION

The artist is by nature more interested in the value of personal expression than is the teacher.

The artist, we should remind ourselves, does not have the teacher's multiple burdens and constituencies, thus is not constantly pressured to focus on the testable, the reproducible, the reduction of subject matter

to yes/no or, at best, multiple choice.

The artist usually begins with the human urge and need to express. The teacher tends to begin with form and technique, encouraging students to perceive those as the most important things about making art. When the artist begins instruction with an emphasis on expression, and later explores forms, the children learn a truth: what gives life and power to a form is the fire kindled by the opportunity to express personally. Form and technique, while important, are not effective starting points.

Artists are likely to want children to push off in idiosyncratic directions, honor the self, interpret the subject through unique eyes—and know they can still teach the skills needed for a potent expression. The artist knows that the techniques of an art form are best and most easily learned when the child is first motivated by the power of personal expression.

We come back quickly to how we perceive children's creations: art, or practice for later? And we come back quickly to the exclusionary tendencies of the aesthetic tradition. For if children's creations are practice for later, and hardly any of them are going to be professional artists—God forbid!—there doesn't seem to be much point, except for the talented few. Talent, after all, is inherent, not practice-able—so some say.

There is, of course, a long advocacy of honoring the personal in American education—and a long struggle against it. This is an essentially contested issue that will always be with us.

Artists in residence are indeed likely to place a high value on personal expression, no question; it's what artists do. But after some residency experience, this is not the main reason they so value children's art-making. They learn to value it because it is so often real art.

This knowledge that residency artists carry with them—for it is knowledge, not just an attitude—is a powerful motivator in the classroom. It not only validates for children the importance of the personal, it validates the real power of their ability to express and communicate it artistically.

Artistic expression is a lifelong tool for maintaining full personhood, and I feel honored to help others gain confidence in making their own art.

—Betsy Bowen, visual artist/printmaker

ARTISTS IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

COMPAS, in its Dialogue program, in its Writers & Artists in the Schools (WAITS) program, and in its Teacher Institutes, has gained enormous experience in finding ways to help teachers improve instruction and re-charge their batteries.

In recent years, teacher pressure has led to greater district funding for staff development programs. Some of this staff development explosion, however, has been ineffective. Administrative practice has sometimes turned potentially useful training time into occasional district-wide one day sessions which are large, impersonal, and have no follow-up. Teachers tend to see such days as largely wasted.

Training is most effective when:

- it is desired;
- it is of manageable size;
- it is personal;
- it is demonstrated or modeled;
- it is processed after demonstration.

PART ONE: Setting The Stage

Artists in residence are in an excellent position to meet these criteria. Training is desired simply because the teacher wants the best for the students—live kids in the room, not hypothetical students. It is manageable because it is classroom sized. It is personal because art-making, as distinct from studying existing art, is necessarily self-expressive. The artist is continually modeling for the teacher, and with the teacher in team contexts. In a well-planned residency, there is time and opportunity to process what was done, what was seen.

Consider the situation of a teacher watching an artist work with kids. The artist is modeling instruction, the teacher is a participant observer—relatively active, not a passive watcher, often making art along with the kids. The two have twenty minutes later, while the class is in the gym, to process the learning. They talk over coffee, play “what if ...” discuss what worked, what concepts and skills are being developed, what Harry seems to need.

The in-service dimension of a residency offers choice to the teacher—how much to “try on,” how much time to spend de-briefing with the artist—and this not only acknowledges the incredible demands on teacher time, it honors the teacher’s professional competence.

An artist in residence gives schools “two for the price of one”—both students and teachers learn, increase motivation, and feel the success of creating.



PART TWO:
The Unique
Approach of AMSC

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program Concepts

In 1988 COMPAS and the Blandin Foundation set out to develop a new arts education initiative, Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC). The purpose of this initiative was to pilot a variety of models that used art as a means of transforming the educational experiences of rural students and community members.

The AMSC program began with a focus on five unique concepts:

- Meeting the distinct needs of rural schools and communities;
- Providing opportunities for local artists to work in arts programs in their own communities;
- Involving local school staff, artists, arts organizations and residents in a collaborative and inclusive planning process;
- Developing lasting projects that would continue after the involvement of COMPAS;
- Listening to and learning from the individuals and communities involved and making changes in the overall program as necessary.

However, it became clear early in the program that one additional idea would also be critical to the program's success:

- Supporting the local autonomy of sites to develop and manage their own projects.

Evolving from the concept of local autonomy was a necessary re-definition of a commitment of all arts education programs:

- How to build a positive artistic experience for all participants.

The sections below explain why AMSC chose to concentrate its efforts on these concepts and how they shaped the components of the overall program.

RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Prior to AMSC, no single Minnesota arts education program focused exclusively on examining the needs of rural Minnesota schools and communities. COMPAS and Blandin chose to concentrate their efforts in this area because of the distinct rural, arts and education issues that confront these communities:

- Rural towns have limited financial and human resources;
- Declining enrollment, dwindling resources, isolation and consolidation all affect school districts' abilities to support the needs of their students. Most rural districts in Minnesota have made severe cuts in arts programs and art specialists, because their limited budgets can only afford programs that are mandated;
- Most of the arts institutions in Minnesota are concentrated in urban areas. Rural schools and

communities have depended largely on arts programs exported by these metropolitan organizations. Among many rural residents, arts activities are viewed as something they see when they visit the city—not as something they do as part of their own community;

- Transportation costs make field trips and residency programs considerably more expensive for rural towns, and metropolitan school districts receive a greater portion of the funding that is available to support their involvement in these programs;
- Often rural artists work in isolation, without the support of their peers or neighbors. Few rural districts utilize the expertise of rural Minnesota artists. Rural artists are underrepresented on the rosters of statewide residency programs;
- Rural arts facilities are often compromised by the departure of local expertise from the community.

DEFINING "RURAL"

AMSC decided to work in rural sites where we could examine these issues. In defining "rural" we identified two key factors that affected the difference between the abilities of rural and urban communities to develop arts education programs: location and resources. Therefore, we eliminated two types of communities from our definition of "rural":

- Small towns that can, because of location, utilize the resources of the Twin Cities area of Minneapolis, St. Paul and their suburbs;
- Larger non-metropolitan communities with populations over 25,000, like St. Cloud (population approximately 43,000) or Mankato (approximately 30,000) or Duluth (approximately 93,000) or Rochester (approximately 58,000), which do support medium-sized theaters, galleries, and music companies.

Initially, we also considered narrowing this definition even further to include only prospering towns and communities with some experience in arts education programming. In these communities it would be easier to achieve innovative, successful projects, and we would have the opportunity to increase the impact of AMSC projects by building on existing programs and plans. We decided against this narrowing, however, because we felt more rural schools and communities would benefit if we chose to document model projects in sites with a

There is an enormous need for the kind of programs that COMPAS has been doing with the Blandin Foundation in rural Minnesota. Smaller school districts, just simply don't have the tax base to provide...basic education, and what are perceived as "extras." ...When you consider a school district the size of Cook County; it takes you an hour and a half to drive from one end of the county to the other. ...We have a huge transportation budget in our school district just because of the number of bus routes.

—Jay Andersen, Director,
Grand Marais Art Colony

Artists have always played an important role in the arts and arts education around the state. However, rural schools and communities often depend on the expertise of artists, touring companies and arts organizations from larger metropolitan areas instead of utilizing their own resources.

—1988 AMSC Program Brochure

PART TWO: The Unique Approach of AMSC

wider range of experiences.

DEFINING "SCHOOLS"

To examine models for school involvement, AMSC decided to explore projects in a variety of Minnesota public school settings, including:

- One school;
- An entire district;
- Several schools from multiple districts working together, to accommodate the growing reality of consolidation.

DEFINING "COMMUNITY"

AMSC decided to require each model project to include a community component in the planning and/or implementation of their projects and AMSC encouraged each site to define "community" individually, based on their own local needs and concerns. AMSC provided some examples for community partners, including: Parents, community organizations, senior citizens, cultural groups or individual community members.

LOCAL ARTISTS

Most arts organizations provide outreach services to rural communities, exporting artists-in-residence and other programs into small town schools and community centers. (In Minnesota the most notable exceptions to this are the ten non-metropolitan regional arts councils which support local artists and arts projects in their areas.) For the AMSC program, however, COMPAS and Blandin decided that local artists were an important focus for three reasons:

- Local artists were a convenient resource that remained untapped by many rural communities and arts organizations;
- Both institutions felt it important to use their financial resources, whenever possible, to directly support rural Minnesotans and rural Minnesota enterprises;
- Involving rural artists in projects would help communities to be less dependent on outside programs;
- In some cases, local artists may be more economically feasible than imported artists.

DEFINING "LOCAL ARTISTS"

Because distance between communities varies greatly in Minnesota, AMSC gave individual communities the responsibility of defining "local artists" and was open to definitions that included artists living in the same town or artists from surrounding communities.

From the beginning, AMSC encouraged communities to work with artists from a variety of artistic disciplines, including visual art, music, dance, creative writing, theater, media, storytelling, and traditional and folk arts. To achieve a range of models, AMSC decided to select sites whose projects included working with one artist or several artists collaboratively. In projects involving several artists, AMSC chose sites that focused on artists representing a single artistic discipline, as well as sites where artists worked in several disciplines.

COLLABORATION AND INCLUSION

Because COMPAS and Blandin decided it was critical to involve local artists, school staff and community members in shaping each site's project, collaboration and inclusiveness were automatically key components of the AMSC program. From previous experience, both institutions observed that projects needed the involvement of all these people to succeed, because:

- Artists provide insight in planning creative projects involving students and teachers;
- Teachers provide input on their own needs and those of their students;
- Projects have the most impact when teachers value them and work to integrate them into the curriculum;
- The support of parents, school administrators and community members is key to developing lasting projects;
- Multicultural projects are only effective when community members from all racial and ethnic groups participate in their development.

Artists are also a valuable resource to teachers. They understand the issues inherent in the process of creativity and can provide teachers with new techniques for stimulating creativity in their students and integrating arts activities into existing school curriculum.

Programs that are designed to meet the individual needs of each community provide channels for new and vital forms of communication among neighbors.

...COMPAS will collaborate in this project with arts councils, leadership programs and other agencies based in rural Minnesota, and will set up cooperative activities that can continue in communities long after this program is over.

—1988 AMSC Program Brochure

CONTINUATION

The concept of continuation, or the development of sustained projects, is an area where the missions of COMPAS and Blandin overlap. COMPAS has a long-standing commitment to community art and to demonstrating, through its programming, that art is not an add-on or a luxury, but an integral part of education and of community life. One important mission of the Blandin Foundation is to advance the viability of rural communities and the well-being of their residents. Therefore, continuation—developing the capacity of schools and communities to sustain arts education projects—was an important goal of the AMSC program from the very beginning.

Both COMPAS and Blandin thought that a mark of the success of the AMSC program would be the increased ability of participating communities to use local resources and to develop and maintain arts programs independent of our support.

This program focus also tied the work of AMSC to the goals of two other important rural initiatives, the Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP) and Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) (see Chapter 1, "COMPAS and the Blandin Foundation"). An important first step for AMSC, therefore, was to contact active participants from these two programs.

Our strategy for effective grant-making has been to listen carefully to the people with ideas. We convene those who have shown an active interest in an issue, problem or opportunity. We try to ask thoughtful questions and to make groups conversant with one another...Our guiding philosophy is to get it done right—not expediently or even perfectly—but “right” in the sense that our partnerships make a difference in Minnesota’s rural communities.

*—Paul Olson, President,
Blandin Foundation*

LISTENING AND LEARNING

Because AMSC was a new kind of arts education effort for Minnesota and for COMPAS and Blandin, these partners decided that a primary approach would be to learn from the schools and communities involved. In keeping with the basic philosophies of both organizations, we approached this program with a commitment to flexibility, to listening and to making adjustments in the program as needed.

We knew also that AMSC would have to be more flexible and responsive than a standard artist-in-residence program, and that, because we wanted to learn from the work of the models and document their process, we had to be more involved on-site than a simple granting program would be.

To inform this effort AMSC conducted field work and town meetings across the state. Local documenters were hired to assist AMSC in recording Town Meetings and subsequent meetings and activities in project sites. In addition, in 1991, the Foundation commissioned an outside evaluation of the program, which included a detailed study of six of the thirteen participating model projects.

One of the first modifications made in the program was in the timeline. The program was originally intended as a three and a half year research and demonstration project. In response to several sites' requests, the timeline was extended to five years to accommodate the need for additional planning and implementation in some of the larger and more complex projects.

Two additional program concepts were also the result of listening and learning: Local Autonomy and Redefining a Positive Artistic Experience.

LOCAL AUTONOMY: PUTTING THE PROGRAM IN THE HANDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Another initial assumption of the AMSC program was that COMPAS would be actively involved in coordinating each project. Through the field work and Town Meetings, we planned to develop an understanding of the type of program structure and coordination that would best serve the objectives of AMSC and the needs of rural communities.

However, as we discussed project ideas and approaches with many communities during first year field work, it became clear that the same project structure would not work in all communities. Less experienced communities who proposed basic projects would need a different approach than communities with previous experience and more innovative and complex ideas. Communities with experienced leadership may want more independence and less support than communities who are just beginning to understand the value of arts projects. AMSC would have to examine a variety of strategies for planning and implementation as well as a variety of types of projects.

AMSC's response to this observation was to put the planning and implementation of model projects into the hands of each local community and to observe and record each site's approach to project coordina-

tion. When needed and appropriate, we provided communities with technical assistance and an outside facilitator. Each community was required to develop a project that supported the overall ideas of the AMSC program, but the project planning and implementation became their responsibility.

This shift toward local autonomy changed AMSC's role from that of programmer to catalyst and facilitator. It also changed the nature and range of AMSC's immediate constituency. As a programmer, AMSC's focus would have been on artists and students. As a facilitator, AMSC's attention turned to local leadership and the people responsible for coordinating projects: community members, teachers and school staff, and, of course, artists.

REDEFINING A POSITIVE ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

Embedded in the tradition of COMPAS' arts education programs, the AMSC program initially planned to develop guidelines to help each school and community coordinate their projects. These guidelines would include specific information on developing artist schedules, teacher involvement, and other logistics that can affect the quality of the student's artistic experience.

However, as the AMSC program shifted emphases, it became clear that providing such guidelines would be in conflict with the concepts of Local Autonomy and Listening and Learning. Such guidelines might also contain assumptions that may not be true in various rural or cultural settings. For example, standard block-time guidelines for artists' schedules may or may not be appropriate for projects built around periodic local artists visits.

Therefore, the AMSC concept of developing positive artistic experiences expanded and became more flexible. Rather than being limited to pre-determined guidelines, project autonomy was enhanced by open-ended planning conferences, provision of a variety of artist role models, and artist training through workshops, mentorships and classroom demonstrations.

We tried to direct our resources outward, into communities to support their goals and ideas. The presence of a COMPAS staff person served as a catalyst to spark local efforts, not to impose a program or a model of what should happen. Often people simply needed help getting started.

—Molly LaBerge, Founder of COMPAS

Program Operations

From the six program concepts described above in Chapter 4, "Program Concepts," Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) identified five areas of program operation:

- Field Work and discussions with artists, educators, arts organizations and community representatives throughout rural Minnesota;
- Town Meetings in twenty-five sites where participants identified local resources, needs, barriers and ideas for arts education projects;
- Follow-up Planning Work in thirteen sites through intensive conferences and informal meetings;
- Piloting and Testing thirteen different project models which ranged in terms of theme and approaches to planning and implementation;
- Ongoing Assistance to support the efforts of project sites and artists;
- An Internal Evaluation commissioned by the Blandin Foundation;
- Supporting similar work in rural schools and communities.

INITIAL FIELD WORK

AMSC field work began in October of 1988. The purpose of this work was to discuss arts education issues and ideas for projects and to identify possible artists, local contacts and Town Meeting sites. In one-to-one and group settings we talked to individuals and organizations—first in northern Minnesota, and then, as we were ready to work with additional communities, in the southern half of the state. The individuals and institutions contacted by AMSC included:

- Statewide, regional and local arts organizations;
- Statewide and regional educational organizations;
- Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) committees;
- Participants in the Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP);
- Interested teachers, school staff, local artists and community members.

During this field work, AMSC discovered a greater range of experience than anticipated.

In COMPAS' previous work in rural communities (twenty-five years of programming through the Writers & Artists in the Schools) most of the schools we encountered had developed some local recognition for their arts education programs.

CHRONOLOGY OF ARTISTS IN MINNESOTA SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES

JULY 1988 THROUGH JUNE 1989

**Field Work: Northern communities
Town Meetings: 16**

JULY 1989 THROUGH JUNE 1990

**Site Selection: First 7 model projects
Project Planning: 7 sites
Project Implementation: 1 site
Project Completion: 1 site
Assistance: 7 sites**

JULY 1990 THROUGH JUNE 1991

**Field Work: Ongoing in southern communities
Town Meetings: 1
Site Selection : 1 additional model project
Project Planning: 1 site
Project Implementation: 6 sites
Project Completion: 1 site
Assistance: 7 sites
Artists Workshops: 1
Outside evaluation begins**

JULY 1991 THROUGH JUNE 1992

**Field Work: Ongoing in southern communities
Town Meetings: 9
Site Selection: 5 additional model projects
Project Planning: 5 sites
Project Implementation: 11 sites
Project Completion: 7 sites
Assistance: 11 sites
Artist Workshops: 4
Sharing Conferences: 2**

JULY 1992 THROUGH OCTOBER 1993

**Project Implementation: 4 sites
Project Completion: 4 sites
Assistance: 4 sites
Outside evaluation completed
COMPAS and Blandin develop a plan for the future
Production of 4 supporting publications**

PART TWO: The Unique Approach of AMSC

As I have been traveling throughout Northern Minnesota during the last nine months, I have learned about the value of this type of project in rural communities. Very few institutions are developing lasting collaborative programs in arts education. In many towns one or two individuals are responsible for the majority of the activity that takes place. Programs phase out after a few years because of burn-out or because someone moves away. Artists are confused about what they have to offer, and schools are reluctant to tap them as resources, because they have little working experience in the classroom.

...Many rural arts programs are working at a much more basic level than we originally anticipated when this program was designed. Developing ideas and identifying the individuals to support them is a challenge.

*—Mary Altman, Director, AMSC,
Report to the Blandin Foundation, August 1989*

One of the things that we have discovered over the last two months is the difference we can make in many communities simply through conducting a Town Meeting in their area. Many communities have some local support for artists-in-education programs, but need to demonstrate to parents and school district personnel the importance of these activities and the learning that occurs through making art and working with an artist. The Town Meetings we develop can bring a general awareness of the value of arts education, and validate the work currently being done through local projects.

*—Mary Altman, Report to the Blandin Foundation,
January 1989*

During AMSC field work we met with isolated teachers and local arts administrators. We found these individuals struggling on a basic level to establish support among school staff, parents and community members for involving artists and arts programs in their schools. We also discovered that many rural schools and communities were unfamiliar with or confused about the resources and programs that were available to support their efforts. Some rural artists were unaware of the arts opportunities within their own or nearby communities.

These discoveries led AMSC to reshape the purpose of Town Meetings, and subsequently alter the program's approach to working with the model project sites.

TOWN MEETINGS

From 1989 to 1992, AMSC conducted 25 Town Meetings throughout rural Minnesota in possible model project sites.

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Sites were identified for these meetings during AMSC field work. An effort was made to choose sites representing a range of geographical areas, populations, economic levels, and experiences in previous arts education activities. Sites were also selected for other factors related to project potential, including:

- Interest on the part of key school and community members in pursuing a project;
- Availability of local artists with an interest in conducting activities in schools and community sites;
- Interest in developing a project involving local cultural communities;
- Interest in collaboration with other communities.

PURPOSE

The original goals for Town Meetings were simple:

- To inform rural Minnesotans about the AMSC program;
- To identify local artists, schools and communities for model projects.

But, as stated above in "Initial Field Work," two discoveries led us to reshape the purpose of the Meetings: The need for advocacy for local programs and confusion over the types of programs and support that were currently available.

The purpose of Town Meetings was broadened to include two new goals:

- Exposing teachers, artists and community members to existing services;
- Bringing special attention to local projects.

AMSC also decided that Town Meetings would be the best forum to begin a broader community discussion about possible projects.

PARTICIPANTS

Announcements of Town Meetings were sent to contacts that AMSC developed through field work with statewide, local and regional agencies. These contacts included artists, teachers, other school staff, parents, arts organizations and key community members. Each community also provided a local mailing list of possible participants. Many sites promoted Town Meetings through local newspapers and newsletters.

The Town Meetings were conducted by AMSC staff who took written chart notes. Following each meeting, we compiled the written notes and provided them to key contacts in each site. AMSC also commissioned a documenter to write a report on each Town Meeting. These reports were used internally as AMSC staff considered possible sites for model projects.

Attendance at Town Meetings varied from 3 to 35 participants.

AGENDA

The first part of Town Meetings was spent discussing and listing information about three topics:

- Local arts and cultural programs;
- Arts education needs currently unmet in the community;
- Barriers preventing the community from meeting those needs.

The lists created during these discussions provided AMSC with additional information about each site, and, more importantly, with a base of ideas which would continue to shape AMSC's approach to working with rural communities. These lists also provided the necessary ground work for the discussion which followed in

TOWN MEETING AGENDA

Who we are, why we are here

Identification of Local Resources

- Current local arts programs*
- Local cultural resources and traditions*

Identification of Needs and Barriers

- School/community needs*
- Barriers to meeting these needs*

Discussions of Ideas for Projects

- Ideas for new local arts initiatives*
- Where we would like to go from here*

PART TWO: The Unique Approach of AMSC

the second half of the Town Meeting agenda: Ideas for local arts projects.

The lists in this section summarize the resources and ideas most frequently identified during the first part of the agenda.

IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL RESOURCES

- **LOCAL AND REGIONAL ARTS GROUPS:** *From official organizations such as a local arts council or community band, to more informal art groups such as writers' and quilters' clubs.*
- **SCHOOL PROGRAMS:** *Including visiting artists and touring programs; field trips; classes in music, visual art, theater, and foreign language; scholarships recognizing students' artistic ability; school plays; and student exhibitions.*
- **COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES:** *Arts fairs and festivals; arts newsletters and columns in the local paper; community education programs; displays of local artists in community and business settings; library programs; local "big-name" artists; mentorship programs; tours to cultural events; dance studios; community theater; the ethnic heritage represented by people in the area; and local museums and historical societies.*

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

- **ARTS AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY:** *Awareness of the critical role that the arts play in education and community life; appreciation of art history and philosophy; recognition of art as a profession; emphasis on art as serious education, not just entertainment.*
- **SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** *Communication among existing programs; leadership; long-term planning and development; support system for artists and art supporters; volunteers; support and interest from classroom teachers, school administrators, parents and school board members; information about local artists.*
- **FUNDING:** *General operating support for local organizations; assistance with grant writing; ongoing financial support from school districts, the community and outside funders; subsidized ticket prices for local artistic performances.*
- **MARKETING:** *Promotion for arts programs and the work of artists.*
- **TIME:** *In the school day and students' schedules, to plan and organize projects, to write proposals and raise outside funding.*
- **RURAL ISSUES:** *Local as opposed to imported programs.*
- **SCHOOL PROGRAMS:** *Dance, string instrument programs, writing programs, performing arts activities, curriculum development, gifted and talented programs, interdisciplinary activities, display and publication opportunities for students, intergenerational activities among students and senior citizens.*
- **COMMUNITY PROGRAMS:** *Local arts classes for adults, community theater.*
- **SPACE:** *Artist display and performance spaces, arts and community centers.*
- **CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES:** *Cultural sharing opportunities to develop a better understanding among local ethnic groups.*

IDENTIFICATION OF BARRIERS

- **ARTS AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY:** *Lack of awareness of local programs; people viewing art as separate from their own lives; perception that art is only for gifted students.*
- **RURAL ISSUES:** *Distance, isolation, decline in population, economic status, losing track of rural roots.*
- **CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES:** *Discrimination, racism and language.*
- **COMPETITION:** *From education "basics" and sports activities, with other larger communities for resources.*
- **BEHAVIOR/ATTITUDES:** *Apathy, lack of energy and motivation, burn-out, fear of change, fear of failure.*

DISCUSSION OF IDEAS FOR LOCAL ARTS PROJECTS

The second part of the agenda focused on discussing ideas for local arts projects, and a wide range of ideas for projects were shared during this time. AMSC instructed participants to discuss any ideas for arts or cultural programs, however we also indicated that we were specifically looking for projects that were collaborations between local artists, schools and community members. In this section is a list of the project ideas that were discussed most frequently.

PROJECT IDEAS

- **PROJECTS INVOLVING ART APPRECIATION OR EXPOSURE TO THE ARTS:** *Art appreciation classes (especially for teachers, parents and community members), arts festivals, "arts alive" events or day-long assemblies exposing students to arts careers, and teacher in-services.*
- **PROJECTS ON LOCAL HISTORY:** *Oral history projects culminating in publications or performances, projects focusing on popular and famous local artists, projects focusing on a local river or lake.*
- **CULTURAL PROJECTS:** *African-, Hispanic-, Native-, Asian- and European-American projects.*
- **THEATER PROJECTS:** *Children's theater, community theater, puppet shows, playwriting, theater projects involving artists of several disciplines.*
- **PROJECTS TO INCREASE PERFORMING AND EXHIBITION SPACE:** *Arts facilities, collaborations with local businesses, communal gallery spaces for artists (including in the schools).*
- **COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS:** *With museums, local businesses, college students, local cable programs, senior citizens.*

I had hoped for more people at our community meeting—visions of rooms crowded with supporters of the arts always dance in my head—but it was a start, people who represented networks of other people, and some who would be very directly active in the project. And certainly this meeting brought together some people who might otherwise never have sat down together, through a common interest, the history and the future of the river.

—*Florence Dacey, Granite Falls*
essay writer

INTERNAL AGENDAS

AMSC also had several internal agendas for Town Meetings:

- Identifying key individuals who may be good leaders, who had a strong understanding of local school, community and arts education issues, who had the trust of artists and teachers, and who could serve as contacts for local projects;
- Selecting other important individuals and local arts and community organizations who should be contacted for subsequent planning work;
- Uncovering key factors that could contribute to the failure of a local project—imbalance of power between potential collaborators, local feuds;
- Assessing the role that would be required of AMSC in supporting a local project—facilitator, disinterested partner, artist advocate, provider of support;
- Assessing the next step needed for each site to begin planning a project.

PROBLEMS WITH THE TOWN MEETING PROCESS

Through Town Meetings, AMSC was able to efficiently gather information on the cultural resources, needs, barriers and ideas facing a number of rural communities. This information enabled us to sensitively shape the AMSC program's approach to developing projects with rural communities.

However, AMSC encountered some problems which may be inherent in the Town Meeting process. These include:

- Participants had difficulty moving on from discussing needs and barriers to discussing ideas for projects (perhaps because they found these issues frustrating and needed more than a short meeting to voice their concerns);
- Participants had difficulty developing ideas that addressed these needs and barriers or that utilized or built-on existing cultural resources;
- Some participants were uncomfortable being candid about local needs and barriers (for example, lack of support from school administration) in front of other community members or peers;
- A desire to impress COMPAS or to be involved in the AMSC program may have also influenced the candor of participants;
- Many members of local Native American and Mexican American communities were not present at Town Meetings. Our methods of inviting people did not attract these groups.
- Those who may have preferred to provide their comments and ideas in one-to-one meetings may not have participated.

These problems suggested to AMSC that other approaches to obtaining community input on these issues needed to be employed as well. One such approach was the one-to-one meetings which preceded the town meetings during the field work stage. Between the town meetings and subsequent project planning in sites, AMSC and other local leaders also contacted individuals for further ideas and to invite their participation in future planning work.

PLANNING WORK

Following Town Meetings, AMSC selected sites to participate in further project planning. In selecting sites, AMSC considered the same criteria listed under the Town Meeting section above as well as the project ideas that were discussed during Town Meetings. AMSC's approach to additional planning in these sites came in two forms: Planning Conferences and informal planning meetings.

PLANNING CONFERENCES

In several project sites, AMSC began planning by holding a Planning Conference with key artists, school personnel and community members. The participants for these meetings were identified through the field work, Town Meetings and through discussions with local representatives. The purpose of the Planning Conferences was to further discuss one or more of the ideas developed during the Town Meetings.

To assist the sites in developing their ideas, AMSC invited experienced residency artists to attend the Planning Conferences. The length of each of the conferences varied from one half day to two days, depending on the complexity of the initial project ideas.

During the Planning Conferences, local participants reexamined and expanded upon their initial ideas, discussed approaches to planning and managing projects, and identified other individuals and resources to contact for future involvement.

INFORMAL PLANNING MEETINGS

In some sites, AMSC chose to hold informal planning meetings. Two sites (Litchfield and Granite Falls) had already begun planning a specific project, and required a shorter planning meeting to discuss details and gauge the support of school and community members. These two planning meetings were open to all school staff and interested residents.

Three other sites (Deer River, Morton and St. James) wanted to develop culturally specific projects. An informal meeting with members of those cultural communities was needed to determine their interest and support for a possible collaboration. In all three cases, this agenda could not be accomplished in one meeting and subsequent planning meetings followed.

PILOTING AND TESTING A VARIETY OF MODELS

The major program feature of AMSC was the testing of a variety of model arts education collaborations among local artists, schools and community partners in 13 rural Minnesota sites.

Project sites were selected from information compiled from Town Meetings, Planning Conferences and other informal planning meetings. The schools and communities involved were not required to submit formal proposals to COMPAS. Rather, the ideas and plans developed during these many meetings were the basis for our selections.

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In choosing sites, AMSC attempted to achieve a range of projects in a variety of community settings. For this reason, after reviewing a project idea, we sometimes met with community members and asked them to consider altering one or more project components. For example, to ensure model projects in a range of school settings, AMSC requested that the Grand Marais project focus solely on the elementary grades. To develop a model for collaboration between two districts, AMSC invited the communities of Little Falls and Royalton to work together on developing a project.

AMSC models varied in terms of:

- **The audience or the individuals that projects were designed to effect.** For every project the primary audience was students in a public school setting, but the number of students and grade levels involved were different in each site. Some projects focused on only a few grade levels. Some projects worked with students throughout the district. Teachers were also a major focus in a few projects. Community audiences included parents, senior citizens, community support groups and the general public.
- **The artistic disciplines involved.** AMSC selected some projects that focused on one discipline, and some that focused on several disciplines. The range of disciplines included visual arts, music, dance, creative writing, theater, media, storytelling, and traditional and folk arts.
- **Length.** Project length ranged from 6 months to 3 years. The amount of time dedicated to planning also varied, from 2 months to one full year.
- **The number of schools or districts involved.** Projects ranged from one school, to an entire district, to multiple districts working together.
- **The number of artists involved.** Projects included one artist leading a project or several artists (up to 20) working together.

But, the theme and approach to planning and implementation were the most significant ways in which projects varied.

THEME

Although we intended to discover themes for projects during the early field work and Town Meetings, AMSC initially had some basic expectations about the types of ideas we would encounter. Two of these initial expectations, mural projects and public festivals, were based on the types of projects that were developed in rural communities during the 1970's, when the budgets of the National Endowment for the Arts, COMPAS and other Minnesota arts agencies were considerably larger.

AMSC also initially anticipated ideas for oral history projects, creative writing workshops, and interactive television, a new educational tool connecting rural students from several districts and providing them with a wider range of choices among elective subjects.

These initial ideas and themes differed somewhat from those we encountered in the field work and Town Meetings. They included:

- Artist/teacher collaborations;
- A sense of place;
- Cultural sharing;

- Interdisciplinary education;
- Ways of sharing art.

(See Chapter 6, "Looking Across the Model Projects: Recurring Themes")

APPROACH TO PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Planning and implementation were the responsibility of each community involved. The Town Meeting and Planning Conference process provided projects with the opportunity to begin to identify possible teachers, school staff members, community members and artists to involve in planning and coordination, and often project leadership emerged at these meetings.

When needed, COMPAS provided sites with ideas for structuring local planning and implementation. Some sites also requested that COMPAS continue to be involved as a partner during the planning stages. Below is a list of some of the projects' approaches to planning and implementation:

- Grand Marais: Triad coordinating committee, including representatives from the schools, a local arts organization and COMPAS.
- Brainerd and Blue Earth: Head project coordinator from the district and a school/community planning committee
- Granite Falls: Co-directed by an artist and a school staff member, with additional input provided through school/community meetings and one-to-one discussions with community members.
- Litchfield and Itasca County: Artist-directed with additional input from school/community meetings.
- Ely and Badger/Roseau/Warroad: Teacher-directed with additional input from school/community meetings.
- Deer River: Committee of teachers, school staff and members of the Native American community, with meetings conducted by an outside facilitator.
- St. James: COMPAS acted as the liaison between the artists and the school, with some input through joint meetings.
- Morton: Joint planning meetings between the school, Native American community members and COMPAS. A community representative acted as a liaison between the Native American artists and the school for artist recruitment and scheduling.

LOCAL PROJECT ROLES

AMSC primarily interacted with local artists, teachers, school administrators and community members in their role as community contacts, project coordinators or planning committee members.

Community Contacts. In AMSC's initial meetings with sites, several people served as community contacts from the four groups listed above, local arts organizations, and CAPP committees. These individuals were responsible for providing us with ideas for possible town meeting participants and later, with ideas for key people to involve in initial planning work.

Project Coordinators/Planning Committees. Although each community identified its own approach to planning and managing projects, there were specific roles and responsibilities that were common to each plan-

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ning committee or project coordinator. These included:

- Identifying additional teachers, school administrators, community members and artists to involve in planning;
- Shaping the overall project, both thematically and structurally;
- Identifying the style of project management and coordinating implementation;
- Identifying roles for community members;
- Soliciting input from teachers, artists and community members;
- Communicating decisions and project results to other key people or interested individuals;
- Planning for continuation.

Aside from these standard forms of participation, the roles of artists, teachers, school administrators and community members, as well as the roles of students, ranged considerably from site to site. The section below describes these varying roles.

Artist Roles. In every project, artists played a critical role in implementation, conducting arts activities with students, teachers and community members. Some of these were with an entire classroom of students, some as one-to-one mentors, and some with larger groups of students, parents and/or community members in a performance setting.

Artists were also actively involved in planning. In projects working with several artists, they were consulted in planning, invited to attend informational meetings or represented on planning committees. In projects where only one or two artists were involved, the artist took on a major role in coordination, and, in two cases, was the overall visionary and coordinator of the project.

Several projects created opportunities for artists to work closely with teachers to co-plan activities, through mentorships, collaborations, sharing techniques or providing assistance.

Teacher Roles. Teachers generally had a wider range of roles and more responsibility for projects than any other participant.

In nearly every site, teachers were actively involved in projects, either as planning committee members or as key project coordinators.

Because students were the major focus of projects, teachers were also actively involved in implementation. At a minimum, their role required that they participate in discussions about scheduling and in observing artists working with their students. Ideally, they supported the work of artists in their classroom and prepared students for their visit and follow-up. Frequently, their role extended far beyond this, and many teachers created art and worked closely with artists through co-planning, collaboration and mentorships.

Teachers were also often the individuals responsible for recruiting community involvement for projects. They identified community members to work with artists, to conduct presentations in the classroom, and created opportunities for artists and students to share the results of their work with community members through readings, performances and exhibitions.

One of the most difficult roles teachers played was advocating for projects to their school administration and securing funding from their districts or outside sources. In some cases, teachers were also involved in writing grants to support projects.

School Administrator Roles. The degree of administrative involvement varied considerably from project to project. In some projects, administrators were active in coordination or on planning committees. In others, their involvement was peripheral. In projects where administrators were not very involved, coordinators and planning committees had to decide when and how to inform them and recruit their support.

When administrators were involved as key project coordinators or on planning committees, they were also actively involved in finding ongoing funding for projects from their districts and outside sources. This enabled teachers to concentrate their efforts on planning and implementation.

Roles of Community Members and Parents. Community members and parents were generally only involved in initial planning meetings.

As project participants, community members and parents were usually involved as audiences or in conducting special presentations in classrooms. In one project, they also had the opportunity to participate directly in artists' activities.

In a few sites, community members were engaged in ongoing project planning. In one site, a community organization took responsibility for some of the project's coordination, including identifying and communicating with artists. In two other sites, where Native Americans were involved, community members were actively involved on planning committees and decision-making.

Student Roles. In most cases, sites defined the role of students as the main focus of the project. Students worked directly with artists and teachers, participating in arts activities in classrooms and in other community settings.

Two projects included one or two older students in initial planning. Because these were busy, older students, other commitments prevented them from being involved on project committees on an ongoing basis. No site gave several students ongoing responsibility for shaping or coordinating projects.

ONGOING ASSISTANCE

A critical component of the AMSC program was ongoing assistance and support in two forms:

- Supporting sites' efforts to plan and coordinate projects;
- Training, supporting and advocating for the use of rural artists in local arts education projects.

Some of this support, such as the training of artists, was anticipated from the very beginning. Through work with the project sites, we discovered that other support was also needed, and when possible, tried to accommodate these needs.

ASSISTANCE TO EFFORTS TO PLAN AND COORDINATE PROJECTS

Because AMSC needed to document and learn from the work of each project, our relationship with the project sites was different from most standard granting programs. Once projects were selected, AMSC hired documenters to periodically record project meetings and activities. AMSC also offered assistance to sites in their efforts to plan and coordinate projects.

Each of the 13 model project sites received some standard forms of support and assistance from AMSC:

- Acting as an initial catalyst for projects through convening Town Meetings, Planning Conferences and informal planning meetings;

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- Making the invitation to local artists, school staff and various community members to come together to discuss arts education issues;
- Convening and facilitating initial planning work;
- Providing funding on a flexible schedule to support the involvement of local artists and direct supply costs;
- Providing representatives of project sites with an opportunity to compare their experiences with each other at a two-day Sharing Conference.

Because each site's project and approach to planning and implementation was different, the forms of assistance needed varied as well. In response to sites' individual needs, AMSC offered and sites requested a range of additional forms of assistance and staff support. These included:

As we developed this program we focused on the enormous challenge of serving as a catalyst, as a center for the encouragement of local initiatives and suggestions in a way that was totally supportive of communities' needs...One of the key things we learned is how many communities needed an outsider to be present at the beginning of a process, to help things along, and then step back when the local leadership began to emerge.

—Molly LaBerge, Founder of COMPAS

- Assistance in organizing a committee;
- Acting as a partner in project planning;
- Convening and facilitating ongoing planning meetings between local project committees;
- Assistance in identifying and assigning committee tasks;
- Performing the role of the "outsider" — providing an objective opinion or assistance in enlisting the involvement of key local individuals;
- Advocating for the representation of cultural communities on planning committees and in decision-making;
- Recruiting artists and identifying other regional or local resources;
- Acting as a liaison between artists and schools;
- Assistance in developing artists' schedules;
- Assistance in developing methods of evaluation;
- Assistance in developing a long-range plan for continuing projects.

The amount of funding support provided to projects also varied from site to site, and it differed from AMSC's initial expectations. AMSC initially anticipated that the funding support we would allocate to sites would be greater than the support we ultimately provided. Our initial assumptions included an estimate of \$15,000 to \$20,000 for artists' fees and supplies for a one year project. The projects that were developed, however, were smaller and took place over a longer period than we expected. Most annual project budgets did not exceed \$7,000.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ARTISTS

Artists were an important focus of the ongoing support and assistance provided by AMSC. This assistance primarily involved local artists who were participating in the model projects, however, whenever possi-

ble, AMSC also extended opportunities to other rural Minnesota artists. Support and assistance to artists came in three forms:

- Advocacy: AMSC advocated for the involvement of local artists in the project sites, including their involvement in overall project planning; AMSC encouraged sites to provide local artists with the same recognition and support as they would outside artists. AMSC also advocated for the compensation of artists for their services.
- Contracting and paying artists directly: To ensure that artists would be compensated and to ensure equity in artist fees across sites; AMSC contracted with and paid artists directly, instead of granting funds to school districts or other community organizations.
- Professionalizing artists through workshops, mentorships and opportunities to observe experienced artists: Over a four year period, AMSC offered five workshops for rural artists interested in conducting activities in school settings; these workshops provided information on working within school schedules and formars, developing activities and lesson plans, and marketing services to schools and other community sites; two of these five workshops were targeted specifically to rural Native American artists.

In a few sites, AMSC also provided new artists with other forms of training, either through mentorships or opportunities to observe experienced artists in action.

EVALUATION

The Blandin Foundation commissioned an AMSC Evaluation, for internal purposes, during AMSC's third year. Jointly designed by Blandin and AMSC, this evaluation used three primary data collection procedures:

- A survey of all project participants administered at the end of the program;
- An open-ended questionnaire answered by teachers and artists at projects' ends;
- An in-depth study of six sites: Deer River, Brainerd, Granite Falls, Grand Marais, Little Falls/Royalton and St. James.

The in-depth studies included observations of planning meetings and artists' classroom work, at least eight interviews with project participants during two site visits, and interviews with groups of students.

This approach to evaluation is similar to others used throughout the country to evaluate arts education programs. Its primary limitation should be noted: Although participants' perceptions were extremely important in shaping and revising the AMSC program throughout the five years of programming, this evaluation relied solely on such observations. Because the evaluation began in the third year, base-line data were not available. Therefore, the evaluation was an imprecise measure of change.

SUPPORTING SIMILAR WORK IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

AMSC developed a series of support materials to assist the efforts of rural schools and communities in producing local arts education projects and the work of arts organizations involved in similar programs.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PART TWO: The Unique Approach of AMSC

Two publications share information about resources identified during the AMSC program:

- *Directory of Rural Minnesota Artists*—a listing which includes personal profiles on 22 rural artists who have conducted COMPAS programs, 196 other rural artists who are interested in working in schools and other community sites, and information for schools and communities on recruiting and hiring artists for local activities.
- *Serving Rural Minnesota*—a resource listing of 70 statewide, regional and local organizations that currently provide support, programming, and other services to rural Minnesota schools and communities developing arts education projects.

Two other publications describe the lessons that were learned through the activities of the model project sites:

- *Producing Rural Arts Education Collaborations*—a handbook providing guidelines for developing collaborative arts education projects among rural artists, schools and communities.
- This research book, *Rural Arts Collaborations*, reporting on the lessons learned as a result of the AMSC program.



PART THREE:

The Implementation
of AMSC Projects

Looking Across The Model Projects: Recurring Themes

As communities met and planned and developed project proposals, certain concepts and themes emerged again and again. Some were based in urgently felt local concerns; some were based in broadly felt social concerns; some were based in the school reform movement; some were based in the simple practical need to fill sudden new holes in local expertise so a play could go on.

Concepts and themes which emerged in planning that AMSC found potentially fruitful centered on:

- A sense of place, stemming from the conviction that what is valued in rural communities must be preserved—'what we cherish here is important'—including oral history, dramatic productions, and storytelling;
- Connections to the natural world, including concerns for the environment, and connecting art and learning to such landscape features as rivers and Lake Superior, which have been central to the community's existence;
- Cultural sharing; the need to address racial and multicultural issues; some long-standing issues, such as relationships with Native Americans, and some in response to burgeoning Hispanic populations;
- Interdisciplinary education, especially in terms of breaking down the school's curricular barriers to enhance holistic learning;
- Ways of sharing art within the community.

As described above, three program focuses were also pre-determined by the AMSC design:

- The use of rural communities and resources;
- The use of local artists;
- An emphasis on collaboration and inclusiveness—collaborations among the schools, communities and artists—which also included mentorships between artists and teachers and artists and children, and a range of artist/artist and artist/teacher collaborations.

Most of the concepts and themes listed above came up in every community's planning, and many did become part of every project. But as plans developed, a number of ideas did come up, predictably, which were rejected. For example, several communities wished to develop community art centers and exhibition spaces. Since school involvement was minimal, this concept failed to meet the collaboration/inclusiveness criterion. Several communities suggested summer-only programs; these were rejected for the same reason.

This process of gradually discovering and narrowing in on communities' interests and AMSC's program needs, informed our difficult process of selection.

ARTIST/TEACHER COLLABORATION:**LITTLE FALLS/ROYALTON AND ELY** (*also see Grand Marais*)

One large thrust in school reform is known as cooperative learning and collaboration. Collaborations between artists and teachers became the shaping concept of two projects, the Little Falls/Royalton "Connections" Project, and the Ely Project.

Mentorship is probably the oldest system of education—master and apprentice, teacher and learner. Respectful, collaborative mentoring is also a difficult kind of activity. Artists acting as one-to-one and two-to-one mentors for both teachers and students was the way art "connected" with the schools in Little Falls and Royalton.

The Ely and Grand Marais projects focused on artists teaming with teachers to plan and implement joint classroom projects. In Grand Marais the projects were interdisciplinary. In Ely, visual artists, creative writers, and a non-fiction writer worked with local elementary and secondary teachers to test ways of "partnering."

WHAT WE CHERISH HERE:**GRANITE FALLS, LITCHFIELD, AND BADGER/ROSEAU/WARROAD** (*also see Grand Marais*)

Several projects centered on ways to define and commemorate what their particular communities cherish. In some projects, these values were explored through a focus on a particular feature of the local environment—a river, a lake. In others, development of an oral history of the town richly demonstrated to all generations who they had been, who they are, where they came from.

The Litchfield project centered on oral history. Among other achievements, it built new and powerful connections between the aged and the young, ensuring that the community's traditions not be lost.

In Granite Falls' "The Story of Our River," the town's setting on the Minnesota River allowed the community to share itself through time, the old reaching out to the young. This focus on what we share, what we value, also suggested a concern for what we should value—students' explorations of the Minnesota River in time included continual sharing of the Native American experience in both past and present.

The concept also cast an environmental eye on the now and the future: How can we preserve the river? The prior question, of course, is, "What is there here to cherish?" The project allowed students to discover just that.

Grand Marais' SAIL project linked itself to Lake Superior for the same purposes: cherishing their history, their common shaping by living next to this vast inland sea, and cherishing the clean beauty of the north woods environment while acknowledging its fragility.

The Badger/Roseau/Warroad project began with a focus on what the three communities held in common. The Roseau River flows through each, and flows through a boreal forest/water ecosystem which is prized by the people.

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CULTURAL SHARING:

DEER RIVER, MORTON, AND ST. JAMES

While many projects concerned themselves with the pluralistic nature of communities, three made cultural sharing the organizing principle. The projects in Deer River, Morton and St. James developed differently from other models. All three of these projects included inviting a cultural community to collaborate with a nearby school district. Deer River and Morton approached Native Americans from local reservations. Because of their large population of Mexican-American students, St. James sought out Hispanic artists to develop a project in their schools.

Deer River and Morton had relatively little experience in co-planning projects with Native Americans. Before a planning meeting could be held or a committee created, each district personally invited artists and cultural representatives from the local reservation to participate.

Because St. James was uncertain about its ability to identify representatives and artists from the Hispanic community, COMPAS enlisted the assistance of the Cultural Diversity Department at Mankato State University, which is approximately 30 miles north of St. James.

All three projects focused on Native and Hispanic artists "presenting" themselves to school children. Storytelling, dance, drama, visual arts, all played the dual roles of art and cultural bridge, in a first-person context. For many white students, this was perhaps the first contact which allowed them to see these artists as human beings.

INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION:

BRAINERD AND GRAND MARAIS

A central thrust of the school reform movement for the past thirty years has been interdisciplinary education. This emphasis on breaking down curricular barriers, combined with the project approach from the British Infant Schools, has led to many "magnet" schools, in which all disciplines are integrated through a single, overarching discipline. In Brainerd's Antarctica Arts Pod Project, art, in all its variety and disciplines, became that unifying factor for three classrooms for three full school years.

Interdisciplinary work, like any collaboration, is person-sensitive, and requires a great deal of planning time. Committed teachers and artists can make it happen, and in several projects, powerful connections between disciplines were made for students. Learning became holistic.

For example, Grand Marais' SAIL project featured artist/teacher interdisciplinary teams; teachers supplied curricular goals and subject matter, which the artists interpreted through their art forms. The process taught each planner to renew perceptions and invent a new fusion of art and academic subject. The students, presented with the same unifying concepts from a variety of directions and activities, found the pleasure of recognition, made their own connections, and learned inclusively.

WAYS OF SHARING ART:**BARNESVILLE/ROTHSAY AND BLUE EARTH**

The goal of several projects was the final sharing of the art and production with the larger community.

Many projects had large and wonderful culminating events. Each year, Brainerd's Arts Pod put on their Renaissance Festival; Grand Marais' SAIL produced an Ojibwe play; Granite Falls produced their pageant, "The Story of Our River," the Litchfield Project culminated with a Readers' Theater. The AMSC commitment to inclusiveness was exemplified in these festive finales. In most cases, though, while these events were the natural outcome of the project, they were not its primary goal.

For a few projects, however, the significant goal of the project was the final sharing of art with the larger community. While these projects varied from stage productions presented in Barnesville and Rothsay to models of vegetable playground equipment in Green Giant park in Blue Earth, public celebration of the art was primary.

HEALING DREAMS:**ITASCA COUNTY**

Perhaps one test of uniqueness is a project's refusal to be grouped with any others. The Itasca County Hospice "Healing Dreams" project exists in part because AMSC learned to listen and be flexible. While it shares many features of the other projects, including an emphasis on sharing the results through an anthology and possible tour, it developed differently.

Healing Dreams came together as the result of meetings between COMPAS staff and several artists who lived in Itasca County and were familiar with the work of the Itasca Hospice. Grief counseling groups were already established in area schools, run by hospice personnel.

One difference from other projects: although the artists met with students at school, school staff were not actively involved in shaping the content or the artists' approach.

We usually focus on classrooms when we think "school." But one feature of recent school development has been the growth of special-purpose groups: students brought together because of shared circumstances—family death, divorce, illness, drug dependency, etc.—to help them in ways the thirty-student classroom cannot. In some hospital and hospice settings, various art therapies have been operating for years. AMSC selected the Healing Dreams Project because it focused on student development through the arts in a unique school setting.

THE ESSAYS

The discussion above is prelude; the core is the thirteen essays that follow.

As each of the projects were distinctive and tailored to a particular community, so are the essays. Most were written by artists who participated in the project, or by project administrators, or in some cases, by artists who also ran the project. The inside perspective with which these writers view their projects offers an invaluable counterpoint to AMSC's overarching perspective of the program as a whole.



ARTIST/TEACHER COLLABORATION

Connections in Little Falls/Royalton

—Edith Rylander

THE COMMUNITIES

Morrison County is mostly rolling morainic land, once heavily wooded, now largely cleared for dairy farming, a place of green fields, white barns, and cattail-fringed glacial lakes.

A hundred years ago this was all lumbering country. Fifty years ago it was almost entirely farming country. Now the number of families actually employed in agriculture is steadily decreasing. More and more central Minnesotans work at industrial or service jobs and those who live in these Morrison County towns are no exception. This is beautiful country full of friendly people. But it is not always easy for them to make a living, and there are few problems of the modern world which do not affect these tidy outstate towns.

Little Falls, the county seat, has a population of 7,250 and is a manufacturing and marketing center, notable as the home town of Charles A. Lindbergh. The name "Little Falls" remembers those Mississippi River rapids beside which the town grew up, before the needs first of logging and then of electrical generation drowned those little waterfalls behind dams. Randall (population 527) was named for a railroad official; Royalton (population 660) was named for a township and village in Vermont from which the original residents came.

These transplanted Yankees, the French-Canadians who were the first settlers in Little Falls, and the immigrant Irish railroad workers who settled in places like Randall and Royalton, have been more

LITTLE FALLS/ROYALTON PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	6
Teachers	25
Participants	100
Artists	14
Art Disciplines	dance, music, theater, writing, traditional crafts, visual art
Length	3 years
Budget	\$10,631

or less submerged by successive waves of Scandinavians, Poles, and Germans.

BACKGROUND

When I walked into the meeting room in the basement of the Pine Edge Inn at Little Falls on the morning of May 16, 1990, my first thought was, "Good grief! Who are all these people?"

I knew they were part of the Little Falls/Royalton Connections Project. On April 6, I had written in my journal, "Putting together a package for COMPAS—the project would mean doing mentorships in the Little Falls/Royalton schools, for money this time. That would be nice."

I had mentored before, sharing what I knew as a poet with a student from Upsala High School, what I knew as a fiction writer and essayist with a student from Sartell High School. I had done it because I remembered being a teenager hungry for more artistic sustenance and guidance than my school could give me. Out of gratitude for past mentors of my own. Out of love for my vocation. For free. So the prospect of being paid for my time and skills was appealing.

Also appealing was the word "Connections." The purpose of art is to make human connections, but the small towns of Minnesota have no cultural network—no magazines, no publishers, few galleries or bookstores—to connect the people who make art with the people it's made for.

People in small towns live in a network of face-to-face connections which are sometimes wonderfully supportive, sometimes smothering. And all of us in twentieth century America live in a largely passive network of mass media. But there is a whole range of connections between microcosm and macrocosm which are very difficult to make. Most of us know more about Madonna than we do about how art and literature are being taught in the school five miles down the road.

When I said this to Nancy Ratzloff, visual arts specialist for Lindbergh Elementary School and AMSC Connections Project Coordinator for Little Falls, she said, "If you're a classroom teacher, you often don't even know what the teacher in the classroom next door is doing. You don't have time to find out."

So I should not have been surprised that so many people would be interested in establishing new connections. Connections between "school and life," as the Project Workplan puts it. Connections between everyday life and art. Connections among artists, teachers, students, and community members.

I had known my own occasionally acute hunger for such connections. I had not supposed so many other people shared it.

CONNECTING

By the time the Connections Project was over, it had involved fourteen artists, twenty-five teachers, forty-nine students, and twelve other participants. Two school districts, Little Falls Consolidated (which includes students from Randall, and Royalton). Six schools: Lindbergh Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, Dr. S. G. Knight Middle, Little Falls High, Royalton Elementary, and Royalton High School. Multiple mentorship sites, from classrooms to living rooms to studios. Multiple disciplines, from movement to vocal music to quilting to water color to music composition. Mentees ranged from first graders to senior citizens. Organizational support came from AMSC and from the Little Falls and Royalton Comprehensive Arts Planning Programs (CAPP).

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

Obviously, what I know best about Connections is what I experienced. As when I left that meeting at the Pine Edge Inn, giddy but anxious. Giddy at having met so many other interested, interesting, arts-oriented people. At simply knowing they existed up here just east of Gopher Prairie, just north of Lake Wobegon. Anxious, because I had somehow committed myself to mentor first graders in poetry, and how the heck does a person do that?

TENSIONS

That sense of being stretched by the Connections Project, of being subjected to unusual demands, seems not to have been limited to me. Those involved in setting up the project did not always find it easy. Joletta Falknor, the Royalton Coordinator, says there was initial concern at Royalton that the "big town" would get more than its fair share of attention, "but I think we had our fair share." Participants in Little Falls, according to Nancy Ratcliff, felt there might be few benefits from the project to a big community, "but just the teachers getting to know each other was worthwhile—the bad thing about education is that every minute is tied up with kids" and the stimulus of outside input is hard to achieve.

The big town/little town tension had a strong impact on the committee meetings which directed the planning and implementation of the Connections project. It was difficult to establish leadership and basic procedures for decision-making, and most importantly, it was difficult to establish trust between representatives of the two communities. No matter what the agenda, Royalton members were always concerned that a greater share of the budget might be directed to activities in Little Falls. This lack of trust carried on throughout later meetings and discussions about the project's continuation.

There was also tension between the implementation of a mentorship project and the goal of reaching more students and teachers through classroom work—of teaching "all the arts to all the students," in Joletta's phrase. "Initially there was a lot of tension about that. There are traditional ways to spend money. It took a lot of time to iron that out. But in some ways, it's easier to get things done in a small community, because it's easier to tap teachers and to disseminate information."

According to Nancy, most Little Falls teachers felt that "all kids should be exposed to the arts, and most of them felt they needed an extra something for the kids with a special interest or a real knack."

Both Coordinators agreed that working out scheduling among mentors, teachers, and students was difficult, and that without the cooperation of the classroom teachers, who had to remember that Neil and Sarah would be out of class the second Tuesday of the month from one-thirty to two, the project would not have worked.

MY MENTORING

I got a real injection of confidence that at least my part of the Project would work when I met in July of '90 with Joletta, Elaine Selinger (a first grade teacher from Royalton) and Lil Warner (a second grade teacher from Lindbergh School in Little Falls). Joletta and Elaine were full of enthusiasm and bright ideas about my mentoring six first grade students from Royalton. Elaine was quite ready to give me a crash course in elementary reading techniques, especially the "whole language" approach, about which I knew absolutely nothing, and to introduce me to writers of children's poetry that I'd never heard of.

MENTOR'S JOURNAL, 12/6/90

My mentee, Lil Warner (second grade teacher) says of the animal fantasy I asked her to write, "I wanted to get away" from responsibilities. (Her teenaged daughter has recently had knee surgery. Her mother-in-law is dying of brain cancer. Her stepson is in the service and expects to be in Saudi soon.)

She has written, "I would be a mouse, slender, sleek and furry." (She is a small, quick-moving woman.) But a mouse whose "nest full of newborns" is "cared for, not forlorn."

I point out that even in her "getaway" fantasy, she is still a responsible nurturer. She laughs and agrees.

It does not occur to me till later that the house mouse is also an upsetter of human domestic order.

Lil Warner, who had volunteered herself as an individual teacher mentee, looked at me with a certain amount of trepidation. "I really don't know anything about poetry," she said, in a tone of voice which suggested I might ask her to rise and recite the first twenty lines of "The Song of Hiawatha." It was somewhat reassuring to meet somebody who was more nervous than me.

From October 1990, to April 1991, I met monthly as a mentor with three elementary teachers, Elaine Selinger, Audrey Goedderz, who taught second grade at Royalton Elementary, and Lil Warner. I also had monthly mentoring sessions with six Royalton first graders whom I think of in pairs, because that is how our meetings were structured. I spent half an hour once a month each with Neil Wilczek and Sarah Dancer, Josh Goedderz and Julia Lyshik, Becky Foged and Jessica Nix.

THE QUEEN WITH THE GOLDEN HAIR

She has black straight hair, projecting front teeth, and a serious speech defect. She starts out stiff and shy, a very "good" little girl. By year's end, she's showing a talent for wacky imagery. She laughs a lot. She also reads the notes I'm writing about her. Upside down. Aloud. She reads, her teacher tells me, at the fourth grade level. This is her final poem.

*In spring, I see bears;
One came by the gate where we live
In the woods, by the Mississippi River.
In spring, I hear birdies.
In spring, I smell the fresh air.
In spring, I taste grass.
In spring, I feel that I'm beautiful.
In spring, I play with my kitty.
In spring, I want to play with my toys.
In spring, I think about being a queen.*

She draws the queen for me. High-heeled shoes. Flowing gown. Crown with points. Floods of crayoned golden hair.

NEIL'S WORRY POEM

*I worry about bats.
One time this bat got into the house
When just my brother and me
And a neighbor were there.
They hid on one couch
With a blanket over them
And I hid on the other.
And I was all by myself.
And my blanket
Had holes in it!*

—Neil Wilczek, grade 1, Royalton

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

MENTOR'S JOURNAL, 1/9/91

We are talking about worries, which to first graders translates as, "I'm afraid of—" Jessica has become progressively more outgoing at each session. She talks through her drawing. "Here I am in my bed. It's thundering and lightning and here comes my Mom to be sure it's all right. No, here comes a monster, a big robot monster is coming to pull off my covers!" All this with laughter and great dashes of crayon. Her text is, "A monster is coming to uncover me up."

JOSH'S SPRING POEM

*In spring, I see leaves.
I see people wearing shirts outside, instead of jackets.
In spring, I hear owls.
In spring, I smell wet sand.
In spring, I feel hot and sweaty.
In spring, I play tag with my dog.
I throw a stick and he goes to get it.
In spring, I want to put on my dressy clothes.
In spring, I think about Nintendo.
(But Mom doesn't let me play it too much.)*

—Josh Goedderz, grade 1, Royalton

GETTING TO THE ROOTS OF THINGS

To think about poetry (or any other art) in a formal way is to climb higher and higher up thinner and thinner ladders of words.

Writing poems with children who were just beginning to read and write brought me down off all the ladders, to the very roots of language: noise, rhythm, physical sensation.

—Edith Rylande:

In March and April of 1992, I took the mentoring skills I had developed with the Royalton first graders to eight first graders at Lindbergh School in Little Falls. Here I spent four half hour sessions each with Scott Hilmersen and Julie Wenzel, Erick Johnson and Amy Riddle, Alisha Nelson and Marybeth Schaefer, Rachel Hoben and Shelby Swenson.

The last mentoring session of the very last day. I am helping Rachel and Shelby to write a spring poem. Without having planned it in advance—never having done anything like this before—I say, "Let's pretend we're flowers, pushing out of our seeds, pushing up out of the ground."

We clasp our hands together, close our eyes, hunch down small. Our clasped hands force their way upward, first with difficulty, then more easily. Our hands open in spring air and we smile.

In the art room at Lindbergh School, two six year old poets and one of fifty-seven are blossoming.

My impressions of those mentoring sessions will stay with me for a long time. Memories of sometimes frenzied preparation, reading material I would probably not otherwise have encountered, thinking about art (specifically my own art, poetry) in its most basic terms. Memories of rumpled six year old heads leaning further and further toward me across the child height table where mentor and mentees worked out poems collectively. Memories of the royal mess we made the day we did the sensory stimulation exercise. (After that session I had to clean up lots of spilled corn

starch and ground cloves.) Memories of small faces opening in excitement, pleasure, amusement. Memories, too, of shared fears and worries. And above all, of shared pleasure in finding words to bring those feelings into permanent expression.

My sessions with adult mentees were less messy but equally memorable. Formally I was Elaine's mentor, but in introducing me to the world of the elementary teacher she was often mine. I remember sitting over herb tea with Audrey and Lil, reading my poems, their poems, their students' poems. Talking about second grade worries, personal worries, Gulf War worries, the student with the dying mother, the stepson in the Army who was shipping out for Saudi Arabia.

OTHER MENTORS

Other mentors have their own good memories. Carol Finney, who mentored two Royalton High School students in vocal music, says, "The most important thing was the chance for those girls to grow." She has continued a contact with one of her mentees, who is seriously considering a career in vocal music.

DeAnna Gehant, a quilter, mentored with sixth grade teacher Sheila Ayers and her five classes at S.G. Knight Middle School. DeAnna watched her student mentees produce a spectacular quilt on the theme of seasonal change in a Native American village. The quilt was a striking exhibit at the AMSC Sites Sharing Conference and is now hanging in the Morrison County Court House. "There was all the interplay between me and Sheila, who really hypes the kids—all the kids. It brought out more from all of us. They got this idea of perfection. They got really interested in quilting. Even the boys. Especially the boys. Sheila tells me younger siblings of the kids that were in our project ask her when they're going to get to do something like that." DeAnna says also that her mentoring experience, "gave me lots of confidence" and "opened doors for me."

The metaphor of doors opening, horizons expanding, runs through the memories of other people who were associated with the Connections Project. Jolitta Falknor says, "The mentorships force students to take risks, real intellectual risks for real personal gain. I know two of our Royalton students who went on to other mentorships, where they had to go through an interview process to qualify. And as far as I'm concerned, I really do feel more connected with Little Falls, with the teachers I met and worked with. I don't hesitate now to call them up and set up projects."

Nancy Ratzloff says Little Falls students who took part in mentorships "still talk about them. It gave them more self-confidence, enhanced their sense of self-worth. I think establishing relationships with adults on an individual basis was very good for them."

THE BEAR IN THE BACK YARD

She has golden hair, big blue eyes, a round, pretty, eager little face. Really a beautiful child. At our first meeting she tells me she has a bear living in her back yard. "I feed it broccoll." During our next to last session she writes a poem called:

MY PRETEND PET

I would like to have a bear.

It would live in the fenced yard outside.

I would feed it meat—deer meat.

I would like to play with it.

I learn from one of my teacher mentees that there is a suspicion of child neglect and possible abuse in the family of this child.

PROBLEMS WITH CONTINUATION

The only objection both Project Coordinators had to Connections was that it came to an end. "I missed it when it was over," Joletta says. "It's too bad there's no ongoing mechanism." Nancy says, "I'd like to set up a continuation."

The initial formal Connection, organized and funded by AMSC, was temporary. Even though both communities agreed in the early stages to try to

develop a collaboration that would be ongoing, the planning committee was never able to develop a formal process for maintaining the work they started. Committee members were exhausted from implementing such an extensive project and from continually confronting the lack of trust between the little town and big town. Facing the even larger task of identifying local funding proved overwhelming.

In spite of these problems, some deeper, more informal connections have been established. If my own experience is any indication, they will last.

Edith Rylander is a poet and a columnist for the Long Prairie Leader, Morrison County Record and St. Cloud Daily Times and lives in central Minnesota. She has won two Bush Individual Arts Fellowships in poetry and recently published Rural Routes.

ADULT MENTEES TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY LEARNED FROM CONNECTIONS

Adult mentees came out of the project "seeing writing in a different light," according to Audrey Goedderz. "I have always thought of it in the context of high school writing assignments. I thought I had to have a specific purpose or a specific topic and that it had to be a certain length. I used to structure student work heavily. Now writing time in my classroom is much less formal. I want my kids to write, write, write. And they do, with enthusiasm."

Lil Warner says, "I always had the idea poetry had to have a special form. Now I've become aware that words can capture feelings powerfully. I'm interested in my students' writings as a way to get to know them better." Both agreed with Elaine Sellinger that mentoring "freed up" their teaching abilities.

Neither Audrey nor Lil had ever attempted to write a poem herself. By the end of the year, both had experienced poetry composition at the personal level at least once.

ARTIST/TEACHER COLLABORATION

Collaborations in Ely

—Dirk Hanson

THE COMMUNITY

Ely is a logging and mining town with a population of about 4,000. It was settled by immigrants from Finland, Sweden, Germany, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere, and has a rich frontier history of fur trading and wilderness exploration. Located near the Canadian border, Ely now serves as a major tourist base for trips into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

Originally the Ely schools were interested in developing an oral history project that would culminate in a community play, but after considerable discussion they agreed that a project of that scope was too immense, considering their experience. The Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) committee then redesigned their program to focus on developing partnerships between artists and teachers to develop and implement interdisciplinary lesson plans.

The project took place over a two year period. During the second year, one of the artist/teacher teams, of which I was a member, implemented a smaller scale oral history project. I also participated in a more modest project during Year One.

**ELY
PROJECT SUMMARY DATA**

Schools	2
Teachers	5
Participants	150
Artists	5
Art Disciplines	writing, visual art
Length	2 years
Budget	\$2,048

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

YEAR ONE

There were three artist/teacher partnerships in Year One. Ruth Pengal, a local visual artist, worked with a fourth grade teacher. Their work concentrated on science and nature. Students explored animals, plants and flowers through a variety of different artistic materials and processes, including stenciling, drawing and watercolor.

Harlan Tjader, also a visual artist, worked with the music teacher developing lesson plans that explored impressionism through music and painting.

I was paired with a high school English teacher, Nez Artisensi, to write a group story with a fantasy theme. After producing an initial character sketch with the entire class, ten students chose to work with me to develop additional characters. These students were paired, and each pair was responsible for using their characters in an assigned section of the story. The first pair wrote the introduction, the next pair continued the story, and so on through the end.

The chain story concept gave us an opportunity to discuss plot, setting, characterization, character motivation, foreshadowing, rising action, suspense, climax and revision as these matters came up in the actual experience of writing the story. It also engaged students in some cooperative fun as a counterpoint to the solitary nature of writing and critically reviewing fiction.

This project went so well, that Nez and I decided to work together on another project in Year Two.

YEAR TWO

In January of 1992, writers Ken Meter (a non-local artist) and myself along with visual artist Margot Wadley (both local artists), spent a week in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades at the Ely high school. Margot worked on a drawing project with art classes, while Ken and I collaborated on an oral history project with seven English classes.

Through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Ely schools were able to bring in Ken (who had extensive experience working on oral history projects) for part of the project to work with me and pass down some of his personal techniques.

After preliminary meetings with the teachers, Ken and I gave separate introductory lectures to the classes. We asked each student to produce a finished essay, based on an extended interview with a local citizen, which reflected some aspect of Ely's uniqueness.

Converting the interview notes into the first draft of a creative essay was a predictably amusing and painful learning experience for most of the students. It was the first time most of them had extensively reworked written material to achieve a desired aesthetic effect. They were convinced that their half-formed sentences and jumbled quotations could never be transformed into something readable. The heart of the project, as I saw it, was to demonstrate that they were wrong.

The editing and rewriting sessions were lively class periods, as we strove to make the interview subjects come alive on the page. I asked my students to rewrite their essays at least three times. Working with students individually and in small groups, I tried to create an atmosphere of informality and humor, while offering specific suggestions about the selection of colorful quotes and the use of concrete descriptive images. Students were encouraged to try, and fail, and try again, to capture a snapshot of Ely by painting a word picture of one of its citizens.

My intent was to provide my 11th graders with a measure of self-confidence about their ability to express themselves creatively through writing. In addition, a number of students gained the experience of becoming published authors of creative non-fiction when the local newspaper agreed to print a selection of the finished essays.

CONCLUSION

The work of the Ely project is not continuing in any formal way. However teachers are now more willing to work with local artists and some of the teachers who worked with artists claim that they have picked up or been influenced by the artists' techniques.

I think good teachers will always be willing to motivate students through artist-in-residence programs. Happily, the teachers with whom I collaborated were enthusiastic, and their support and trust made it possible to take over their classes for the duration of the project. Collaboration between local and non-local artists went smoothly as well.

Provided that artists and teachers have gotten together in advance to share their ideas about how the class residency should go, I strongly believe that arts programs of this nature can be highly beneficial to rural communities. Students benefit from an exposure to working artists on an informal basis, and, in our case, the published results of their work served to bolster an appreciation of arts education in the community at large.

Dirk Hanson is a fiction and non-fiction writer from Ely, Minnesota. He has written a non-fiction book on alcoholism which will be published in 1994.

Bert Maddern, a man in his eighties, is a retired miner with the fire of mischief brewing in his youthful eyes.

"When I came here in 1913, they had wooden sidewalks on the main street!" Laughing, Bert looks up to see my expression, and I laugh with him.

"I seen the soldiers goin' from here in 1918. We lived right by the train depot when they were goin'. Yeah, I seen 'em goin' and I seen 'em comin' back. Them that did come back, anyhow. All of 'em didn'."

Bert quit school in 1925.

"That was the eighth grade, that's as far as a got. Back then you had those mines goin', two mines were goin' all the time, now there's none. Never will be any more now, either. They got the richest ore there, down there under Miners Lake, and they'll never get it out no more."

Sadly, Bert places a hand on his head.

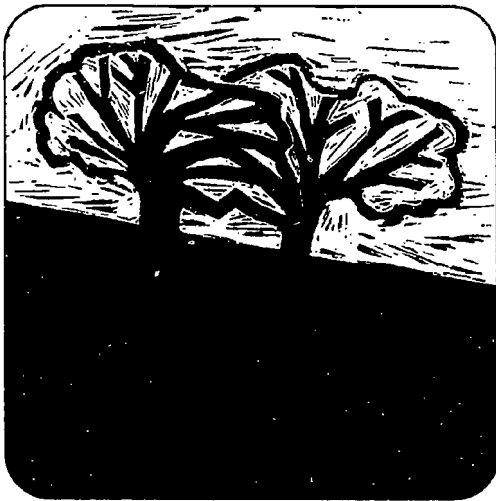
"We were drilling all the time in that iron ore, and blasting, and you get that rock dust..." Stopping, Bert snorts to emphasize his point.

"That's were I got my asthma from. When I came here I had a lung that I haven't got any more."

—Heather Heinz, grade 11

The students discovered that they were actually writing the history of Ely. Some of the essays are not too bad! Once involved in the project, students discovered that all of their interview subjects had played a role of one kind or another in making Ely what it is today. If we had done the interviews in advance of the residency, we could have utilized the writer's classroom editing skills even more, but the end product was a success.

—Geri Koschak, grade 11 English Teacher



WHAT WE CHERISH HERE

The Story of Our River in Granite Falls

—*Florence Dacey*

GRANITE FALLS PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	1
Teachers	6
Participants	185
Artists	6
Art Disciplines	music, writing, theater
Length	1 year
Budget	\$5,093

THE COMMUNITY

Granite Falls, a southwest Minnesota town of about 3,500 was established by people of Scandinavian descent right by the Minnesota River. About seven miles out of town, the river passes by the small Upper Sioux (Dakota) reservation, where Firefly Creek Casino was opened several years ago. The town is home to several small industries, its own hospital and newspaper and the Yellow Medicine County Museum. The Northern States Power coal-powered electrical plant, situated on the river, has been the source of some controversy, most recently over a plan to burn PCBs there. This proposal was abandoned in 1991.

BACKGROUND

For me, the writer, the project really began in my own history in this place. A twenty year resident of the small southwest Minnesota town of Cottonwood, since the early 80's I have worked in grassroots environmental movements to protect the Minnesota River Valley. Through a friend who lives near the river, I've grown intimate with the valley, collecting stones and shells from the river and standing inside great hollowed out cottonwood trees. The water and the land were the brooding place for the project.

During this time I also made cursory attempts to know the

Dakota community, located at the Upper Sioux reservation, drawn to work with Native American philosophy and its tenets for preserving the earth and the interconnectedness of all beings.

My creative work with Heart of the Beast Theater of Minneapolis on their river projects contributed concepts and impetus. Over the more recent years, I had taught a few creative writing sessions in Bev Tellefsen's 4th grade class at Bert Raney Elementary in Granite and edited an anthology of writing by Granite Falls' senior citizens.

Through a video project based on interviews with seniors, I had made contact with the Yellow Medicine County Historical Society members and museum, also in Granite. Two years ago, I began working to develop an environmental center at the Upper Sioux State Park, located seven miles east of Granite.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

When the COMPAS Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities Program (AMSC) contacted me about the possibility of a project about the river, I was poised. Bev Tellefsen and I compiled a long list of local artists, arts resource people, elementary and secondary teachers and other community members such as environmentalists. We invited them all to our AMSC town meeting in December of 1991.

The result was a small but representative group, highly receptive to AMSC's brainstorming on the community's arts resources. This was my opportunity to present a "grand scheme," which was well received.

At a meeting in January, after we learned we were to become an AMSC project, teachers supplied very helpful information on students' writing background and study of area history. And, in a moment of goodwill, all six pledged their flexibility.

A community gathering which drew some key participants followed. Cynthia Kuenzel, a chapter aide at Bert Raney, had already volunteered to help me coordinate the project. As a high-energy, highly organized person with many community involvements, including the town's Arts Council, Cynthia complemented my

***I am traveling to the River of Time
where the wound is deep and the river wide.***

***I am traveling to the River of Time
where the remembrance is strong
and the persistence great ...***

—Dan Khali, grade 6, student

I had hoped for more people at our community meeting—visions of rooms crowded with supporters of the arts always dance in my head—but it was a start, people who represented networks of other people, and some who would be very directly active in the project. And certainly this meeting brought together some people who might otherwise never have sat down together, through a common interest, the history and future of the river.

—Florence Dacey

The planning of this venture was very critical. Lots of little details had to be thought out ahead of time. The serendipity of life and learning was, if you will, controlled. There were too many kids and too many teachers to let things just "happen." But then, good learning often happens that way—little bits of serendipity amongst heaps of planning.

—Cynthia Kuenzel, Project Coordinator

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

strengths. Unlike a regular classroom teacher, her schedule allowed her the flexibility to help with field trips, videotaping and important coordinating contacts. Generally, she handled publicity, in-school communications, and a great deal of the "nitty-gritty."

However, there was considerable flexibility in our coordination, with almost daily meetings between us to determine what to do and who would do it. Cynthia's extraordinary efforts were crucial to the success of the project. Our frequent joke to each other was how fortuitous was our initial ignorance of all the project would involve! What powered Cynthia in hours of unforeseen tasks was a commitment to the value of the artistic process for students. She also had two talented daughters in the project!

The night before the residency was to start, my ailing father died. The project start was delayed a week and I came to it full of all the emotions surrounding such a major loss, plus anxiety over my ability to function effectively in the classroom. But this loss also opened me to new love and trust that supported the vision and work of the project. One repeated experience I recall vividly from this time is driving down into the valley, where Granite rests, from my home 15 miles away. I would listen to a U2 song written about a death and the line, "We run like a river runs to the sea." In a culture that allows so little time for mourning, I was afforded at least a channel for my grief, a mode of transformation through a truly communal creative act.

—*Florence Dacey*

Besides Cynthia, that community group meeting included several environmentalists, two senior writers, two artists, a couple of the teachers, and the county's Senior Citizens coordinator, Lori Sandberg. Although there was no representative from the Upper Sioux Community, I had already made contact with Irene Howell, employed in Health Services at the Tribal Community Center.

Before the start of the project in March, I spent many hours learning about Dakota culture, through reading and talks with Irene and examining materials from the school's Dakota Project, which had acquainted students with Dakota culture and history during the several years it was funded. It was important for me, as I attempted to integrate Dakota history, art and myth into the project, to understand not only the past, but the present reality, especially for the seven Native students in my classes.

During February, Cynthia and I also laid out the first of many schedules that included field trips to the park, classroom visits by storytellers, creation of a wall-hanging, visits to the Upper Sioux community and a local gallery, and presentations by environmentalists.

All of these activities required meetings and complex scheduling with thirty or forty community members in all. There were also many meetings with the six teachers involved. In fact, much of the contact time outside of class with teachers was given over to figuring out scheduling. A few of them would have been happier with a less complex project. And I know I wished for more staff time to discuss the content and skills of the writing activities.

We all learned to appreciate how broad and grand this endeavor was.

DOING IT

We had chosen the 4th and 6th graders to work with, three classrooms of each. The 4th graders were a lively and productive bunch, many of whom wrote with greater confidence and freedom than the 6th graders,

who, while they produced many thought-provoking pieces of writing, remained more challenging to me, as a teacher, throughout the residency. We began. I brought in treasures I have been given from the river over the years and their stories commenced. I talked about all we would do. Our plan was to experience and reflect on the past and the present of the river and imagine the future, expressing in writing and other art forms what we absorbed.

The next week we journeyed by bus to the Upper Sioux Agency State Park, where adult volunteers had met several times and were ready to lead students in observations and informational hikes. But first, Irene spoke to the large group. In her quiet way, she recalled the past for the Native peoples, including painful memories of the Upper Sioux Agency, broken promises, and death. She also spoke of the Native American belief that all beings stand connected and equal in the circle of life. She reminded us of the necessity to "take only what you need" from the earth.

Off we went to track deer and voles in the fresh snow, to thrill to twenty eagles, to learn what their presence might mean to a Native person, to hold a stick or dry seed-pod and wonder about its life force. Some students were attentive, taking notes, sketching; some slid and gabbed.

The excitement of this first excursion, the sense that we were embarked upon significant work, blessed by nature, sustained many of us throughout the arduous days ahead.

The primary focus of the residency was to progress from different experiences to experiments in various written expression. Back in the classroom after our park visit, we wrote *persona* poems, becoming eagles and sticks, Indian grass and earth and, of course, the river.

Next, we prepared to interview community members whose stories and impressions of the river and its history were either retold or turned into new stories by student writers. Our community storytellers brought us riches: stories of fire and flood, of the rise and fall of Minnesota Falls, a town just up river from Granite that couldn't compete, as well as tales of singular moments, pasque flowers and carp, daredevil leaps from bridges, and a river once so clean people drank from it.

From these interviews students developed dramatic scenes, long poems of remembrance, stories where eagles talked to fishermen and animals reclaimed the river, and imaginary journals.

There were several special moments for me. At the park on the bluff overlooking the valley, the eagles came right above us. One had beautiful circles of white designs on the underside of its wings. I told the kids that the eagles were considered sacred by the Native Peoples and that their being there was like a blessing for the whole project.

I also told the students about the field mice, how they would gather up the "mouse beans"—wild peas—for winter food. The Native people would find the store of beans and take them, but they would replace what they took with dried corn. The story showed that they considered all animals as brothers and sisters and didn't want even the mice to starve.

In preparation for their students' interviewing community members, each of the teachers told a story of the river or one of its tributaries. One of the male teachers shared his flight from a raccoon and another, losing his toupee on a tubing adventure. Naturally, some pretty hilarious student writing followed. I appreciated these teachers' willingness to be vulnerable with students, who certainly relished these peeks into awkward moments.

—Florence Dacey

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

When my sisters and I were little girls—there were three of us—our pasture was along the Minnesota River. We spent hours walking along these banks, exploring and looking for flowers. We'd take imaginary trips as we'd toss a leaf or stick and talk about what we'd be seeing along its course. ...There were coves that afforded us hours of imaginary, mysterious, and scary adventures. Sometimes we thought goblins, fugitives or robbers were in the inner cavities of this rocky mystery. Really, it was a home for a fox and kits. In the spring we found crocus, violets, columbine and bluebells, not far from the house. Right about now we'd be looking for pussy willows in the shady area and where you could smell the humus that was formed by the decaying wood, we'd find jack-in-the-pulpit and an occasional Indian pipe. To our wonder, mushrooms would spring up over night. ...Sometimes we'd sit on the bank of the river and talk about the miles each drop of water would have to go to reach first the Mississippi and then the Gulf of Mexico. These are all God's miracles...When I was in school we never talked about pollution. But maybe even then we were polluting from the farms and sewers. As it is, you students have inherited a really big problem.

—Berniece Vinje, senior citizen, from written piece read to class

This is a story about Berniece Vinje. When she grew up her parents had a farm and a pasture by the Minnesota River. When she grew up the river was not polluted... She and her sisters would play in the caves by the river and say that robbers and goblins would chase them ...In spring they would go swimming in the river and pick crocus, violets and pussy willows...Now it is fifty years later and Berniece has become a writer and an environmentalist.

—By Patrice Fjermestad, grade 4, student

There was one tense moment for me when one of the speakers mentioned the uncovering of Native American bones when Highway 67 was constructed in the 1930s. The bones had been collected in bushel baskets for a local dentist who wanted to study the teeth. There it was. And there I was trying to bridge the gap between two cultures but definitely a white woman, remarking on what a violation this bone collecting was, how slowly our consciousness changes.

On this delicate ground I trod throughout the project, hoping to be guided by Irene's wisdom that it is one's attitude, rather than the tint of one's skin, that is crucial.

She voiced this concept to students when she, her daughter Sharon Odegard, and a local quilter explained the wall-hanging project to students. Students could use the symbol of a pipe or the four directions if they were doing it with respect and a good heart, whatever their ethnic background. In fact, the two finished wall hangings reveal the students' engagement with and respect for Dakota symbol and design.

During this part of the project, Diane Holman, fourth grade teacher, had invited two members of the Dakota community in to speak on Dakota language. This presentation was videotaped and added to our growing collection of tapes, photos, and newspaper articles documenting the project. About this time we created a special stationary that said "thank you" in Dakota, that went out to community participants. Students also sent many letters cards, and drawings to people who had visited their classes or served as guides.

Our next trip was to local sculptor Art Norby's where we looked at Norby's works

that draw on the history of the river valley and Native American myths.

The Native American theme continued the next week, when we visited the Upper Sioux Reservation to listen to three generations of the Ironheart family and Harriet Blue, another prominent community member. These women shared their stories and myths about the river. There was serious talk of the legacy of bitterness and sorrow from the past and the racism that continues to shape the present. Students were fascinated by the traditions of the peace pipe. Bessie Ironheart and Sharon Odegard displayed their traditional artwork and we ended with fry-bread for all.

At the follow-up writing session with one of my 6th grade classes, we wrote a group poem about "The Spirit of the Pipe." The students wrote that the spirit of the pipe left with the Native American peoples; it was carried away to a mountain:

This poem, composed in almost a throw-away manner by 6th graders hesitant to appear "serious," became pivotal for me as I began to piece together student writing for the final pageant. Students from another class wrote myths of the pipe's return. I realized that I wanted the pipe, in some form, to be a central image of the people coming together in peace, despite the past, with a common goal: to restore and protect the river.

By now it was really spring. We returned to the park on two splendid warm April days, this time grouping students in threes or fours on the basis of stated interests. Some created environmental art, some learned more about deer or birds, some searched for emerging flowers and grasses.

As we moved into the final stages of the project, students heard from people working to clean up the river, from members of the newly formed CURE (Clean-Up-Our-River-Environment) to songwriter and singer Scott Sparlin, who founded Sportsmen Coalition to Clean Up the Minnesota River in New Ulm. Although the environment had been a primary theme throughout the project, it was the information and inspiration from these people that fueled our final writing of environmental raps and celebratory poems.

SHARING THE PROJECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

The time had come to choose writing to be revised for the booklet. A local resident who worked as a journalist in the 1930's and helped write Granite's history for the Historical Society helped edit the collections of work, one for each grade level. The high school librarian offered to put the text into the computer and the church where Cynthia's husband is pastor let us print on their speedy copying machine.

Meanwhile, I was poring over stacks of writing, piecing together "The Story of Our River" pageant and

When I saw the final quilts, it made me cry. The Native American symbols were so prevalent, I could see that everything we told the kids had meaning to them. They wanted to learn. They took things to heart. And that's what came out in the quilt.

—Cherie Four-Bear, writer

One thing about the river is, you have to respect it. It is very unforgiving, I've canoed it in every season. Every season has something to tell...I've gone right at the crack of dawn when the fog was so thick you couldn't see the canoe in front of you. I've taken off at eleven at night and canoed all night under a full moon. I know every bend, every fallen tree, every rock in that stretch I'd canoe at night.

—Gary Lentz, community member

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

beginning the formidable task of including every student in some way by adding dramatic and musical elements.

At this point, with more time, I would have involved area musicians and visual artists and made the writing of the final dramatic presentation more of a local collaboration. As it was, a friend who does theater with children helped me bring that into focus, and my musician son created original music to be played by him and a cluster of students.

This collaborative process was very organic. As with other aspects of the project, I tried to supply a primary vision and was fortunate to work with artists who were willing to use their artistry to support that.

Now I know that the river is more than a river. I will remember everything. I liked it when we went out to the river and did art such as clay models, leaf rubbings and drawings.

—Sheila Bengtson, grade 4, student

Cynthia started making costumes and props, driving to Willmar to find the right blue cloth, deftly showing student volunteers and me how to create buildings from big cardboard sheets in her garage. The two large wall hangings, with an original square by each student, were being sewn together by ladies at the church. The question of the pipe remained. After talking to Irene about it, I had asked a wood carver who has close connections with the Upper Sioux community through his construction jobs to create a large pipe that would represent "The Spirit of the Pipe" in our show. Before he would do that, he wanted it checked out more formally, so I went to the Tribal Council, who decided a representation of the pipe was acceptable.

The scene of the action switched back to school, to the high school auditorium, where each class came to rehearse their scene from the show. Students with no acting parts chose identities as creatures or objects connected to the river's story and had a spot in circles of water, of prairie, and of the "two legged ones."

I had divided the show into seven scenes, a segment for each class, plus one in which all the participants marched past the audience by circle. Subsequent scenes touched upon early Native American experience, the arrival of settlers and the Dakota conflict, the growth of the town, floods and fires, people who drew life and inspiration from the river, the pollution of the river and, finally, the movement to clean up the river, our vision for the future.

Our first performance was in the gym, for the rest of the elementary students and several dozen community members. We had been rehearsing for this moment for days, squeezing time into busy school schedules, lugging props and instruments around, worrying over kids who "goofed-off."

The show began with the words: "This is the Story of our River. It is one of the stories of the Circle of Life, in which all things are connected...Long Ago, long before the river was here, there was only the sound of the earth's heartbeat..."

The opening scene was mythic and powerful, with students from different ethnic backgrounds, each carrying one of four banners with the four colors representing all the peoples of the earth. To the beat of the big drum, then the theme on synthesizer, students dressed as eagles accompanied the large hoop fashioned of willow from the riverside. Through the hoop came the river, composed of an interesting assortment of sixth graders, in blue capes and headdresses.

Remembering this opening scene, my soul always stirs. Somehow, all together, we had come in touch

with something so very large, ancient, and profound—the story of our particular place with its human tragedy, beauty and comedy. We had dared to step out of our skins and the limitations of time to become a tree, a Dakota grandma, a bum, a magic deer. We remembered the peace pipe, a little of what it means, enacting its return when the people come together to save the river. “Won’t you join the circle to help clean up the river? We are all connected,” we appealed to our audience.

People wept, were amazed to learn that almost all the language of the show was taken from the writings of the children. Following this performance, teachers stopped me in the hall, full of pride and emotion.

My small theatrical crew and I didn’t have much “basking time,” because we had to decide whether to do the evening show outside, down by the river which runs right through the town. That is where we did it, in the wind, to a crowd of three hundred more, plus a goodly flock of pelicans.

In an hour it was over. Time to hand out booklets of students’ work, shake hands with parents, hug teachers, the usual unsung heroines of such enterprises as this. Time in the dusk to gather up cardboard buildings, wrap the big pipe in red cloth, return drums and horns to the high school. Time for a few of us to sit by the river in the dark, listening, remembering all the amazing words of the young people, gifts to the river and to all of us who worked with them.

The days following our performance were busy, as we finished printing booklets, exchanged expressions of gratitude and

DAKOTA GRANDMOTHER

*I am an aging grandmother.
I have seen many moons, many things.
My grandchildren wait, listen for a story.
They wish to learn, to know my knowledge.
They play in the river, a sweet song it is.
I was young once, playing with the others
It makes me happy, remembering those days.
I am old now, in a tipi with my grown-up children.
They work, hunting, fishing, trapping.
I owe them my life for the happiness.
The grandchildren, too, are too sweet for words.
But I must leave for I am old.
Soon I will die, my life will go.
I will go when I’m full of contentment.
I am an aging grandmother.*

—Rachel Kuenzel, grade 6, student

*I am traveling to the River of Time
where hope is the key and opportunity the door.
I am traveling to the River of Time
where we control the future and the past lives on.
I am traveling to the River of Time
where I’ll stay a drop in the River of Time.*

The “Story of Our River” project allowed us to begin to integrate the arts into our regular curriculum. We were able to experience many of the various art forms in a study of the history of our river, the environment of our area, and the culture of our people. More importantly, however, was the bridge it formed and ties it created between the community and the school, between the elderly and the young.

—Dwayne A. Strand, Principal, Bert Raney Elementary

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

Our river project allowed our students to express their understanding, feelings and thoughts in a variety of ways using a subject that is very important in all their lives. Our students were given "hands-on" exposure to several art forms that cannot be experienced in an everyday classroom. Environmentalists, naturalists, quilters, storytellers, writers, Native American artists, sculptors, and citizens with special talents all shared their talents. The privilege of listening to and talking with people of multicultural backgrounds gives a deeper understanding and appreciation of our environment and our local river. The students became involved with people of the community and with community affairs as a way to better prepare them to be concerned and involved citizens of the future. In all of this, each student responded in a written form, each experience producing another variety for their creativity. I feel truly honored to have been a part of the learning process.

—Bev Tellefsen, grade 4 Teacher

congratulations with students, and made video copies of our performance. Proceeds from tapes sold to parents, along with donations for the booklets of students' work, became the seed money for the next River Project.

CONTINUATION

A week after the show, Cynthia and I hosted about twenty-five community participants to an appreciation brunch. All agreed this valuable project should continue. And it seems that it will. Bert Raney Elementary has applied for a grant to do a three week river residency, including staff development with the six teachers. They will be laying the groundwork for a proposed two year project through MAX, in partnership with COMPAS, to develop and implement a sequential creative writing curriculum K through 6. If all the funding materializes, the stories and poems, the memories and dreams of those who continue to live the history of this place will continue to flow, like a river to the sea.

Florence Dacey is a poet from Cottonwood, Minnesota. She teaches creative writing to kids, senior citizens, and battered women through several COMPAS programs. Her collections of poetry include The Swoon and The Necklace.

WHAT WE CHERISH HERE

Wildlife & Landscapes of Our County in Badger/Roseau/Warroad

—*Elnora Bixby*



THE COMMUNITIES

Badger, Roseau and Warroad, three towns along the Canadian border in Roseau County, are each approximately 350 miles from the Twin Cities. Warroad, on the west side of Lake of the Woods, is a farm, tourist and Marvin Windows manufacturing town. Roseau, twenty miles farther west, is the county seat and the largest of the three towns. It has a Polaris manufacturing plant, a hospital and a prosperous farm area. Badger, ten miles farther west, is the smallest of the three towns and is almost exclusively farms or farm-related businesses, but has an intense desire not to be assimilated into the larger Roseau school system.

PLANNING

When Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) invited the three communities to consider collaborating on a project, they agreed. Badger and Roseau had just recently come together with several other communities to form a consortium of school districts. Like most school districts, they were seeking ways to work together and share ideas and resources. All three districts felt that joining forces would create opportunities for teachers and

BADGER/ROSEAU/WARROAD PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	3
Teachers	22
Participants	658
Artists	4
Art Disciplines	theater, writing, visual art
Length	6 months
Budget	\$6,146

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

community members to learn from one another, spanning the long distances that exist between the towns and people of northwestern Minnesota.

The teachers, artists and community members who came together at a Planning Conference decided to select a common theme to tie the project and the three districts together. This was not an easy process. For years the communities had focused more on their individuality (the schools of the three towns carry on a long standing friendly rivalry in sports) and less on their similarities.

One similarity was obvious: The Roseau River runs between the three communities, and all three communities reside in Roseau County, named for the river. Nature and wildlife are a basic part of life in this northern area, and so they were chosen to be the common thread that ran through the activities in all three districts.

It is a project the county can be proud of, both in the talent displayed in the various art forms and also in the cooperation displayed in the schools...each school in its own way expressed a common bond of purpose, interest and location.

Those who were too young to write, I asked to tell me stories—and what stories I heard! About hunting, accidents, driving the car, and even a story of how to shoot ghosts. The stories tumbled out until, toward the end of class, even the shy ones had a story to tell.

—Elnora Bixby

The communities decided that each district would develop two weeks of residency around this theme, and gave each district the freedom to select the grade levels, art forms, and artists to be involved.

RESIDENCIES

Thomas Parr Williamson, a wildlife artist, spent two weeks at Warroad High School working in grade 9-12 art classes and teaching the basic of Wildlife painting. Julie Elick, also a visual artist, worked in grades 4-6 at the Roseau Elementary School creating six large scale murals of moose, deer, birds, eagles, timber wolves, ducks and geese using tissue paper, collage and watercolor.

Badger Elementary School worked with two artists, Troy Brewster, a theater artist and Elnora Bixby, a writer. Troy may have had the greatest challenge: Integrating the wildlife and landscape theme into creative dramatics activities. In a crowded week at Badger he stretched the imagination of the students and made them conscious of various dramatic techniques while focusing on the different roles that people play in the local community. Because the theater experience itself was so new to the students, however, Troy was ultimately forced to work on the basics, and as the week-long res-

idency progressed, the thematic component of his project faded. Nevertheless, the teachers involved felt his residency was a great success.

Elnora Bixby, in the following week at Badger, tried to impress on the students that the local community was distinctive and each family different. For source material, students were asked to talk to the oldest member of their family and gather stories. They heard stories of blizzards, deer hunting, how the early settlers coped with the Depression and World War II. Later, in class, they shared the stories with one another, described them in their journals and wrote short pieces of prose.

After the planning phase, the projects developed independently, with fairly little communication between the communities, until the culminating event, a three-week exhibit at the Roseau Library and

Museum, displaying student paintings, murals, writing and a video tape from Troy Brewster's theater residency.

RESULTS

Each of the three communities has different impressions about the project's importance and impact. Elwyn Ruud, a teacher from Roseau, feels the theme was significant to its success because all the students were personally connected with it in some way. Warroad and Badger feel the theme's contribution was primarily structural—it tied the communities together.

Has this tie been lasting? Only informally. The teachers occasionally meet, share experiences and other ideas. Had the need for the communities to work together been greater, perhaps the tie would have been stronger. All three sites agree that the project has increased teacher's enthusiasm for and awareness of the work of artists.

Elnora Bixby is a writer from Williams, Minnesota. She is a former columnist for the Williams Northern Light and has several pieces published in COMPAS Literary Post Anthologies and a book entitled North of Nowhere.

Now teachers just expect an artist residency. Even though there have been budget cuts we continue to bring in artists because of the strong teacher interest.

—Elwyn Ruud, Elementary Teacher

Teachers realize now that they don't have to go to Minneapolis to get an artist, and local artists feel more confident about working in schools.

—Carol Hallan, English Teacher



WHAT WE CHERISH HERE

The Litchfield Story in Litchfield

—Joe Paddock

LITCHFIELD PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	3
Teachers	36
Participants	1155
Artists	2
Art Disciplines	theater, writing,
Length	1.5 years
Budget	\$9,351

AMSC's approach to working in Litchfield was somewhat different than in other sites. In many of the early town meetings, several communities expressed an interest in developing oral history projects that included interviews of local senior citizens, student writing and a theatrical production. These communities also expressed concern about whether their local artists had the expertise and the range of skills needed to develop a project of this scope.

Because of this strong interest, AMSC approached Joe and Nancy Paddock about creating a model oral history project. Their previous experience in conducting oral history activities, and the fact that they were beginning oral history interviews in their own community of Litchfield through another COMPAS program, made them ideal candidates for this work. Several teachers and community members had the opportunity to assist Joe and Nancy in shaping activities, however, Joe and Nancy served as both the visionaries and ongoing facilitators of the project, as well as the primary artists.

THE COMMUNITY

Litchfield is a community of 6,000 situated on the north shore of Lake Ripley, 40 miles south of St. Cloud and 65 west of the Twin Cities. Since World War II, its population has increased by only a

thousand people. The Litchfield area has, from the beginning, been ethnically diverse. The earliest white settlers in the region were Swedish, Norwegian, German and Irish. Recently, a significant Hispanic population has settled here. Litchfield is the county seat of Meeker County. Originally, its economy was entirely agricultural, but in recent years, several small industries have become important as well. Many Litchfield workers now commute to jobs in larger surrounding towns, and shoppers have begun to travel to these towns as well, to the detriment of Litchfield's main street. A large population of retired people is very important to the town and its economy.

BACKGROUND

The goal of our project was to recover and celebrate, in many ways, our local story. In small rural towns, the sense of community is very strong, and the collective story often takes on an almost sacred dimension. Art shaped from such material is truly special for those whose lives intertwine with it. This proved to be perhaps the most basic strength of the Litchfield Project. Using oral history techniques, we collected a significant portion of our story as it lives in the minds of local elders. These taped memories, a valuable collection in their own right, became the foundation for much of what followed: the hundreds of hours spent working with the collected material in the community and its classrooms, the writing and producing of a community play, and the writing and publishing of a book.

My wife, Nancy Paddock, and I were chosen as the local artists for this project. We are both writers with extensive experience in collecting oral history and working in rural communities. The origins of the Litchfield Project were perhaps more artist-centered than most. Years back, while working in Olivia, 50 miles southwest of here, as the first National Endowment for the Arts poet-in-the-community, it came to me that I would dearly love to do something similar in my hometown of Litchfield. In time, we moved back to Litchfield, and in 1989, the frail beginnings of our project began to emerge.

We received early seed funding from the COMPAS Statewide Seniors Program and the southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council. Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC), saw merit in what we had started, and Litchfield was selected to be one of AMSC's model projects.

Meanwhile, Nancy and I had developed a working friendship with Bea Thompson, a woman of 70 who was director of the Meeker County Council on Aging. Bea had a strong sense of the value of a community's own story for itself, and was a local activist with a detailed working knowledge of our community. As our in-town administrator, she proved important to our project in almost every phase.

During the Spring of 1990, a number of school and community planning meetings were held, and our

In three different high school classes, I asked a pair of linked questions. First: "How many of you feel that this has been a good place to grow up?" Almost all raised their hands. Then I asked: "How many of you imagine that you will continue to live here after you graduate from school?" Almost none raised their hands. Two girls in the three classes.

It's a well-known sociological fact that smaller rural communities have been losing "the best and the brightest" of their children for two generations now. Ignorance of and lack of commitment to our local story has to be one of the many reasons for this phenomenon.

—Joe Paddock

LICKETY-SPLIT

**1916 or so, and Lickety Split,
the small spotted mongrel of us,
is trotting along main street, proud
as if maybe this town had been named
for him, and then, in front
of T. C. Smith's Jewelry Store,
at the base of the fifteen-foot tower,
with a clock at its top—
T. C.'s white face blurry
and scowling behind his heavy
plate glass window—Lickety
yet again lifts a leg and pees
at the very root
of the timekeeper's pride,
then easily outdistances T. C.,
yelling and waving his broom while,
along the street, people smile
and feel in them, somehow, a bit
of small proud dog, prancing
in the timeless moment.**

—Joe Paddock, derived from a story told by Art Kraut

**As we grow older, most of us find that the
passage of years doesn't leave us with much.
Youth, strength, talents, skills and health
begin to fade. But if God and fate have been
kind, we still have our memories, and those
memories have the power to help us relive
moments in our lives when we were filled
with hope and strong enough to withstand
the dashing of those hopes. This was one of
the impressions I received as I interviewed
several citizens for the oral history project...**

—Joe Paddock

project seemed to take shape almost by itself. Since the project had been forming for some time before this official planning, there was less give and take, less struggle as to what we should do. We explained to teachers and other relevant community people what we hoped to do, and in almost all cases they agreed with enthusiasm. Some might see this lack of long-term, whole-community planning a weakness. We would argue that this is just another way in which a project can get started.

We began by locating and training a small core of senior citizens to interview other senior citizens. Committed, intelligent people can quickly become effective oral history interviewers, but they must receive some training at the outset. Nancy and I gave the training workshops and, of course, did many of the interviews ourselves.

PHASE ONE: COLLECTING

Our collecting process consisted of the following steps:

- Planning meetings;
- A reminiscence night;
- An oral history collecting workshop;
- A follow-up to the oral history collecting workshop, after volunteer interviewers had done at least one interview;
- Ongoing interviews.

The reminiscence night is a wonderful storytelling event in its own right, and we recommend it as a great way to break ground at the start of any oral history project. We developed a list of questions and invited ten carefully selected individuals to come and share their memories. The conversation was taped that night, and it ranged from discussion of the Dakota Conflict of 1862, which started near here, to talk about Depression era hard times, to stories about old Hank Camel who used to sleep on our court house floor. Participants hung around to talk on their own, long after the coffee and cookies had vanished.

The wide-ranging reminiscence night discussion

provided a solid background for us from which to develop our question list, and interviewing went swiftly. Overall, we did a total of 90 interviews, averaging about two hours in length. Space is too limited here for full discussion of the value of the interviewing process for those involved, but be assured that it is a deeply humanizing experience. Senior interviewer, Barb Olson, became especially involved with her explorations into the memories of old friends.

PHASE TWO: TRANSCRIBING, WRITING & PERFORMING

Nearing the end of that first summer, it was clear that we now had an almost overwhelming body of story from which to work as we moved into the secondary phases of our project. These would be:

- Transcribing onto paper as many of the interviews as time and money would allow;
- A rough cataloguing of the content of the transcribed material, so we would be able to access it for our ongoing work;
- The writing of newspaper columns about our experience;
- The writing of a play script from the collected material;
- The Litchfield Community Theater's production of this play.

In rural communities, involved people read the local weekly paper from cover to cover. Four columns were written for the Litchfield Independent Review, one each by Nancy and I and two by senior interviewers. These were a way of making the wider community aware of our ongoing project, advertising the forthcoming play, and providing a little of the flavor of the interviewing experience. Wally Stubeda, my Junior class English teacher of many years ago, wrote the column that struck the most fire in the community. After reading it, a realtor I know stopped me in the supermarket and said, "Wow, it isn't often we get something like that in the local paper."

We were meanwhile well into writing the script of our play, *I'll Tell You the Story*. In order to cover as broad a range of material as possible, we placed a storytelling narrator at the center of the action. Our original intention was, at intervals, to have stories blossom into fully acted scenes, after which the narrator would again take up the thread.

Each person's memories seem to be a private, personal part of one individual's life, but when woven together with the memories of others, they become history—the type of history that goes beyond news reports and public records in a court house. They become the story of real people struggling to make their way on a confusing journey toward some goal not yet clear to any of us.

—Wallace Stubeda, senior citizen,
from a column in the *Litchfield
Independent Review*

This has been a truly unique experience for our cast and myself. Working with creative writers on a new work in progress is the dream of every creative theater artist...

The measure of the heart and soul of a community is reflected in the creativity of its history. Tonight we echo the voice of our past in words and stories as funneled through the perceptive pens of Joe and Nancy and brought to life again by our talented actors.

—Bertie Aaker, Director,
Litchfield Community Theater,
I'll Tell You the Story

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

IN 1862

*In the time of the Indian, here in this place,
swords killed people. Little Crow,
the Chief of the Dakotah people,
was killed. In the time of the Indian,
here in this place, arrowheads were lost in the dust.
And then found for the G.A.R. Hall.
Muskets smoked.
Ropes lassoed buffalo.
Indians died in the war.
After the war, here in this place,
Indians and Whites became friends.
The Year of Reconciliation
was 1988.*

—Grade 1 group poem, Ripley Elementary School

The second first-grade session happened after the kids had gone to the stockade. One teacher was concerned that they would only get the White settler side of the conflict, so I offered to tell Little Crow stories. Little Crow was the leader of the Dakotah. I've never seen first-graders get so involved. They especially loved the story about how Little Crow stood on a split rail fence, waving his blanket and taunting the military marksmen who could not hit him. When the smoke had cleared, he jumped down, bowed and disappeared into the woods. In both classes we wrote group poems beginning with "In the time of the Indian, here in this place ..."

—Nancy Paddock, writer

Great-Grandpa says his parents wanted him to go to school. He didn't see the use of it so he dropped out when he was done with 9th grade. In school, he was a little troublemaker just like the rest of the boys. He remembers the teacher always checking the boy's pockets for snuff. Great-Grandpa kept his in his shoe so he wouldn't get caught. He says,
"Men who chew are well-to-do."

—Brandon Schauer, grade 10, student

Bernie Aaker, director of the Litchfield Community Theater, a man with extensive theater experience, helped us to see that time constraints for local theater personnel would not allow for so ambitious a script as we had originally developed. We therefore compromised and did the play as reader's theater. This approach worked out wonderfully well, and we recommend it to other rural communities looking for a simple, dramatic way to present local material.

I'll Tell You the Story was performed in the Little Theater in the Litchfield High School on three consecutive dates in October 1990. The actors read from tall stools, the women wearing evening dresses, the men cutaways. Historic photos were projected against the backdrop, a musical soundtrack proved very effective on two of the three nights. (Our sound "expert" played football on the third night and the timing of his substitute was a little off.) Community people were deeply moved by this reawakening of old stories, old friends from the past. We often heard a buzz of recognition go through the crowd. People lined up after the performances to thank us, and they continue to do so when we meet them on the streets.

PHASE THREE: TAKING ORAL

HISTORY TO SCHOOL

The concept behind the school phase of our project was to heighten student awareness of the story in which they live and which will continue at the core of them for the remainder of their lives. We became "tellers" of local history, and discussed how the students' personal stories were part of the larger community one. We then helped them to recreate bits of their stories through the use of creative-writing-in-the-classroom techniques.

The fact that we were funded for only 125 planning and classroom hours—this time to be spread out between the two of us over four schools—meant that our work in the schools was somewhat thin. Nevertheless, the sessions proved to be lively and productive.

In February 1991, Nancy and I each taught two classes for Litchfield Community Education. Nancy's were called *Collecting Family History* and mine, *Writing the Personal Memoir*. Enrollment was large, and Nancy, who is involved with an ongoing book about her own family, found that her students were enthusiastic about the possibility of using oral history techniques within the family. Many had worked with genealogy, but not story and the preservation of actual voices. They also proved enthusiastic about print-shop methods she taught them for copying and reproducing family photos alongside text.

In my class on writing the personal memoir, I focused on technical ways in which an anecdote such as we tell at the local coffee shop can be expanded into a full-blown piece of creative writing. The

Students liked stories about the Litchfield schools in the past, say, of the great football teams of 1914 - 1916 that Bernie Bierman played on and that beat bigger schools by scores of 80 or 100 to nothing and which even beat what is now St. Cloud State 54 to nothing. They also liked to hear about how the high school burned down in 1929 and how the students had to go to school in church basements and local businesses for two years, and how the contractor building the new school (the one we were in) cheated his laborers, causing a new law to be written by the Minnesota legislature. Another story that really entranced our students was a rather ghoulish one about an interesting girl whose hair had caught in the gears of her family's windmill, who'd died up there, swinging in the wind above our newly settled landscape.

—Joe Paddock

With May Day past and lengthening daylight...and disinterest in waning school, other games infringed on the skating ritual. We met after supper in fading daylight to play kick-the-can and run-sheep-run and hide-and-seek in the shadows as anemic street lights flicked on. But our roller skates were never idle long. We skated in hordes, headlong with speed and youth. Now the town took on a different aspect from the prosaic daylight that harbored no secrets. Now the town was a mile long and of infinite depth. We were changed to daring adventurers. Lights shone from windows in square shapes as the workaday world retreated—and we were outside of it, out of sight of the adult world. What delicious independence spiced with danger and daring! A barking dog dashed from behind a hedge and chased us. Headlights probed the streets—was it Dillinger, lost on his way to St. Paul?

—Marjorie Stokes, community member

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

group was given an assignment to do just this, and the following week, about two-thirds of the original class showed up with completed pieces. These proved to be excellent, and within our glow of mutual enthusiasm, we decided to continue meeting as an adult writing group.

This was one of those serendipitous opportunities that open up during a project and that must be seized. AMSC agreed to fund our ongoing sessions till the end of the project, and since the writing from this class was excellent, also suggested that we collect and edit a book that AMSC would publish. This opportunity to publish proved a great stimulus to class members, and they wrote with exceptional enthusiasm. Now, almost a year after the close of the project, we are still meeting on a monthly basis.

Our final official event happened on the night of January 16, 1992. It was a combination reading by members of the adult writing class from their newly published book and a celebration of the installation of our oral history material into the Meeker County Historical Society's archives. The event took place in Litchfield's historic Grand Army of the Republic Hall, and the house was full that evening.

The new book, *I Think I Can Handle This Life*, proved a great success and sold out shortly after the reading. One of the contributors to it was Bea Thompson, our local project administrator and an eager, active participant and supporter each step of the way. She died just before the book was published, and it was dedicated to her. A warm and supportive community spirit hovered in the air around us that final evening.

In many ways the Litchfield project was easier for me than the Olivia project I did so many years before. The people here and the outlines of our story are intertwined with my own earliest memories, and this made it less difficult for me to move ahead with certainty. And, of course, I didn't have the problems of resentment that the "intruding" outsider will sometimes run into. At the same time, as an artist, I had always felt a little alienated here. It is hard for a writer to go home again. The Litchfield Project proved a sort of magic doorway back in to the spirit of my place.

Joe Paddock is a poet who grew up in Litchfield, Minnesota and has returned there in adult life. He has done extensive work in collecting and presenting oral history. His books include: The Boar's Dance, Earth Tongues, Handful of Thunder, The Things We Knew Best, and Soil and Survival.

CULTURAL SHARING

Ojibwe Artists in Deer River

—Cynthia Driscoll

The projects in Deer River, Morton and St. James develop differently than many of the other models. These three projects invited a distinct cultural community to collaborate with a nearby school district. Deer River and Morton approached Native Americans from local reservations. Because of their large population of Mexican-American students, St. James sought out Hispanic artists to develop a project in their schools.

The projects in Deer River and Morton had relatively little experience in co-planning projects with Native Americans. Before a planning meeting could be held or a committee created, each district needed to personally invite participation from artists and cultural representatives from local reservations.

The St. James project was uncertain about its ability to identify representatives and artists from the Hispanic community, so COMPAS enlisted the assistance of the Cultural Diversity Department at Mankato State University, which is approximately 30 miles north of St. James.

Because of the lack of trust and long-standing problems between whites and people of color in these communities, each of these three sites required the assistance of an outside facilitator throughout the planning and implementation of their projects. The role of these facilitators was to mediate any disputes that arose, and to ensure that the concerns and ideas of the Native



DEER RIVER PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	3
Teachers	7
Participants	469
Artists	12
Art Disciplines	music, storytelling, traditional crafts
Length	4 years
Budget	\$16,682

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

Americans and Hispanics were given adequate attention.

AMSC acted as the facilitator in Deer River, and, to a lesser degree, in Morton. In both communities AMSC also provided an independent facilitator/coordinator to work with committees and artists.

In St. James, Mankato State University provided assistance in identifying and working with student artists and in developing the arts activities that were part of the project.

**I learned from my grandpa.
The boys and girls were kept
separate from the time the girls
had their first period. From five
years the elders knew what the
kids would be. In the classrooms
now there is no way to teach the
children what they will be.
Now the White people teach in
school and the Ojibwe children
are erased from K-12 with the
repetitive school. The white nature
slowly erases the Ojibwe people.
We get our kids in the summertime
to teach them how to be Ojibwe.
My grandfather would keep me
home from school. Then I would
go back and they would tell me he
was wrong. It was how to grow.
Each little kid is different and
must be treated different.
No slow learners, just individuals.
You can't put it on paper.
The strongest ones passed down
the knowledge. We need to instill
how things change.**

—Clara Jackson, visual artist

THE COMMUNITY AND HISTORY

The Leech Lake Indian Reservation and north-central Minnesota's Deer River School District overlap in such a way that each year approximately one-third of the district's students are Native, mostly Ojibwe. Within the district, therefore, there are two communities.

Whites live throughout the district attendance area as do some Indians; however, concentrations of Native Americans make their homes on the reservation, especially in two rural, predominantly Indian villages, Ball Club and Inger. Many Indians living off the reservation consider it their spiritual home, often visiting parents and grandparents there. During the summer months, pow-wows every weekend offer celebrations to renew family and tribal ties and transmit cultural traditions.

The Deer River school district operates from three schools, a larger elementary school, King Elementary School, a combined junior-senior high school in the town of Deer River and North Elementary School about 25 miles north in Talmoo. For some Indian students, public school is their first long-term association with white culture. There are few Indian staff members. A first grade teacher at North; a counselor and two other positions which are dependent on available funds—an Ojibwe language teacher and another counselor.

Some Native families consider their extended family's life, the Ojibwe seasonal calendar and cultural traditions more important than their children's daily school attendance. Occasional absences of Native children for reasons not readily understood by whites are taken as parental indifference by some school personnel. With the historic mistrust of whites which Native peoples carry from broken treaties, white condescension and white misunderstanding of Native

culture, the situation at Deer River School District meetings is sometimes palpably tense. Adults and occasionally students of both cultures may be quick to be defensive, in differing ways: whites verbally, sometimes aggressively verbal, Natives by withdrawing and remaining quiet. While Natives understand the dominant culture, whites often do not take time even to try to understand Native ways.

At different times in the history of the Deer River school district, private grants and U.S. government monies have come to the district because of the high population of Indians. For many in the Native American community, these monies seem to have disappeared into the district budget without obvious benefit to their children.

THE PROJECT

Aware of this atmosphere of community wariness, in the winter and spring of 1989, Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC), Native Americans and some teachers formed a project committee to investigate possibilities for curriculum development about Native culture—history, art, storytelling and music—by videotaping Native artists in the classroom. Later these videos as well as other cultural resources from Native and white historical societies could be transferred to laser discs for ready access by students during the school year. Using the "Foxfire" method, Native students and community members could interview elders and artists for Laser disc voice-overs to better explain cultural aspects of art and Native life, past and present.

GOALS

Purposes of this project were twofold: to include Native American culture, demonstrated and spoken by Native people, into the Deer River curriculum; and to improve communication, understanding and appreciation between the white and Native American communities in the Deer River School District.

The school district needs to respect Native ideas and Native ways of contributing, to listen to Natives and really hear what each different Native says. I feel that funds meant for Natives have been used by the district without Native students directly benefiting. Native people have been left out of providing input in grant writing. I ask again, as I have before, that we begin our meetings with an elder to pray for good feelings among us, for trust, for honest dealings.

—Kathryn Fairbanks, visual artist

Nothing in the Deer River school curriculum shows Native culture. This project might begin building self-esteem in Native students and understanding between white and Native students.

—Yvonne Wilson, grade 1 Teacher, North Elementary School

It is important to note that the dynamics of this meeting were significantly altered by having white teachers present. For two people initiating a project to preserve Ojibwe culture, they seem wholly ignorant of how to act around Ojibwe people. They fear silence, interrupt, talk a good show but demonstrate no real respect.

If they are to make this project work, they will have to change their attitudes. They will have to respect more than just beadwork and dancing. They will have to care about this project for a set of reasons different from those that brought them to the project in the first place.

—Stephen Peters, AMSC Facilitator

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

Computers can be useful as culture-carriers if the sacred—that which is private and secret—is monitored out. Even though we are an oral people, we need documentation. We must communicate our culture to our children and the rest of the Deer River community.

—Carrie Ortiz, visual artist

We've talked about all this frustration coming to a head. I think this project is a good thing. We need to do something to try to understand where everyone is coming from. Lack of communication is a big problem. This is the situation as I see it. Everyone needs to LISTEN. We can only offer the bricks; the kids need to use them. We must build understanding here.

I am real tired of hearing, "You Indian people are trying to make everyone feel sorry for you." One of our elders has said we need to be a part of our children's education. We forget we are doing this for the kids, for their future, that these children will be successful or unsuccessful. Do we show the children that we adults can't work this out?

—Corrine Nason, school counselor

Integrating Allen Wilson's visits—or a number of individual Native artists and storytellers—consistently throughout a student's school life would be a meaningful teaching technique. Starting in first grade, Allen and other Native culture-carriers would become familiar, welcome visitors.

—Bobbi Kossow, grade 1 Teacher, King Elementary

See the turtle carved into the top of my redwood "trickster flute"? Natives have great respect for animals, people and each other. I will play for you the song-tale of "Naniboujou and the Winter Maker." The story of the song is of the time of perpetual winter when glaciers and snow were everywhere. Natives lived in winter day in and day out. Naniboujou came asking what to do about this cold winter? So the people thought and thought until one old Ojibwe said, "We will invite Old Man Winter to a feast of hot, hot food and ask him to eat." Winter ate and ate and sweated and sweated until he could stay no longer. He had to go away at least for summer to cool off. Now he returns only once a year, and green grass and food and flowers grow all summer long, and the people are happy.

—Don Robinson, musician and storyteller

My father told me that my great, great, great uncle chased the Sioux with his band of warriors after the Sioux killed all their women and children. The men returned from a hunting excursion to find their village ravaged. They chased the Sioux in revenge and anger, vowing to kill them. When the Sioux found they were being followed, they constructed a huge Peace Drum and drummed continually as the Ojibwe People approached changing the Ojibwe hearts to peace. The tribes then celebrated together. Here is that very Peace Drum that the Sioux gave the Ojibwe so many years ago. When I was thirteen my father and I stretched a new skin over it. Now it belongs to me. I will leave it with a museum to take care of.

—Allen Wilson, Ojibwe elder and storyteller

TENSIONS

From the beginning of the project there has been miscommunication and cultural misunderstanding, especially about technological aspects of the project. Some Native Americans were worried about sacred aspects of Ojibwe culture being revealed, especially to insensitive whites. Others think of their culture as a living, changing body of knowledge that might be considered static if recorded at one point in time. Artists worried that if they revealed their art techniques on tape, they would be stolen by whites as had wild rice production and many other Native ways.

Who would control the videos, the content, use and copyright? Whose art would be featured in the video tapes, and who would decide? Which artists and community members would act as resources? What cultural information, which values would be transmitted? While many of these questions were answered in written form with Native Americans driving the project, Native mistrust continued in meeting after meeting. Tempers flared. Patience ebbed. Verbal confrontations continued especially when Native American questions and concerns remained unheard. A timeline which some teachers had constructed began to seem impossible to meet. Was the timeline more important than Native American/white relations?

IMPLEMENTATION

During the second year of the project a number of Native artists became comfortable enough to conduct classroom presentations, and the Project Committee agreed on enough planning and funding so the teachers could schedule these artists. A tentative beginning was made.

So concurrently, with the project committee discussing the project, some Deer River students began to meet Native artists and learn about Ojibwe art and culture first hand. Teachers noted improved Native student self-esteem almost immediately. White students were interested in Native presenters and their art. Teachers not involved in project planning requested Native artists' time in their classrooms. The artists fine-tuned their presentation skills.

Some Native Americans on the committee thought the project might act as an important transmitter of culture for the younger generation. But, after many meetings, there was enough disagreement among the Natives about the technology and its uses that AMSC personnel and Deer River teachers decided to separate the now operational artists' residency project from the teachers' videotaping/laser disc project. Also, during this period of transition, AMSC provided interested teachers with an initial two-hour sensitivity training, the first of a number of attempts by AMSC to assist Native and teacher groups to understand each other better and build a relationship which could benefit Deer River students and the Deer River community as a whole.

AMSC felt it essential that the Deer River Native American community play a major and decisive role

I am angry with my father and grandfather for not showing me certain medicinal plants in the forest, medicines that are now lost because this information was not passed on. It's time to change; a lot of this stuff should be recorded or it will be lost forever.

*—Don Sherman, visual artist
and storyteller*

The challenge for Native people looking at a project like this is to use media in a way compatible with their tradition of handing things down.

—Chris Spotted Eagle, film maker

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

I can't write Ojibwe curriculum.
Ojibwe people must tell about their culture.
The computer is just a tool. As a teacher I teach technology; kids use it in learning. Right now we have no content to put into technology.
We need to talk about solutions.
Why shouldn't we work together?
I don't have enough time in my life to keep talking about problems. Let's work on solutions.
I don't feel trusted. Someone has made me out to be a technology monster. I've taken Ojibwe classes, visited Cass Lake and the Mille Lacs Museum.

—Myrna Peterson, Media Director, King Elementary School

Direct relationships between kids and artists are happening. This is important and significant. It is misunderstandings between adults in the project that we see at committee meetings. We adults here need to make sure Native artists continue to have contact with kids in the classroom.

—Gary Sorenson, Principal, King Elementary School

As long as teachers contract with Native artists to come into their classrooms and the district monies are used, the district will support the project. Native artists in the classroom create an awareness in all kids of the importance of Native culture. Our hidden agenda is building self-esteem in Native kids.

The biggest problem we've had was developing communication between the schools and the Native communities. With the project, communications have improved.

—Wally Schoeb, Superintendent

I wish the Deer River Schools had started this project much earlier. As an administrator, I see fewer disciplinary problems, fewer Native/non-Native disputes, better understanding of Native American culture. I hope the district will continue to financially support this project. I believe AMSC trained facilitators are helpful. I see the Project Committee as a three part team: artists, community, AMSC.

—Gary Sorenson

The project in Deer River was surprising in a number of ways. I was amazed at how little understood or recognized native cultures were by the school. This project was really the first time Native ideas, art forms, and traditions—taught by local "experts" from the Native community—were brought into the classroom as serious, worthwhile subjects. Seeing cultural information granted importance, and being taught by an uncle or cousin of a student, had a dramatic impact on the self-image of Native American students.

—Todd Driscoll, Senior Program Officer, Blandin Foundation

As a community member, I feel it is important to keep the project going. Personally I believe Indian self-esteem is better since we've started the project; whites are respecting Natives. The Native community should be involved to help teachers keep the project going.

—parent and community member

in this project about their culture. AMSC offered Native artists workshops on how to develop teaching plans, demonstrations by Native artists from other locales working in Deer River classrooms, and a continuing sympathetic presence at meetings.

Over a period of three years, AMSC systematically phoned Native artists, Deer River teachers, administrators and community people, requesting ideas, listening, trouble-shooting, and encouraging. When teachers' tempers flared or Native American factions felt unheard, when school administration needed reassurance, when Native people became discouraged, AMSC helped.

CONTINUATION AND RESULTS

At this writing, the project continues. Teachers are contracting artists for the '92-'93 school year. The Deer River Superintendent of Schools has a budget item for artists in the schools and promises to support the project in the future if the '92-'93 money is used. Through time, just by Native artists becoming welcome visitors in the schools, attitudes and behaviors will change. Children will benefit and they may not form the same stereotypes as their parents. This school interaction may be the most promising aspect of the project.

Moderated and mediated by AMSC, the three year dialogue between Native and white adults continues. Much has been said, some has been heard, and the talk promises to continue. Through three years of meetings, Natives and whites in Deer River know more about each other than they did before the project started, and some interracial friendships have formed. Currently meetings are sparsely attended, but they keep happening. That neither Native Americans nor whites have given up is a good sign.

One amazing fact is that everyone involved in the project considers it important and worthy, very beneficial to the education of Deer River students, white and Native, and to the whole Deer River community.

Perhaps over a period of years through Native artists coming into the schools, relationships among individual Natives and whites will evolve into community change. Building mutual respect takes time.

Cynthia Driscoll is a non-fiction writer from Grand Rapids, Minnesota. She has over 100 articles published in national magazines on diverse topics.



CULTURAL SHARING

Native American Storytellers in Morton

—*Florence Dacey*

MORTON PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	1
Teachers	2
Participants	63
Artists	5
Art Disciplines	storytelling
Length	1 year
Budget	\$1,86€

THE COMMUNITY

Morton is a little town near Redwood Falls, Minnesota, close to the Lower Sioux Reservation with its large "Jackpot Junction" casino. More than one third of the town's school children are Native American. Above the town, two obelisks dedicated to white settlers killed in the 1862 Dakota Conflict overlook the local elementary school, where teachers and Native American storytellers are engaged in an ongoing project to create a bridge between two cultures that clashed so violently, build the self-esteem of Native students, and integrate the arts into their school system.

HISTORY OF PROJECT

This Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) pilot storytelling project, which focused on increased cultural understanding, brought four Native American residents into the first and third grade classes to share their heritage and personal stories during May of 1992. They told personal stories, explained Native American beliefs such as the symbolism of the four colors, and spoke of the impact of reservation life. Iola Columbus taught her group how to count to five in the Dakota language. Response to the sessions by all in attendance was very positive.

The AMSC liaison for the project, local visual artist and long-time Morton resident Gary Butzer, recruited the storytellers over a period of several months. During this time he worked with a number of co-planners: school staff, including Superintendent Jan Dallenbach and Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Sue Osborne; AMSC staff; and interested Native American community members. Butzer found one-to-one meetings with potential storytellers and a flexible approach to scheduling very important in seeing the project through to completion.

Patience, flexibility, and the willingness to listen helped school staff cope with last minute changes and the less than ideal end of the school year timing of the events. Another important detail that planners felt was key to the success of the project was the purchase of a rocking chair to be used as a special place of honor for the guest storytellers.

CONTINUATION

In 1992-93, these activities are being planned and coordinated by third grade teacher Patty Gavin, one other teacher, and Mary Eller, one of the two Native Americans staffing the Dakota Project based in the school this year. Students will be hearing from both Native and white storytellers, producing booklets and sharing their stories and poems with seniors in non-school settings.

Ideas for improving the project, such as staff in-service during the school day, involvement of more Native storytellers and more structured pre- and post-storytelling activities for students, will be incorporated into the next series of weekly sessions, which are scheduled to begin in January of 1993 for grades 1, 2 and 3.

RESULTS

The impact of this modest project has been large. The spin-offs and general effect on the community are exciting.

Participating students and teachers learned the value of storytelling and Native culture, with special gains for Native students. Non-participating staff, some of whom are still adjusting to the new emphasis on Native American

My role as the contact person with AMSC involved going to homes, sitting down at kitchen tables and explaining that we now have something that's worth doing. I also went to the Tribal Council and got a vote of confidence to represent the Lower Sioux Community as coordinator on behalf of the Native American artists. Scheduling, as irregular as it was, created no problems. In fact, the spontaneity of storytellers showing up at the last minute was better than if that storyteller had been sitting and thinking about this project for days, weeks, or months. To me, the storytelling is the community input itself. It is the community, in effect, being itself, delivering the message through the storytelling process.

—Gary Butzer, project liaison

What I know isn't from books. I tend to be shy about talking. If one of the teachers had said, "Oh, Mrs. Columbus, we'd like to have you come and talk," I definitely wouldn't do it. I have to know someone. Knowing and working with Gary helps. I thought maybe this will help our Native American students. That's why I'm doing it. Because I feel if we're visible there and sharing stories about our culture, all these things are going to help our children want to stay in school. This isn't just a white world.

—Iola Columbus, storyteller

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

We ran into a few difficulties, but I think we worked through it quite well...It was a successful experience. We learned what storytelling is really about. We found out about our cultural heritage. Our level 5 kids (older students who are transported to the school from five different school districts) assisted us in a monitoring-mentorship role. Here were "problem" kids that were feeling great because they had a role in helping other kids learn more about their background and heritage. We have built on that. We now have an "at-risk" high school student helping the first grade teacher. That was a direct "pay-off" of our artistic experience.

—Jan Dallenbach, Superintendent

The most valuable part of the project for me as a teacher was having people come in from the Lower Sioux Reservation as persons just being who they are, letting students know it's OK to be who you are, and you should be proud of your heritage. There is a lot done here at the school that incorporates trying to make all the students, whatever their culture, feel free to be who they are, but this allowed students to see someone else as an adult come in and say: I like who I am; these are the stories I can tell that have made me a better person and I've learned from them. There was usually a moral in the stories. Doing the story that way, instead of reading it or watching a video, made a big difference. The students listened very attentively. They all want to know when we will get to do this again.

—Patty Gavin, grade 3 Teacher

My position as Coordinator of Gifted & Talented Services has allowed me to be involved in many unique programs. And although my involvement in the Morton Storytelling Project was mainly administrative (working with Gary Butzer and the teachers scheduling), I am glad that I was able to be a part of this very important program. I remember one session I was able to sit in on with Mrs. Gavin's third grade class. The students could hardly contain their excitement as Mrs. Columbus taught the group how to count in Dakota. You could see the pride of the Native American students in the group—it made me stop and think about what it must be like to live in a culture that doesn't place value on your heritage. I think this program is the most positive thing that has happened for our Native American students in a very long time.

—Sue Osborne, Gifted and Talented Coordinator,
Morton Schools

culture at the school, had an indirect exposure to the benefits for students in terms of both ability and attitudes. Native American participants increased their confidence as cultural emissaries and their ease with working within an institution that, in some cases, has been a source of pain for their families and community. Storytellers experienced considerable satisfaction in serving as positive role models for youngsters from the Native community.

The project also served as one important step in a larger, ongoing movement to address issues of cultural intolerance and to integrate the arts fully into the school's curriculum:

- Two new Dakota Project staff have been added to the school, a husband and wife team, and they have taken over a Dakota student dance group started last year by Jan Dallenbach;
- A Dakota Cultural Center has been created in the school. The school has purchased several sets of Native American literature for elementary students;
- One of the storytellers, Reverend Lyle Noisy Hawk, has worked with Gary Butzer and students to create a unique Dakota nativity scene for the Episcopal Church;
- Students at the nearby Redwood Falls Middle and High Schools are initiating cultural diversity activities and their grade school is interested in also participating in the storytelling project;
- Through the Center for School Change, Morton School is exploring the possibility of developing into a Magnet School for Cultural Studies.

For the planners and storytellers of the Morton project, these and other spin-offs from their efforts remain connected to a circle of children seated around a person in a rocking chair, someone who found the trust, courage, and time to sit down and begin to tell the story. And the children are all listening.

Florence Dacey is a poet from Cottonwood, Minnesota. She teaches creative writing to kids, senior citizens, and battered women through several COMPAS programs. Her collections of poetry include The Swoon and The Necklace.



CULTURAL SHARING

Hispanic Awareness in St. James

—Margot Fortunato Galt

ST. JAMES PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	3
Teachers	37
Participants	1,369
Artists	7
Art Disciplines	writing, dance, music, visual art, traditional crafts
Length	6 months
Budget	\$9,003

THE COMMUNITY

During the past few years, the small, south-central town of St. James, Minnesota, has become home to an increasing number of Mexican-American workers and families. With a population of 4,500 the town of mainly German-Scandinavian heritage has grown from a smattering of Hispanics to about twelve percent. The Hispanic adults work primarily at Tony Downs' chicken-processing plant, and their children attend the three St. James district schools, Northside Elementary, K-3rd grades; Armstrong Elementary, 4-6th grades; and St. James High School, 7-12th grades. Tony Downs recruits workers from Texas, and brings them to work in its' two plants in St. James and Madelia. In Madelia, a smaller community currently struggling to keep its school open, Hispanic families are housed in one trailer court, but in St. James, with a larger and wealthier school district, Mexican-American families are spread throughout the town.

The St. James school district has become increasingly aware of the needs of Hispanic students, many of whom arrive speaking only Spanish, and come to school on their own, without parental accompaniment. Five years ago, the St. James district funded a half-time ESL [English as a Second Language] teacher; now it employs three full-time ESL teachers, three full-time Hispanic aides drawn from the local community, and a full-time Hispanic outreach worker.

HISTORY OF PROJECT

In June of 1991, Karla Beck, Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) chair for the area, attended a conference in the Twin Cities where she learned that Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) was looking for a rural site ready to host a cultural sharing project in the schools and community.

Because the St. James elementary teachers were experiencing a larger increase in Hispanic students, their attitudes and assumptions about teaching were changing at a rapid and possibly confusing rate.

The idea of teaming experienced residency artists with Hispanic students in the arts from Mankato State University (MSU) appealed to the planners.

Working with Mario Quintero, a visual artist and member of Mankato State University's Cultural Diversity Department, AMSC selected four students and four experienced residency artists to spend five weeks spanning April and May 1992, in all three St. James schools.

The purpose of the project was to increase the students' exposure to artists of Latin American background: all the MSU students came from Mexico or Texas and thus could tap directly into the lives of the school children. The point of the team-teaching was to provide the MSU students with the opportunity to work with experienced residency artists. The artists represented a variety of ethnic backgrounds including Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, Native American, and Mexican. The experienced artists would help prepare the MSU students for work in classrooms, in presenting material, relating to young learners, and providing direction and discipline.

ARTIST/TEACHER INTERACTIONS

The success of the teaming relationships was mixed. Since the students lived in Mankato and the experienced residency artists in the Twin Cities, they did not meet for much planning and training ahead of time. The artists felt this lack more acutely because as practiced classroom presenters, they were quite aware of the challenges. Most of the elementary-school schedule called for one-time appearances in each class. In the short class periods allotted, they had to establish rapport with the youngsters, teach them something about art and culture, and also allow for time for each member of the teaching team to present in a coherent fashion.

Mentoring and presenting to the classroom audience at the same time sometimes proved difficult, especially for the more structured, versus improvisational, personalities. In the best team arrangements, a series of sessions with the same classes allowed more time to fulfill the requirements of the double purpose, and an exchange of information about arts, culture, and teaching developed among the MSU students and experienced artists.

The classroom teachers in the three St. James schools were also quite differently prepared to host the

The St. James project, that paired professional COMPAS artists with Hispanic students from Mankato State University, taught me that team-teaching with student teachers is difficult. A COMPAS residency program is not a place to train young/new artists. Too much depends on the residency as specialized teaching. There should be some sort of training period first; including time to observe, slowly. Then the students could work together with an experienced mentor/artist, and finally they could teach alone, when they feel ready.

—Sandra Benitez, writer

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

teams of visiting artists. Elia Bruggeman, high-school Spanish teacher, scheduled the gym in advance for dancing, and left sufficient instructions for her classes to be led quite effectively by the artists during a trip abroad to Spain. The team of Mila Llauger, Puerto Rican singer and dancer, and Delen Sanchez, MSU Mexican dancer, brought the high school students to a high level of performance, and Mario Quintero worked with the students in mural design and Cinco de Mayo decoration.

Our team was so good...I could see Delen grow before my eyes. I also learned from Delen, things about Mexico that I wasn't aware of before.

—Mila Llauger, performer

At one school, the teachers were, for the most part, unfriendly and aloof to the artists. In the lounge the first day at lunch, the teachers opened their sack lunches. I inquired about lunch at school for myself. They said I had to have a ticket. No one volunteered to show me where the cafeteria was or help me get a ticket. At first I was very upset and saw their treatment as the result of negative cultural attitudes. Later I stopped being so egocentric and asked myself, where are they coming from? They may think that because I live in the big city, I have nothing to say to them.

—Sandra Benitez, writer

seemed resentful that local money was being spent in this way. When informed that AMSC was paying for artist fees and supplies, teachers seemed to relax and become more accommodating.

Though they were informed by mail, some teachers did not seem aware of changes in plans when one of the experienced residency artists delayed his visit.

In the elementary schools, Lisa Gerdes, art specialist, happily welcomed various artists into her studio sessions, and now will incorporate information about Mexican pyramids into a unit she teaches about Egyptian pyramids.

But she pointed out that lack of advance planning had her scrambling to meet the visitors' needs for materials at the beginning of some classes, and that sometimes the MSU students did not show up on time or failed to come at all.

All in all, however, it was a positive experience for her, having contact with other artists which she misses and seeing her students respond to the positive adult role models of the artists. "The artists counteracted a lot of negative stereotypes," she said.

Other classroom teachers seemed to struggle with the presence of the artists.

TENSIONS

Published during the early days of the project, an anonymous letter to the editor condemning Hispanics set a negative tone, and elementary school teachers occasionally made damaging double-edged remarks about the cultural identity of the artists.

In commenting to one of the experienced residency artists, for example, one classroom teacher said, "I feel bad for the incoming Hispanic students who don't speak English, but language doesn't mean anything. They will have to adapt as other immigrants have." Since the visitors had come primed to speak both Spanish and English, and soon discovered that Hispanic students came alive when they could speak in their native tongue, such a comment could easily be interpreted as dismissive of Hispanic cultures.

The elementary-school classroom teachers also seemed poorly attuned to the schedule and origin of the project.

Some thought that the school district was paying for it, and

But administrative difficulties were not all on one side. Artist-student teams also made mistakes in scheduling, and the MSU students, new to this work, were not familiar with classroom procedures.

Clearly, more time for classroom teachers and the visiting artists to become acquainted, talk about the project, and work out a schedule would have made the project more understandable, and possibly acceptable, to the St. James teachers.

One teacher with a previous friendship to an experienced artist was overtly welcoming and attentive to the project, suggesting the importance of more than perfunctory contact between classroom teachers and the artists.

With a project that highlights cultural identity, negative procedural occurrences, not directly related to the theme, may key into other uncertainties and fears that the teachers already have about incorporating the Hispanic newcomers into school and community.

The ESL teachers and school counselor, with prior training in cultural relations, seemed the most aware of the benefits of the project. They also identified themselves as potential agents for change. For example, ESL teacher Pat Bradley took some of the artists to lunch and asked for ideas about how she could become a link between the two cultures in the community.

Clearly, in any project with the underlying goal of encouraging cross-cultural understanding, classroom teachers are key players in absorbing and translating interest and information to their students and to the larger community. The St. James Project underscores their crucial role and suggests the need to address it at the start of the project and in an ongoing way.

EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

An increased sense of self and pride in their cultural identity for Hispanic students were probably the most general accomplishments of the Hispanic and Native American artists visiting the St. James schools.

But many Anglo students clearly benefited too: learning about their Hispanic peers and becoming more appreciative of their heritage, Anglo students also became more aware of their own backgrounds. As writer Sandra Benitez said, "When we talked about names, grandparents, and ancestors, I realized that I had to make the Anglo kids proud of their culture too."

The inequality between Hispanic and Anglo students was somewhat rectified as Anglo young people

Two of us COMPAS artists saw almost a "deprivation" mode with the darling Latino children. Sandy Benitez spoke to them in Spanish and I spoke my "Spanglish," well enough to communicate with them. It was almost heart-breaking to see the transformation: they went from apathy to smiles, jumping from their seats to communicate and participate. Their status as "the other" was gone for a while. They were proud and thrilled. The Anglo kids were happy, too, to learn some words and ideas from the Latino kids' world. Many asked to title their drawings in Spanish.

—Amy Cordova, visual artist

I had many things I planned to tell the students about Mexican natives and their history before and after the Spanish arrival, but there was only time to show them pyramids. I could have done a lot more.

—Mario Quintero, visual artist

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

experienced for themselves the outsider position. They listened to a language they didn't understand and bridged to other culture's ways of life through a variety of activities:

- Young classes enthusiastically played Mexican games; older ones heard stories about Mexican families and wove themselves into sequels;
- Students of all ages drew Mexican pyramids, made murals in the Mexican style, created turtle rattles in the Native American spirit, and danced both contemporary and folkloric Latino dances;
- They watched potter Victor Valdez at his work and tried their own pottery;
- They listened to bilingual storybooks and translated names from English to Spanish, and Spanish to English;
- With Brother Anansi, spider folk-hero of West Africa, and Coyote, the trickster figure in Native American folklore, the students spun narratives, and designed masks;
- With a turtle image that appears in legends as far away as China and as close as the Dakota, students sent wishes for the earth into their own community.

Hispanic students also benefited from the artists' activities. A shy boy who wouldn't participate in the dance the first day soon joined; a student who had declined to read his writing aloud for the entire year finally consented with a piece written with the visiting artists.

Pat Jones, counselor at Armstrong Elementary noticed that Hispanic students who initially thought the Mexican and Latin American dances were silly soon danced for a Hispanic symposium at MSU. Many Hispanic youngsters who have grown up in poverty, with little idea of college or professional artists, could now identify with the MSU students some options for their futures that they may not have realized before.

When individual artists visited the Hispanic Club at the upper elementary school, and the Hispanic Advisory session in the high school, students talked to them freely in Spanish. "Some in grades 9-12 had recently come to town," explained Sandra Benitez. "I told them that when I was 14, I was sent from El Salvador, to live in Unionville, Missouri, a small farming community of 2,000. I was the only Hispanic the town had ever known. I told them what I saw there that was so different, how I adjusted, what I learned, and how what I learned has served me in my life. I then encouraged them to tell me what life was like since coming to St. James. What their dreams and hopes were."

Delight with the artists was immediately evident among the elementary classes, and developed soon among the high school students, but this enthusiasm often was stopped short because of the limited classroom time allotted the artists. Classroom teachers and artists alike voiced frustration with these one-shot visits. "Next year, I want more time in each class with one artist," said art specialist Lisa Gerdes.

Some of the desire for more cross-cultural and Hispanic activities was answered by the late spring International Festival sponsored by the school district. Many of the MSU students returned, displayed their work, taught crafts, and during the Sunday afternoon about one thousand, five hundred community residents attended, sampled foods from Mexico and other countries, watched students dance Latin American dances, and generally became better acquainted with Hispanic art and culture. "The Festival was a terrific success," said Hispanic outreach worker Maria Wellman. "The school was packed. We plan to have another every two years."

CONTINUATION

The St. James school district, clearly committed to bringing the two parts of their student community into better understanding, is beginning to plan a continuation of the Project. But, according to Karla Beck, the next Hispanic art and culture project will draw only on student artists from MSU, eliminating the team-teaching with experienced residency artists. The next project will, however, add quite a bit more time for St. James classroom teachers to get to know the potential artists, plan workable schedules and longer stints in some classes, and prepare the students for working within a school framework.

Though these plans are just being formed, they indicate the district's positive assessment of the 1992 Hispanic project, awareness of the initial plan's strengths and weaknesses, and the intent to emphasize regional resources. Karla Beck is working on fundraising, and will continue to shape next year's version of the project with school staff and with Mario Quintero. Surely this self-correcting and self-reliant response is all that the AMSC model project could have hoped for its successor. And the joyful and energetic response from students in St. James bodes well for a stronger community of mutually appreciative cultures, where the young lead the way in bridging differences and celebrating diversity.

I would recommend student-artists coming continuously throughout the year. Even if it's once a week, the impact would be greater, progress will be seen with time. Short two-three week projects are great, but they are just a shot in the arm.

—Mila Llauger

Margot Fortunato Galt is a writer from St. Paul, Minnesota, and teaches creative writing to kids, senior citizens, and battered women through several COMPAS programs. Her recent book is The Story in History.



INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

Antarctica Arts Pod in Brainerd

—*Judith Kidder*

BRAINERD PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	1
Teachers	4
Participants	225
Artists	20
Art Disciplines	writing, dance, music, visual art, traditional crafts
Length	3 years
Budget	\$11,986

THE COMMUNITY

Brainerd, with neighboring Baxter, forms a community very near the geographic center of Minnesota, in the heart of the lakes region. The rural setting with well-developed recreational and resort facilities has attracted visitors and summer lake residents for years. The resulting increased population not only helps support the school district of more than 6,000 students, but also gives Brainerd added reason to share its talents. Once a booming railroad center, Brainerd is striving now to develop a new identity among area tourist towns. It has decorated its downtown with chainsaw carvings and has begun hosting annual arts fairs. Concerts in the park and a local community theater are well attended by local citizens and tourists alike. The town provides an ideal center for the arts in central Minnesota.

BACKGROUND

I first heard of the Antarctica Arts Pod in a letter in the fall of 1990, inviting me, along with 20 other listed artists, to a planning session after school to discuss how we might be involved in teaching the arts. I already knew from my son that a "pod" was a teaching unit of three classrooms with about 90 students at Washington Middle School in Brainerd. Each sixth grade pod was

named after a continent and was taught with a team approach using three teachers. The list of invited artists was impressive; I felt honored to be included. I went to the meeting.

As I entered the pod classroom, I saw several familiar faces. Paul Bloom, Director of Community Education was there. So were Peder Hegland, local potter, Paul Wilson and Mary Abendroth, local crafters who also ran the Piney Woods Folk Dancers, Jeff Kidder, a woodworker, Beth Medin, 6th grade art teacher, Denny Martin, principal, and many I did not know. We sat in a huge circle encompassing the room and were invited to go around that circle, introducing ourselves and telling about our arts. These were inclusive techniques I remembered from Human Relations class, and they were working.

When I had entered, I wasn't at all sure I should be there. The quilter on my left and the illustrator on my right quietly expressed to me the same doubts. But, after the introductions, we could see the real interest that the teachers and administrators had in us by their questions and immediate suggestions of how we would fit and when they could use our help. Any ideas we had were encouraged and written down. The teachers handed out curriculum outlines, mission statements, goals and timelines. By the end of the meeting, we felt a part of the project, and I was to be in the classroom in three weeks teaching myth writing.

I could see that much planning, discussion, support and hard work had gone on prior to this meeting. The project was well underway, and artists had already begun working with the students. So, what had led up to this Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC)? How did it happen that I was signing contracts and turning in my social security number to Paul Bloom?

NECESSARY INGREDIENTS

Brainerd was lucky enough to have all the ingredients needed for a successful artists-in-the-schools project in 1989, when AMSC was offering support for such a project. First, it had a person with a vision of using the arts to enhance interdisciplinary teaching. As Director of Community Education, Paul Bloom had a firm belief in community involvement and a strong love of the arts. His position gave him another important ingredient, access to a growing network of rural artists.

Next, this central Minnesota community had Assistant Superintendent Wayne Haugen, a person in position to enact the project. This administrator was willing to try something new and gave the project crucial backing. With the help of local artists, both men put together a 31-member planning team essential to the project's development.

It seemed like it would be a good idea to take a look at the possibility of creating an arts magnet pod, because we had to start a new pod with the kids at Washington School anyway. Because of my background in the arts, and also as community education director, I'm interested in the relationships between the schools and the community, and always trying to look for ways to get people from the community involved in the schools and working with teachers. This looked like an excellent opportunity.

Arts are the spice of life...School should be fun for kids. And while they're having fun, they learn information and remember it because of the arts involvement. They'll say, "Remember when we made cartouches?" and it will bring back what they learned about Egypt.

*—Paul Bloom, Director,
Community Education*

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

PLANNING STAGE

This team of local artists, community members and school administrators began meeting to find the best ways to work together. Early in the planning, each individual filled out four pages of Brainstorming Ideas for the Arts Magnet Pod. All ideas were welcomed without a criticism. Each person was to:

- Describe outcomes desired for the student;
- Identify ways to incorporate the arts into learning;
- List resources that might be helpful in designing curriculum;
- List obstacles the project might encounter.

The teachers have been wonderful, and I guess that is the key to the whole thing. The nice opportunity we had was that this project wasn't something that we dropped on teachers. We had the opportunity to actually interview for this particular situation and to be able to invite teachers who really wanted to work for this...and they have worked very hard. But if you ask them if they wanted to go back to where they were before, they wouldn't. Even though it has been very hard, it has been very rewarding, and they have seen the results.

—Paul Bloom

ON SHARING HER CLASS:

That was the best part of the whole project, because we don't have the expertise to teach all of these things. We get to have the experts in. That's what education is all about...and the kids are in awe of the artists. They are heroes to the kids.

—Sandy Nielsen, grade 6 Teacher

These ideas were pooled and became instrumental in developing the mission statement, goals and activity resources for the new project.

Because of increased enrollment, Brainerd had been about to add a new pod at the middle school. Thus, the Antarctica Arts Pod was created as an arts magnet where all units taught would be tied to the arts. Needing to add these three classrooms was an unforeseen advantage that allowed the school to find teachers who fully supported the idea. These teachers were Pat Altrichter, Sandy Nielsen and Chris Sames, who chose to apply because they wanted to try something new; something that would involve hard work and new ways of thinking about their classrooms. Having the teachers' support was essential, because once the project was under way, they were the keys to its success.

IMPLEMENTATION

Revamping the entire curriculum appeared to be a huge task, more than the teachers could accomplish, even with additional planning time over the summer. So the teachers chose to focus their efforts on social studies for the first year of the project. They presented their core social studies curriculum and asked artists to come up with arts projects that would apply. The Renaissance came to life as the students, under the guidance of experts, created banners, listened to a troubadour and learned dances such as the Branle des Sabots, meaning the shaking of the wooden shoes. With the experienced hands of artist Marie Bode, they decorated Ukrainian Easter eggs. They dressed paper dolls in elegant Egyptian styles and themselves in Renaissance head-dresses with local costumer, Judy Kuusisto. The children participated and interacted. "Doing" became important and gave meaning to the reading and listening aspects of education. Once everyone agreed that

everything would be taught successfully with a connection to the arts, new ways to integrate artists' activities into the curriculum sprang up constantly.

The teachers were open to sharing their classes with local artists, some of whom they scarcely knew. At times they joined the class in being students and no longer were always in the singular position of authority.

We local artists and volunteers got to know and respect what the teachers were doing. The teachers got to know and learn from the artists. We gained trust in each other. Everyone won. The biggest winners, though, were the kids who learned not only the crafts, but also the cooperation of their mentors. Several of us worked in teams. Else Carlson came in to teach the illustrating part of my book-writing project. After students traveled to Egypt through the slides and souvenirs of Jeff Kidder, they worked with him and Peder Hegland to create cartouches, clay carvings of their names in hieroglyphics. This talented team returned again during the unit on Renaissance art to help students fashion original clay gargoyles. Karen DeVries, Darla Sathre and Donna Wheeler worked together teaching about quilting and piecing together squares done by the students during an immigrant unit. Paul Wilson and Mary Abendroth, a husband and wife team, taught many folk dances. And throughout the year, we all received support from the enthusiastic Antarctica teaching team in the form of materials, scheduling, encouragement, thank-you notes, and an appreciation tea.

The students benefited in other ways. The kids got to know there were other people in the community who were interested in them. Even today, artists feel free to drop in to see how the class is doing, and the kids' self-esteem gets a boost. Sometimes a hands-on project, like the Egyptian cartouches, will be the first thing to capture the interest of a "problem" student. The teachers have been amazed to watch some children blossom in the arts and carry that success over into their general work.

SHARING WITH THE COMMUNITY

As the achievements of the students grow and develop through the year, they are shared with the school and with Brainerd. Washington Middle School's hallways are constantly exhibiting the Pod's creations. All the 6th grade pods contribute students to the book-writing project. The books produced are presented at an author's tea to parents and the media, then are displayed in the public library with copies anyone may read. The cartouches and gargoyles have also been on display there and enjoyed by many.

Each year the Antarctica Pod has put together a gala evening event including their sixth graders, artists, volunteers and families for entertainment, food, and a viewing of class projects. The first year they held a Heritage Festival and last year, a Renaissance Fair. What fun it was to attend and see friends and neighbors in costume enjoying the village spirit. Last year, three artists did caricatures, a newspa-

First of all, juggling was the best. Rick Sundstrom came to our class. We met in the gym. It was my first time. Then I joined the juggling club, and I'm a very good juggler now. My second favorite was the gargoyles. I'm kind of interested in super-natural, horror things like monsters.

—Shane Ewert, grade 6, student

This is a replica of a Greek and Roman suit of armor made way back about thousands of years ago. I made it out sheet metal with leather straps. It was very fun because I got to learn how they made it, but it was a lot easier for me because I had better technology and tools. First, I cut up a couple pieces of sheet metal and overlapped them, so they wouldn't cut me. Then I strapped them together, and I used some tape for this. This is a shoulder pad, which they used, so they wouldn't get cut.

—Joshua Skogen, grade 6, student

I liked the Renaissance Festival best. I got to be a jester in a costume and walk around with my face painted. I also got to do gymnastics in between the folk dances. It was fun.

—Andria Bloom, grade 6, student

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

per columnist read Shakespeare, a volunteer villager described daily life in the 15th and 16th centuries, students helped guests try a hand at calligraphy and a group of sixth graders led medieval games in the hall. Several parents provided tastes of different cultures with pretzels, pickles and chicken drummies. Afterwards, we all retired to the auditorium to see Sue Anderson's improvisational 6th grade troupe doing plays of Robin Hood and King Arthur, to watch the Pod members folk dance, to hear the Bemidji State Minstrels sing and the Brainerd High School Orchestra play period pieces, and to admire the skills of local juggler, Rick Sundstrom. Everyone was welcome, and many took time to come.

CONTINUATION

We had 40 year-end T-shirt designs submitted. We picked the top 10, and those kids worked in a smaller group to select one logo to use on the front of the shirt. It was a penguin with a cartouche around its neck, a Ukrainian egg by its foot, a copy of The Egypt Game book; all things to remind them of the highlights of the year. What they took home was a very personal shirt that only had meaning for them—and on the back everyone's name inside the Antarctica continent shape, all 90 signatures.

— Jeff Kidder, visual artist

Anytime you can get children excited about something, they'll learn. We see the Antarctica pod as a success, and we want to be involved in that success. We are certainly proud to be a part of the project, and I feel we will support it again next year.

—Terry McCollough, publisher.
Brainerd Daily Dispatch

Such community response is allowing the project to continue a third year. One purpose of the AMSC program was to encourage the Brainerd community to take up the project. The school district went to the citizens with a petition of interest to sign. They also approached local clubs and businesses with presentations. The Brainerd Daily Dispatch, the Brainerd Moose club and the school board are jointly providing \$5,000 in funds for the 1992-93 project. Publisher Terry McCollough explained the Dispatch's interest in supporting the arts pod because it was innovative. They liked the idea of combining several disciplines. But the main impetus in their support was the "enthusiasm from top to bottom, from the administrators down to the students, that proves it is having great success."

As one of the twenty-plus artists and volunteers who have worked with the Antarctica Arts Pod, I have shared in a wonderful educational experience. The teachers have been open to suggestions and ideas from all directions, including from the students. They have incorporated and adapted to our many and varied activities. The administration and school staff have welcomed me often, finding corners in their offices for storing my supplies and time in their schedules for admiring the works of budding young artists and authors. The kids have been open and ready to try new things and eager to help each other.

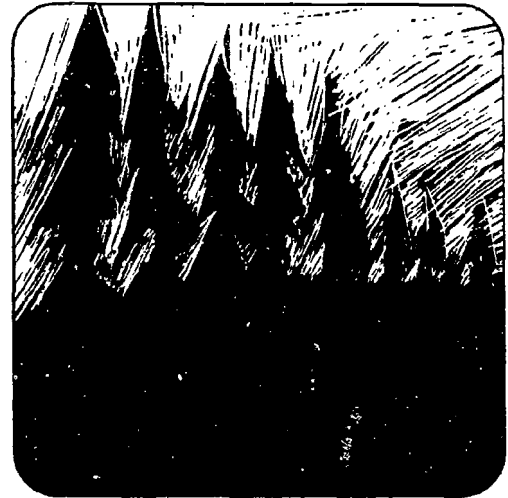
Participation is the true path to education. In Paul Bloom's office hangs this African proverb, "It takes the entire village to educate one child." Perhaps with the Antarctica Pod, Brainerd is a bit closer to that ideal.

Judith Kidder is a writer and social worker who lives in Brainerd, Minnesota. A former teacher and children's librarian, she writes mainly fiction stories for children.

INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

Strengthen Arts In Learning (SAIL) in Grand Marais

—Jay Andersen



THE COMMUNITY

Grand Marais is the only community of size in the county that forms the tip of the Arrowhead where Minnesota, Ontario and Lake Superior meet. The Grand Portage Indian Reservation, at the very tip of the Arrowhead, is home to the Ojibwe. During the school year, Grand Marais has about 1,350 inhabitants—a figure which easily triples in summer. The entire county has fewer than 5,000 permanent residents and three quarters of the county is owned by the state and federal governments, including Superior National Forest and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, which attract thousands of visitors to the area winter and summer. Without this influx of people from varied ethnic, social, economic and cultural backgrounds, Grand Marais would be one of the most isolated places in the state; with them, however, it is far more cosmopolitan than its physical locale would suggest.

Before the tourist boom of the last five decades, the Grand Marais economy was tied to a small but energetic flotilla of commercial fishermen and a vast timber products industry, with a few hardscrabble farms wedged here and there. Today only lumbering remains and that is rapidly being supplanted by tourism.

GRAND MARAIS PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	3
Teachers	22
Participants	353
Artists	14
Art Disciplines	creative writing, music, visual art,
Length	3 years
Budget	\$8,000

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

Every once in a while you find a model you wish you could replicate everywhere—and the Grand Marais Art Colony is one. The Art Colony takes on so many important roles within the community: particularly, as an advocate of arts in the schools. The Colony has high community visibility and trust, a good sense of the respective roles of teachers and artists, and strong creative and administrative leadership. Its busy season is the summer, so staff have a more flexible work schedule to accommodate projects during the school calendar and are able to use the Colony's artistic resources at other times during the year.

*—Todd Driscoll, Senior Program Officer,
Blandin Foundation*

The children should feel free to play with language. Chanting, making up verses, nonsense language, creative dramatics, codes and secrets should be easily acceptable ways children use words. The children should feel free to be as creative with words as they are with art materials, and to think of language as a way to express emotions as well as thoughts.

—Joanne Hart, poet

The natural beauty of the Grand Marais area makes it an ideal drawing card for summer campers, canoers and boaters as well as winter skiers and snowmobilers. This is the same environment that over the years has attracted so many artists to the county. They came to Grand Marais to create art, and stayed to create a lifestyle. Until recently, only a few local artists had worked in the schools, and then in relatively standard residency roles.

HOW THE PROJECT EVOLVED

Two experiences gave us clues to what kind of project might have the greatest chance for success and the longest lasting impact: some previous in-class experience, and planning for an artist/teacher workshop as part of the Minnesota Arts eXperience (MAX) summer program.

With idea sketches in mind, Art Colony members and staff, local artists of all disciplines, teachers and interested community members met in Spring 1989 with Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) staff in a series of brainstorming meetings. These sessions were designed to pull together both a concept and a process based on the educational and artistic strengths of our community.

Even before we began ticking off goals and objectives for what was to become the SAIL project, we sensed an emerging basic concept shared by local participants and nurtured by COMPAS experience. This concept stayed with SAIL throughout the two years of AMSC's involvement, has continued in subsequent years and underlies all the Art Colony's student/teacher programs.

Simply stated, our premises were these:

- The arts can be used to enhance non-art curricular goals;
- That this is best done over an extended period of time with the artist and classroom teacher cooperating as a team;
- That this will be most successful if the two stay in their respective roles.

By having artists and teachers working within the curriculum, complementing one another's skills and using their various areas of expertise to team-teach children, we were on our way to SAIL: Strengthen Arts In Learning.

Given our unique rural community, the task then was to focus on that uniqueness and make it central to the SAIL project. We knew we had the art resources, but we needed to consider other aspects of Grand Marais and Cook County that could maximize classroom and community impact. We discussed many options in our brainstorming ses-

sions, but kept returning to one central organizing theme that has affected the community's past and present and will affect its future—Lake Superior. Not only is the lake physically broad and deep, we found it equally as inclusive metaphorically. Lake Superior and its environs became the theme for SAIL. It afforded us ample raw material in the arts, it served as an engaging local curricular focus and allowed us to include other, non-artist community members.

PROJECT NUTS AND BOLTS

Once the broad outline of SAIL was established, we formed in Fall 1989 a six-member Executive Committee to deal with administration of the project: the elementary principal, the art specialist, a participating artist, community member, the Art Colony administrator and the AMSC program director. Next, teachers were asked to identify areas in their curriculum where the arts may be used. Artists who expressed an interest in the project were asked to supply ideas about where their art form might fit into the elementary program.

In Winter 1989-90, we brought teachers and artists together to share their ideas and to form teams. The teams then met separately. Using a simple planning sheet and a few ground rules, each team forged an ideal plan for their grade level in the coming school year. These "ideal" project concepts were reviewed by the Executive Committee, weighed against the budget and re-submitted to the teams for their approval and comment.

The result of this process was teacher/artist teams for all elementary grade levels in Sawtooth Elementary in Grand Marais as well as satellite schools at the county's west end in Tofte and on the Grand Portage Indian Reservation to the east. The school district supported teacher involvement by providing "bank time" and substitutes. The artists contracted with AMSC, which paid them directly. When SAIL began the classroom phase of its program in Fall 1990, there were 15 artists working with 18 teachers. During this phase, the Executive Committee met regularly to oversee the general operation of the project, while Art Colony staff were responsible for the day-to-day administration.

PROJECT EXAMPLES

There were too many projects to detail each of them here. Some changes were made as the school year progressed, but for the most part, the extensive pre-planning paid off. Projects which the Executive Committee felt were the most successful were those where the teacher/artist team worked together closely in the classroom, where the class was prepared for the artist's appearance, and where the project continued when the artist was not present. Surrounding these elements was the less specific, but all-important magic of having a really good idea well executed.

There were two extensive projects especially worth noting. One was a sixth grade social studies and sci-

I have some music ideas—songs about the Lake, myths and legends, songs incorporating bird sounds, wolf sounds. Just ideas at this time, I have to let them sit in my brain for a while.

—Barb LaVigne, musician

...this opportunity is a new one with no firm rules and your understanding, input and willingness to take chances is important.

—from an administrative memo to Cook County Elementary staff

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

ence unit centering on commercial fishing—an industry which still continues in Cook County; the other was a second grade project focusing on the local Ojibwe culture.

We developed accompaniments with mallet instruments to songs with a Lake Superior theme...We presented our project to four sections, twice a week for two and a half weeks. We found it worked well and I have since used these same techniques with other classes.

—John Redshaw, Elementary Music Teacher

The second graders were able to experience and learn about Native American dance. We had a mini pow-wow with 16 dancers and six drummers...a special honor song was held for all the artists/staff who were involved in the SAIL project.

—Jaye Clearwater Day, grade 2 Teacher

The book consisted of anything the children found in nature along Lake Superior: flower petals, bugs, snake skins, butterfly wings and rocks.

—Dena Schliep, Kindergarten Teacher

WEAVING THE NET

The commercial fishing project was extensive. It included both sixth grade classes, resulted in full room decoration—nets, buoys, glass floats—and brought in local resource people to discuss how they fished and some of the history of the industry.

The art form central to the project was weaving. A floor loom was set up in the classroom, boys and girls wove designs evocative of rocks, water and fish, and incorporated fishermen's knots into the tapestry. The teacher loved weaving as much as the artist and was able to carry over other aspects of the activity when the artist herself was not present. A second artist helped students create a visual "time line" of fish and fishing which related the local community to the industry in general.

NANIBOUJOU PERFORMED

In the Ojibwe project, three second grade classes participated with as many artists to produce two short plays based on Ojibwe mythology. A Native American teacher—herself an artist and storyteller—played a double role. She presented two Naniboujou legends to the children, and worked with two visual artists to create costumes and painted sets for the dramatic interpretation of the stories.

The plays were presented for the public; later Indian dancers and drummers came to the school to further help the children identify with a contemporary side of Native culture. Although the Ojibwe are a regular and visible part of our community, their culture is less familiar to most children than the majority culture. A natural extension of the children's everyday life, this project turned an existing recognition of Ojibwe people into an appreciation of Ojibwe culture.

Three smaller-scale projects deserve special note.

INTERDISCIPLINARY BOOKMAKING

Imaginative as well as mathematical skills were the curricular focus for a book-making project done with one third grade class. Betsy Bowen, herself a children's book author, helped the class create the story and illustrations for their own book. The book was laid out exactly as it would be for regular printing with the children figuring out the "work and turn" pagination system. They then brought the book to a local printer, monitored the process, returned to the classroom for hand coloring, autographing and binding. The

books were then sold at a special table in the largest tourist gift store in Grand Marais and the proceeds donated to an international charity. The children participated in all economic as well as creative aspects of the project.

CONCEPTUAL SCULPTURE

The natural features of the Lake Superior area were highlighted for a first grade class where the teacher and artist worked together on an environmental project. Students constructed a diorama of Lake Superior, delineated physical features of the shore and surrounding countryside with natural objects and marked off the significant features according to Ojibwe tradition. They also visited the lakeshore where they gathered objects and created conceptual sculptures which would then be reclaimed by the waves. Some concerns arose with the school administration about what was viewed as the "spiritual" content of some of the art and approach used, and there was some disagreement between the artist and teacher on the same subject. While the project was carried off to everyone's satisfaction and the students enjoyed the process, the artist felt some of her goals were not met because of the disagreements.

SUPERIOR SELF-ESTEEM

An example of arts in the socialization curriculum involved third and fourth graders in one of the satellite schools. The teacher had incorporated a self-esteem program, "Project Charlie," into her classwork. A visual artist and a writer worked with the teacher to help students express and interpret their feelings about the natural beauty of Lake Superior and the North Woods. Creating poetry and paintings was coupled to discussions about what these feelings meant to the children and how they viewed themselves in the larger scheme of things.

PROBLEMS

We had hoped to pull all of these projects together somehow at the end of the year, in the form of a display or production for parents and public. This would have been not only good public relations generally, but might have made an impact on school administration and school board members which would add to the prospect of including some of the project approaches in District curriculum.

However, the great diversity of the projects, the time span, and more importantly, no assignment of responsibility for making it

Barb did an excellent job getting the students to think about how things they were seeing and hearing could be related to music. They talked about the change in tempo of the boat motor as it sped away from the dock, the melodic motion the Sawtooth Mountains could portray, and the change in dynamics that was portrayed by the sprinkle, then downpour of rain.

—Anne Redshaw, Kindergarten Teacher

**Clear, wet waves
crashing on the rock.
Waves rushing down the water falls
and into the lake.**

—Nate Dobbelman, grade 4, student

My students SAILED into their project with the reading of *Paddle to the Sea* by Holling C. Holling. The artist, Liz Sivertson, shared slides of her recent kayak trip along the North Shore of Lake Superior. With real herring as models, students sketched and perfected their fish drawings.

—Sharon Bushman, grade 3, Teacher

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

happen, conspired against our hope.

Contributing factors included administrative change during the two school year project period. The superintendent changed as well as two elementary principals. This is not uncommon in rural communities, and unfortunately can disrupt staff, students and program continuity.

PLUSES

The sheer size and success of the program lent a driving force to follow-up and continuation even after AMSC's role was technically finished. SAIL continued for a third year under various public and private funding configurations. An additional two-year funding plan for a reduced SAIL program in the three elementary schools was subsequently funded by the Blandin Foundation. During these two years the overall goal, through school and community cooperation, is to find a way to include additional arts education in the district's policy. This was one of our original objectives.

One day the class went down to Lake Superior and turned their boats loose, hoping they would somehow find their way to the sea. A vacationing family found one of the little boats floating near shore at Copper Harbor, Michigan. Lacking writing equipment, they noted the information with a sharp rock on birch bark and put the boat back in the water.

—Cook County News-Herald

We did a historic perspective of fishing in Lake Superior. We felt the project was great and had lots to do. It was integrated into the sixth grade curriculum. We now have plans to develop curriculum on the art of Lake Superior Indians.

—JoAnn Krause, grade 6 Teacher

EFFECTS

- SAIL demonstrated that schools can use their community's art resources in multiple ways for curricular goals;
- SAIL demonstrated that artists have a role to play in education far beyond the auxiliary one of "icing on the cake." Art is a basic human activity that can be used as an end in itself and as a tool for a more full and penetrating learning experience;
- As community members, artists gained a greater understanding of the role their schools play, and teachers gained valuable information on the arts process from their art co-workers;
- Many teachers commented that they saw their students from a different perspective as they interacted with the artist on a regular or long-term basis;
- Students themselves gained valuable skills and insights, and also were able to view artists as viable, working members of their community;
- Ultimately, the gentle nurturing of "doing art with an artist" created a valuing of the arts within the child, the parent and the community.

Jay Andersen is a writer and the Director of the Grand Marais Art Colony in Grand Marais, Minnesota.

WAYS OF SHARING ART

Developing Stage Productions in Barnesville and Rothsay

—Marjorie Barton



THE COMMUNITIES

Rothsay and Barnesville are small, rural towns in west-central Minnesota. Although located only fifteen miles apart, Barnesville and Rothsay lie near the borders of three counties; Barnesville in Clay County and Rothsay at the intersection of Wilkin and Otter Tail County. With a population of 2,200 Barnesville is larger. Rothsay's population of 475 is higher than other neighboring towns located, like these, just off Interstate 94, halfway between Fergus Falls, Minnesota, and Moorhead, Minnesota - Fargo, North Dakota. They are generally identified as farming communities, not as bedroom communities. While their small, agricultural base remains strong, it is not uncommon for residents to commute to jobs in Fargo-Moorhead.

HISTORY OF PROJECT

The center of each of these towns has historically been the high school. For local entertainment, area residents attend school sports events, band concerts and plays. In Rothsay and Barnesville, as in most rural schools, teachers are called upon to supervise at least one extracurricular activity—coach a sport, lead the speech team or direct the school play.

BARNESVILLE/ROTHSAY PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	2
Teachers	5
Participants	118
Artists	4
Art Disciplines	dance, theater, scenic design
Length	2 years
Budget	\$3,897

PART THREE: The implementation of AMSC Projects

The teachers who are assigned to direct the school play, however, don't always have extensive experience and training for the job. Nevertheless, community expectations are high; people have seen enough theater to know good from bad. Students are expected to give a credible performance.

The primary purpose of the Barnesville/Rothsay Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) project was to bring professional artists into the schools with a goal of increasing technical skills among the schools' teachers.

CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Staging productions in very small rural schools creates a unique set of challenges.

Students have responsibilities in multiple extracurricular activities, and they can't postpone their involvement in other events until the play is over. A single student is likely to be a crucial member of the track team, as well as a key player in the band, a star in the play and a vital part of the speech team. Because the population is so small, it is often impossible to limit students' options or to select someone else. Excessive demands on students can lower their own expectations of producing a quality presentation.

In addition to teaching basic dance steps, the Barnesville project's choreographer, Laurle Williams, worked on such concepts as centering, rhythm, balance and space. It is important, she believes, to give students a sense of the value of dance in everyday life. Everyday exposure to the arts, Laurie added, can widen the students' horizons beyond Barnesville.

—Marjorie Barton

In the Rothsay project, for example, it was necessary to rethink several aspects of the project: simplify dance steps, work around scheduling glitches, consider inexpensive set design techniques—to keep the performers on task and to produce a high quality presentation.

To further complicate the production process, facilities in rural schools may be limited. The stage at Rothsay, for example, is at one end of the gymnasium. The gym is used for classes throughout the day, and, during the early spring rehearsals of this AMSC project, it was the site both of after school play practice as well as track warm-ups and workouts during inclement weather. In addition, it is

commonly accepted as a place for students to gather to shoot baskets after school.

Bringing professional artists to a rural community to work with teachers presents yet another challenge. In small towns, teachers are frequently seen as the ultimate authority in their field of expertise. The teachers are accustomed to this role, and they may feel that, in times of school cutbacks, their expertise could be the factor that protects jobs. To bring an outside professional into the school, then, to help a teacher, can threaten instead. Artists who recognize defensiveness in the teachers are likely to pull back and not contribute as much as they otherwise could.

Furthermore, teachers expect to assume entire responsibility for their own area of expertise—the band teacher is unlikely to seek input on music from the play director; the director is unlikely to ask the art instructor if she sees problems in staging that need to be worked out; the band director and the art teacher are not apt to consult with each other on their separate responsibilities.

WHAT HAPPENED

To some degree, all these challenges cropped up. Students were over-extended, facilities were over-booked, and instructors and professionals were unsure of the boundaries of their roles.

ROTHSAY

Rothsay was the first of the two communities to participate in the AMSC project. The goal was to use professional help in producing the school play for that year, *Something's Afoot*.

Three professional artists—an actor, a choreographer and a set designer—were hired to teach their techniques to Rothsay instructors and students. The artists worked with three Rothsay teachers: an academic instructor who served as play director; the instrumental music teacher, who was in charge of the pit band; and the school's art teacher, who volunteered to work with the set designer.

One factor that made the project particularly welcome was that the school's long-term play director had left the district, and the new director was relatively inexperienced.

The artist residencies took place over a six-week period.

Rothsay's experience with the set designer was one of the highlights of the AMSC project. The school art teacher had not previously worked on set design, and she enthusiastically took on the challenge of learning, then teaching, the research and production techniques necessary to developing a convincing set.

A new group of students became part of the school play through the technical work. Many of the art students had never considered trying out for the play, but they recognized their contributions and took pride in the results. As they saw the set evolving from an idea to a reality, their excitement grew. After a particularly productive work session one afternoon, the art students all but refused to surrender the stage to the actors. "I don't see why the actors can't practice on the gym floor, so we can keep working," one boy complained. Students were intrigued with the notion that looking at their work from the gym floor gave an entirely different image than the close-up appearance on stage.

"When the curtain opened the night of the play," said art teacher Chris Teisel, "it was like our art exhibit."

The assistance of regional artists offers teachers and students the opportunity to expand their skills and to make the best possible use of the equipment and people available. In Rothsay, the AMSC project introduced a new resource person, the art instructor, to the annual school play project, helped free up the time of the other teachers involved, and taught students and staff some valuable new set design techniques. While there are bugs to be exterminated from the program, it's a most beneficial project for rural Minnesota.

—Marjorie Barton

The students were enjoying the play and its demands right up to the final performance. They maintained the illusion of the first time because they were enjoying their work and learning aspects of theater they otherwise had no exposure to. We feel our students have had their arts experience enriched, and the directors feel a surge of new life having had such a successful production and having so few obstacles.

—Gary Zirbes, Principal

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

BARNESVILLE

One year later, the Barnesville portion of the project began. The goal was to use professional artists to help produce the all-school variety show, a yearly event in Barnesville and one much looked forward to.

Set designer Karl Larson taught one of my classes basic set design. I was also a student because I had never done set design. The most important thing we gleaned from her was process—we built scale models, made a group decision, and then made the set. That kind of group work is not always stressed in the classroom, but I feel that it's important training for the real world.

—Carol Schwandt Albright, Art Teacher

I would try to set this up as a whole-school project. I would suggest teacher in-service training in the fall, involving every teacher who might possibly be involved: art, history, English, music, band, industrial arts, physical education, etc. At Barnesville, even the Spanish teacher was involved, so maybe it should be everyone. Explain the purpose of the project and then have each teacher meet with artists or other related teachers to begin the planning process. The more involvement, the more student excitement you'll have. Blocks of time are removed from the school day for many reasons. Building and painting scenery for an all-school production could be one of those time blocks if the administration were behind the idea.

—Joan Ellison, AMSC Documenter

Two professional artists—a set designer and a dancer/choreographer—were hired to teach their techniques to teachers and students. To provide continuity to the project, the same set designer who worked in Rothsay also worked in Barnesville. The artists worked with the show director, the school's music teacher, and the art teacher.

Like Rothsay, the Barnesville school also had the problem of the previous variety show director having left the district.

A factor that made the project especially useful was the school's lack of expertise in production lighting. They already had some equipment that no one at the school knew how to use, and they had received a small grant to purchase additional lighting equipment, but did not know quite what to buy.

Benefiting from the lessons learned in Rothsay, Barnesville teachers began the process earlier and included professionals sooner. Although similar problems occurred with student scheduling, multiple use of facilities and concerns about teachers' roles, new and valuable results came out of the performance.

At the earliest planning stage, two teachers—the art instructor and choir teacher—assumed all responsibilities for generating ideas and planning the program. As the process evolved, however, they began to see positive reasons to involve students and other teachers.

The school's Spanish teacher worked with her students to write and perform a skit. Other teachers worked with students to write parts for the finished piece. With improved planning, there could have been participation by TV production students, shop students and others.

As in other small, rural communities, Barnesville residents have deep involvement with their schools. If asked, parents and community members would have answered a call for assistance with costumes, lighting and set building. The director of the production was new to the

school, and time factors as well as conflicting demands on his time probably contributed to his hesitance in putting out a call for volunteers. Community involvement may have improved the finished piece and increased overall quality and interest in the production.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is crucial, in these kinds of projects, for the project to be described specifically in advance, especially in terms of roles, expectations and authority. In the words of Thom Haggerty, the professional actor in the Rothsay project, "I would have liked to have done more in terms of taking a leadership role, but I don't think the teachers would have been prepared for that. If roles had been established in advance, the problem would be alleviated. I think the artist could also instill from the very beginning that, while the activity must be fun, we can also work hard and present something of a higher quality than the participants may have expected."
- In both Rothsay and Barnesville, the choreographers' experiences suggest that success is dependent upon teaching dance basics early in the rehearsal schedule. Dance, perhaps more than any other art form in a theatrical performance, brings out the insecurities of those who have had no previous instruction. Boys especially were self-conscious about dance. Rothsay's instructors concluded that students would have benefited by learning basic dance routines in the first rehearsals and developing their movements at the same time they developed their characters. If the dance had become second-nature, actors could have projected personality traits into the choreography rather than merely concentrating on staying in step.

SUMMARY

- Participation by professional artists was successful; instructors both at Rothsay and Barnesville learned new techniques that they will be able to use in future performances.
- Students were involved at a different level than in the past; set design, acting and choreography had a more professional touch, and students took pride in their new skills.
- Participants not only learned how to achieve new techniques in performance and set building, they also learned what to look for in productions they view as audience members.

Small, rural schools like Rothsay and Barnesville have unique problems in terms of student involvement, space limitations and expertise of teachers. These factors have the potential of limiting success in the final outcome, or they can be addressed, and compensations can be made. With assistance from professional artists, teachers can learn the skills they need; more and different students can be involved, beginning at the classroom level, and the performance can be an event in which the entire community can take pride.

Marjorie Barton is a writer and former journalist for the Fergus Falls Journal.



WAYS OF SHARING ART

Green Giant Park Project in Blue Earth

—Margot Fortunato Galt

BLUE EARTH PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	2
Teachers	5
Participants	129
Artists	1
Art Disciplines	visual art
Length	1 year
Budget	\$3,450

THE COMMUNITY

Blue Earth, a south-central Minnesota community of 4,200 is the center of a vegetable growing and canning oasis. An immense fiberglass statue of the Jolly Green Giant, commemorating the company that cans much of the regional produce, stands in a little park close to Interstate Highway 90.

HISTORY OF PROJECT

In February 1992, when educators, business people, and community activists from Blue Earth met with Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) to talk about what kind of arts project in the schools could also benefit the community, tourism soon became the focus of discussion.

The Green Giant acts as a magnet to lure summer motorists off the freeway. What artistic project could enhance Green Giant Park and also benefit the local residents in a continuing way? Given the educational component of the project, and the town's dependence on vegetable growing and canning, playground equipment shaped like vegetables soon seemed a natural answer to the artistic theme and product.

Students who might play on the equipment then became the logical choice for designing it. As the committee continued to plan,

they selected sculptor Gary Fey from nearby Good Thunder to work in the school. His training in the Walker Art Center's Art Link program, using multiple learning styles to connect the arts and other curriculum, would help him design a process that students of different ages and bents could enter. With Gary, the committee decided to begin with the third and fourth grades, producing drawings and paintings of vegetables, then, in the two weeks following, work with senior advanced art students, who would transform selected drawings into clay models of vegetable playground equipment. High school art specialist Charlie Wilder recommended seniors because he had found that age group to be more motivated than younger classes.

WHAT HAPPENED

For three weeks spanning the end of September to the middle of October 1992, Gary Fey worked with students in the Blue Earth schools. "The Green Giant is lonely and wants children around him," he began a story for the third graders. Soon they were enthusiastically shaping their bodies in vegetable forms, playing vegetable charades, writing sentences about vegetables, and sampling vegetable textures, smells, and, with dip added, tastes. After seeing a Walker Art Center slide show about texture and scale in the Walker Sculpture Garden, they closed their eyes and molded clay images of favorite vegetables; then with eyes open made watercolors of vegetables. "Pure heaven," Gary called his work with them; the four classes produced over 300 drawings and paintings of vegetables which he then toted over to the high school for the next phase of the project.

"Why do we got to do this stuff?" complained a senior art student in the midst of Fey's first presentation. Though this student quickly changed his tune, the disinclination he expressed was unfortunately a common response from the seniors. They watched a Walker video that distinguished four kinds of sculpture; they cried reproducing the third graders' improvisational, free flowing line drawings in clay; they even visited the third grade playground. But in any class, only five or six students would be working on their models; the remaining ten or twelve would be socializing. "This year, Charlie Wilder's experience was reversed," commented Fey. "The ninth and tenth graders were his inspired students."

It's not unusual for seniors to act uninvolved, with one foot already out the door of the school. Fey also discovered that normally less talented students showed more interest and dedication than those with better records. It simply wasn't "cool" to be making playground vegetables. Then the night before the competition, when the third grades, faculty and staff would vote to select models for Green Giant Park, a number of seniors

After one meeting, the Blue Earth funding committee has gotten much more realistic. To ask a funder for \$60,000 for playground equipment in the shape of giant vegetables is a challenge. First, because funders look on any kind of equipment as a capital expense, rather than a human services expense. There are so many human needs these days that most funders want money to go directly to people. It is also a challenge to make the case for playground equipment shaped like giant vegetables. But the students' contribution to designing the equipment is a positive element. Given the rate of departure by young people from small towns, anything that will encourage them to take ownership of their towns and thus stay there is a good thing.

*—Marty Case, COMPAS fundraiser
on loan to the Blue Earth project*

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

worked hard at home and the next day brought in wonderful projects. "They stuck it out, struggling through their obstacles," said Fey.

One of the more remarkable models was a sweet corn teeter totter with tiny stalks of corn holding up the center axle. The student artist "surprised us with his diligence," Gary said. "He had to work through technical problems with the clay bending, drying and cracking; he created a good corn cob texture, and at the last minute discovered the stalk axles."

Blue Earth is a very arts-driven community. Look at the Green Giant itself, built ten years ago for \$50,000, and funded by ten people who each gave \$5,000. Now we want to take advantage of Green Giant Park's location next to Interstate highway 90. Two thousand people during a summer day pull off I-90 and patronize the businesses near the interchange. The Tourism Committee built an information booth last year at this spot, and third graders helped beautify the little barn in the Park by planting flowers and shrubs. Now we want to give kids something to play on inside the Park.

—Darlene Holmseth, Community
Education Coordinator

Another student, "your basic social outcast," talked a lot about producing a model, but only at the last minute used a paper mache pumpkin, that had been lying around the studio, to fashion a large circular sandbox, with curving upright pillars. Dejected because he was sure this would not be voted in, the student was elated when it was: a "real esreem builder."

A squat carrot slide was also a favorite, as was a model made from metal wire. "The girl who made the metal climbing bars couldn't be bothered to work with clay," Gary said. She took awhile to discover a tomato shape for the climbing toy. Then after adding leaves on top, she realized that cabbage leaves might be fun on the outside. She eventually cut shapes in them to help parents keep track of their children.

The directive, challenging approach that worked so well with the third grade did not engage the seniors immediately, but like the college students they almost are, they waited for a deadline and last minute inspiration.

"If I had this to do over," Gary reflected, "I would let the concept of playground vegetables evolve out of the senior high school students. As it was, they had the concept thrust upon them. The art process was not an exciting, breathtaking experience for these older students or for myself working with them. I did, however, learn a lot from watching the high school art teacher, Charlie Wilder. I'm very

intense, pushing to get done what I envision. But he is never overt or frontal with his students. He jokes and doesn't get on their case. This works: eventually they take charge. I walked away with a new respect for him and for classroom teachers."

CONTINUATION

Now that Blue Earth has a miniature carrot slide, pumpkin sandbox, tomato climber and sweet corn seesaw, the Tourism Committee has taken charge of finding money to grow these sibling vegetables as big as their green brother. Fiberglass fabrication has increased in cost since the Green Giant was built ten years ago: "it costs about \$1,500 for a sweet pea on a spring," quips COMPAS fundraiser Marty Case, on loan to the project. But as many observers note the playground vegetable patch can be grown a bit at a time. Planting nickels and dimes for a carrot slide might even appeal to upcoming third graders from Blue Earth and from the many

cars that curve off the highway for ice cream and a run around the playground under the big smile of the Green Giant.

The Blue Earth model project exemplifies the advantages of bringing young students into a process for beautifying their town. Funding sources in Blue Earth, however, are tapped out because the community has just voted to raise several million dollars to build a new high school. With COMPAS fundraising help, Blue Earth advocates must now make a strong case to outside sources to bring the young people's work to fruition. If they succeed, Blue Earth may have some of the fanciest playground equipment anywhere up and down the interstate.

Margot Fortunato Galt is a writer from St. Paul, Minnesota, and teaches creative writing to kids, senior citizens, and battered women through several COMPAS programs. Her recent book is The Story in History.



HEALING IN A UNIQUE SCHOOL SETTING

Healing Dreams in Itasca County

—Cynthia Driscoll

ITASCA COUNTY PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Schools	3
Teachers	0
Participants	52
Artists	2
Art Disciplines	visual art, writing
Length	1.5 years
Budget	\$5,640

The Healing Dreams Project was structured and developed differently than many of the other Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) projects. It came together as the result of meetings between COMPAS staff and several artists who lived in Itasca County and were familiar with the work of the Itasca Hospice Project. The collaboration between the Hospice and the schools was already ongoing, without an arts component. Although the artists met with students at school, school staff were not actively involved in shaping the content or the artists' approach.

AMSC selected the Healing Dreams Project as a site because the project focused on student development through the arts in a unique school setting.

THE COMMUNITY

Itasca County is a sparsely populated woodland and lake region in northern Minnesota. In some 2 million acres live slightly less than 43,000 people. The county seat and largest town is Grand Rapids, pop. 8,000. Other communities include Deer River, Cohasset, Warba, and the Iron Range towns of Nashwauk, Keewatin, Calumet, Taconite, Marble, Coleraine and Bovey.

THE ITASCA HOSPICE PROJECT

The Itasca Hospice Project is a unique rural outreach program providing care for the dying and their families. The Hospice Project is a private, not-for-profit corporation which represents a coalition of public and private agencies.

Based on hospital regions in Itasca County, three teams serve the dying and their families with care designed for social, spiritual and economic needs. Each team includes a human services provider, a home health aide, a nurse, clergy, a family support person, and various volunteers. As invited guests in families' homes, and on-call 24 hours a day, the teams coordinate nursing, innovative holistic care and counseling from county services.

HISTORY

The AMSC Healing Dreams Project is a collaborative project which includes two local artists working with hospice staff, students, teachers, parents and anyone else coping with personal grief.

The project came about as a result of meetings between visual artist Marce Wood, writer Barbara Cameron, and two hospice workers who were also artists. Verna Bogren and Paula Byrne. The four saw an opportunity for art to play a role in the lives of grieving families.

After approaching and meeting with AMSC, the four decided to send the artists to visit grief groups run by Hospice staff person Gayle LaPlant Edwards in school and community settings. In their search for a way to work with grieverers that would include writing and art, the artists discovered that these grief groups often focused on dreams and their sharing. The dream theme was a natural for the project, because of its powerful image content and its relative safety.

Hospice Work is about presence—"being with" a person who is dying. The whole of a life has distilled to this moment, to this place. It is raw and sublime, this sharing of experience with someone nearing the journey's end. We are initiated into a most human pilgrimage; we learn to walk with grief. Grief is itself creative, for we must re-create our lives after each loss we experience.

—Barbara Cameron, writer

Part of the bonding that holds the AMSC/Hospice Dream Project together are the grief groups. Writing and drawing are good media for people to share pains and gains in their lives. I believe this so strongly. It's been such an encouragement for AMSC to support this project. I think it will continue.

—Gayle LaPlant Edwards, Volunteer & Bereavement Coordinator, Itasca Hospice Project

At the beginning the possibilities were enormous. Would we work with patients that were dying? Would we do art work for them, or would we facilitate their doing their own art work? Would we work with hospice nurses? Families? Teenagers? What would be our focus? What would we want it to say? One night Gayle told us about a woman who had lost her daughters in a fire, and she kept praying and praying that she would see them one more time. The woman had this powerful dream. And the dream moved me so deeply, I just couldn't let go of it. It fascinated me.

—Marce Wood, visual artist

PART THREE: The Implementation of AMSC Projects

WHAT HAPPENED

The Healing Dreams Project began with the artists meeting with grief groups, who shared their dreams aloud, then drew them. With Gayle's professional guidance, Marce and Barb met four times with student and teacher grief groups at Grand Rapids Middle School, Grand Rapids High School and Greenway High School. They also met with the Hospice staff and individually with members from local adult grief groups.

The picture she drew was of two gravestones with her parents' names on them with a wavy line up to a brilliant cross in the sky:

I dreamed that my parents' spirits were rising to heaven toward a bright cross. It was about two weeks after my dad died. I was 13 years old and living with my aunt and uncle. The purpose of this dream was: I know they made it to heaven and will be waiting for me.

—high school student

Dreaming offers a different dimension to grief; it is about insight more than eyesight. But right- or left-brained, you don't have to logically understand anything about a dream or be affected by it. Just giving your attention to the imagery, allowing its mystery, makes for a shift in consciousness.

—Barbara Cameron

A second dimension of the Project was the artist's interpreting, with vision and story, the griever's dreams and drawings. Each eventually completed twelve works. Marce completed her interpretations in twelve large scale pastels honoring the griever's dreams, and Barb wrote parallel essays, flowing words of grief and healing.

The culmination of the Healing Dreams Project was a sharing of Marce's drawings with members of the grief groups. AMSC has also published a collection of the artists' works, *A Gift of Dreams: Creative Grief*, for distribution among Minnesota hospice programs.

THE CENTRAL ISSUE IN GRIEF WORK

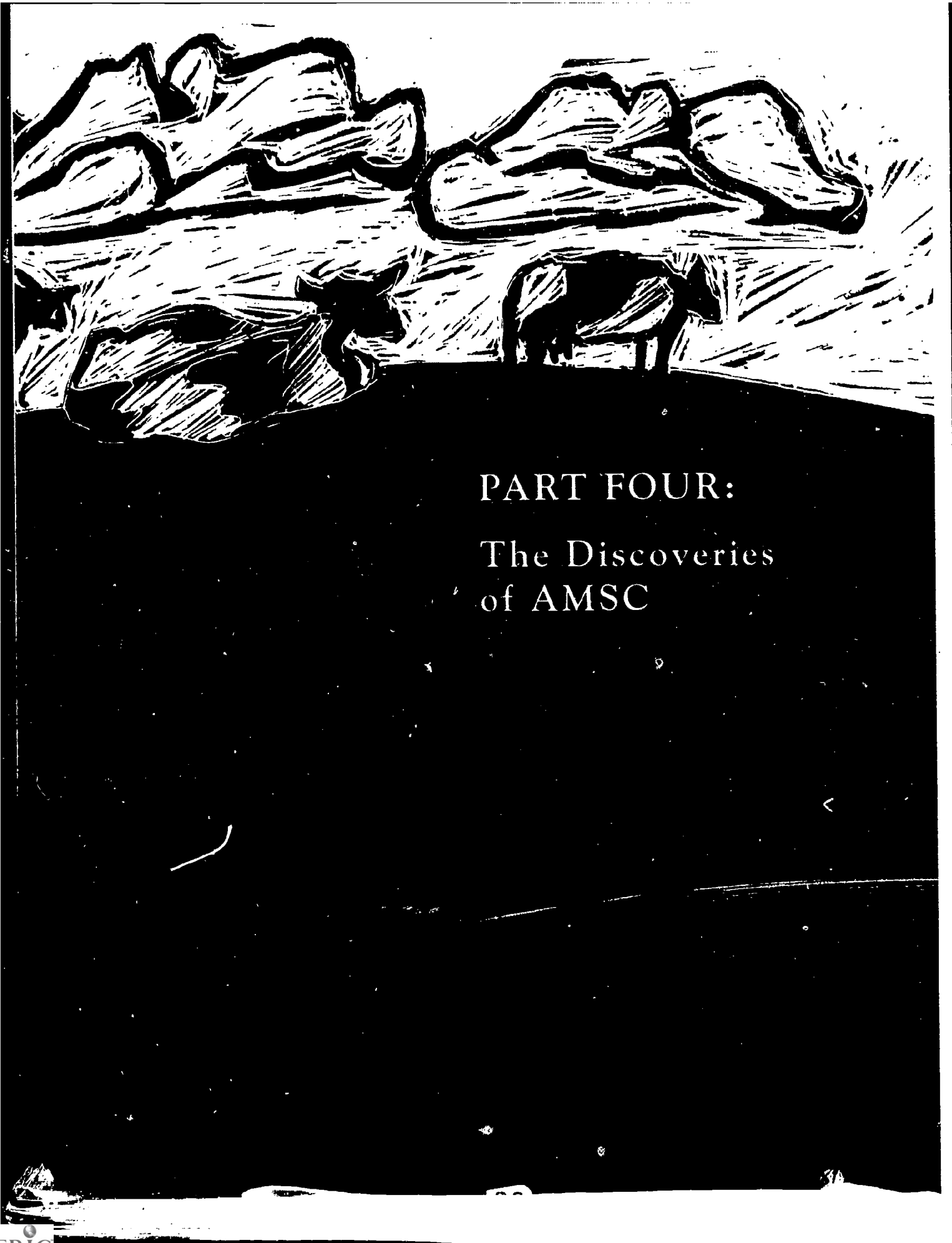
Central to working with the bereaved and other grievers is gaining trust. "Trust is so important in grief work" says Gayle, with thirteen years of experience to back up her words. "Marce and Barb were so affected by the individuals sharing their dreams, they were soon trusted. People are in so much pain, laying it all out in the beginning, they are so vulnerable. If I didn't already know Marce and Barb, I wouldn't have felt comfortable introducing them to grievers."

POSSIBLE FUTURES

Marce has her own dream: to mount an exhibit of all dream drawings and dream writings, griever's and artists', for a traveling show to be exhibited in hospices all over the state and perhaps even in other public locations such as banks, churches, schools and malls. By showing how dreams can help resolve painful issues, such an exhibit might help many learn ways to help themselves.

"There's a lot more out there that hasn't been tapped," says Gayle Edwards. "Dreams are meaningful. I believe that prayers can be answered through dreams. This project is not over. In a grief situation people lose their courage. Through this project, grievers gain back some of it."

Cynthia Driscoll is a non-fiction writer from Grand Rapids, Minnesota. She has over 100 articles published in national magazines on diverse topics.



PART FOUR:
The Discoveries
of AMSC

What is Unique About Working in Rural Communities

GENERALIZATIONS

Through the Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) program we have developed a beginning understanding of the unique aspects of building arts activities in rural Minnesota.

...In America we have tended to stereotype our communities and regions in certain ways...The views of local life are often exaggerated, but accepted as the way people are, look, or the way they are said to look and act in certain areas. And because we are and have always been a very regionally oriented people, very conscious of our roots, and despite terrific changes in communications and travel which have smoothed us out, we are still conscious of our stereotypes, sometimes embarrassed by them, or amused.

*—Robert Gard, Professor Emeritus
of Community Theater, University of Wisconsin*

Each community is different. Beware of generalizations. While we can categorize "rural community" in some terms, such as size, location, market, ethnic character, and so forth, it is critical to realize the distinctiveness and uniqueness of rural communities.

—Blandin Foundation Focus Group, 1993

At the same time that we have begun to know these unique aspects, we have become increasingly cautious about any generalizations about working in rural towns, including those with which we began.

Even the term "rural" is such a generalization—yet in our program it includes communities with populations ranging from 320 to 11,500.

We also found that even when communities are of roughly the same size, differences of isolation, ethnicity and economic health should make us wary of generalizing.

The generalizations in this book come out of four and one-half years of research and work. While we must generalize, we must not confuse the generalizations with specific realities in rural communities. Those speak more strongly about the unique aspects of arts activities there than any generalizations.

RURAL STEREOTYPES

As AMSC developed, we observed both in ourselves and in others, a number of common stereotypes about rural towns and people:

- Rural people are rather uninformed and lack the sophistication of the urbane;
- Rural people are European-American and universally Christian;
- Rural people farm for a living;

- Rural people may resent city people;
- Rural people are the repository of traditional American values.

We discovered, of course, that these stereotypes (habits of thought) bore little relationship to reality.

RURAL REALITIES

During the first years of AMSC we identified several real issues that were a function of a community's rural nature.

- Small towns have fewer people, thus, those people often have a wide variety of responsibilities;
- Many towns are isolated or distant from other communities and resources;
- Some rural communities are declining in population and economic base, and many schools are under pressure to consolidate with other school districts;
- Outside organizations need to be sensitive in identifying local contacts;
- Communities near Indian reservations, or with growing Hispanic populations, face difficult cultural and racial issues;
- Rural artists are often perceived as unsophisticated;
- Rural arts programs and artists may have trouble receiving recognition from or demonstrating credibility to urban institutions.

FEWER PEOPLE/MANY ROLES

The AMSC program worked in a wide range of communities, from Brainerd (population 11,500) to Badger (population 320). As we describe in Chapter 22, "Collaboration and Inclusion in Projects," we found that variables such as population size, distance or isolation from other communities, economic base and proximity to urban areas all influenced the ways in which rural communities approached developing projects.

Rural by definition usually means small, and AMSC found that small can be both an advantage and a disadvantage.

In small towns there are fewer people to do things and so people in rural towns often wear many hats. A teacher in an AMSC site, for example, was sometimes also an artist, involved with the local historical society or related to someone in local government. We found that when the people involved in planning and implementing projects had other roles in the community or the school it was easier to develop collaborations with other community projects and to gain support from the community or school board members. We also found that playing dual roles in projects sometimes became a conflict of interest for artists and teachers and a problem for students trying to balance after school activities.

There are far fewer people than jobs to fill. Someone must be found to lead the church choir or youth group, to bowl with the league, to coach a softball team or Little League, to run a Chamber of commerce or club committee.

—Kathleen Norris, writer,
Dakota: A Spiritual Geography

It's easier to get things done. The opportunities provided by fewer people include the ability to have more immediate impact on "the way we do things around here"—influencing the culture of the community. It can be easier to reach consensus; potentially, more capable of recognizing and naming the differences in the community.

*—Blandin Foundation
Focus Group, 1993*

COLLABORATION AND OVERLAP WITH OTHER AREAS OF THE COMMUNITY

We found that when the committee members in AMSC sites were also involved in other local activities they often could make connections between school and community more easily. Collaboration and overlap were natural.

- In Granite Falls, the artist was also active in the development of a local park, whose personnel and resources consequently became part of "The Story of Our River" Project;
- In the Little Falls/Royalton project, some Little Falls committee members were connected with the renovation of a local historic family home, where they arranged to hold their culminating event;
- During the SAIL project, the Grand Marais Art Colony also investigated a collaboration with a local museum. This museum became the site of a SAIL student exhibition.

Unfortunately, in most projects, committee members' overlap of school and community duties did not result in as much in-depth community collaboration as AMSC had originally hoped.

SUPPORT FROM LOCAL GROUPS

Getting the approval of a civic group, the school board or parents was easier when some committee members either represented these groups or at least knew someone who did:

- The Blue Earth project had no problem gaining support to create playground sculpture for Green Giant State Park, because there were close ties between the group and the local Tourism Committee responsible for the park;
- Initial planning meetings for the Brainerd Antarctica Arts Pod included both parents and school board members, and consequently it was easier to receive a vote of confidence from those groups, before implementing the project.

MULTIPLE ROLES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Teachers and artists were responsible for many tasks in planning and implementing projects. In Grand Marais, a Native American served as both an elementary classroom teacher and as an artist in the project. As a teacher, she worked with other artists to develop a framework for their activities focusing on Ojibwe art and culture. As an artist, she performed for several classrooms as a storyteller. She was also responsible for scheduling other Native American artists for a school pow-wow celebration.

Artists frequently had two roles in projects, serving on committees and working in classrooms and other community settings. Their work on committees was important, because they were often responsible for contributing to the artistic vision of projects.

For both artists and teachers, their committee work sometimes suggested a conflict of interest when selecting possible project participants, because they were often among the pool of applicants. In Little Falls/Royalton, the best applications for mentorships came from committee members who had a strong understanding of the project and its goals. Because they had several artists on their planning committee, the Deer River project spent a number of their meetings developing procedures for identifying and selecting artists and dividing available work among artists. Due to the size of these communities, it would have been impossible to avoid conflicts without compromising the quality of their projects.

AMSC's initial approach to dealing with conflict of interest was compatible with traditional definitions: for example, those facing a potential conflict should be excluded from related decision-making or opportunities for participation. The cases listed above forced us to rethink this approach.

Aware that relationships with their peers would continue beyond the project, most artists and teachers were shy about participating when conflict of interest issues arose. Furthermore, AMSC observed that in a rural context, in many cases, this awareness provided a natural check and balance in processes of planning and participant selection. Those facing potential conflict often chose not to participate, participated on a smaller scale, or had to be persuaded to participate.

One of our roles thus became to encourage hard-working committee members to partake in the rewards of their efforts. As a result of this listening and learning, AMSC redefined the traditional definition of conflict of interest for working with rural communities. Where multiple roles are the norm, conflict of interest should be viewed more flexibly.

BALANCING STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES

We also learned that students wear many hats in rural schools and communities, making it hard to coordinate their activities. This was a particular problem with the Rothsay/Barnesville project, where students' rehearsal schedules needed to be balanced with their other after school activities.

DISTANCE AND ISOLATION

Rural communities differ in terms of their distance or isolation from other communities and resources. In some areas of rural Minnesota, small towns are becoming bedroom communities to larger cities like St. Cloud or Rochester. In other mainly agricultural communities in the Northwest or Southwest corners of the state, rural towns are scattered about 20 miles apart. In Cook County (the location of the SAIL project), as in other areas of the far North, schools are especially isolated. The east end of the Cook County school district is about 85 miles from the west end.

Because people in rural Minnesota often have many different responsibilities, many teachers and com-

Students have responsibilities in multiple extracurricular activities, and they can't postpone their involvement in other events until the play is over. A single student is likely to be a member of the track team, as well as a key player in the band, a star in the play and a vital part of the speech team. Because the population base is so small, it is often impossible to limit students' options or to select someone else.

—*Marjorie Barton, Barnesville/Rothsay*
essay writer

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munity members do not have the opportunity to specialize. They learn new jobs as they need to. They are isolated by distance from other people who do the same work, and it is harder for them to make connections with others who have similar ideas and visions. For this reason, participants in nearly every AMSC town meeting listed distance or isolation as a major barrier to developing arts programs.

In large cities, professionals sometimes become tired of attending conferences and networking with peers. AMSC found that many people in rural Minnesota are hungry for opportunities, and though their spare time is scarce, they will juggle their schedules to make connections with people who may have new ideas or approaches. During the AMSC program, teachers, artists, administrators and other community members traveled up to 250 miles to meet with other AMSC project personnel and share experiences.

Distance can be a disadvantage in other ways. Rural community members frequently have to travel further for everything—school sports events, visits to friends and family, and medical care. Traveling takes time and puts added pressure on schedules.

DECLINING COMMUNITIES

With the decline of the populations and economies of many rural towns, consolidation between rural Minnesota schools is on the increase. AMSC found that many school districts fear consolidation, not only because consolidation may mean loss of jobs, but also because it may mean the loss of the cultural center of the community.

In many towns, the school is a primary center of cultural activity. Sports events, school plays and productions all provide residents with entertainment and pride in their community's achievement.

Tension over consolidation is prevalent in schools. The loss of the school may mean the ultimate decline of the whole town, and although many schools feel the need to collaborate with nearby districts to begin to build bridges with those future partners, AMSC found that this tension can be an obstacle in making decisions and getting the support of teachers. Tension over consolidation resulted in mistrust between the communities of Little Falls and Royalton and complicated the planning of the Connections project.

A declining community has trouble holding on to its identity or finding a new one. For this reason many communities find solace in their past, in the way things were, in their glory days. As we describe above in Chapter 6, "Looking Across the Projects," we found that many communities' ideas for arts projects and celebrations (i.e., oral histories, storytelling) came out of this reminiscence and from the conviction that this community definition must be preserved.

Declining communities also have difficulty holding onto their residents. Often people, especially the young, leave the community for "bigger and better" places, and when they leave they take their expertise with them. As we discovered in talking to residents during town meetings, there are many communities where local theaters stand empty, because the one person who had experience directing plays or working the lighting has left the community.

Open enrollment and the development of an arts high school in Minnesota have also created opportunities for rural communities to lose their most talented students. People fear this may compromise the quality of school productions and leave the remaining students without good role models among their peers.

THE OUTSIDER AND THE INTERPRETER

In small towns, most people know each other. This is often an advantage in planning projects because everyone can identify local resources. (Cathy can play the piano, Michael can make the costumes.) For example, in the early stages of AMSC, we assumed that schools and communities would need considerable assistance in recruiting local artists. As we describe in Chapter 21, "Local Artists: What They Offer Projects," our experience was quite different. Most of the AMSC sites could easily identify local artists without our assistance.

AMSC also learned that knowing everyone in your community can also be a disadvantage for rural residents. People call on each other for help often and fear stretching their friends and resources too far. They know each other's problems and burdens. We found this is where an outside organization can make a difference. It is easier for an outsider to call a meeting that may be perceived as an intrusion on, for example, personal grief, heavy workloads or other assumed problems.

When an outside organization comes into a community to investigate developing a project there, they often rely on one or more persons to give them information and ideas. The persons they depend on to act as their interpreters can have an important impact on the way in which they are received by other members of the community. If the interpreter is someone who is trusted, the outsider may be more easily received. If the opposite is true, the outsider may have trouble winning the support and interest of the local community. As we learned in the Deer River and Morton sites, this is why the role of the interpreter can be an especially sensitive issue for projects attempting to build trust between different cultures.

Outsiders also have to be careful about infringing on a local person's territory. Without an understanding of local roles, it is easier for an outsider to make mistakes and offend people. These mistakes can make it difficult for an outsider to develop trust with community members and can sabotage a project's success. We found that, without intending to, some outside AMSC facilitators were perceived as supporting one local faction over another.

(See Chapter 24, "Balancing Project Autonomy and Program Assistance.")

There is less anonymity in rural communities. Because of the decreased number of relationships in a rural community, people tend to come to know a lot more about each other: their history, their "secrets." This has implications for the community in which leadership is exercised and experienced.

—Blandin Foundation Focus Group, 1993

CULTURAL ISSUES

The cultural diversity of rural Minnesota is larger than may be commonly perceived. African-, Asian-, Hispanic- and Native-Americans all play significant roles. AMSC projects targeted two of these, Native Americans and Hispanics.

In rural Minnesota there are eleven Indian Reservations. The Hispanic population of a number of communities is expanding rapidly as factories and packing plants recruit labor from the Texas-Mexico border. Most rural communities recognize the need to improve relationships between European-Americans and Native and Hispanic Americans. In the majority of the town meetings held by AMSC, school staff and community mem-

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bers identified multicultural programming as a means of addressing this need.

Most of these communities also expressed confusion over specific ways to begin to develop the relationships with local cultural communities required to plan this programming. Indian and Hispanic families often live in different communities or sections of towns than whites. Despite the fact that Native and Hispanic American and white students sit side-by-side in the same classrooms, some school staff have little contact with

the parents and other relatives of their students of color. Race relations are complicated by the heated issues over Native treaty rights and the fear that whites may be losing jobs to Hispanics willing to work for low wages.

The Deer River, Morton and St. James projects reported that art was one of the most effective means of beginning to bridge racial tensions in school and community settings.

As we explained above, we found that our choice of contacts or interpreters in these communities affected the willingness of whites, Natives and Hispanics to participate in the AMSC program. Further, because of the tension among these cultural communities, AMSC staff were often put in the position of acting as facilitators.

The AMSC experience found many communities eager and a few schools desperate for resources to help address challenges arising from increasing diversity. Rural communities lack the resources and organizations to help them make these difficult changes. AMSC in three of the sites effectively used artists and the arts to begin to increase cultural and racial appreciation. The arts are often a first step for people of different backgrounds to appreciate each others' differences.

—Mary Ellen Spector, AMSC Evaluator

We were amazed by the richness of the arts and artists everywhere in the state. In some ways we had expected to find this, but it was so much stronger than we had anticipated.

—Molly LaBerge, Founder of COMPAS

ART IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

When COMPAS and Blandin first began the AMSC project, many urban people asked, "Are there really that many artists in rural Minnesota?"

Of course there are many artists living in rural Minnesota. AMSC found that the difference lies not in the number of artists per capita, but in the attitudes and ideas urban individuals and institutions have about rural arts.

MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT RURAL ART

Traditionally when outsiders think of the art created in rural communities, they imagine duck paintings, landscapes and chainsaw sculpture. These misperceptions paint a picture of rural art as unsophisticated.

When COMPAS first initiated the AMSC program, we had already worked with some rural Minnesota artists, and we also had over twenty years of experience working with rural communities. Our perceptions of rural artists, then, were more accurate than the common urban stereotypes. However, we discovered an even broader

range and a larger number of artists than we had predicted.

Perhaps the visions of duck paintings come from the fact that the subject of many rural artists' work is the natural world around them. Some of this work is wildlife art. (Wildlife art is also produced by artists work-

ing in urban areas.) But the rural art we encountered varied greatly in terms of content, texture and technique. During the course of the AMSC program, we worked with toymakers, printmakers, abstract painters, creative dancers, opera singers, potters, scenic designers, weavers, calligraphers, poets, fiction writers and snow sculptors—all from rural Minnesota.

AMSC also discovered that many artists living in rural Minnesota work in traditional techniques such as rosmaling, Polish paper cutting, and fish decoy carving. Native American artists practice traditional beadwork, flute carving, dancing and storytelling. Many communities pride themselves on their connections to these traditions and value them as a means of passing down stories and family or tribal customs and values. During the town meetings held by AMSC, participants often listed these traditions as a source of community pride and identity. Frequently, these traditions are shared and honored during local festivals celebrating Santa Lucia and Syttende Mai or during Native American pow-wows.

The main advantage I see in this kind of rural approach is that, if someone is an art practitioner in an out-state area, it can be very difficult to get any kind of recognition. Recognition goes to the metropolitan area artists. Funding and money go to metropolitan area artists. So one great advantage is that this is a way of breaking some of that funding, some of that recognition, away from the larger urban centers.

—Kent Scheer, visual artist, Wadena

I have worked in some of America's most notable arts institutions: Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Broadway shows with the likes of Kevin Kline and Meryl Streep. I have experienced the galleries of Soho and Santa Fe. They are wonderful. But they are, in many ways, not more inspiring than a production of the Hayes Players; Hayes, SD, population 30, who produce one show a year where ranchers travel over 150 miles round trip to rehearse and sets are built with hands that learned the mechanics of the world through the necessity of fixing their own tractors.

What is at issue here is the quality of the product versus the quality of the process and a sense of appreciation for both. The quality of the Hayes production, by professional Broadway standards, is low. However, the process is of extremely high quality because of the extensive involvement by the community. From conception to closing night, the entire town participates. They are an eclectic group including ranchers, teachers, business people, retirees, children and those with and without theater experience. Everyone in the town has a connection with the activity either directly or indirectly. It is a community effort and a community event.

The rural process is an inclusive one incorporating the community as a whole as opposed to an exclusive one incorporating only "artists." Consequently, the quality of the process is significant in all rural areas because it is truly of the community, not merely for the community.

—Janet Brown, Executive Director, South Dakotans for the Arts

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RECOGNITION AND CREDIBILITY

For many rural Minnesotans, it is natural to integrate these artistic traditions into planning arts programs. Unfortunately, many of the arts institutions established in urban areas do not value traditional art, folk art or art based in the natural world as highly as the art that is created in university settings or exhibited in urban galleries.

Most funders and museums ask arts programs and artists to demonstrate that the art they produce is of "high quality," and frequently the standards used to demonstrate "high quality" include academic achievement or exhibitions and performances at well-known galleries and concert halls. This criteria makes it easier for funders to identify what good art is.

In terms of American democracy, the arts are for everyone. They are not reserved for the wealthy, or for the well-endowed museum, the gallery, or the ever-subsidized regional professional theater. As America emerges into a different understanding of her strength, it becomes clear that her strength is in the people themselves and the places where the people live. The people, if shown the way, can create art in and out of themselves... And let us start by acceptance, not negation—acceptance that the arts are important everywhere, and that they can exist and flourish in small places as well as in large; with money, or without, according to the will of the people. Let us put firmly and permanently aside as a cliché of an expired moment in time that the arts are a frill. Let us accept the goodness of art where we are now, and expand its worth in the places where people live.

—Robert Gard

arts organizations who conduct outreach programs, bringing art and culture to communities where they perceive there is very little.

This is one of the strongest cases for working with local artists.

Rural artists working in traditional art forms sometimes learn their skills by apprenticing with a relative or friend. Rural communities exhibit and perform art in libraries, churches and restaurants, because professional exhibit space is scarce. Some rural Minnesota artists also exhibit and perform their work in Duluth, Moorhead, St. Cloud or the Twin Cities, but gallery owners and museum curators do not frequently travel to rural studios or solicit work from outside metropolitan areas, so it is more difficult for rural artists to establish recognition and credibility among these professionals.

Consequently, many of the traditional vehicles for supporting arts programs and artists discriminate against the values and experiences of rural arts programs and artists.

The attitudes of urban communities spill over into rural communities during art instruction. Generally, when we teach art to students, we use examples of artists who live and work in New York, Paris, London, Tokyo and Kenya. Rarely do we share the experiences of rural artists. Many rural people come to think of art as something that exists outside of their communities—outside of their day-to-day lives. This is further complicated by the well-meaning efforts of urban

Local Artists: What They Offer Projects

In the first four years of the program, nearly one hundred local artists conducted activities in Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) Projects. As a result of this work, we found that the participation of local artists is uniquely important to the ability of communities to develop successful and lasting arts education programs. We found this to be true for a number of reasons:

- Local artists help students develop an understanding that art plays an important role in the rural experience;
- Local artists understand their communities' traditions and customs;
- Local artists are committed to improving education in their own communities;
- Local artists are a convenient and accessible resource;
- Local artists may be more economically feasible than imported artists.

We also learned that there are specific reasons why outside artists may need to be involved in this work as

We certainly have come to recognize that there is a very very rich resource of artists in this community, and they're of every bit as high quality as artists that come out of a metro area. It's been exciting to empower them. So often, they've been active in the school setting anyway—in volunteering their time.

There are several of our core artists who just hang out after a while. They come and check on us or they end up coaching basketball on the side. That sense of community is far more than what you'd get if you were just importing an artist for a week-long residency.

The other beauty is that they can come and go.

We're not packing every experience into a week and then moving on.

—Pat Altrichter, grade 6 Teacher, Brainerd

WHAT IS "LOCAL?"

Throughout the Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities project, we found that every rural community defined "local artists" differently. In communities closer to metropolitan areas or several other small towns, "local" often meant within twenty to thirty miles, but in isolated communities, some "local artists" traveled an hour or more to participate in projects.

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I've thought of an artist as someone that painted all the time...but when I learned more about artists, I learned that they were all different types of people and did all different kinds of things. I found out that everyone is an artist in their own way.

—Jake Furda, grade 6, student, Brainerd

I always imagined artists with long hair and long mustaches and berets and hats and that they only painted pictures. But they're just normal people, just regular people that do everyday things.

—Megan Anderson, grade 6, student, Brainerd

Throughout the history of this country, we have divorced the arts from our everyday lives. The problem with this is, the arts have always been one of the key ways that a culture's values are identified, conserved, celebrated, and transmitted. Without the arts "integrated" into our daily lives, we lose an essential way to tell our story. The end result of this is, we forget who we are and our culture begins to "disintegrate." Some of us believe this is a great spiritual crisis of our time. By introducing and promoting the arts in the community setting, we provide a means for our story to be shared and celebrated together. Thus, the arts actually can be a means of restoring our cultural roots and healing the spiritual brokenness of our time. The people who have always seemed to know this the most are those that live in rural and small communities.

—Patrick Overton, Columbia College, Center for Community and Cultural Studies

well. For example, an artist may need to be imported if the specific artistic expertise needed is unavailable within the community or if a school decides it needs something new and different.

ART IS PART OF THE RURAL EXPERIENCE

During the twenty-five years COMPAS has supported arts activities in schools and communities, we have discovered that one of the most valuable experiences that can come from working with an artist is the understanding that anyone can make art. The opportunity to be part of the creative process exists everywhere. Working with a local artist, someone who lives in your own community, and perhaps even someone you know, reinforces this experience. Local artists, by example, demonstrate to students that art can be part of their day-to-day lives, and already is part of their community's daily life.

LOCAL TRADITIONS

Through the work of AMSC, we have seen that local artists also understand their communities' traditions and customs. They know what types of examples will be meaningful to students and teachers. They know what may be persuasive. They understand local attitudes about art and their community.

This is especially important in projects that focus on local history, such as mural projects commemorating a historical period or an oral history event. An outsider may not always understand what constitutes local history, what events are important to tell, and just as essential, what events should not be told.

Joe and Nancy Paddock were careful to select appropriate local stories for the reader's theater production and for their work in the schools. Their sensitive and respectful approach, and their understanding of the values and concerns of the local citi-

It makes good sense to include local artists in residency programs from time to time. A residency project led solely by non-local artists can sometimes be a tough sell in rural schools. The local connection can serve as a way of grounding the experience in the community itself. It demonstrates to students, teachers and local residents that there are artists living and working in their own backyard, which is something they're not always aware of.

—Dirk Hanson, *Ely* essay writer

I think the neat thing is that the kids can see these artists and say, "These people live in our community." A lot of times they will see somebody that's talented and from someplace else—as though talented people grow elsewhere. But here's a situation that shows that these are talented people, they're interesting people, they live right here, and they're our neighbors. I think that's a real benefit.

—Paul Bloom, *Director, Community Education, Brainerd*

The professionally trained artist may be able to draw magical things from a paintbrush, a musical instrument, a stage production or story, but without an understanding of the longing and fear that surrounds a rural community, the artist may not be able to bridge the gap between what the artist knows and what country people want to learn.

—Elnora Bixby, *Badger/Roseau/Warroad* essay writer

The artists appreciate the beauty here and they interpret things here in a special way. Tamera Anderson has shared with the children how she really loves deer, and some of the children have shared how they really love ravens or bears or wolves. So there is that connection that the artists here have with the land.

—Megan Heikes, *Kindergarten Teacher, Grand Portage*

It is a truism that outsiders, often professionals with no family ties, are never fully accepted into rural or small-town life. These communities are impenetrable for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that the most important stories are never spoken of; the [local] mentality has worn down their rough edges or placed them safely out of sight, out of mind.

—Kathleen Norris, *writer, Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*

For many years we have been bringing in artists through an artist-in-residency program from around the state, and we still do that. And I still, I see a value in doing that. But I think that there's a particular value in using the local people because they have a vested interest in this community. Some of them have children in the school system or actually in the pod, so they have a lot of ownership, and they're willing to work really hard to put this together.

—Paul Bloom

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Some, who are artists by profession, can't really afford to spend the time without pay. Other people do it for fun...Personally, I needed the money. I got paid for my in-class time, but I donated the preparation time and the hours I took to enter all the students' manuscripts on the computer. The pay allowed me to take time away from my regular job.

—Judith Kidder, Brainerd essay writer

There are definite advantages to having a local artist in the school; the main ones are the availability of the artist and the ownership of the project. In the case of the Ely project, the local artist was concerned about the closure of the task while the imported artist was able to remove himself from the final project because he would not be there through its completion. The local artist had a definite edge...when it came to judging the climate of the students' preferences.

—Denise Drechsler, Speech Clinician, Ely

overtaxing requests. Teachers and others sometimes assumed that, because some artists did not work in traditional nine to five settings, they had more time and resources to volunteer.

As stated earlier, AMSC and other outside organizations played an important role in educating schools and communities about the importance of treating artists professionally and compensating them fairly for their efforts. A necessary feature then, of rural art projects using local artists, should be clear guidelines for what is and is not expected of the artists for compensation; initial clarity can dispel many potential problems later on.

In most of the AMSC projects local artists were also important contributors to the planning process, serving on planning committees, providing fresh ideas and identifying links with other artists and community resources. We found that local artists' involvement in the planning process created both realistic uses of artistic resources and an increased commitment to ensuring project success. In some sites that focused on one or two key local artists, like Litchfield and Granite Falls, the artists also took responsibility for much of the leadership and vision of the projects.

zens were key to the success of The Litchfield Story project.

COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

Many of the local artists who participated in AMSC commented that the main reason they chose to work in the project was to make a contribution to their school or community, and when asked about whether they were interested in expanding their work to other communities, they declined for the same reason.

It is our experience that local artists have an investment in improving their community—in making a difference. If they are also parents of students in the school, they have a greater investment. For this reason, local artists are often willing to contribute more time and personal resources to projects. This level of commitment made an important impact on the success of many of the projects.

Sometimes, however, we found that this level of commitment was also easy to exploit, and because local artists knew school staff and community members personally, it was difficult for them to say no to unusual or

CONVENIENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY

One obvious reason to work with local artists is the convenience. Local artists are more accessible and can more easily arrange to plan with the school and community in person. They can stop by at a staff meeting after school for ten minutes to share information, or run home between sessions to retrieve a book that might interest a student.

Initially we assumed that AMSC staff would need to concentrate considerable effort in the recruiting, hiring and training of local artists. However, our experience was somewhat different from those expectations. Only three projects requested assistance from AMSC in locating local artists.

When asked, several participating teachers and community people could identify local artists, and many of the local artists they identified already had previous experience working in schools. Sometimes they were working as parents or community volunteers. At other times they were involved in projects sponsored by local or outside arts organizations.

Despite their ability to identify local artists, AMSC found that school and communities did not place as high of a value on contributions from local artists as they did on those of outside artists. Many teachers and community members explained they had not worked extensively with local artists, because most of the opportunities provided to them were designed to utilize the talents of outside artists, and because they did not know if their local artists were capable of working in schools. They also felt their staff might value the contribution of an outside artist more. Therefore, an early role for AMSC in the projects was to advocate for the participation of local artists and offer them training.

Some participating local artists' previous experience was limited to certain grade levels or to conducting shorter term projects, but through planning discussions with teachers they learned to work with new age groups or to develop longer, more complicated projects. This training and preparation of artists through planning was financially possible primarily because the artists were local. In most cases, the cost of bringing outside artists in for these discussions would have been excessive.

In several COMPAS programs, we regularly utilize experienced residency artists to work with artists who need to develop their teaching skills in specific areas, but through the work of some AMSC sites, we have learned that talented teachers can serve this function as well. In the projects to date, this informal training and expansion of local artists' teaching abilities happened out of necessity. However, we see this unanticipated result as a collaborative opportunity to be consciously explored in future projects.

There's a couple of real strong advantages we've found for using artists that live in the community. I think the most important thing, first of all, is that it makes it obviously quite functional.

You have easy access if your artist lives in the community, you don't have to bring him in from a great distance.

The other thing is that they're recognizable. Kids know who they are and when they see them on the street, after school, they know that person as an artist. The so-called occupation, avocation of the artist doesn't seem strange to them because these are people they know.

*—Jay Andersen, Director,
Grand Marais Art Colony*

LOCAL ARTISTS MAY BE MORE ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE THAN IMPORTED ARTISTS

Another reason for working with local artists is economic: with local artists, the lodging and mileage expenses are considerably reduced. For the cost of importing an outside artist for a one-shot activity, rural districts with limited funds can employ five to six artists over several weeks.

WHEN AN OUTSIDE ARTIST CAN BE MORE EFFECTIVE

The AMSC program has provided us with opportunities to compare working with local artists to other COMPAS programs in which artists are "imported" into communities from statewide programs such as Writers & Artists in the Schools (WAITS). Working with local artists clearly has its advantages, but there are times when a community may usefully choose to work with an outside artist.

One of the most significant benefits of having an outside artist work in a school is that the artist enters the classroom without the accumulated baggage of past performance, peer position or teacher expectation that haunts so many kids. The artist arrives fresh, a visitor from the real world, with the stunning news that success can come in many different forms. For the gifted student who finds group work so boring, it's exhilarating to discover that there's no upper limit on the challenge of exploring self through art. For the social outcast, or the painfully shy, the writing or the drawing or the dance offers an alternative universe in which they can reveal new sides of themselves—and maybe try out new approaches to the world.

—Daniel Gabriel, Director, Writers & Artists in the Schools (WAITS), COMPAS

EXPERIENCE

We found that a school or other community site might need to use an outside artist simply because the specific expertise needed to carry out the activity is unavailable within their own local area. If a site has a very specific project in mind, they can conduct a search for an artist with the proper experience. Working with an experienced outsider may save the school and community the time it would take a lesser experienced local

AN OUTSIDER IS SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT

Over the last twenty-five years we have learned that one of the reasons why students are so engaged when an artist sets foot in their classroom is because they are an outsider—someone from a strange and different place, with something new and exciting to share with them. An outsider can use this opportunity to hold students' attention, to help create a magical and exciting experience.

Teachers also sometimes take an outsider more seriously. If pains have been taken and dollars been spent to bring someone in from the Twin Cities, teachers are curious to come and see what they have to say. An outsider might know something new, something that hasn't been tried before.

Artists' effectiveness is also influenced by the fact that they, unlike the classroom teacher, have no biases toward individual students. Their expectations are not only high, but uniform, which allows all students to choose to live up to them and succeed, no matter what their history. Outside artists are at an even greater advantage in this situation, because they have no previous knowledge of the students or their families, school or teachers.

artist to learn the necessary skills, and consequently may save money.

We also found that an outside artist may also be able to fill the void of an art form that is not represented locally. Although it was the experience of the AMSC program that a wide variety of artists were available in each of the communities with whom we collaborated, in some sites very specific needs could not be met locally. For example, the Brainerd Antarctica Arts Pod sought a deaf artist to work with their students, some of whom were hearing impaired. Because a local artist with this experience was not available, the site brought someone in from another community.

During the AMSC program, COMPAS imported some outside artists with years of experience to conduct classroom demonstrations, workshops and mentorships with local artists. Outside artists can work with local artists to pass on new skills and experiences so schools and other sites do not have to continually seek someone from another community to assist them in implementing an arts program.

We have learned, then, that when a project requires the presence of an outside artist, opportunities for local artists to expand their repertoires, through training and observation should be built into the project plan as a matter of course.

After working with local artists all the sites indicated that they had learned to value them as local resources. Many of the artists also explained that they would like to continue working in local school or community sites.

The AMSC program found that the involvement of local artists was key to the success of projects because they serve as a reminder that art is a part of the rural experience, because they have an understanding of their communities' values and because their accessibility makes it possible for schools and communities to develop comprehensive programs that are tailored to meet their needs.

We have also seen that through utilizing and developing local artists and local resources, communities are strengthened and empowered to successfully create arts programs on their own. The work of the AMSC sites demonstrates that enabling local artists and other community members strengthens rural communities and increases pride in local resources.

I enjoyed the partnership with the experienced artists. Before, I used to be so scared. Mila Liauger showed me how to control a group. It was hard and I need more experience, of course, but I got the basics...I met with Mila every day before and after class. She helped me figure out what to talk about my life and family. Then the next day she would remind me. She gave me more cultural information too.

—MSU Graduate Student, Mankato

Increased visibility, recognition of artistic talent plus artists' contribution to the school and students helped artists to be recognized as valuable community members...Several artists mentioned during interviews that they appreciated the new found recognition. A solid majority of artists reported this program also increased their willingness to work in the community.

—Mary Ellen Spector, AMSC Evaluator

Collaboration and Inclusion in Projects

Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) found that two key factors in planning and developing successful, continuing rural arts education programs were the processes of:

- Collaboration—*working together to achieve a common goal*—and
- Inclusion—*incorporating many voices*.

This, of course, will come as no surprise to people working in the arts or in education. For many artists, such as dancers, musicians, actors, and film makers, collective participation is a necessary element of the creative process. For educators, cooperation is key to accomplishing a variety of objectives in a field with little money or time to spare.

Broad-based community involvement in collaborations can contribute to success in a variety of ways: the development of a larger community ownership in the partnership goals and political support; access to complementary resources; access to leadership; sensitivity to multicultural concerns; and the potential to empower specific community sectors. Highly diverse partnerships tend to be good at generating lots of alternatives to planning and problem solving and seeing many sides of each issue.

—Craig Dreeszen, Director,
Arts Extension Service

WHY COLLABORATION AND INCLUSION ARE CRUCIAL

Because AMSC selected project sites that were interested in developing activities involving local artists, schools and community representatives—groups and individuals—collaboration and inclusion were inherent components of each project's planning.

As described above in Chapter 5, "Program Operations," AMSC chose a variety of project models. They ranged in terms of the number of schools, districts, artists and art forms involved. Beyond these elements, however, each site designed its own project and structured its own planning process based on specific local needs and resources. The initial town meetings held by AMSC acted as catalysts for bringing together a variety of arts supporters in the community. Subsequent collaboration in many projects built on the relationships that were developed in these meetings. Key people made sure other important school and community people were added to the planning process.

Each project's approach to planning shaped AMSC's growing vision of collaboration and inclusion. AMSC found some approaches more effective than others. We discovered that certain elements of collaboration and inclusion were critical to all projects:

- Accommodating to diverse communities;
- Maximizing the effect projects have on participants;

- Maximizing resources;
- Developing advocates by creating a sense of ownership among partners;
- Balancing power among partners;
- Including underrepresented viewpoints.

ACCOMMODATING COMMUNITY DIVERSITY

AMSC learned that it is critical for each community to influence the shape of their planning process.

The term "rural" names such a large range of community sizes and kinds that it is easy to forget their real diversity. The local economy, availability and types of resources, distance or isolation from other communities, number of schools, and proximity to an urban area all vary greatly from one end of Minnesota to the other. In larger towns like Brainerd, (pop. 11,500) things get done in very different ways than in a town as small, say, as Badger (pop. 320).

We found, therefore, that no single process for shaping projects will serve all rural Minnesota communities. This process must vary with a specific community's needs. For example, obtaining input from the teachers, community people, arts organizations and artists in some small towns, like Badger, was fairly simple: bringing them all together for coffee and informal discussion after school, or calling them each separately on the phone to gather ideas.

Soliciting input in a large town, such as Brainerd, was more complex. The number of artists, teachers, community people and organizations involved in the arts is large. A single all-purpose meeting would have been hard to manage and may not have given everyone ample opportunity to speak. The project coordinator had to hold several structured meetings and invite key representatives, such as the chair of the local arts committee, to speak for their members.

For the most part, AMSC found that community members knew how things needed to be accomplished in their own community. They could readily identify their needs and resources. Each town has its traditional ways to get things done.

Even when they knew whom to contact, some projects didn't have the skills or the leadership to carry the project to completion. AMSC learned that its role in future projects should include training and planning and providing some collaborative models to adapt to local needs.

MAXIMIZING PARTICIPATION AND RESOURCES

Another reason the processes of collaboration and inclusion are necessary to rural schools and communities is hard economic times. Small community arts organizations are folding, and most school districts have

As arts organizations and school systems continue to struggle through a difficult economy, the human and financial resources needed to sustain collaborations are strained. At the same time, we may have never been more in the need for collaborative action to solve problems and to seize opportunities larger than any one organization can manage. We're well into an age of interdependence, where skills in collaborative action are crucial. Arts education advocates are leaders in collaboration, who have long interacted with schools, funders, local arts agencies, and governments to fulfill their high purposes.

—Craig Dreeszen

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cut back severely on arts programs. The organizations and programs that remain face the huge task of meeting the needs of their communities and providing opportunities to all students.*

Integrating resources and investing time and energy in leadership is crucial to the survival of the arts in rural Minnesota. Rural schools and communities are aware of this challenge. Most are joining forces on a number of levels, trying to make the best of these hard times.

In their AMSC partnership, COMPAS and the Blandin Foundation used Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP) graduates as important contacts.

In most sites, projects were able to build on the previous work of local Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) committees.

Many of the AMSC sites saw within their projects opportunities to collaborate with other school programs or local organizations:

In collaboration, partners' combined efforts reach well beyond that of many individual, fragmented programs and false starts.

—Ted C. Fishman, *Building Partnerships in the Arts, Urban Gateways: The Center for Arts in Education*

...the task of bringing the full power, knowledge, discipline, and energy of the arts into education and community life is a task beyond the resources and vision of any one organization. A new direction is indicated, away from a framework which affirmed success only through competition and towards success as a commitment to common values and goals, a level of joint operations in which everyone benefits.

—David O'Fallon, Staff Director, Arts Partnership Working Group

- The Healing Dreams project built on an existing relationship between local school districts and the Itasca Hospice Project.
- Litchfield worked with the local historical society and local theater to collect oral histories and create a readers' theater production.
- The Granite Falls Schools hired a coordinator who was also on the local arts council, to ensure the involvement of local artists in their project.
- In the Brainerd Antarctica Arts Pod, a successful district-wide volunteer program recruited community members to conduct activities in classrooms.

MAXIMIZING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

We learned that sometimes a project can develop through the support of several financial resources.

For example, the Litchfield project received support from three separate sources, which made it possible for the artists to conduct their work in phases:

- The first phase, collecting stories from local individuals, was developed in partnership with another COMPAS program which focuses on providing activities to senior citizens;
- Part of the readers' theater was funded through the local regional arts council;
- Script development, artists' work with the schools, and community writing classes were supported through AMSC.

In Ely, project planners raised funds through the Minnesota State Arts Board to support the involvement of an outside artist to work in partnership with a local artist on an oral history activity.

DEVELOPING ADVOCATES: CREATING A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AMONG PARTNERS

AMSC discovered that through collaboration, and the inclusion of such key players as school board members, teachers, community members, parents, and artists, projects created enthusiasm and developed advocates for their activities.

The Brainerd Antarctica Arts Pod involved parents and school board members in early planning, and during implementation, invited them to attend special activities. When it came time for the school board to give its vote of support to the project, some members were ready to advocate its importance.

AMSC found that it was critical for teachers to be involved in planning, because they could provide input on their own needs and those of their students. In Grand Marais, teachers were regularly asked for input to the SAIL project, in meetings and through surveys. Teachers were also given the freedom to shape their individual projects with artists. Because teachers were included in the process and received regular communication, they supported the project. Nearly every elementary teacher in the district made the choice to participate.

In two sites where administrators directed the projects, and teachers were involved only in implementation, some teachers questioned the purpose and value of the activity, and limited their own and students' participation.

For example, the St. James Hispanic Awareness project was planned by district staff, a parent from the CAPP committee, artists, AMSC staff and a representative from Mankato State University. Teachers were not involved in planning. Although many teachers subsequently agreed to participate, some did so with apprehension and some bitterness. These feelings were conveyed to the artists and affected everyone's enthusiasm.

Whenever programs are imposed from "above" without teacher input, it is perceived by teachers as devaluing their professional competence.

We found that most AMSC projects could be improved by more adequately including all key players during planning and especially during implementation.

Effective roles for parents, community or school board members are not as apparent as those for teachers and artists. However, AMSC has learned that the effort required to create those roles is important.

As described below in Chapter 23, "Factors Which Influence Continuation," when key people from the school and community are involved and kept informed from the beginning, they will be there when it comes time to ask for financial support from the district or other community sources, or when volunteers and other types of support are needed.

Ownership is created by invitation and real participation, through all stages of a project. The most successful AMSC projects were the ones which legitimized all the partners' ownership;

- In Litchfield, the participation of seniors was large, by design; they wrote newspaper columns, conducted oral history interviews, and participated in a community writing class;
- The Brainerd and Granite Falls projects were characterized by continual communication and invitation, opportunities for community volunteers, and large sharing events.

In the sites where residents assumed meaningful roles, they gained skill, leadership and commitment to the project.

—Mary Ellen Spector, AMSC Evaluator

BALANCING POWER

Collaboration and inclusion were crucial to AMSC projects as a means of balancing power among the partners.

Typically, the partner with the most institutional power had most control over resources and over the direction of a project.

When one partner's needs began to dominate a project, other parties lost incentive to continue participation. Projects that focused on only one partner's concerns soon lost the involvement of such key players as community members and artists.

Our search, therefore, was for realistic ways to balance power in order to maintain the inclusiveness of the collaboration.

School: In most of the projects the partner with the most power was the school.

Schools have great power in collaborations because schools have established procedures and methods, and follow them quite conservatively, as one would expect of a public trust. Many of the other partners in the projects, such as artists and community members, came to their collaborations with no preconceptions of procedures. Because these partners were less experienced in the logistics of project planning, they automatically deferred to the school procedures. When this happened, the people within the school automatically became more powerful—in effect, power was given by default.

The issue was further complicated by structural restraints schools must bring to any collaboration. Projects need to work within school timelines and formats. Most projects must adhere to classroom schedules and sizes. Non-school partners see little choice but to conform their projects to these restraints.

Managers of some successful projects were highly familiar with schools—former teachers, married to teachers, experienced in residencies—but not part of them. This familiarity probably gave them the ability to interpret between the community and the distinct culture of the school.

One interpretation those familiar with schools can validly make is that most schools know they need to collaborate with outside programs or specialists within their own communities to bring new ideas and energy into their curriculum.

Most of the schools in AMSC projects were willing to share power for this reason. In Grand Marais, Granite Falls and Brainerd this sharing happened; it was a central reason for their highly successful and continuing projects.

Projects where schools tended to monopolize—intentionally or by default—had problems in implementation and continuation. Examples here include the projects at Badger/Roseau/Warroad, Barnesville/Rothsay and Little Falls/Royalton.

Community: The community component of AMSC projects generally had far less power than the school. This was especially true in the sites where the community component was individual as distinct from organizational. Committee members who represented organizations, and consequently more people, carried more weight. Individual community members were usually only one voice at the table.

AMSC found that when schools took primary responsibility for projects early in planning, single community members and organizations often bowed out, or were not included after initial brainstorming discus-

sions. After early planning, for example, community involvement was peripheral in the Little Falls/Royalton, Barnesville/Rothsay, and Badger/Roseau/Warroad projects.

However, in the SAIL project, the Grand Marais Arts Colony was well-organized, demonstrated its own concerns, and provided a successful power balance to the project. One factor that ensured an effective balance was the Colony's consistent input at all stages of the collaboration. Another factor was its refusal to let power go to the school by default. Instead, it brought its own expertise and its own methods to the collaboration.

In collaborations between two school districts and communities, lack of trust was sometimes a major impediment. Smaller communities' fears of consolidation, of losing their school and much of their identity, of being "swallowed" by a larger community, meant that their suspicion of motives was a continual stumbling block in meetings. To address this problem, AMSC provided a facilitator to the Little Falls/Royalton Connections Project. Although the project was successful, providing facilitation did not accomplish project continuation.

Artists: Generally, we found that artists had incentive to participate in AMSC collaborations because there were opportunities for them to work. However, as discussed above in Chapter 20, "What is Unique About Working in Rural Communities," artists had to be cautious, because their dual roles in projects sometimes suggested a conflict of interest.

Including the Underrepresented: AMSC found that the ongoing involvement of members of various cultural communities was critical to the success of multicultural projects. However, we also found that in projects working with communities of color, the imbalance of power between the school and other partners was further complicated. The majority of school staff were white, and the non-school partners, artists and community members, were people of color. Trust was a large issue.

This dynamic made true collaboration difficult. In two of the three cultural projects, for example, AMSC decided to intervene as a mediator and advocate for the people of color in the community. We hoped to create a more balanced power relationship and enable more trust.

AMSC provided these projects with an outside facilitator, someone who would respect each side's point of view and would also ensure that the Native American or Hispanic American viewpoints were heard and acted on. This process, though inevitably difficult, was a major addition to the repertoire of assistance strategies in arts collaborations.

PROBLEMS THAT CAN OCCUR

AMSC discovered several obstacles to collaboration that can lead to frustration, burnout, and ultimately an inability to make decisions and move forward. These obstacles include time and expense of difficult projects and trying to meet too many needs.

Even with Deer River's struggle to keep its project alive, participants' of the critical factor in their continuing involvement was COMPAS' insistence that American Indian artists and parents were part of the decision-making.

—Mary Ellen Spector

TIME AND EXPENSE IN DIFFICULT PROJECTS

We found that collaboration does not always make for the most economical use of resources.

Collaboration takes time, especially in projects where groups are partnered for the first time or where trust is an issue.

In both the Deer River and Little Falls/Royalton projects, lack of trust between communities led to many meetings, an inability to make group decisions, and difficulty in deciding project leadership. AMSC found that a pattern of meeting over and over without result burned committees out and affected project continuation.

We've talked about all this frustration coming to a head. I think this project is a good thing. We need to do something to try to understand where everyone is coming from. Lack of communication is a big problem. This is the situation as I see it. Everyone needs to listen.

—Carrine Nason, school counselor,
Deer River

In the Deer River project, AMSC found that collaboration did not make the most economical use of human or financial resources. Bringing Native Americans and whites together to plan a project required extensive dialogue over several years. Meeting costs were high; committee members felt it was important to talk over a meal, a respectful tradition among Native Americans. Costs were further increased by AMSC and the school district making it possible for some community members to attend by paying their travel costs.

Although it is clear that this dialogue was necessary to create long-term change in the district, the process was expensive and often frustrating to the partners.

ATTEMPTING TO MEET TOO MANY NEEDS

Complex Projects: AMSC found that projects involving more than one school district and several artists were difficult to manage.

In the Little Falls/Royalton project, this difficulty was further complicated by the number and types of mentorships it attempted. Matching mentors to apprentices was time-consuming and confusing, especially because the communities were striving to create a balance among schools, artistic disciplines, and the kinds of mentors and apprentices involved—artists, teachers, students, and community members.

The work of too many meetings was selecting participants and scheduling mentorships. The volume of such micro-management tasks was a burden that inhibited discussion of crucial planning decisions about assessment and continuation. Time for such central issues was lost, and some decisions were never made.

In the future, similar projects could simplify their design by reducing the number of tasks.

Simpler Projects: AMSC found that projects involving one school or district and one or two artists were easier to schedule and manage than larger projects.

When an artist led the project, committee burnout did not occur. This characterized projects in Litchfield, Granite Falls and Blue Earth. With the artist acting as the leader, meetings were reserved for sharing ideas, and logistics were handled outside of meetings.

In future projects, AMSC may need to provide more guidance to projects in which schools and communities are balancing many tasks. AMSC should also suggest alternative organizing structures.

Attempting Too Much: In collaboration, partners bring their own agendas to the table and want them included. It is easy, therefore, for some collaborations to try to meet too many of the partners' needs. Project goals become compromised by attempting to be too inclusive.

The initial Deer River video project, for example, proposed combining several existing district curricular activities which focused on the Ojibwe culture. This made sense to teachers and district staff because it seemed to be an effective way to use teachers' time.

Unfortunately this decision turned the planning committee's focus away from a primary objective: developing understanding between the school and the local Ojibwe community.

The focus was turned instead toward logistical complexities. It is worth noting—without arguing intent—that issues of substance are often subverted by arguing that issues of form must be dealt with first.

The Native American members of the committee continue to feel unresolved about the project and the school district's sincerity. To move the project forward, the committee had to re-focus its work and chose to separate their activities from other school initiatives.

PLANNING AT THE WRONG TIME

To call Spring a problem may seem absurd, at least in Minnesota. Collaborations which include schools, however, must take the season into account. It is in the nature of schools for both teachers and students to work very hard in this season, to be generally worn down, and to be eager for a break.

Spring, AMSC found, is not the time to cooperatively plan for the following Fall. To insure real collaboration—and physical attendance at meetings—planning for Fall should take place in late Winter.

SOME EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO COLLABORATION AND INCLUSION

It is not the purpose of this chapter to provide specific "how-to's" of collaboration. (We describe those in a separate COMPAS publication, *Producing Rural Arts Education Collaborations*.) Beyond the general recommendations provided above, however, AMSC discovered two other approaches to collaboration worth noting.

FLEXIBLE INCLUSION: ONE-TO-ONE NETWORKING

Inclusive collaborations must incorporate many different viewpoints. But the vehicles for that input are multiple. Many projects created opportunities for input only through community meetings.

The Granite Falls approach to inclusion was unique. After initial community meetings, the project artist/coordinator in Granite Falls met one-to-one to solicit suggestions with several artists and community members, among them people from the Upper Sioux reservation. This one-to-one networking became the standard mode for the project.

"The Story of Our River," acknowledged and included the ideas, concerns and stories of many community members. These stories found their way into the activities of the project and into a culminating production that deeply moved school staff, parents and the large number of local people who attended.

Inclusiveness is defined as a way of being that promotes wholeness. In the midst of diversity and honors the distinctive gifts of all peoples.

—Magaly Rodriguez Mossman,
Rapid Change Technologies

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We found that the committee structure was not as important as the ability of the process to be inclusive. ...In Granite Falls the majority of the decisions were not made by a committee, but by the artists and project coordinator. However, teachers, residents and students were regularly asked for their ideas and reactions to the proposed direction. All interviewees saw the inclusive process as a major project strength.

—Mary Ellen Spector

Collaboration is a process often confused with a process to build consensus or collective agreement.

Consensus is the result of discovering areas of agreement and similarity, emphasizing those, and suppressing differences. The search for consensus is a search for what is commonly held among the participants.

Collaboration, on the other hand, will be most effective when it discovers abilities unique to each participant. In a strong collaboration, we ignore what is commonly held; if we focus there, the result will be dull. Instead, we search out difference, and treat some of those differences as cherished strengths.

For each participant, the discovery of strengths he or she can bring to the collaboration also suggests appropriate roles. What gives a strong collaboration its power is the energy of the edge, the vibrant interface between yin and yang.

—John Caddy

AMSC found this approach to inclusiveness successful because:

- It respected the ideas of individuals—a phone call or visit is more personal than a meeting;
- It created opportunities for people to express ideas they may not have shared in large groups;
- It was more convenient than attending a meeting;
- It fit Native American decision-making style.

HONORING THE EXPERTISE OF EACH

PARTNER

AMSC discovered that effective collaborations honor the expertise of each partner.

For example, the SAIL project made use of the experience and leadership of the Grand Marais Art Colony and the skills of Cook County School District staff. The Art Colony took responsibility for identifying and communicating with artists. The district recruited teachers and kept them informed about activities. The two organizations involved teachers, artists and community members in defining the project's theme and scope. When it was time to assign artists to individual teachers, Art Colony staff and district staff worked together to identify the best possible teams. This partnership made the most use of each organization's abilities, maximizing the time and energy of staff and the impact of the project on participants.

In both Deer River and Morton, the Native American partners determined the new curricular content for the project. Teachers decided how this content could best be implemented in the classroom.

LEARNING

AMSC learned that collaboration and inclusion are essential to the overall development of rural arts education programs. We also learned that collaborative and inclusive processes do not always mean large committees and frequent meetings. A design feature of early project planning should be explicit attention to the mode of inclusion likely to be most effective for a given community.

It is clear that in the future, AMSC should continue to provide guidance to projects where trust is a problem or where schools and communities are balancing many tasks. Program guidance to date was successful, but incomplete. We need to creatively explore additional strategies for accomplishing this guidance.

Factors Which Influence Continuation

One of the main objectives of Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) was to work closely with projects on continuation—building lasting, self-sufficient arts education activities that continued long after the financial and technical support provided by Blandin and COMPAS.

For a number of reasons, continuation was the AMSC program component in which projects were the least successful. Only two of the thirteen sites are currently continuing their projects on the same scale as when they were supported through AMSC. Consequently, AMSC has identified continuation as the main area where we need to develop more strategies to support the work of future projects.

This section describes COMPAS' efforts to facilitate ongoing projects and the projects' various attempts to continue beyond the AMSC stage.

COMPAS' EFFORTS TO FACILITATE

As we describe briefly in Chapter 24, "Balancing Project Autonomy and Program Assistance," AMSC attempted to support projects' efforts toward continuation through a variety of technical assistance. Projects' varying degrees of success in continuation are one indication that AMSC's strategies did not provide the full support needed. These strategies included:

- Requesting an initial commitment to develop lasting projects that would continue after COMPAS' involvement, and encouraging projects to ask for this same commitment from their school boards;
- Requiring schools and other community organizations to contribute financially or in-kind to support the involvement of teachers and community members;
- Providing projects with technical assistance that encouraged them to begin thinking about continuation in the early planning stages;
- When appropriate, arranging meetings with projects to plan continuation;
- Inviting other statewide arts and education funders and programs to attend sharing conferences and provide projects with information about possible opportunities;
- In the case of the Blue Earth Model, investigating the possible benefits to projects of working with an outside fundraiser;
- Developing a program guide for projects, "Fundraising for Arts Education Projects" and providing sessions on this topic at sharing conferences.

PROJECTS' ATTEMPTS TO CONTINUE

Each AMSC project's approach toward continuation was different. Some efforts were more successful than others, and some efforts have been integrated into the community more deeply than others. They range from continuing the project as it was originally conceived, to not continuing the project at all. We note also that some sites that are no longer conducting projects report that they are "continuing" in part, through the growth and development of local artists and teachers.

CONTINUING AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED

Brainerd and Grand Marais are continuing to implement their activities as originally planned. Both projects are integrated into the curricula and into the ongoing plans of their local school districts. Although both communities have been successful in raising funds for the near future—Brainerd from local sources, Grand Marais from outside the community—they remain concerned about how their projects will survive as changes or budget cuts are made in their districts.

CONTINUING ON A SMALLER SCALE

Granite Falls and Deer River are continuing their work on a smaller scale:

- The Granite Falls decision to conduct a smaller project than planned was budgetary. Limited funding was raised from their regional arts council;
- The Deer River project has a strong financial commitment from its local district to continue the project. However, they are having trouble identifying local, motivated people to coordinate the project.

SEEKING FUNDS, ON HOLD

Three projects are currently seeking funds to continue their work:

- Blue Earth is trying to identify outside funds for the construction of the playground equipment designed by local students;
- The Itasca County Hospice project is raising funds for a traveling exhibition of project drawings and writing to hospices and other communities around the state;
- The St. James community is looking for support to continue to collaborate with Mankato State University on a Hispanic arts and culture project.

BRANCHING OUT FROM WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY PLANNED

Several AMSC sites have or are currently considering branching out beyond their original projects:

- The SAIL project in Grand Marais is applying to become part of the Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) to create long-term arts education goals for the Cook County district;
- The Morton project has influenced a number of activities that are focusing on increasing the involvement of the Native American community, including the development of a Dakota Cultural Center within the school;
- Granite Falls is hoping to build on the creative writing component of the "Story of Our River" and is seeking funds to hire a local writer to work part-time with teachers in the development of creative writing curricula.

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ARTIST/TEACHER/COMMUNITY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The work of several AMSC projects continues through the increased growth and development of the artists, teachers and community members involved:

- In Ely, teachers continue to use some of the ideas they gathered by teaming with local artists;
 - In Badger, Roseau and Warroad, teachers more frequently draw on local artists to conduct activities in their classrooms;
 - Artists from several projects are currently approaching nearby communities and schools with ideas for new projects;
 - As a result of the relationships that were developed in the Deer River project, Native American community members and teachers continue to talk and work to foster cultural understanding between whites and Natives;
 - The artists who worked in the Healing Dreams project are interested in working in other hospice and community settings. This year they will be making a presentation about their work in Itasca county at a statewide conference for hospice workers;
 - Although the Little Falls/Royalton mentorship project is not currently continuing, members of both districts highly advocate mentorships for teachers and students. As a result, some students in both districts have participated in another mentorship program offered through their regional arts council.

The Morton project has also served as one important step in a larger, ongoing movement to address issues of cultural intolerance and to integrate the arts fully into the schools' curriculum.

—*Florence Dacey, Morton essay writer*

The work of the Ely project is not continuing in any formal way. However, teachers are now more willing to work with local artists and some of the teachers who worked with artists claim that they have picked up or been influenced by the artists' techniques.

—*Dirk Hanson, Ely essay writer*

Teachers realize now that they don't have to go to Minneapolis to get an artist, and local artists feel more confident about working in schools.

—*Carol Hallan, English Teacher, Warroad*

WAYS TO MAKE CONTINUATION REAL

One of the most critical problems encountered was that many projects' key players considered the development of lasting projects to be solely a fundraising concern. AMSC found that sites were more successful when they considered continuation to be much more than a fundraising issue. Continuation may turn on the nature and extent of inclusion as much as on the availability of funds.

AMSC has identified seven concerns which are crucial to developing projects which continue beyond initial funding:

- Planning for continuation must go on throughout a project's development;
- To persist, a project must meet real school and community needs;
- Continuation depends upon developing inclusive support which persists beyond planning;
- Assessment and documentation must impress a variety of audiences with the kind of data with which each is familiar;
- Long-term impact is assured, and continuation is more likely, when project activities are integrated into the school curriculum;
- Continuation depends on leaders who can communicate a clear and simple vision of the project, and on well-planned project coordination;
- Continuation depends on the ability to identify and solicit long-term financial support.

PLANNING FOR CONTINUATION THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

For most projects continuation was not seen as part of the whole process, but as something to consider toward the end of their project.

AMSC encouraged projects to think about continuation from the very beginning, but many found it easier, or more habitual in their funding context, to postpone planning for continuation until their projects were up and running.

AMSC learned that projects like Brainerd and Grand Marais which thought about continuation throughout planning and implementation were more successful at developing ongoing programs.

MEETING REAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

One important ingredient of planning for continuation is developing a project that meets real school and community needs. AMSC found that when sites developed projects that met important local needs it was easier for them to find support among teachers, parents, school administrators and community members, and for them to prove their projects' importance to funders.

AMSC also found that when a specific component of a project did not meet the needs of the community, it could become a barrier to continuation. For example, to pilot a variety of models, AMSC required some projects to work collaboratively with nearby communities. Neither the Badger/Roseau/Warroad nor the Little Falls/Royalton projects saw the real need for this collaboration. Consequently they were less committed to the continuation of their projects.

The Deer River community is continuing its project, yet leadership is inexperienced and continually changing, weakening its effectiveness. Teachers are over-represented.

Communication is sporadic.

Despite these problems the project continues because of...the school's strong commitment to the project and their need for a curriculum that includes American Indian history and culture. Teachers pushed the project forward and the administration yearly contributed substantial in-kind and financial support.

*—Mary Ellen Spector,
AMSC Evaluator*

**Has the tie been lasting?
Only informally. The teachers occasionally meet, share experiences and other ideas. Had the need for the communities to work together been greater, perhaps the tie would have been stronger.**

*—Elnora Bixby, Badger/Roseau/Warroad
essay writer*

INCLUSION BEYOND PLANNING: DEVELOPING COMMUNITY, PARENT, TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

AMSC learned that one of the most critical factors influencing continuation was a project's ability to build community, parent, teacher and administrative support. When these groups were informed and included in projects, they committed time and energy to raising funds, volunteered their services, and advocated for project continuation to school boards and local businesses.

Many project participants commented about the importance of strong administrative support. The COMPAS contract signing process required administrative support—to be knowledgeable about the process, commit to certain responsibilities and make in-kind or financial contributions. In Deer River, the administration's willingness to continue funding...is a critical factor that keeps the project going.

—Mary Ellen Spector

As we describe in Chapter 22, "Collaboration and Inclusion in Projects," most of the projects did recognize the importance of including administrators, parents and community members in the planning process, and asked these groups for initial, shaping ideas.

Some of these same projects, however, did not anticipate the importance of including these groups in meaningful ways beyond the planning stage. Nor did AMSC fully realize the long-term implications of its commitment to inclusiveness.

During planning stages, the possible roles of teachers, administrators, parents and other community members were familiar, more clear, but beyond planning, it was difficult to imagine what their participation might look like.

In most cases, project focus turned almost exclusively toward students. This was especially true in some cases where teachers were responsible for recruiting community involvement as in Little Falls/Royalton. Project pressures and time constraints forced teachers to prioritize, and, naturally, student and teacher activities became their top priority.

Some projects invited parents and community to attend performances and presentations, but many of these took place at the culmination, which left them wondering what was happening during the implementation stage.

Declines in community and administrative involvement often forecast a drop in overall school and community support of projects. At fundraising time, the assistance of the administrators and community members who had been involved in planning—but not beyond—was no longer readily available.

A few AMSC projects were successful in creating ongoing community involvement:

- Several projects validated the participation of parents and community members by publicly thanking them for their assistance. At the culmination of their project, Granite Falls held a special brunch honoring school and community members who were key to the project's success;
- For some projects, simple and regular communication was crucial. Informal notes and letters to update community participants on the progress of the project helped them feel involved and reminded them of the project's importance. We see a rural difference here; a note may be more effective than a typical, and costly, urban newsletter;
- Some projects included parents and other community members beyond planning by giving them

active responsibility. In Granite Falls and Brainerd, community members and parents were invited to conduct presentations in classrooms. This gave students an opportunity to work with other specialists, provided community members with fulfilling roles and enhanced community support of projects;

- Brainerd also occasionally invited the initial planning committee to come together for a progress report from the artists and teachers involved.

In the future, AMSC intends to pursue further ideas for creating and maintaining ongoing roles for parents and community.

INTEGRATING THE PROJECT INTO THE CURRICULUM

Some projects approached the need to develop support from school administrators and school board members by finding ways to integrate their project activities with the curriculum.

This happened naturally in Grand Marais and Brainerd where artists and teachers were involved in developing interdisciplinary activities. In both projects, teachers created learner outcomes as a part of the project. Grand Marais even paired artists with teachers during a few weeks one summer to co-write learner outcomes.

Both sites felt that writing their activities into the curriculum would help to preserve their projects from potential budget cuts, because it would be harder for administrators and school board members to perceive the activities as extra-curricular or add-ons, one frequent rationale for cutting arts programs.

ASSESSMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

Toward the end, many projects commented that they would like to demonstrate the success of their work more conclusively. Even with the support of parents and community members, they felt a need to demonstrate the value of their projects through concrete and respected evaluation methods in order to make the case for longer-term district support.

Most AMSC projects did not conduct individual evaluations. Grand Marais surveyed teachers and artists after the first year of implementation. Little Falls/Royalton asked artists and teachers to keep journals documenting their mentorships, but few actually followed through with the assignment.

AMSC intends to work with future projects more closely to develop approaches to assessment which:

- Satisfy the needs of administrators, parents and school boards;
- Assist sites in developing more effective programming.

LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT COORDINATION

Leadership and approach to project coordination were also key factors shaping continuation. AMSC observed that when project leadership was effective at communicating a clear vision, other participants understood the importance of the project, as well as their roles within the project. When it came time to develop additional support, parents, teachers and community members were united under one theme or mission, and it was easier for them to persuade others of the project's importance.

AMSC also found that when projects planned for ongoing coordination, projects were more likely to last. For example, in Brainerd, the initial project coordinator managed the early planning process and worked with the school principal to select the teachers to be involved. Once the teachers were hired, they took full

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responsibility for the ongoing planning and implementation of the project.

In contrast, AMSC found that in projects where coordination was less organized or where leadership was less defined, as in Little Falls/Royalton or Deer River, planning for continuation was more difficult. Committees burned out and members were less motivated to persist.

Turnover in leadership or coordinators also affected projects' success at continuation. Due in part to frequent changes in school administration (three principals within three years), the SAIL project was unable to raise funds from within the Cook County district. Consequently they decided to look outside their own community for short-term project support and to work to develop a long-range plan for arts education within their district.

...the Little Falls/Royalton project participants reported that the lengthy group decision-making process was the greatest barrier to their continued involvement. Teachers were burned-out from the three-year planning and organizing process. The inability of the group to work as one rather than two school districts hampered their planning continuation.

—Mary Ellen Spector

IDENTIFYING LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Of course AMSC also found that a project's ability to identify long-term financial support significantly affected continuation—whether the source was the school district, local funders or outside programs.

In observing projects' efforts to raise funds for continuation, AMSC identified four barriers:

- Programming for available funding, versus planning based on need;
- Increasing competition for education funds;
- Funders' desire for up-front fund commitment;
- Limited local fundraising experience.

Programming for Available Funding: Schools and other community institutions are in the pattern of programming for the type of funding that is available as opposed to planning for community need or raising funds for existing programs. The frequent shifts in state and federal programs in education reform have helped create an expectation among parents, teachers and community members that activities should be planned around the availability of current government programs and funds. AMSC discovered that several projects approached continuation by asking two questions: "What's fundable?" and "How much money can we get?"—even after they had developed successful projects that met the needs of students, teachers and community members.

This expectation may also have affected sites' impressions of the initial intention of AMSC to work to create ongoing, self-sufficient projects. Some project personnel may not have believed this intention and may have expected us to also shift our program direction after a few years.

Increasing Competition for Education Funds: There is increasing competition for existing local and statewide education funds. This is especially true in rural communities where school populations are declining. AMSC found that with annual cuts in education spending, and in a climate where long-term, established programs are receiving severe cuts from their districts, it is increasingly difficult to raise funds for new programs. This is particularly true for arts programs, because administrators in many districts consider the arts to be extra-curricular or less important than other subject areas.

The problem of competing for fewer funds was especially significant to projects that tried to raise support from their districts in the spring when other cuts were being made.

AMSC also observed that several projects experienced the problem of competing against other local fundraising projects, including bond referendums to build new schools in districts with very old facilities.

Funders' Desire for Up-Front Financial Commitment: Most funders want districts to demonstrate some financial commitment to their projects before considering them for possible support. At the same time, schools are increasingly under pressure to find funding outside their districts for new programs. AMSC found that most projects wanted to obtain full funding from outside sources.

Limited Local Fundraising Experience: Fundraising experience within school districts is often limited. Many of the districts that AMSC met with over the course of the program expressed a great need to develop the expertise of their staff in the areas of fundraising and grant writing. "Experienced grant writer" was listed as a basic need in many AMSC town meetings. AMSC also found that parents, teachers, curriculum coordinators and other school leaders are often intimidated by the grant-making process.

OTHER FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE CONTINUATION

POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Obviously AMSC found that there was an important relationship between project success and project morale and the desire of participants to continue. For example, in projects like Brainerd, Grand Marais and Granite Falls where artists, teachers and community members valued their participation and enjoyed their experience, projects were more motivated to pursue continuation. In contrast, projects like Deer River, St. James and Little Falls/Royalton, where participants and community members felt less than satisfied with the results, or where they found managing the project cumbersome or exhausting, leadership had less energy and enthusiasm for raising additional funds and developing ongoing support.

Funding sources in Blue Earth, however, are tapped out because the community has just voted to raise several million dollars to build a new high school. With COMPAS fundraising help, Blue Earth advocates must now make a strong case to outside sources to bring the young people's work to fruition.

—Margot Fortunato Galt,
Blue Earth essay writer

The positive artist-classroom experience also helped the Brainerd project to become a permanent part of the school. Teachers and administration explained that the artists' expertise and their ability to teach, enthusiasm of the students and enhancement of the curriculum were a few reasons for the positive experience.

—Mary Ellen Spector

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CHANGE IS HARD AND TAKES TIME

In schools, the demand for change is constant. Yet schools are among the organizations most resistant to change. Each year brings new programs, new ideas and new expectations—and new resistance. Unfortunately, parents, school board members and the department of education all expect schools not only to make changes, but to make them quickly. But, although these key players in education ask for change, they do

little to support the efforts of teachers to make these changes. When teachers are involved in developing new programs, they frequently are expected to plan for them in after school hours.

Traditions, attitudes and beliefs can be so deeply ingrained that nothing penetrates the status quo shell. Resistance to doing things differently takes a heavy toll on the morale of those wishing to advance new programs. We find many educators and their clients eager and impatient to break free of conventional programs. They become excited about being able to try new practices. But they find that the "system" doesn't respond sufficiently.

—Community Learning Centers newsletter,
March 1993

Schools and other community organizations are complicated structures. Each change can impact on a variety of areas. Programs are expected to conform to existing formats, like schedules and class sizes, that have their own advantages and disadvantages. Creating changes within these structures is hard and changing the ideas and attitudes of the people within them takes time.

AMSC found that the expectations for change on the part of teachers, parents, administrators and community members was often greater than the time they could commit to making change.

The projects in Deer River and St. James required time for discussion between participants from different cultural groups. The attitudes of Native American, Hispanic and white participants needed to change in order for projects to succeed. This kind of change could not happen quickly, it might even take several years. Some participants found this frustrating; they wanted to see results faster. In their disappointment it was hard for them to maintain excitement for their projects.

AMSC discovered that projects that were the most successful at creating lasting change were:

- Smaller in scale;
- Supported planning time for teachers.

Both the Brainerd and Granite Falls projects focused on groups of students, rather than the whole school. They also supported the involvement of teachers by providing additional prep time or compensating them for planning during the summer months. Enthusiasm for these projects grew within their schools as other teachers and students observed their success. Participants not only supported their continuation, but also encouraged leadership to expand their activities.

Balancing Project Autonomy and Program Assistance

This chapter describes the lessons learned during an ongoing process of balancing Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities' (AMSC) involvement in local projects with its commitment to honor local autonomy.

As explained in Chapter 4, "Program Concepts," project autonomy was not an original focus of AMSC. Rather, it grew out of AMSC's commitment to locally based projects. We needed to discover planning and implementation strategies that would be flexible enough to meet the needs of a variety of rural communities. This decision to put the projects into the hands of their local communities demonstrated the evolution of AMSC's role from that of programmer to catalyst and facilitator.

In attempting to strike this balance between project autonomy and program assistance several questions kept demanding answers:

- What kinds of assistance should we provide?
- What roles should we avoid playing?

In this difficult time of failed public expectations, when thoughtful people wonder where to look for hope, I keep returning in my own mind to the thought of the renewal of the rural communities...

I think that it could be the beginning of the renewal of our country, for the renewal of rural communities ultimately implies the renewal of urban ones. But to be authentic, a true encouragement and a true beginning, this would have to be a revival accomplished mainly by the community itself.

—Wendell Berry, poet, "The Work of Local Culture", *What Are People For?*

As this shift occurred, it became clear that a critical challenge facing AMSC was to determine an appropriate balance between local project autonomy and outside assistance from AMSC.

We needed input into each project to develop a range of models, but we wanted to avoid over-influencing local planning and decision-making. This shift toward local autonomy changed AMSC's role from that of programmer to catalyst and facilitator. It also changed the nature and range of AMSC's immediate constituency.

As a programmer, AMSC's focus would have been on artists and students. As a facilitator, AMSC's attention turned to local leadership and the people responsible for coordinating projects: community members, teachers and school staff, and, of course, artists.

—Mary Altman, Director, Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities

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The most important question is how to empower these communities to take responsibility for local arts education activities in the long-term. Many people lack the knowledge or confidence to do it on their own and are hoping that someone will come in and do it for them...We have begun to facilitate the development of this empowerment in a few of the communities in which we have been working. Others show promise. In many it is too early to tell.

—Mary Altman, Report to the Blandin Foundation, August 1989

After providing the initial leadership, COMPAS stepped back when local leadership could take over. COMPAS responded to sites' needs and provided a range of assistance depending on the sites' experience and skill in organizing a community-school project.

Even with Deer River's struggle to keep its project alive, participants said the critical factor in their continuing involvement was COMPAS' insistence that American Indian artists and parents were part of the decision-making.

—Mary Ellen Spector, AMSC Evaluator

- When and how should we intervene in local project management?
- To what degree should we encourage projects to be independent?
- Should we provide projects with a set of basic options for project management?
- Should we work with projects to select local leadership?
- How closely should we be involved in a project's decision-making process?
- What should our role be in projects working with local cultural communities?
- What aspects of COMPAS' standard guidelines for artist schedules and student/teacher contact should we mandate?
- How can we encourage projects to be independent and at the same time achieve the goals of the AMSC program?

Answering these questions was an ongoing process throughout the program, and the answers varied for each project community. We discovered early on that the level of local autonomy and degree of AMSC involvement must vary from site to site. Some communities requested considerable help. Others expected AMSC to keep our distance. This continuing search for balance between autonomy and assistance required AMSC to creatively explore its role in several areas which are reported below:

- Anticipated program assistance to projects;
- Unanticipated program assistance;
- How to tailor program assistance to projects;
- When to intervene with assistance;
- How direct assistance to artists supports projects unintrusively;
- The unique roles an outside organization can play in local projects.

We will briefly discuss each of these, and close with a look at some special problems we encountered with project autonomy.

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

Throughout our involvement with projects, AMSC offered several kinds of assistance.

Six were anticipated and provided to all projects:

- Serving as an initial catalyst for projects through convening Town Meetings, Planning Conferences and informal planning meetings;
- Making the invitation to local artists, school staff and various community members to come together to discuss arts education issues;
- Convening and facilitating initial planning meetings;
- Providing funding on a flexible schedule to purchase supplies and pay artists;
- Providing assistance to artists through advocacy, through contracting and paying them directly, and through training opportunities;
- Providing project representatives with opportunities to compare experiences and develop an overview of AMSC at two-day Sharing Conferences.

AMSC also anticipated providing projects with considerable assistance in:

- The development of artists' schedules;
- The recruitment of artists and other local and regional resources.

However, few projects actually requested help in these two areas. In most projects, AMSC learned that local leadership (especially school leadership) had strong opinions about the development of artists' schedules. This sometimes became a reason for AMSC to intervene on artists' and students' behalf.

As we describe in Chapter 21, "Local Artists: What They Offer Projects," AMSC also discovered that most sites were more familiar with local artists and local resources than we had originally expected. Only three sites, Blue Earth, Little Falls/Royalton and St. James, requested assistance in recruiting local artists.

AMSC also offered project assistance to:

- Develop evaluation plans;
- Develop long-range plans to sustain project efforts.

Although these were both critical steps in planning and implementing successful projects, AMSC found that most projects were already burdened with the basic tasks involved in project management. Although some projects planned to develop long-term strategies for both evaluation and continuation, none actually followed through. Several projects are continuing, however, under short-term funding. (See Chapter 23, "Factors Which Influence Continuation.")

UNANTICIPATED ASSISTANCE

In this evolutionary process of listening and balancing, AMSC provided projects with four types of assistance that were

Basically it's been a support system to a team approach we identified a few years ago. ...Some of the financing from Blandin, some of the technical support from AMSC, and the continued support...of the local people involved has added to the team ...

*—Dennis Martin, Principal,
Washington Middle School, Brainerd*

DEGREES OF PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

Following Planning Conferences or other planning meetings, AMSC estimated the degree of autonomy and level of program assistance that would be required by each project.

Sites were provided with an estimated allocation of staff support and assistance along with their allocations for artists' fees and supplies.

Allocations for staff support ranged from Very Low to High: (See Appendix i.)

VERY LOW: less than 25 hours. AMSC assistance during initial start-up only:
Badger/Roseau/Warroad, Ely.

LOW: 26-50 hours. AMSC staff invited to attend key planning meetings or events:
Brainerd, Granite Falls.

MEDIUM: 50-149 hours. AMSC staff engaged in key planning meetings or events: Grand Marais, Blue Earth, Barnesville/Rothsay, Itasca County, Litchfield, Morton.

HIGH: 150-400 hours. AMSC staff extensively engaged in key and ongoing meetings or events. AMSC also provided a project facilitator for at least part of the project:
Deer River, Little Falls/Royalton, St. James.

not initially anticipated:

- Acting as a partner in project planning;
- Performing the role of the "outsider"—providing disinterested opinions and assistance;
- Insuring the representation of all cultural communities on planning committees, and insuring access to decision-making;
- Providing impartial facilitators to projects involving cultural sharing.

HOW AMSC TAILORED PROGRAM

ASSISTANCE TO SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Although AMSC had some early indications of the kind and degree of assistance that would be required by each site, most projects' needs and plans evolved continuously.

AMSC's conceptions of program assistance evolved in parallel with the projects. What began as a "menu" of assistance possibilities became a program assistance process which was usually initiated by a project's request. It was also initiated by AMSC intervening when program goals were not being met. A dynamic balancing between local autonomy and program assistance was a continual feature of the AMSC program.

AT THE REQUEST OF PROJECTS

Some projects initially provided AMSC with an indication of the assistance they needed, or the role they would like to see AMSC play in project planning and management.

For example, the Blue Earth project requested assistance in locating local artists, while the Grand Marais project requested that AMSC act as a partner in planning. Little Falls/Royalton and the three projects focusing on cultural sharing asked for assistance from AMSC to facilitate meetings.

Some project leaders approached AMSC for assistance in solving a particular problem. For example, one problem in the Brainerd project was that the arts pod teachers had to maintain a heavy workload and often felt isolated from their peers. Brainerd administration

requested that AMSC find ways to acknowledge the efforts of these teachers. Among the other means, the simplest and most effective was to get the teachers and AMSC staff together over a meal.

When project planners asked for specific assistance that had not been anticipated, AMSC usually complied. In some cases we chose not to comply.

For example, AMSC opted not to develop individual project budgets, but rather, assisted sites in budget development. Some planning committees would have preferred to work with a predetermined budget. However, AMSC decided that an important part of empowering local communities was to encourage them to allocate and administer resources. For many planning committee members, used to working within restrictive budgets and guidelines, this was a new and frustrating experience.

In some instances, sites requested that AMSC support or discourage the participation of specific members on local planning committees. Except to encourage sites to involve a range of individuals, AMSC chose not to become involved in local politics.

WHEN AMSC IDENTIFIED A NEED TO INTERVENE

In some projects, AMSC identified a need to intervene. AMSC took on a role in the project without a request from local planners.

This was typically true in projects focusing on cultural sharing where AMSC advocated equal representation among various cultural communities in planning and decision-making.

For another example, AMSC tried to balance the power between school, community and artists, by persuading planning committees to include representation from each of these groups.

In projects where leadership was apprehensive about taking responsibility, such as Deer River and Little Falls/Royalton, AMSC encouraged project planners to identify local leadership, and in some cases, encouraged individuals to assume or accept leadership positions.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT INTERVENTION

Because AMSC's main objective was to learn from participating model projects, we were apprehensive about intervening in local project management. But as a result of the experiences of the model projects, we have gained some insight into which situations may better be served by assistance from AMSC in the future.

INTERVENTION WHEN GOALS ARE NOT BEING MET

AMSC has learned that there are two conditions within projects that require AMSC assistance:

- When AMSC program goals are not being met as a result of a project's design or implementation;
- When local goals are not being met as a result of problems with project planning or management.

Program Goals: AMSC found that some project's original objectives changed during implementation, either because current leadership lost track of those objectives, or because new participants were less versed in them. This was especially true in projects where planners were less committed to AMSC goals and more engaged in their own ideas and experiences.

For example, artists in the Itasca County Healing Dreams project became less interested in working to help grievors create their own drawings and writing, and more interested in gathering dreams and expressing them in their own artwork.

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In the future, AMSC may need to select project sites whose objectives and ideals are more compatible with the AMSC program or to periodically assist sites in re-examining their objectives.

Project Goals: In cases where projects were trying to balance multiple goals, AMSC found that one or more goals were often sacrificed for the sake of others. For example, in Badger/Roseau/Warroad, the goal of creating a collaboration among the three communities gradually disappeared as project coordinators focused on creating successful projects between artists and students.

AMSC also found, however, that projects do alter goals for legitimate reasons or as they learn from their mistakes.

Serendipity: Finally, AMSC discovered that sometimes when projects' goals change and no longer precisely parallel those of the AMSC program, AMSC may benefit from unanticipated results. Although the Itasca County project diverted from AMSC's initial expectations, it did provide AMSC (and, more broadly, COMPAS) with an innovative example of how the arts can be used to assist people who are grieving, within the school but outside the classroom.

SPECIFIC SITUATIONS WHICH MAY REQUIRE INTERVENTION

The AMSC model projects experience suggests that it may be beneficial for AMSC to intervene in project planning or management more often in the future than we have to date.

For example, some sites initially requested extensive structure and guidance from AMSC. AMSC could provide such sites with specific planning models from which to choose.

Other circumstances that suggest more AMSC intervention include:

- When there is an imbalance of power or unequal representation of artists, school staff or community members (see Chapter 22, "Collaboration and Inclusion in Projects").
- When sites have not provided sufficient contact hours between artists and students (see Chapter 25, "Building a Positive Artistic Experience").
- When project leadership need additional help or support, or when sites fail to identify leadership (see Chapter 23, "Factors Which Influence Continuation").
- When projects fail to plan for continuation or evaluation (see Chapter 23, "Factors Which Influence Continuation").
- When projects have not been able to identify future financial support from their districts and other local resources (see Chapter 23, "Factors Which Influence Continuation").

WHEN TO STOP INTERVENING

One key component of AMSC assistance was knowing when to step back and let local planners take full responsibility. This was difficult to determine, because in cases where local leadership wanted full responsibility early on, we feared the overall objectives of the AMSC program might be lost. In other cases, where local leadership was apprehensive about taking responsibility, AMSC's untimely exit could have jeopardized a project's viability.

Throughout our work with the AMSC projects, we have found several indicators that projects are able to sustain themselves locally and no longer require assistance from AMSC. Note the relationship between

these indicators and the list directly above. These indicators include:

- A project design and implementation plan that reflect the goals of both AMSC and the local community;
- A commitment among project planners to maintain a balance of power between artists, school staff and community members;
- A commitment to sufficient artist contact hours;
- A commitment to compensate artists as professionals;
- Local leadership who are empowered to take responsibility for the project;
- A plan for and commitment to evaluating the project;
- The identification of resources to support the project beyond the involvement of AMSC.

ARTIST TRAINING: UNINTRUSIVE PROJECT SUPPORT

AMSC discovered that one of the most critical and unintrusive methods of supporting projects is to provide local artists with two kinds of training and experience.

The first, training artists to work in classrooms with teachers and children, is crucial and a clear need from the beginning.

The second, training artists to organize and manage projects, was a less obvious but vitally important aspect of several projects.

AMSC found that in most projects where experienced artists were actively involved in project management, projects tended to be more focused and compatible with AMSC goals. For this reason, AMSC may pursue providing teachers and other community members with management training in the future.

ROLES AN OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION CAN PLAY IN LOCAL PROJECTS

AMSC played a variety of roles in projects. Many of these roles could only have been played by an outsider, and in particular, by an outside organization with authoritative experience in arts programming. These unique roles include:

- Providing projects with experienced program assistance;
- Advocating for the involvement of local artists, and for their compensation;
- Providing artists with training and experience;
- Providing funding to projects until their communities are able to sustain them;
- Acting as a facilitator in communities where trust or

The initial Town Meetings and subsequent planning meetings sponsored by AMSC were credited for most of the projects' beginnings. During those early meetings many local artists were identified for the first time. In most communities, different segments of the community who were interested in the arts came together for the first time. AMSC provided the initial leadership that brought these people together to set a common goal and work to accomplish it.

—Mary Ellen Spector

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AMSC came along with encouragement and ideas about how to plan this. Now we'll have to take it on, to show the school board that the money should be backed up ... I think sometimes it takes an outside group to help local people muddle through their problems.

—*Ruth Anne Weaver, Brainerd CAPP*

AMSC's active involvement on the behalf of the artist changed the dynamics of the projects from school-dominated to artists becoming closer to equal partners with the school.

—*Mary Ellen Spector*

...a great deal of our research is about "the how" of developing rural arts programs. Thus far, our approach to "the how" has been through supporting local organizing. The downside of using local organizing is that it is more staff intensive and that it takes longer, but we feel it is an effective process for the AMSC program for a number of reasons:

- 1) Traditionally, most of the arts programs conducted in rural Minnesota have involved metropolitan area groups coming in and planning and implementing a project for a school or community. COMPAS chose to support the autonomy of project sites because it makes them less reliant on outside groups.**
- 2) The local organizing process has given COMPAS and the AMSC program insight into the scope of what members of rural communities can realistically take on, and how the individual characteristics of a community can affect the success of a program.**
- 3) Through local organizing we have also identified a variety of possible ways to proceed when planning and implementing a project. These various options will help us provide support to future sites.**

—*Mary Altman, Report to the Blandin Foundation, October 1990*

cultural differences are issues:

- Initiating discussion of sensitive ideas that may make insiders uncomfortable because of local sensitivities and communication traditions;
- Validating and lending credibility to local activities and leadership.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS WITH THE PROJECT AUTONOMY APPROACH

By placing local projects into their own hands, AMSC has learned a great deal about organizing projects in rural schools and communities. Many of the sites have benefited through an increased ability to plan and manage their own projects. AMSC, however, did encounter some special problems with the project autonomy approach:

- Initial misgivings about the approach, both internally at COMPAS and from project sites;
- Project autonomy is not an effective approach for all communities, especially those who are not ready to conduct their own programming or who need an outsider to coordinate their programming because of local problems;
- Project autonomy can place an additional burden on teachers.

INITIAL MISGIVINGS ABOUT LOCAL AUTONOMY

The AMSC shift toward local autonomy and local organizing was difficult and somewhat controversial for COMPAS for three reasons:

- **Presentation of the Models:** It was clear that local autonomy would make it difficult to analyze and document the model projects. To observe and document the models we would have to consider how content and approach were influenced by differing community contexts. This would make replicating the models more complicated for future interested schools and communities. On the other hand, a serious problem with traditional "exported" models is that they pay little attention to local context, and thus often fail;
- **Organizational Change:** The local autonomy model was controversial within COMPAS because it meant shifting from the traditional COMPAS roles of programmer and leader to facilitator and provider of technical assistance—a more staff-intensive and more expensive approach. Putting the program into the hands of the community also meant trusting communities to identify critical needs and focus on effectiveness, two hallmarks of COMPAS' programming;
- **Community Expectations:** Some project sites were also unhappy with COMPAS' shift toward local autonomy. They wanted COMPAS to act as a coordinator or to provide them with specific planning and implementation guidelines. Taking local responsibility for the program meant more work for teachers and community members.

The organizing needs of communities were a surprise. Group processes and training people to work together were more important than we initially realized. As the program developed, we did not try to maximize the hours of classroom involvement, but instead focused more on the capacity of the community to carry this work forward.

—Todd Driscoll, Senior Program Officer,
Blandin Foundation

SOME COMMUNITIES MAY NEED AN OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION TO CONDUCT THEIR PROGRAMMING

AMSC has found that, because the local autonomy approach focuses on enabling communities to develop sustaining projects, it is not an especially successful approach for those communities who are not prepared to conduct their own programming. Some communities, because of their lack of experience or because of local problems, may not want to or be capable of developing their own local arts education projects. This may be particularly true in declining rural communities or in rural communities facing racial conflicts.

In such cases, an outside organization may be the only group able to create or maintain a local arts project. Because of its emphasis on local autonomy, the AMSC program is unlikely to be able to serve the needs of these groups.

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TEACHERS CARRY THE BURDEN

AMSC found that often the responsibility for planning and maintaining projects was given to teachers. Because of their knowledge of students' needs and schools' procedures, teachers seemed to be a logical choice for leading committees and conducting other activities.

But managing this additional responsibility was sometimes difficult for teachers, even when their districts provided them with planning time outside the classroom. This work was frequently just another burden placed on rural teachers' already overloaded schedules.

AMSC also learned that when teachers carried most of the responsibility for projects, burn-out was more likely to occur and projects were more difficult to sustain.

Although clearly teachers must play a critical role in project development and in ongoing project activities, AMSC has determined that future projects need to pursue new approaches which will obtain teachers' ideas without placing additional strain on their workload. Project sites should be willing to examine alternative leadership within the community.

Building a Positive Artistic Experience

In several places, (Chapter 3, "A Case for Artists in the Classroom," Chapter 21, "Local Artists: What They Can Offer," and Chapter 22, "Collaboration and Inclusion in Projects") we discuss variables that influenced the development of successful artistic experiences among the artists, teachers, students and other community members involved in AMSC. This section summarizes several of those variables.

Three variables relate specifically to the role and schedule of the artist:

- The amount of contact between artists and participants;
- The artists' style, attitudes and approaches toward teaching;
- The project size and number of artists.

AMSC also examined the significance of four variables in the relationship between artists and teachers:

- Teacher support of artists' projects;
- An appropriate collaborative match between artists and teachers;
- Adequate opportunities for planning and debriefing between artists and teachers;
- Artist/Teacher Collaboration and Mentorship;
- The role of artists in staff development, and teachers in artist development.

AMOUNT OF CONTACT BETWEEN ARTISTS AND PARTICIPANTS

One of the most obvious elements affecting the success of projects was the amount of time artists were able to spend with participants.

Many of the AMSC projects anticipated this important consideration and developed projects that provided students with ample opportunity to work with an artist. In Brainerd, Grand Marais, Granite Falls and other more intensive projects where artists worked with students for ten or more sessions, AMSC found that artists were able to develop activities in which students could participate in the entire creative process.

However, many of the sites experienced the same pressure that most schools apply to all of their arts programs—involve as many students as possible—emphasizing the quantity, not the quality, of interaction between artists and students. Some project sites submitted to this pressure and developed short-term activities or scheduled the artist to work with two or more classes at a time. (In the St. James project

...where the artist only worked with students for one or two class periods, teachers were frustrated with the superficial coverage of materials. They questioned the impact and relevance.

—Mary Ellen Spector, AMSC Evaluator

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some students worked with artists for as little as twenty minutes.)

AMSC confirmed the experience of other COMPAS arts education programs: projects need to

schedule at least four to five sessions with an artist to make a sufficient impact on participants, and artists, like teachers, need to work with regular class sizes. As we describe below in Chapter 26, "Effects of the AMSC Program," providing students with an opportunity to participate in the entire creative process can affect them positively in several ways:

- Providing them with ample opportunity to succeed;
- Fostering the development of their personal creativity;
- Increasing their enthusiasm about art and creating;
- Developing their understanding and appreciation of the arts;
- Increasing their learning in other subject areas.

THE EXPOSURE SYNDROME: A SELF-DEFEATING USE OF ARTISTS

Confronted with shrinking budgets and vocal constituencies, school administrators sometimes use residency artists in ineffective ways. The understandable temptation is to use arts education dollars for the purpose of exposure. The term "exposure" is rooted in medicine.

In its results, the "exposure syndrome" is analogous to vaccination, in which a patient is injected with a weakened virus, to insure that they never catch the real thing.

In a particular building, this generally means "exposing" the artist to the largest possible number of children; in elementary schools, all the children. The artist is often scheduled into all the classrooms, students all have minimal contact, but the principal is able to report that all the students "had" the artist. The motives for this are finally political, not educational: keeping peace within the staff, keeping peace with parents groups, meeting district-level quota impositions. While these are important, they are not as important as creating a learning context in which the residency artist can actually help students create over several hours or days. We have witnessed throughout our experience that sustained contact with the artist has long-term results; "exposure" does not.

This use of artists in residency is self-defeating as far as meeting children's educational needs. The danger is that it does tend to meet adult needs within the school system. People planning arts residencies, then, need to keep a clear eye on educational motives, and place them ahead of other valid but less important motives.

—John Caddy, poet

ARTISTS' STYLE

Many of the teachers, school administrators and community members who participated in AMSC attributed the success of their projects, in part, to the artists' style of working with students and their attitude and approach toward teaching. The characteristics of this approach are described at length in Chapter 3, "A Case for Artists in the Classroom." To briefly paraphrase:

- Artists have different and powerful classroom expectations;
- Artists share with children their delight in the unpredictability of making, in experiment, discovery and risk;
- Artists are more oriented toward process than product;

- Artists' activities are hands-on; generalizations are drawn by the student from art which the student has made. In the usual learning sequence, the making comes after the generalization is taught;
- Artists see connections everywhere;
- Artists empower students through their unique use of examples;
- Artists motivate children because they take as given the ability of children to create art;
- Artists tend to be more interested in the value of personal expression than teachers.

AMSC also discovered a unique characteristic of local artists that especially contributed to the success of rural projects:

- Local artists help students develop an understanding that art plays an important role in the rural experience.

AMSC found, of course, that some artists were more effective than others, and the success of artists' work with students also depended on their own personal capabilities, including:

- Their ability to work with particular age groups;
- Their level of preparation;
- Their personal artistic abilities.

PROJECT SIZE AND NUMBER OF ARTISTS

Project size was another variable that affected the success of sites. Each AMSC project varied in terms of the number of artists, teachers, students and schools involved.

Overall, AMSC projects were eager to include as many people and schools as possible. During planning, projects often grew in size as committee members identified more and more possible participants.

But AMSC found that as a rule bigger was not automatically better, and that projects involving fewer artists and fewer schools were easier to manage:

You wouldn't think of bringing a math teacher into the school for a one-shot on algebra. Seems kind of funny that you have to bring an artist in to do an hour or two in art, but I guess that's where we are currently in our values.

—Jay Andersen, Director, Grand Marais Art Colony

Children that were shy or withdrawn began to open up after two or more sessions. One young man who resisted was participating by the fourth day and was planning to perform...I have seen students with discipline problems completely change...

—Milagros Llauger, performer, St. Paul

A behavior problem student from the third grade acted out the first day and was eventually removed from the room. He has a full-time aide with him. The second day I worked with the third grade, this student exhibited no wild behavior. He was totally focused and was so taken with our activities that he did not want to miss anything. I made a special effort to compliment his behavior and participation. My experience has been that when numerous learning styles are presented, the more difficult students respond with excellent focus and participation.

—Gary Fey, visual artist, Good Thunder

The evaluation found that students working with one artist were more likely to increase their appreciation for the arts and enhance their learning in other academic subjects. The Granite Falls site provides insight into possible reasons for greater student impact. The single artist in Granite Falls provided the clear vision needed for a large project focused on a certain area. Singly she could more easily coordinate planning with teachers and relate the art activities to the curriculum.

—Mary Ellen Spector

We have an involvement of 20 to 40 teachers—all significant pieces of a successful program, even in a small school. And without an organization to coordinate these efforts, you'd have to work in a much more simplified framework to make something like this work.

—Sue Robinson, artist and art teacher,
Grand Marais

activities were perceived as a one-time experience. As a result, the project probably had little long-term impact on students, teachers or curriculum.

APPROPRIATE MATCH BETWEEN ARTISTS AND TEACHERS

AMSC learned that a key factor that influences the success of artist-school collaboration is an appropriate match between artist and teacher. A successful artist-teacher relationship depends on a number of variables:

- Smaller projects required simpler schedules and juggling fewer logistical details, giving planners more opportunity to discuss ideas and content;
- Projects involving one or two artists were easier to coordinate; the artist often acted as the leader or visionary and became responsible for handling much of the logistics.

The Brainerd project exemplified this in another way. It included several artists, but the project focused on only three classrooms in one school. Artists were also scheduled over the entire school year, with usually no more than two artists working at one time.

The SAIL project was the exception that tested the rule. With the help of the Grand Marais Art Colony, SAIL was also able to manage a large project, including several teachers and artists in three separate schools. The Art Colony took responsibility for identifying and communicating with artists.

TEACHERS' SUPPORT OF ARTISTS

Individual teacher's support of artists and interest in artists' activities also significantly contributed to the success of projects. When teachers were supportive and involved:

- Students were better prepared;
- Students were more interested in the activity;
- Teachers were more likely to followup on the artists' activities;
- There was a greater chance that the artists' activities would be linked to the curriculum;
- The artist could often be less concerned about discipline and classroom behavior.

A high level of teacher involvement and support contributed to the success of several AMSC projects, including Granite Falls, Brainerd, Little Falls and Grand Marais. In St. James, where many teachers were less involved (and consequently less supportive), artists'

- The compatibility of the artist's and teacher's needs, styles and goals;
- Flexibility and willingness to learn on the part of both players;
- Previous experience of both the artist and teacher in any type of collaboration;
- The artist's and teacher's personal familiarity with one another. (This variable may be unique to small communities.)

In projects where teachers and artists had worked together before, where they had similar expectations or where they had an opportunity to develop projects that reflected input from both, the artist-teacher match was most often successful. In projects where the artist and teacher disagreed about common goals, AMSC found frequent disappointment and occasional conflict.

In cultural projects, AMSC found that the artist-teacher match could be complicated by a lack of cultural understanding on the part of white teachers. In Deer River, some teachers tried to direct artists on the aspects of Native American art and culture they thought were the most appropriate to teach. Their lack of understanding offended the artists, making it difficult for them to develop a good relationship.

There were many positive examples of flexibility and mutual learning in collaborations between artists and teachers. In the Ely project, for example, writer Dirk Hanson built a writing activity around kids' fascination for video games. The classroom teacher's ability to structure the experience to ensure learning, however, was as crucial to the activity's success as the artist's concept.

ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLANNING AND DEBRIEFING BETWEEN ARTIST AND TEACHERS

One key component in creating an effective artist-teacher match is providing adequate time for the artist and teacher to discuss their needs and ideas, to plan and debrief. Some schools participating in AMSC found this difficult. Teachers' schedules were tight, and they felt scheduling artists for planning time was a luxury, when they could be meeting with students instead.

But in projects where adequate planning and debriefing occurred, AMSC found that:

- Both artists and teachers were better prepared;
- Artists and teachers had a stronger working relationship;
- Teachers were more supportive of and involved in the artist's work with students;
- There were fewer communication problems or issues of mistrust between artists and teachers;
- Artists' projects more often related to other areas of the classroom curriculum.

Grand Marais, Brainerd, Granite Falls, and Ely all anticipated the need for artists and teachers to work together to develop their projects and provided ample time for them to discuss the artists' activities, both as a group and as individual teams. Teachers and artists in these sites developed good relationships and supported one another.

Because of a short timeline in St. James, artists and teachers were only able to meet in one large group session, where they had to plan both the schedule and content for the individual artist's activities. The project suffered greatly from lack of planning time. Schedules were revised frequently, and artists worked in classrooms where they had no prior information about the students' abilities, teachers' expectations or the curriculum. Because they did not have an opportunity to meet with artists in advance, teachers did little to prepare stu-

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dents, and many simply observed the artist from the back of the classroom, providing little support or assistance.

ARTIST/TEACHER COLLABORATION AND MENTORSHIP

In some AMSC projects, artist/teacher relationships extended beyond the role of mutual support into a collaborative relationship or mentorship. AMSC found that when artist/teacher collaborations were combined with classroom work, projects were more successful.

Grand Marais' SAIL project is the best example of this. In SAIL, artists and teachers collaborated to develop arts projects that were integrated into the existing curriculum. Each partner brought personal expertise to the collaboration: teachers contributed their knowledge of students and subject matter, artists their experience with techniques and creativity. The SAIL planning committee provided artist/teacher teams with some structure: contact hours, planning hours, time frames. They also provided the crucial ingredient: freedom to develop their teams' ideas.

In Little Falls/Royalton, AMSC encountered some reluctance by teachers to participate in mentorships. Teachers sometimes expressed discomfort with being the focus of artists' efforts, because they felt that the time and funding available for artists could be better directed toward their students. To resolve this problem, artists agreed to demonstrate in the classroom as well as conduct one-to-one meetings with teachers.

One of the important things about the program was the collaboration between the teachers—the classroom teachers and the artists.

The artist and the teacher invented the program themselves. We didn't tell them what to do. In fact, we went with the idea that minimal interference from the administration, was best...So the need was perceived by the teacher within his/her own curriculum.

The teacher said, "This is a subject area where I could use the arts." And the artist said, "That makes some sense. Let's figure out a way to incorporate what I do as an artist with what you need in your curriculum."

—Jay Andersen

THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHERS IN ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

AMSC observed that for some artists and teachers, planning and debriefing sessions were also opportunities for both to develop their individual skills. In some cases, as a result of these meetings:

- Teachers had ideas for related, preparatory or follow-up activities;
- Teachers learned new artistic techniques;
- Artists were better prepared to meet the needs of specific age groups;
- Artists were able to develop longer, sequential projects.

This was true in projects such as Grand Marais and Brainerd, where both teachers and artists developed lesson plans regularly as part of the activities. Teachers also learned new artistic skills through their mentorships with artists in the Little Falls/Royalton project.

Developing teachers' skills and artists' skills was one way in which AMSC projects succeeded in affecting their schools and communities.

Effects of the AMSC Program

The effects of the thirteen Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) projects, and of the program as a whole, were large and various. When we speak of effects and results, two cautions may be useful. The nature of AMSC—projects carefully tailored to individual sites and their needs—makes generalization about effects difficult. Also, it is easy in an overview to let slip from view the unique aspects of a given project. Often those are among a project's sustaining strengths.

As you read on, we ask you to remember the limitations, as well as the value, of these generalizations.

As described above in Chapter 5 "Program Operations," the Blandin Foundation commissioned an AMSC Evaluation, for internal purposes, during AMSC's third year. The following material owes much to this evaluation. This discussion of effects is also based on:

- Artists' logs and reports;
- Periodic AMSC reports and other documentation;
- Proceedings of two project sharing conferences;
- Extensive videotaped interviews with students, artists and teachers in Brainerd and Grand Marais.

EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

Students in the projects were all enthusiastic. In all group interviews, the students wanted the artists to return.

Teachers agreed that students generally demonstrated increased creativity and increased willingness to experiment. They were more comfortable taking risks, learning to see this as essential to artistic process. For example, dancing for the first time in front of others became possible. Sharing a new piece of writing became an opportunity for praise rather than an ordeal.

Confidence in their abilities as creators transferred to other activities. Fewer students, many teachers reported, continually asked if their work was "right." Concrete-sequential learners became more willing to risk and use their own ideas.

The sole disagreement with this finding—creativity up, risk-up—was in St. James, where the format was minimal exposure—one hour contact with the artist.

I'd say it's more fun learning, hands-on experience, because you can figure out what types of things you might like to do when you grow up, or just try things that are new. And it helps to understand things better.

—Angie Hanske, grade 6, student, Brainerd

Students felt freer to express themselves in their work. Teachers observed students designing unique patterns, creating colors, designing their own costumes.

—Mary Ellen Spector, AMSC Evaluator

With the artists you learned how-to.
It made it easier to learn, with the arts.
It brought that into my life, and it's easier.

—Kirsten Anderson, grade 6, student, Brainerd

The art teacher here has mentioned that she can tell the kids that have come from this pod. When they get to the classroom, they're ready to work, it isn't the hustle and bustle of trying to get everybody settled down. They show an interest above and beyond the normal. They have a different kind of motivation than some of the other kids. They've found an interest which is unleashed, and it's a good vehicle for them. Kids have been exuberant, happy, and I've never had to worry about discipline problems.

—Else Carlson, craft artist, Brainerd

One of the big changes I've seen is that they've started to see themselves as creative people. They've gotten an idea of being able to do things that they've never been able to do before. It's really expanded their sense of self-esteem, and creativity has really expanded, because they've been involved.

—Ahne Patten, grade 1 Teacher, Grand Marais

It helped us learn about history
because we understood it.
We didn't just read about it. We made it.

—Brainerd student, grade 6

I think the reason the SAIL project was so effective for the students over time is because so many different little pieces were happening, and they were seeing these different pieces. The SAIL program was a thematic program where we chose the topic of the Lake. It was interpreted differently by each collaborative team, for each different age group, depending on what the curriculum need was that the teacher wished to enhance.

Because there was that theme that was recognizable to the students of all different ages, when they saw the products resulting from, or the process in action, of other ages of students, they were able to tie it to their own experience. So their own experience went beyond their own one, little project, to be tied like a spider-web to all the others.

That's where I think you get the mileage out of something like this. You get that ripple effect which is much larger than any one piece. For instance...in the second grade, there was a play put on which had the Native American themes in it. Well, of course the whole student body got to share in that play. So the product of one group became something for everyone in terms of an educational experience.

—Sue Robinson, artist and art teacher, Grand Marais

Students showed increased appreciation for the arts, and improved artistic skills.

In several projects, teachers reported significant positive effects on academic performance. Students gained new knowledge in academic subjects in which art was the means of teaching those subjects. Increased student pride in their academic as well as artistic work was a related finding.

Both students and teachers reported increased student enthusiasm for school in general. Increased cooperation with other students was another reason for that enthusiasm.

Teachers reported that students took greater pride in their work when they created it. In Brainerd, more students completed work when they actually created it, than when they answered worksheets and textbook questions.

Artists reported that student pride increased when they had enough time to complete their work or master an artistic technique.

AMSC's commitment to interdisciplinary curriculum was verified as teachers reported that more learning took place when art activities directly related to the rest of the curriculum.

In Granite Falls, teachers mentioned the learning impact of combining the arts project with a unit on Minnesota history and with a science unit on the environment.

EFFECTS ON STUDENTS WITH

ATYPICAL LEARNING STYLES

The AMSC projects demonstrated that arts-based learning can meet the needs of all types of intelligences, including those who do not learn well in the traditional

Student enthusiasm for school significantly increased. Not only did the survey find the project was very effective in increasing enthusiasm for school, but the evaluator heard from students at every site that working with the artists was "fun," and they all wanted to work with them again. In every observed classroom where the students were actively involved in an art activity, students were fully engaged. In Brainerd students continued working after the class had ended. Teachers there said students were always fully involved when the artists came.

—*Mary Ellen Spector*

There are several kids over the last three years who stick out as students that especially benefited. They are very varied types.

For instance, we have had very concrete-sequential children who are used to being successful in a very structured kind of system. "Just tell me what you want to know, I'll spit it back to you and I'll get my A and off we'll go." It's been really fun to watch those children open up and be more flexible and more creative in their work. They've benefited greatly by doing that.

The other kind of student that we often end up seeing are kids who really need a lot of activity, a lot of hands-on approach, who have not been successful in a traditional kind of classroom setting. It's been fun to watch those students really get excited about making learning real and making things come alive.

—*Pat Altrichter, grade 6 Teacher, Brainerd*

The project bridges the gap among students with different learning styles.

—*Brainerd teacher*

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It's not just for the kids that are obviously artistically talented. They all have different abilities. It helps them to be more expressive in their writing and in all kinds of communication, in making friends, it makes them warmer people. I think art tends to do that. For the children that don't do well in the normal classroom setting—where it's paper and pencil and book and that's it, and you just sit in your class and then switch every 50 minutes—we see them blossom. They have a chance to use their hands so much more. Yesterday it happened in the group. Josh did it twice! Josh hasn't had that opportunity in the classroom, where Josh is the winner, or Josh has the best score, but in the art activity, he does.

—Sandy Nielsen, grade 6 Teacher, Brainerd

Kids who couldn't focus on regular studies have really been able to concentrate on hand weaving. For some reason, it was able to quiet them down. We don't know quite if it's the actual, physical manipulation of the fingers or...because you're really focusing and concentrating. It's been positive, it's almost been a therapeutic result and this is something we hadn't at all anticipated. You know, I came in as an artist and we wanted to teach children art—and we have some of these other things resulting.

—Mary MacDonald, visual artist, Grand Marais

Another important result was teachers' personal growth. Many reported that their creativity had been enhanced, and that they were more willing to experiment, both in making art and teaching.

Teachers also reported that they have added many artists' activities to their own teaching repertoire.

classroom.

Teacher reports about the effects on students of varying learning styles and intelligence emphasize five positive results:

- Academically strong students were challenged and stimulated;
- Students who need hands-on experiences to learn most efficiently, succeeded;
- Quieter students became more social after working in small groups;
- Artistic students demonstrated they could excel;
- In some sites, students with control issues became more cooperative.

EFFECTS ON TEACHERS

The program's effects on teachers were large and not all quantifiable. Many teachers experienced a startling renewal—of their teaching, of their perceptions of themselves as creators, of their conceptions of interdisciplinary education. They were energized and empowered by seeing the effects of arts-based instruction on children.

In the Blandin Evaluation, three primary effects on teachers were found:

- An increased willingness to involve artists in classrooms—all teachers were eager to have the artists return;
- Teachers all added more art activities after working with the artists, and learned alternative ways of teaching the arts;
- Teachers reported a 'battery charge' in their enthusiasm for teaching. A new program, new and fresh artists' approaches, and increased student interest in learning are probable reasons.

The teachers responded very positively to this experience. I think what I'm seeing now is that they are in fact carrying this more open-ended and integrated experience into other areas of their curriculum. I see collaborations starting up between different teachers, different classrooms, that just would not have been happening five years ago. I can't say it was just SAIL, because this idea is coming across all of education. But certainly, when you can bring into a school an opportunity to experience something that is new, people don't often respond well to change, especially older teachers who have had their traditional ways of doing things. SAIL can introduce an experience that can be a pleasing one, that they can see as productive, effective, solving their needs and improving their situation, providing them with something that they really could not have done solely by themselves. SAIL brought them together as teaching units with artists and writers, and then it left them together as teaching units. More, it brought them out of their individual classes.

—Sue Robinson

By bringing an artist into the classroom we give them projects, new projects that relate to their curriculum. But, at the same time, the teacher learns about doing art. And that's the flip side of the program. ...Once a teacher has the confidence, the self-confidence, that he or she can do art, then they'll transfer that confidence to the kids in their classroom.

—Jay Andersen

One of the advantages is obviously for the staff. As I mentioned earlier, I felt I was much more confident. Each year as we do more; we've expanded the program. First, we did just simple skills and techniques. This year, we're doing quite a big project with a joint tapestry that we're doing, with all the first graders making contributions to the same tapestry. We will have group ownership, and we'll hang it in the school somewhere. I think we've been able to increase the complexity of the projects as we've gone along with more skills.

—Ahne Patten

This became a total in-service training for the teachers, to learn the creative process, and how they could, even when they weren't doing the SAIL project, turn back to their own curriculum...with new eyes, and incorporate more visual stimuli into the curriculum, more hands-on opportunity, more creative thinking, more acceptance of an open-ended project, more awareness of a process than would have been the case before. So the natural benefit then to the student, is going to be reflected through a change in the teacher.

—Sue Robinson

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It's a wonderful experience just for the time when the artist comes and spends those few hours. But I've found it's also taught me a lot about the weaving process, and I've expanded that and done other weaving kinds of projects in my classroom just on my own. So it's increased my own artistic abilities and also skills. I mean, there are a lot of skills that I learned through the process that's enabled me to do other artistic projects in the weaving area that I would have never felt comfortable doing before.

—Ahne Patten

There's a whole trend going on now in education, of course, back to whole learning, and theme-oriented learning, as opposed to just reading and writing and arithmetic. This kind of collaborative venture supported that reform in education. I happen to think it's very positive, so I call it a reform. If you were on the other side, you might feel differently. For a rural community with teachers in the elementary school—the majority of whom have been here for 20 years and were very traditional—this provided a very pleasing opportunity to see a different kind of education work.

—Sue Robinson

In Brainerd the arts pod became a permanent part of the middle school's curriculum. It also served as a model for other thematic pods to develop in the schools. Where previously arts were questioned for their relevance to the academic curriculum, the arts pod provides a permanent place for art in one grade in the middle school.

—Mary Ellen Spector

We've been cutting out these fish and the end result is going to be a mobile where the fish hang in the order in which they would swim in the lake, with the top feeders at the top of the mobile and the lowest fish on this mobile, the bottom feeders, like catfish and sturgeon. So when you look at the mobile it's almost as if you were underwater, looking at the lake. Right? Kind of like the food chain. Integrating the regular curriculum of the classroom with an art project makes school more interesting. You get a lot broader scope of learning. We've been studying science and doing an art project in conjunction with science, so that the things we're learning in the curriculum in the classroom becomes a fun thing and we can see it actually in a visual way. We can see these fish hanging the way they would in a food chain. It gives us a whole new understanding of the food chain. How life works in a lake—the visual form of a fish tells us a lot about what a fish does, whether it's built for speed, whether it's built for picking up food off the bottom of the lake. It all becomes fun. You can do the hands-on, the painting on this paper, the cutting it out, rather than just sitting and listening to your regular teacher talk about, lecturing from a science book. To have another person come in is exciting. Kids see it as a departure from having to do work. There were a couple times I didn't show up and I got scolded from a couple of the kids who said, "When you don't come, then we have to do work!" But what they don't realize is that the art projects that we're doing are the science work. Just not the same way we're used to learning about science.

—Tim Young, visual artist, Grand Marais

The classroom artists gave teachers many practical ideas they could implement themselves.

EFFECTS ON SCHOOLS

As well as having the profound effects on students and on teachers detailed above, AMSC positively affected project schools in additional ways:

- Schools show greater use of interdisciplinary strategies;
- Schools show greater use of holistic strategies, especially teaching to a variety of learning styles;
- Administrative commitment to the arts in schools increased;
- School/Community interchange has increased;
- School district collaboration attempts have increased.

INTERDISCIPLINARY STRATEGIES

Many project schools increased their level of interdisciplinary education, especially at the elementary level. For some schools, an AMSC project was their first experience with interdisciplinary work, and it was a positive one. In others, the AMSC project proved to be persuasive with teachers who previously had only a lukewarm commitment to interdisciplinary work.

In Grand Marais, the interdisciplinary experience has been so positive for teachers that it will affect curriculum for years. Not only was new curriculum written and incorporated, but the approach—collaborative, thematic, discipline-linked—widened concepts of instruction. Perhaps the most lasting effect, however, is the excitement generated in teachers.

The Brainerd Middle School's Antarctica Arts Pod is committed to an interdisciplinary approach in all subject areas, using arts as the bridge between disciplines.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

School administration support for arts education and artists in the classroom has become strong in AMSC project communities. AMSC was highly effective in developing this support. This was not only a result of ensuring that administrators observed positive classroom and in-service effects, but also a result of AMSC's design. A significant factor may have been the presence of COMPAS as a valid "third party"—the local community member or teacher did not have to validate and carry out proposed projects alone. The resource of local artists enlarged administrators' perceptions of feasibility when considering arts programs.

Perhaps the most lasting effect on administrators may be perceptual: a shift from regarding the arts as non-essential, even frills, to regarding them as powerful experiences which can motivate students and enhance their academic achievement.

Administrators reported that AMSC helped them meet several of their district goals. Artists added greatly to their schools and they want it or similar programs to continue. Administrators also pointed out that the primary barrier to continuation was insufficient money to pay artists.

We did some dyeing of different yarns, using natural things. Then we did a science project that was related to that, about how plants grow. So the kids saw that this related to the weaving that we'd done—"Remember when we used this!"—They would cross curriculum areas naturally.

—Ahne Patten

PART FOUR: The Discoveries of AMSC

The project changed the relationship of the community with the schools at many sites. Slightly more than 50% of project participants reported their project was effective in involving the community in the schools. Town meetings, planning sessions and organizational meetings all included community residents.

The evaluator observed that more community residents were involved in the projects' planning phase than during the projects' implementation. However, even during the planning the teachers, school staff and artists outnumbered residents. As implementation focused the projects' efforts toward the students, classrooms and the school, fewer residents were involved. ...The evaluator speculated that both residents and school representatives were unclear about the residents' role when the project focused on the artist in the classroom.

...students, teachers and artists took school work out into the community. The community became a resource for learning. The state park near Granite Falls and the shores of Lake Superior were regular visiting spots to inspire the students' creative work. Granite Falls students often referred to the Upper Sioux Indian Reservation and a local art gallery in their writings.

The community also became a place to showcase student creative work. Brainerd students displayed their work in the Heritage Festival. Grand Marais students sold handmade books in a local store. Several hundred Granite Falls residents watched a performance written and acted by the second and fifth-grade students on a parking lot next to the Minnesota River.

Granite Falls was the best example of involving residents throughout the project. Local residents came into the classroom to help students quilt, told stories to inspire creative writing and demonstrated American Indian quilting and beadwork. ...the project leaders strongly believed in active community involvement. A project coordinator was hired with a major responsibility for facilitating community involvement.

In Grand Marais, the project continues for another two years. A significant component of this continuation project is building a deliberate strategy for stable funding. The strategy includes high project visibility, active involvement of school board members, developing a cooperative relationship with the district that includes community agencies helping the district to raise outside funds and become a Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (CAPP) site.

Although the survey and interviews reported the project was effective in increasing community involvement...it is important to again remember that these findings are based on people's perceptions. For many schools, having even a few residents involved in the planning was a significant change from other school projects.

—Mary Ellen Spector

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY INTERCHANGE

All AMSC projects attempted greater community/school involvement. The schools and the communities they serve, of course, are already highly involved structurally and financially. However, schools as institutions can become rather exclusive. A case can be made that community members are an insufficiently used resource in most schools. Similarly, one can argue that many community members feel neither informed about nor particularly welcome in their schools.

Generally, participants agreed that the AMSC projects did succeed in raising the level of school/community interchange. However, community involvement was largest at the beginning and end of projects. With some shining exceptions, community members were less involved than they might have been during the implementation phase of projects.

It is hard to know how long these changes in school/community relationships will persist. In some cases, however, AMSC clearly was an important impetus to lasting change. For example, Little Falls' Lindbergh Elementary School has become a community arts center, and AMSC played a role in this development.

SCHOOL DISTRICT COLLABORATIONS

Two AMSC projects attempted collaborations between school districts, with mixed results. In the Little Falls/Royalton project, the collaborative aspect was a continual struggle. The disparity in size between the two communities—Royalton's fear of being "swallowed" by Little Falls—made this aspect of an otherwise successful project difficult.

In the Badger/Roseau/Warroad project AMSC again found district-level collaboration difficult. While the collaboration did succeed—that is, the project was completed—fears of consolidation and a history of competition made the collaborative aspect of this project less successful than it might have been. Here, rather than being a continual barrier, the collaborative potentials of the project were never fully explored. We emphasize that this project was artistically and educationally a success; it was the inter-district collaboration that fell short of expectations.

Two other, perhaps obvious, effects on schools are:

- There are now more arts in the curricula and more artists in classrooms on a continuing basis;
- In several schools' curricula, there is more Native American and Hispanic content.

I think it develops a consciousness within the community... of the resource that is available here. It tends to affect the view the community has of itself. If we brought people in from outside, artists from outside the community, then the community would view this that we were having to import skills and they would not see us as part of their own make-up.

—*Sue Robinson*

EFFECTS ON COMMUNITIES

Above, we have detailed some of AMSC's effects on schools. While it is somewhat awkward to separate effects on school/community relations from effects on communities, the effort proves useful here. We found two kinds of effects, not detailed above, which were direct outcomes of local project goals:

- Valuing the Community;
- Cross-Cultural Awareness.

COMMUNITY VALUING

In all of the sites where the project was highly visible to the community, and large numbers of artists and students were involved, community pride increased. In those projects where "what we value here" was an organizing principle, success was measured in part by enthusiastic community response.

One thing we're showing is that we're professional artists living, working in a small town and we go to the grocery store and we have families and we do everything that other people do, we make our livings doing our artwork. ...I met one of the students I had three years ago in the grocery store and he was introducing me to his mother as his weaving teacher...every time I see him, he says I have a new loom, a little cardboard loom. I like that touching base. You do have some sort of impact on a person's life...and it's nice to get that feedback that you're affecting somebody.

—Mary MacDonald

In Brainerd, an extensive community volunteer presence during implementation as well as consistent community involvement in planning, presentations and culminating events all contributed to increased pride.

The Granite Falls and Litchfield projects culminated in large public performances for the entire community, which became talked-about and much appreciated celebrations.

CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS

AMSC from inception had a commitment to meeting unique local needs. Some of the most striking positive results of this commitment were found in the "cultural awareness" aspects of projects in Deer River, Granite Falls, Morton and St. James.

In these community schools, the need for cross-cultural awareness has been understood, but its solution is difficult for majority-culture white teachers to accomplish. In all the projects cited, school administrators and teachers reported that they were relieved to have Native American and Hispanic artists working in their schools. They enhanced the normal curriculum and served as positive role models for the students involved. As important, their classroom work presented a whole new set of perceptions to white students about Native Americans and Hispanics.

These projects began to bridge cultural communities that had previously only had limited and socially prescribed contact.

While AMSC can regard these projects as clear successes, it is just as clear that these projects can only be regarded as beginnings.

In Deer River, Morton, and Granite Falls, the Native American communities, in particular, experienced increased pride in their cultural heritage. This was especially pronounced among the young.

FUNDRAISING

The AMSC program had less effect than it wished on communities' ability to raise money to pay for arts projects. More than half reported no change in their ability to raise outside funds or increase district funding.

These are, of course, perceptions. We think it likely that in some sites, particularly those where artists were also project managers, skills gained and contacts made have, in fact, improved fundraising prospects for future projects.

EFFECTS ON ARTISTS

A design feature of all AMSC projects was the emphasis on using local artists, so we evaluated project effects on this large group of participating artists from rural Minnesota.

Many artists reported increased enthusiasm for their own art work, and several said they had found new subject matter for their art by working with children.

Like all of us, artists appreciate credibility. Most artists in the program reported that their professional reputation in the community was enhanced. Their visibility was increased. The fact that they were paid for their services created new perceptions of them as professionals within the community.

The community and local artist emphasis of AMSC was highlighted by many artist reports of stronger local artistic communities as a result of their project work.

The large majority of artists said they had gained new marketable skills. Almost all believed that the AMSC projects increased their ability to be successful in planning. This they attributed to two activities: the extensive collaborative planning they did with teachers, and COMPAS-sponsored training workshops.

We'd do lots of sharing and talking about our lives and what led us to do what we do. There's a confirmation in that for the artist. Artists can lead very isolated lives even if there are many of you in a community like this, there still is simply a tendency, by the nature of the beast, to become isolated. SAIL provided an opportunity to come out of that isolation, to join in communication with other artists, to learn what they were doing and what their thoughts were, so that when you then all went back into your separate little cubbyholes, you went as stronger, united, integrated individuals.

—Sue Robinson

Activities undertaken through AMSC have produced both immediate and long-term benefits for COMPAS as an agency. By helping organize diverse communities around the issue of arts education, COMPAS has forged extensive contacts with creative people throughout Minnesota, enhanced its statewide presence, and re-affirmed its leadership role in arts education.

Historically, COMPAS has sponsored arts activities in a wide range of community sites. The scale of its programming in schools, however, and the unique challenges of working in the school environment, often pressure the agency to set education programs apart from the activities in battered women's shelters, parks and other settings. Through AMSC, COMPAS has been engaged in overcoming barriers among schools and their surrounding communities, and the reflection of this effort in the organizational structure of COMPAS has made the agency a more effective advocate for community art.

—Marty Case, Staff Writer, COMPAS

PART FOUR: The Discoveries of AMSC

Where artists were project managers as well, they reported large increases in their management skills. Other skill increases reported include improved public speaking and human relations abilities.

EFFECTS ON COMPAS

The impact the AMSC program had on COMPAS as an institution is of a different order from the effects described above. While these are solely internal observations, we find it useful to mention how some of the lessons learned through AMSC have shaped COMPAS:

- Through its identification of rural artists and other resources, the AMSC program has increased COMPAS' capacity to work statewide;
- AMSC's experience of developing artists' workshops has given COMPAS a better understanding of the needs of artists who are new to working in the school environment, strengthening COMPAS' approach to preparing artists to work in all of our arts education programs;
- The success of COMPAS arts education programming results in part from COMPAS' development of a standard residency model. By making this model more flexible and including local involvement in shaping AMSC models and programming, COMPAS has increased its commitment to local autonomy and meeting individual communities needs, while renewing its commitment to provide schools and communities with basic guidelines for ensuring a positive artistic experience.

As a result of the AMSC program's focus on listening and learning, AMSC was able to discover new ideas and experiences not originally anticipated. Consequently, COMPAS has increased its commitment to this focus, for the future work of the AMSC program, as well as for new COMPAS initiatives. "Listening and learning" has specifically reinforced long held ideas that:

- A critical component of new and ongoing programming should be the solicitation of input from potential participants and key individuals involved in similar work. This input should be gathered through a variety of sources, including program documentation and evaluation, town meetings, focus groups and one-to-one interviews;
- New initiatives must be flexible early on and be willing to accommodate changes and adjustments as needed.



PART FIVE:
Recommendations
For The Future

What Makes A Successful Model Project

What constitutes a strong collaborative project in arts education in a rural setting? What combination of goals and strategies, people and institutions are likely to ensure that the project will succeed?

Based on the Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC) experience, we offer this list of design features. It is unlikely that any project, however well designed, would include all these components. The most successful AMSC projects, however, did include most of them.

The best projects, we have discovered, are likely to include components that no one has predicted or used before. AMSC learned from each successful project that the energy created by empowering local concerns helps create new strategies. This list, therefore, should be treated as a descriptive beginning, not as a prescription.

GOALS

Overarching the entire project are the desired outcomes: what should happen as a result of the project?

- Students and community members should be provided with arts activities which increase:
 - Their creativity and willingness to experiment and risk;
 - Their knowledge about the arts and critical judgment;
 - Their ability to create art;
 - Their confidence in their artistic abilities;
 - Their ability to connect the arts activities with other disciplines.
- The project should enlarge the ways teachers, school administrators, artists and the community think about arts education.
- The impact of the project should continue beyond the support of outside organizations and funders.
- The project should complement existing school and community arts programs, both in planning and implementation.

RESOURCES

Another concern that arches across the entire project is the combination of resources that best enable project goals. What kind of resources and strategies will help the project to be truly collaborative, inclusive, and locally empowered?

- The project should depend on local expertise and support whenever possible.
- The project should invite and work with local organizations from a variety of community sectors: business, service organizations, cultural institutions, and so forth.

- The project should develop and depend on local leadership.
- The project should enlist the assistance of regional and statewide organizations in areas where the community lacks expertise.

CREATING A COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS

Once a commitment is made to collaboration and inclusiveness, what components can be built into a project to ensure them?

- The collaborative partnership should include:
 - School teachers, administrators, board members;
 - Local artists who are interested in and supportive of local arts education programs;
 - Community, represented by parents, organizations, ethnic groups, and individuals.
- The project's planning process should be inclusive and honor the expertise and values of each partner; it should provide each with opportunities to affect the project.
- The project design should insure regular communication among all partners and with the community at large.
- The project design should provide a variety of forms of access appropriate to the community: meetings, one-to-one contact, surveys, hands-on participation, and so forth.

ENSURING A POSITIVE ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

The bottom line of any arts education initiative is the quality of the experience for direct participants.

What project design features help ensure this?

- The project should establish project goals and artistic goals at the outset.
- The project should schedule sufficient time for planning and administration, and be sensitive to school calendars.
- The project should provide artists and teachers with adequate opportunity to plan and debrief.
- The project should provide artists and teachers with opportunities to work collaboratively.
- The project should schedule a minimum of five artist contacts for each classroom or community group.
- The project should provide artists with fair compensation.

CREATING A LASTING IMPACT

A worthy project should affect participants beyond its scheduled life. What design features help ensure this? The project should:

- Be based on a clear community need;
- From the beginning, plan to sustain itself by exploring long-term fundraising, leadership and project development possibilities;
- Obtain the support of school administration, community members, parents and school board members;

PART FIVE: Recommendations For The Future

- Discover meaningful roles for parents and other community members throughout planning and implementation;
- Work to develop within the community an awareness of the project and its value;
- Integrate project activities with the school curriculum, so they are replicated after the project's end;
- Integrate art projects with other subject areas to demonstrate interdisciplinary possibilities;
- Be committed to evaluation, establish assessment goals at the onset, and gather appropriate baseline data;
- Be flexible and willing to make changes based on evaluation;
- Be feasible, that is, within the scope of what the community can achieve.

DISCOVERING THE UNIQUE

A commitment to rural and local needs implies a search for project features that honor specific aspects of a given community.

For example, one set of project goals and implementation strategies might focus on a unique local value, or a specific landscape feature that has traditionally created community pride, or a particular ethnic mix and its art forms.

When such unique, locally appropriate strategies are created, the community's sense of project ownership increases, collaboration is energized, and more partners stay involved beyond the project planning stage.

Planning The Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

In 1988 when COMPAS and the Blandin Foundation began Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities (AMSC), neither organization could anticipate the projects that would result. Both entered this partnership with a commitment to listening to rural communities and learning about their local arts programming needs, the barriers they faced in meeting those needs and the creative solutions they envisioned for themselves.

As a result of AMSC and the experiences of the participating communities, COMPAS and Blandin have learned a great deal. In developing a plan for the future, we want to apply these lessons, but we also want to continue to learn from the communities involved.

We are suspicious about mandating new methods and solutions. As with AMSC, our future efforts in rural Minnesota must depend on balancing program assistance with local autonomy. We will need to be flexible and sensitive to projects' needs, but also provide sample solutions to aid projects to maximize their impact.

Plans for the next five-year partnership of COMPAS and Blandin have been influenced by this philosophy, by the lessons of AMSC, and by three other activities:

- The internal evaluation of AMSC commissioned by Blandin;
- The contributions of five focus groups who reviewed a draft plan;
- Ongoing and extensive dialogue between COMPAS and Blandin.

Through this planning, a new program is taking shape, The Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative. This program will not be a simple granting program or a standard artist-in-residence program. Instead it will focus on developing partnerships with local communities to create unique projects.

THE RURAL ARTS INITIATIVE

The purpose of the Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative will be to strengthen arts education in twenty-four rural Minnesota sites through the development of long-term collaborative projects that contribute to the viability of their local communities. Planned to begin in January 1994, this five-year program will provide approximately 10,000 students and community members with arts education activities.

To reach these students and community members, the Initiative will work closely with approximately 800 people on project development, including artists, teachers, school administrators, parents and other community members.

PART FIVE: Recommendations For The Future

In selecting sites for the Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative, COMPAS and Blandin will examine existing local leadership, commitment to the arts, support for education reform and community building, and previous participation in related efforts.

Each community involved will be encouraged to develop a unique, well-designed project that includes the components described above in Chapter 27, "What Makes a Successful Model Project."

PROGRAM CONCEPTS AND ACTIVITIES

Like AMSC, the Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative will focus on seven core concepts:

- Rural Schools and Communities;
- Local Artists;
- Collaboration and Inclusion;
- Continuation;
- Listening and Learning;
- Local Autonomy;
- Positive Artistic Experiences.

The Initiative will continue to conduct seven types of program activities:

- Field work;
- Town Meetings;
- Projects in Rural Communities;
- Conferences;
- On-site Support and Assistance;
- Artist Workshops;
- Resource Materials Development.

As a result of the lessons learned from AMSC, however, the Initiative will emphasize three new features:

PARTNERSHIPS WITH STATEWIDE ARTS AND EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS

To strengthen the ability of local communities to produce effective, sustained arts education programs, and to build on the experience of related efforts, the Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative will enlist other statewide arts and education organizations. These organizations will assist the Initiative to provide assistance to projects at conferences and workshops, through the development of resource materials and additional on-site help.

AREA ARTS NETWORKS

To build stronger relationships between rural resources, the activities of the twenty-four Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative sites will be consolidated in eight different networks. Each network will be a "hub" of approximately three nearby communities. The Initiative will begin by selecting one site within each network. Additional communities will be invited to join the process once the initial site has successfully developed a project. When appropriate, the sites within each network will be given opportunities to come together for workshops, sharing and assistance.

NETWORK COORDINATORS

To provide projects with experienced and accessible program assistance, eight to twelve rural Minnesotans—artists, teachers and other community people who were involved in AMSC—will be trained to provide support to projects. A Network Coordinator may, for example, consult with projects to develop a long-range plan, hire an artist, or mediate a dispute between cultural groups. Each Coordinator will work in a specific Network, providing support to all projects developed within that area as part of the Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative.

As the partners did during AMSC, COMPAS and Blandin will monitor the work of the Initiative as it relates to these new program concepts and activities, and make changes in the program as needed. Evaluation will play an ongoing role in this process.

The Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative will continue to work with sites to discover new methods of sustaining projects and to identify new and meaningful approaches for involving community members and parents in projects. As we described above in Chapter 23, "Factors Which Influence Continuation," AMSC found that these two concepts were closely linked. Although some AMSC projects have been able to maintain their efforts, further strategies need to be explored.

MOVING AHEAD

The AMSC program has shown that the arts can play an important role in the educational experiences and community life of the people of rural Minnesota today. It also demonstrates that the arts have a part to play in creating rich and viable rural communities.

AMSC began with the premise that there were working artists in rural Minnesota communities who would be able to teach in their local schools. Such artists, and other rural community resources, are too rarely used and appreciated by most schools. The wide range of projects and partnerships formed through AMSC began to tap these resources and combine innovative approaches to education.

The lasting achievement of AMSC—whether through students writing poems on the shores of Lake Superior, personifying the Minnesota River flowing through Granite Falls, hearing Dakota stories from a tribal elder in Morton, or in Brainerd, carving personal hieroglyphs in clay—is empowerment through the making of art.

In keeping with the missions of both COMPAS and the Blandin Foundation, we approached the AMSC program with a commitment to flexibility, to listening and learning to be responsive to the unique qualities of rural communities.

That same commitment has led to the new features of the Initiative—partnerships, networks, area coordinators. The work of the AMSC projects and other Foundation partnerships establishes a firm footing for the Minnesota Rural Arts Initiative.

The arts are an invitation. They invite us to tell our story and they invite us to listen to the story of those around us. They also invite us to celebrate who we are together. In small and rural communities all across our country, community arts provide a new gathering place, a cultural and spiritual touchstone that is a source of community revitalization and neighborhood revival. In a way, you could say community arts have become the new front porch of America.

*—Patrick Overton, Columbia College,
Center for Community
& Cultural Studies*



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

TABLE ONE: Summary of Project Information

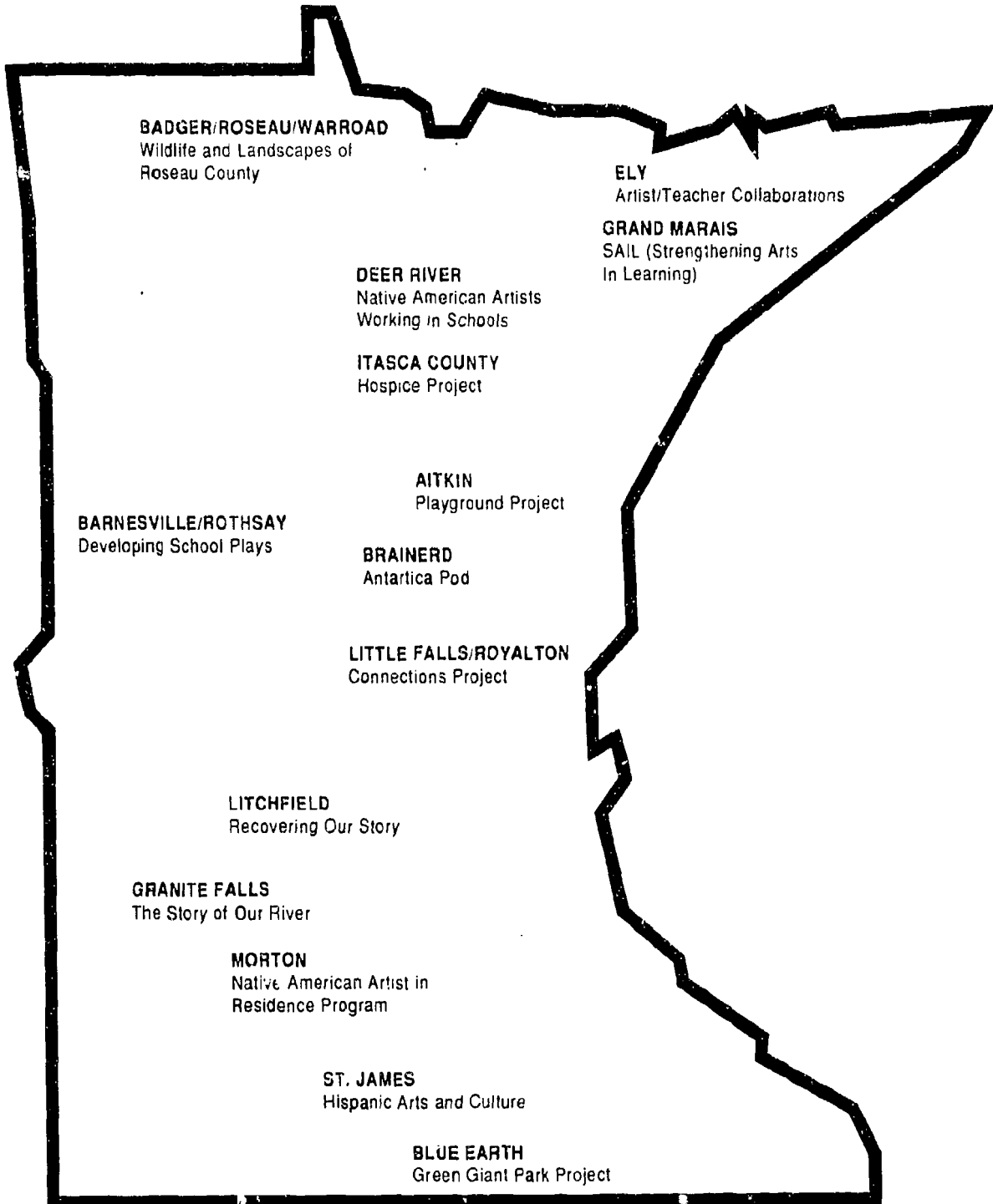
Project Community	Schools	Teachers	Students	Artists	Others	Artistic Disciplines	Contact hours per student	Project length (years)
Badger/Roseau/Warroad	3	22	627	4	5	theater, visual arts, writing	7.5	1/2
Barnesville/Rothsay	2	5	105	4	4	dance, theater, scene design	12	2
Blue Earth	2	5	115	1	8	visual arts	32	1
Brainerd	1	4	175	20	26	dance, music, crafts, visual arts, writing	40	3
Deer River	3	7	441	12	9	music, crafts, storytelling,	1.5	4
Ely	2	4	150	4	5	visual arts, writing	5	2
Grand Marais	3	22	350	14	3	writing, music, visual arts	10	3
Granite Falls	1	6	145	6	28	music, theater, writing	14	1
Itasca County	3	0	—	2	52	visual arts, writing	3	1-1/2
Litchfield	3	36	1,155	2	142	writing, theater, storytelling	4	1-1/2
Little Falls/Royalton	6	25	49	14	12	dance, music, theater, crafts, visual arts, writing	6	3
Morton	1	2	50	5	6	storytelling	4	1
St. James	3	37	1,320	7	5	writing, dance, music, visual arts, crafts	1.5	1/2
Totals	33	177	4,682	96	303		average 11	

TABLE TWO: Summary of Project Budget Information

Project Community	COMPAS staff time *	COMPAS Financial Allocation	Other Local Funds	Total Budget	Project length (years)
Badger/Roseau/Warroad	low	5,146	1,000	6,146	1/2
Barnesville/Rothsay	medium	2,597	1,300	3,897	2
Blue Earth	low	3,450	0	3,450	1
Brainerd	low	11,486	500	11,986	3
Deer River	high	10,682	6,000	16,682	4
Ely	low	2,048	0	2,048	2
Grand Marais	medium	7,800	200	8,000	3
Granite Falls	low	4,653	440	5,093	1
Itasca County	low	5,240	400	5,640	1-1/2
Litchfield	medium	9,351	0	9,351	1-1/2
Little Falls/Royalton	high	10,631	0	10,631	3
Morton	medium	1,836	30	1,866	1
St. James	high	8,703	300	9,003	1/2
Totals		83,623	10,170	93,793	

* low = less than 50 hours, medium = 50 to 149 hours, high = 150 to 400 hours

Map of Model Project Sites



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APPENDIX

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About the Authors

Mary Altman is the Director of Artists in Minnesota Schools & Communities. She has worked in the field of arts education as an administrator, teacher and museum educator for nearly fourteen years. For the last five years she has traveled throughout Minnesota, meeting with artists, teachers and community members and assisting them in planning and implementing local arts activities.

John Caddy is a poet and teacher who regards both activities as central to his life. His honors include the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the Minnesota Book Award, the Bush Artist Fellowship, the Loft-McKnight Award and the Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship. A founder of the Minnesota Poets-in-the-Schools Program, he has been working in arts programs and training teachers in English education and environmental education for thirty years. His books include *Eating the Sting* and *The Color of Mesabi Bones*.



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Arts and Education

The arts are an invitation. They invite us to tell our story and they invite us to listen to the story of those around us. They also invite us to celebrate who we are together. In small and rural communities all across our country, community arts provide a new gathering place, a cultural and spiritual touchstone that is a source of community revitalization and neighborhood revival. In a way, you could say community arts have become the new front porch of America.

*Patrick Overton,
Columbia College,
Center for Community
& Cultural Studies*

Somehow, all together, we had come in touch with something so very large, ancient, and profound—the story of our particular place with its human tragedy, beauty and comedy. We had dared to step out of our skins and the limitations of time to become a tree, a Dakota grandma, a bum, a magic deer. We remembered the peace pipe, a little of what it means, enacting its return when the people come together to save the river.

*Florence Ducey, writer,
"The Story of Our River,"
Granite Falls*

Collaboration...will be most effective when it discovers abilities unique to each participant. In strong collaboration, we ignore what is commonly held; if we focus there, the result will be dull. Instead, we search out difference, and treat some of those differences as cherished strengths. For each participant, the discovery of strengths he or she can bring to the collaboration also suggests appropriate roles. What gives a strong collaboration its power is the energy of the edge, the vibrant interface between yin and yang.

*John Gaddy,
"Collaboration & Inclusion
in ANIC Projects"*

ISBN 0-927663-22-8

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