

a fine **FACTA**



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MADD About Town

Editorial

Bonnie Cohoe



It is not often you hear the F-word bantered around conferences, but I heard it many times during the “Fear No Art” conference in Edmonton—except that in this case *F* referred to fantastic, fabulous, fun and far out! Indeed, “Fear No Art” was a great experi-

ence that offered interesting workshops and time to reconnect with old friends and make new ones. I hope you enjoy and are inspired by the photos and conference reports from “Fear No Art.”

The theme that emerges from the workshops at “Fear No Art” and from the articles included in this issue is that the fine arts truly do make a difference both in the lives of the students who study them and to the community at large. And you, the teachers of fine arts, are the ones who help your students discover their talents and develop the skills, knowledge and appreciation to express their personalities, their experiences and their creativity.

Teachers of the fine arts are diverse, creative, committed to providing quality experiences for their students, and rigorous in examining the theory, place and delivery of arts instruction. It was wonderful to cohost the conference with the Canadian Society for Education Through Art, thereby getting leading-edge research on the roles, effects and delivery of arts education.

The message from our new president, David Fettes, reminds us that the future of fine arts education in Alberta depends in part on our readiness to advocate for policies and programs that benefit our students in response to forces and philosophies that have the potential to cause great harm to the quality of the curriculum.

Andy David, Marta Kedves and Tammy Watt have submitted thoughtful articles that prompt reflection on the importance and dimensions of arts education. I am grateful that they took the time to compose and submit these articles, and I hope that many of you will also be willing to prepare and submit articles on your special fine arts experiences for the upcoming issues of *a Fine FACTA*. We have the article by Andy David because someone who is aware of his work recommended that I contact him. If you are aware of someone whose work would be worthwhile bringing to the attention of fine arts teachers, please contact them or contact me—it is so rewarding to receive contributions to this journal. The deadline for the next issue is March 1, 2013. I look forward to receiving your submissions.

The final F-word that comes to mind is *fifty!* Our Fine Arts Council turns 50 in 2013. Like any milestone birthday, we will celebrate it in a big way, so we are looking for feats that would be fitting for the 50th anniversary in fine Calgary, as our Conference 2013 committee fuels up!

Bonnie Cohoe is no stranger to either teaching art or to Calgary, having grown up in that city, though she has also lived in Halifax, Montreal, Saskatchewan, and other places in Alberta. After life changes, including marriage and children,

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she has returned to her origins. Bonnie inspires, encourages and guides students as they create works of art that combine imagination, skill, knowledge and individuality. Students in Ms Cohoe's previous classes have won local, provincial and national awards. Her passion helps others find joy in personal

expression through art in a variety of media. She looks forward to renewing and making new connections with colleagues in the Calgary area and across the province in her role as editor of Fine FACTA. Bonnie has chosen the phrase Nondum in Auge (not yet famous) to inspire her journey and that of her students.



President's Report

David Fettes

Welcome to another exciting school year! Even though this is my 20th year of teaching, I always get excited at the start of a new school year. This year, however, brought a new challenge, one faced by many teachers of the fine arts. For the first time in my career, I was not teaching drama—I was to teach Social Studies 20 and 30. Social studies is my background, but it is a very different subject nonetheless. Three weeks into the new school year, we had a whole-school campout (we are a small school of approximately 100 students), and what did the students want? Drama! The drama workshop had 15 student participants and many interested observers, including my administrators. They approached me afterwards—now they want to look at how we can establish a drama program for the next school year. We already have a drama club that meets at least once a week, with up to 25 students who want and need their drama fix.

This story serves to illustrate that we must support our arts at every opportunity. The government proposed a new curriculum three years ago that would have gutted our arts programs: the CTS model of “any place, any time, anywhere” does not work when we need to be together and in the moment. Rightly, teachers saw this threat to our curriculum and protested. Now there is word that government is ready to look at all curricula, not just the fine arts. We need to be vigilant and ensure that the educational needs of our students and teachers are not threatened again. Please be a voice for our programs and our students. I assure you that the Fine Arts Council will be an active participant in this conversation.

Now, with the political message out of the way, to Conference 2012. We had an amazing conference in

Edmonton at the end of October. Along with our colleagues from the Canadian Society for Education Through Art (CSEA), more than 300 people attended sessions at Victoria School of the Arts. The school has been transformed to support all aspects of arts education; the renovations allow students to work in amazing, state-of-the-art facilities. Thanks to our conference committee for all their hard work and dedication, especially Gayla Worden, now our past president, and Judy Smallwood, our Edmonton regional president, who, along with their committee, spent many hours putting together this conference for us. The support we received from the administration of the school was also greatly appreciated. The sessions were inspiring and gave us new techniques; for example, it is worth aspiring to have a great animation lab. Next year's conference, in Calgary, promises to be just as exciting. We would have loved a mountain location for our 50th annual conference, but none are available on our scheduled dates. Our plan is to return to the mountains in 2014.

Finally, this is your Fine Arts Council! We need to hear your voices. We want to know your needs. Is there professional development that you need? A workshop in a particular technique? New resources? The executive is here to serve the needs of members. This is your council, so please do not hesitate to contact me or any of our subject-area specialists if we can help you. Consider us your professional learning community. If you have expertise to offer others, please contact us. I encourage you to get involved. I look forward to serving as your provincial president for the next two years and continuing the work of our council.

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David Fettes was born and raised in Scotland. After moving to Edmonton, he obtained an education degree in social studies and drama. He was the founding president of the FAC's Edmonton regional council and, in addition to his current presidency, has also served the FAC as provincial secretary, Calgary regional president, and provincial president and past

president. He moved to Calgary in 2001 and currently teaches Social Studies 20 and 30 (and, covertly, drama) at Calgary's Alternative High School. David has just completed a master's in educational studies and convocated on November 21. He and his wife, Cindy, have two rambunctious wiener dogs named Winston and George.



Conference 2012



Dr Miriam Cooley and Gayla Worden



Next Steps



Next Steps: Every Victim Matters, with Jan Brown and Mary Ann Dobson



Next Steps

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On Board for the Journey



Next Steps



Movement Session



Technology Session



Art Session

Opening Address

Tami Dowler-Coltman

Good morning and welcome to Victoria School of the Arts, where students from kindergarten to Grade 12 discover a second home, where those who have attended never lose the sense of belonging and where we want you to feel most welcome for the duration of this weekend—two days to be engaged, connected and inspired.

My name is Tami Dowler-Coltman and I am proud to be the principal of Victoria School of the Arts.

Less than a month ago, Jordan Kaminski, a grad from 2010, dropped in to visit. We casually said, “Jordan, we are hosting a national conference of arts educators at the end of the month and the conference title is ‘Fear No Art’ ... and we just need a song.” Jordan’s fearless response was basically “What a good idea.” Within the week, he had a first draft; while he was in Vancouver to complete work on his upcoming CD, he laid down a track, which he then shared with some of our dancers, and in this way Jordan’s “good idea” became a collaboration among young Vic artists. Jordan arrived at 7:30 this morning to meet the dancers and I ask you to join me in welcoming them to the stage. I celebrate their fearless embrace of art!

Our theme, “Fear No Art,” both challenges and invites. It is a joyful reminder of our deepest human urge to create and, in doing so, make meaning that can move us forward. It is also a powerful call to action that dares us all to free our hearts, to test every boundary that lies in our way, to break through walls that surround our minds and boldly state all that we are.

Here at Victoria School, where for the past 26 years students have fearlessly embraced their artistic impulses with passion, “Fear No Art” is a mantra that is lived

daily. But I have to believe that it resonates just as deeply in your own schools, on your campuses, and in the classrooms, performance venues and galleries where your students will fear no art.

As educators, it is our responsibility to ensure that we, their teachers, fear no art in order to pave the way for them to follow. This weekend provides us with a wonderful opportunity to dream and to focus on the possible rather than the impossible.

I know that you do not all teach in schools of the arts, but I am often reminded of the challenge presented by a very wise woman who works with our staff, when she asked, “What would you teach if you had no books, no materials, no resources?” It is a great reminder that all we truly need is the courage to meet our students face to face and wait for a question to emerge. And that question, along with our fearlessness to engage and inquire, will be enough.

Again, let me say how proud we are to open our doors to you. We are fortunate to have undergone a recent renovation; however, the heart of Victoria School has never resided in the physical space, but in the bold and courageous hearts of our young people. Though this is their PD day and the majority of our 1,700 students are at home today, as you move through the building over the course of the day, you will encounter a few of our Victoria artists engaged in their creative process. Actors and dancers have been invited to respond to the conference theme and without hesitation have embraced the fear. Visual artists have moved their canvases out of their studios for you, but only to the temporary spaces that might provide them with a new and vital perspective as they embrace the fear. Musicians may also be found playing or composing or

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weaving harmonies with their voices. These students are here to welcome you, but in truth, they would probably be here anyway because their love of the arts is fearless.

Once again, let me thank you for your deep commitment to arts education. It is the endurance of that

commitment that ensures that every student in every classroom in every school will have the opportunity to learn in, through and about the arts.

That is why we're here—to celebrate every good idea and engage in the courage to fear no art.



Address to the Conference

Jacquie Fenske



Good evening, everyone. As a former drama teacher I was thrilled when Minister Klimchuk asked me to welcome you this evening. It feels like coming home to be surrounded by teachers who know how important the arts are in shaping the lives of our

students and, in turn, society.

On behalf of Premier Alison Redford, Minister of Culture Heather Klimchuk and all of my colleagues at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, it is my pleasure to be here to bring greetings this evening.

As teachers you are helping our young students develop skills to make their way in the working world. I am betting that your situation is similar to what mine was like, when students stick around after class because you provide them with a safe forum to express themselves. In fact, you probably have to kick them out of the classroom later in the evening so you can go home and plan lessons!

I don't have to tell you how important the arts are in inspiring our future leaders. I'm speaking to the way you allow their spirits to soar by giving them breathing room and allowing for that expressive voice to be heard.

Art often starts the conversation. I've watched with interest as a situation unfolded in the community I once represented as a municipal councillor. It happens

at least once in every community that is home to a public art gallery—the exhibit that gets people up in arms. I'm glad I didn't have to be a part of the deliberations, but the exhibit did engage the community, which is what we expect art to do.

You are teaching students to understand the world, to examine it, to envision a future for themselves and their children and to try to make that vision a reality. You are teaching them the skills of good citizenship.

There were 79,000 people employed in Alberta's arts and culture sector in 2011. Culture connects us to the bigger ideas: to our history, our traditions and the world. It is the magical ingredient that brings together all of the other things that we learn and gives them meaning. It makes life worthwhile. I feel that a community that embraces the arts has come of age.

On behalf of all Albertans, I want to thank you for the role you play in moulding our students. I know it takes countless hours and unending energy on your part, but remember—no human masterpiece has ever been created without hard work and dedication.

Thank you.

Jacquie Fenske was elected as MLA for Fort Saskatchewan in 2012, after having served as a municipal councillor for Strathcona County. Prior to her political career, Jacquie spent years operating her family's group of companies, Fifendekel, and was a teacher with Edmonton Public Schools. A third-generation Strathcona County resident, she has deep roots and a passion for the community. She and her family live southeast of Josephsburg, near Elk Island Park.

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Her love of the arts is reflected in numerous theatrical endeavours, including her involvement with the Canadian Youth and Drama Association. Currently, Jacquie is a member of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship,

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and is government liaison to the board of directors of Alberta Innovates–Health Solutions.



Drama Report

Kerry Martens

As I picked up my custom-made bag of swag, I noticed the name of the 2012 conference. “Fear No Art.” That was exactly what I planned to do in the next two days. There was plenty of entertainment lined up for the next couple of evenings, though for the time being I was much more interested in being around people who would share my passion for the arts and learn from each other.

Since I work at an arts-centred learning school, I thought I would make my time worthwhile at this conference and sign up for some sessions that integrated the arts with core subject matter. First on my list was “A Beginner’s Guide to Bridging the Gap Between Arts and Science.” This workshop incorporated dance and art with workable art and teamwork. We were to make a drawing, which was to become something that was not only 3-D but would have to function in the many names of science. The picture on the right represents a drawing that was moulded from wire—me holding an egg on my tilted head.

My other sessions for the two days included “Digital Applications in Intermediate/Senior Visual Arts,” “Between Two Worlds—Art and Science” (where I learned that everyone can draw!), “Creating Comics to Teach Visual Literacy Skills in the Language Arts Classroom,” “Puppet Movies” (I loved the hands-on puppet making, where I met the talented Carolyn Jones), “What’s the Point! Counselling the Math-Art Relationship” (again with the talented Carolyn Jones), “Keynote Speakers—Journal Fodder Junkies” (“What’s fodder?” you ask) and “Playing with Shadows and Lighting Design 101” (a great refresher and humbling experience).

I brought back a wealth of experience and engaging devices for the core classes I teach. And please take my word for it—there were many, many, many more types and styles of workshops to take. It was difficult to choose, and I could spend at least two more days taking these courses if they were offered again.

On Thursday evening we hiked down to the Art Gallery of Alberta, where we soaked in the wonderful colours of the world, performance art and, of course, visual art. My husband and I even took the opportunity to purchase a couple of Christmas gifts from the gallery gift shop. On Friday evening, the talented a cappella group HOJA graced our presence with audio art while we ate and drank, just moments away from our hotel room. After a long day of workshops on Saturday, we had just enough time to change and be whisked away to



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the black-tie masquerade, where we were entertained by a local band, won door prizes and, of course, wore masks for the Halloween Saturday.

Thank you, Team Fine Arts, for your true dedication and advocacy of the visual and performing arts (my favourite). “Fear No Art” was exactly what I and many other thespians did. Thank you to the Victoria School for hosting; Victoria School is such an amazing venue for all facets of the arts. Last, but not least, thank you to CSEA for your collaboration with the ATA FAC. Hope to see you all in Calgary for our 50th-anniversary conference!

Kerry Martens is the FAC’s drama representative, a drama specialist and mother of two. She works as a teacher in Calgary at Sir John Franklin School, an arts-centred learning school, and is a theatre enthusiast extraordinaire.



Presenting our Fine Arts Council

Dance Report

Kelly van Sluys



The “Fear No Art” Fine Arts Council conference was held on October 25–27, 2012, and was an amazing success. As the dance representative for the Fine Arts Council, I was privileged to spend the two days of the conference in the dance studios of Victoria School of the Arts, in

Edmonton, in the company of good friends and fellow dance instructors.

After the very first session, my body was already exhausted and felt as though it had already participated in an entire dance conference, but my brain was geared up and ready for more. “The Art of Bellydancing,” presented by Suzy Quendack, a professional Middle Eastern dancer with more than 15 years’ experience, was an intense workout and made us realize we could use muscles we didn’t even know we had. The brief choreography allowed participants to embrace their tribal tendencies with hip shimmies and fluid body undulations.

A number of sessions were led by teachers from the Victoria School, including “Connecting with Jazz Dance Pioneers,” a session that explored the elements of different jazz techniques and the relevance of these jazz dance masters in today’s dance studios. This was followed by “Horton-Based Modern Dance Technique,” which allowed participants to break boundaries and emphasized flexibility, strength and coordination of the body.

One session that I found truly empowering, and left me standing taller and deeply focused on my surroundings, was “Elemental Body Alignment System” (EBAS). Scott Putman, the creator of EBAS, guided a series of stretching and strengthening exercises for the whole body to increase flexibility, range of motion and core strength. One of the basic principles of EBAS is initiating and anchoring movements from the pelvis, which helps a person find a deeper understanding of the body’s integrated movements. Scott introduced the session by explaining how he developed EBAS while recovering from a dance injury—he had to re-educate his body to sustain core strength by using a number of different exercises. A great deal of partner work gave the participants a greater understanding of each movement and allowed for discussion about how teachers could use this practice in their own school classes. EBAS is a wonderful cross-training exercise, not only for different dance styles but also for running, swimming, golf and weight training.

During the second day of the conference I attended the “Body Language” session. The workshop looked at the composition process; by using basic human gestures, the participants were active in the creative process for an improvised dance piece. We were privileged to have an amazing group of students from Victoria School perform a routine that was created in the same manner, and participating dance teachers were able to ask questions about the ins and outs of choreographing a large-group dance piece.

The two-day conference ended with a journey into the world of “Visual Journals,” a fantastic tool to add to any teacher’s toolkit, whether it is used in a performance-based

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course or any other subject area. Participants had the chance to examine samples of student work and to create their own visual-journal entry. This is an excellent way to make reflection meaningful to students, and I will definitely use it in my upcoming classes.

“Fear No Art” was a fantastic, stimulating conference—I always find it a joy to be surrounded by other passionate people. Until next year ...

This is the fifth year that Kelly van Sluys has been the Fine Arts Council dance representative. Dance has been her passion since she was very young. Kelly feels privileged to be teaching the dance program at the Foothills Composite High School/Alberta High School of Fine Arts, in Okotoks, Alberta. Every day is a joy, and she loves to share in her students' excitement every time they learn a new dance move together. She can be reached at vansluysk@fsd38.ab.ca.



Arts-ful Features

Collaboration with iHuman

Laurie Petersen

In the fall of 2012, art students at École Secondaire Sainte Marguerite d'Youville (ESSMY) undertook a project to help struggling youth through a partnership with iHuman, a nonprofit, charitable organization that works with youth in downtown Edmonton who are struggling with homelessness, mental illness and addictions. The students created messages on recycled digital projector bags that had been donated by their school board, Greater St Albert Catholic Schools. Art teacher Pam Wilman mentored the students as they created messages with acrylic paint, using text and images to convey what they would like to say to youth who are battling mental illness, drug addiction and homelessness. Pam also contacted iHuman and gave them thirty bags for youth taking part in their programs to paint.

Eighty-two bags, created by youth from iHuman and students at ESSMY, were displayed in the school's foyer during November. Leadership students at ESSMY and their teacher, Louise Shervey, created an awareness of iHuman at the school and collected items to fill the bags. Staff at iHuman distributed the bags at Christmas to youth in the inner city.

To learn more about iHuman, please see their website, www.ihuman.org.

Pam Wilman teaches Art 7–12, and Laurie Petersen teaches foods and fashion studies to students in Grades 7–12 at ESSMY. They enjoy collaborative community projects that promote arts education.



Arts-ful Features



A Time to Celebrate: The Grand Opening of Westmount School in Okotoks

Stacey Swanson, with Sherri McEwen and Jim Kenney



Westmount School in Okotoks celebrated its opening on October 15, 2012, with events that included many, from students in the school to special guests and celebrities.

The school was honoured to have some very special guests joining us for the celebration. Rick Fraser,

MLA for Calgary-South East, brought greetings on behalf of the Government of Alberta; Danielle Smith, MLA for Highwood, also attended; and Deputy Reeve Ted Mills represented the Municipal District of Foothills. The Town of Okotoks was represented by Mayor Bill Robertson, who is also a former, long-time teacher in the division, Councillor Ray Watrin, and Municipal Manager Rick Quail. The representatives from Alberta Infrastructure were Christa Seepish, Manager-South,

Learning Facilities and Alternative Procurement Branch, Capital Projects Division; and Kimberly Murfin, facilities technologist.

Foothills School Division 38 representatives included board chair Diana Froc; board vice-chair Laurie Copland, who represents Okotoks; trustees Doug Gardner and Christine Pretty; and the following members of our senior leadership team: Superintendent Denise Rose, Deputy Superintendent Del Litke and assistant superintendents Stacey Meyer and Drew Chipman.

This learning community event, with a strong fine arts emphasis, began as guests entered Westmount to be greeted by a Swahili song sung by the Grade 7 choir. This was followed by "A Day in the Life of a Wolf," a video filmed by Grade 8 and 9 students, with an original script written by Karla Adolphe, in collaboration with Grade 8 and 9 students.

Next was a tour of the school and special presentations in several locations. Grade 8 and 9 volleyball students performed a cheer in the gym. During the visit to the kindergarten area, the kindergarten students did

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the Westmount Wolf Howl. This was followed by the Grade 1s reciting a Halloween poem. The tour moved upstairs to the Grade 6 class, who took the song “Rolling in the Deep,” by Adele, and used the melody to sing about the Seven Traits of Highly Effective Students, accompanied by Joanne Loewen playing guitar.

The Grade 5s entertained our guests with some African drumming. The Grades 7, 8 and 9s held a gallery art walk that included appetizers and sparkling apple juice. Guests were encouraged to wander around the room and view the many art projects.

The Grade 7 class had written a poem on the power of starting over and starting anew, which they read in chorus. The Grade 4s then burst onto the scene with a flash mob. The tour continued down to the Grade 2 pod, where students performed a number of songs and poems.

The grand finale included all of the Grade 3 students circling the guests and singing “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” with guitars played by Bob Ellis and Tammy Masson.

Stacey Swanson is vice-principal of Westmount School in Okotoks; she can be reached at 403-995-4824, ext 40753; the school’s website is <http://westmount.fsd38.ab.ca>.



Visual Arts for All: Reflections on the Value of Visual Arts Education

Marta Kedves



The importance and usefulness of visual arts education have been debated for a few decades. With the rapid advancement of technology, visual literacy becomes one of the most important skills for students to master; therefore, education in the visual arts is a necessity for the 21st-

century student. As a visual arts specialist, I experience the benefits of visual arts education and so do my students. Visual arts education fosters the development of creative problem-solving skills and visual literacy, which are necessary in today's fast-paced world. Visual arts education helps students explore, investigate, repeat and understand techniques and use of art materials—skills that are transferred to other school subjects. Visual arts education is highly effective because it is a cumulative process that promotes the discovery of art techniques through critical thinking, socialization, and motor and problem-solving skills. Visual arts provide an opportunity for discovery, joy of learning and aesthetic

experiences. Visual arts teach students to effectively use visual communication, which is at the core of 21st-century technology. Visual arts and visual literacy are universal languages of expression which, when learned early, empower students to express themselves and connect with the surrounding world. Students who understand the visual arts can decode visual messages and use them effectively to communicate. Visual arts build students' literacy skills, knowledge, connection-making abilities, character and self-esteem.

Visual arts education should be embraced by all for both the rich experiences it offers as a learning tool and the vast opportunities it provides for enhancing the quality of life in the 21st century.

Marta Kedves, BEd, MEd, is a teacher and visual arts specialist at St Basil School, in Calgary. Born in Transylvania, she began her visual arts education at the age of seven, when she won a competition in drawing on asphalt. She attended the Fine Arts High School in Nagybánya [now known as Baia Mare, in Romania], where she was trained in the disciplines of drawing, painting, sculpture, graphic art, ceramics, art history and aesthetics. She continued her education at McGill University and earned a bachelor of education with an art major; she then earned a master of education in school administration from Gonzaga University, in Spokane,

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Washington. She has been involved in the field of visual arts all her life, having worked as a textile designer before becoming a teacher. Since 1997, she has taught art and other subjects in Calgary. Her work has been published in the McGill Journal

of Education (1997), Looking Back—Commemorative Issue (1994) and Mosaic—Anthology (1994). She has participated in several solo and group exhibitions in Europe, Montreal and Calgary.



How Do the Arts Impact My Life?

Tammy Watt



Two years ago, when I became the art representative for the ATA Fine Arts Council, I established a professional learning community for visual arts educators. One of our group's goals was to arrange an activity to promote the value of the arts. To this end, we organized a provincial

art exhibition for students and teachers, which we titled "How the Arts Impact My Life." We invited artists to submit artworks in response to that question. Participating artists were also asked write a personal narrative of 150 words describing themselves, their artworks and how the arts impact their lives. We also wanted to fundraise for Alberta's children, so we selected a charity and sold artworks for \$150 each.

On May 24, 2012, principals, teachers, professional artists and citizens from across the province attended our opening reception. Sixty-two paintings, accompanied by narratives that expressed how the arts impact our lives, were exhibited. Paintings, all 24 by 24 inches, ranged from portraits to abstracts, from landscapes to fantasies. The quality of the paintings was impressive, especially considering that our youngest artists were only 12 years old. An exhibition catalogue was given to

each participant; the catalogue contained reproductions of the artists' artwork and narratives. The event concluded with the sale of 27 paintings, which raised enough money to send four sick children to Disneyland for a day.

The success of this event surpassed my expectations in several ways. First, I was astonished by the artists' responses to the question, "How do the arts impact my life?" One artist said that the activity of art was an anchor of personal identity, while others stated that the arts contributed to their success as mature and creative people. Many artists said that art provided them with dreams, encouragement and the wings to fly. One said that art was like her free psychologist, and another stated that art was an oasis of unlimited possibilities. Some participants noted that art helped them notice simplicity and beauty, while others felt that art encouraged youth to think and learn about themselves (Watt, Lewis and Kaminski 2012).

There is no shortage of research on the benefits of fine arts education. For example, Creedon (2011) stated that cognitive research reveals that a well-designed "arts education program enhances the emotional well-being of children" (p 34). Yet what resonated with me more than Creedon's research were the words of our participants, who stated that when they are depressed, the arts pick them up. Likewise, Grytting (2000) declared that immersion in the arts enriches one's imagination and thus enhances one's ability to deal with the challenges of relationships. More compelling than Grytting's

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research was the view of a participant who suggested the arts permit us to open our imagination, explore our humanity and experience connections with others. Lastly, Perrin (2008) stated that arts education supports skills such as the evaluation of information and ideas and the creation of new ideas. Louder than the words of Perrin's study are the words of the participant who asserted that art is a creation of the mind that permits us to communicate imaginative qualities and grow as human beings (Watt, Lewis and Kaminsky 2012). I concluded that research is interesting; however, its impact is not nearly as meaningful as the views of students. More than ever, I am convinced that high-quality arts education programs are essential in our schools.

Another way in which the event exceeded my expectations was in the quality of artwork submitted. It was evident that skilled teachers had worked hard to help their students think through and within their chosen media. Every medium presents unique demands for the artist, and to use it well, he or she must learn to think within it. For example, carving soapstone and building a sculpture out of clay require different cognitive tasks (one process is subtractive, while the other is additive), and oil paint has textural qualities that cannot be created with watercolour paint. Gaining knowledge in any area requires, at the very least, thinking within a medium (Eisner 1998). Teachers who participated in this event gave their students an opportunity to exploit the possibilities of a medium and, in the process, coached them to think in new ways. Creating artwork is not just an activity that provides a route for students to pass an idea from their head to their hand and into the material—through the process of representing, students were able to discover and invent. They committed to a concept, edited, shared and uncovered new ideas, all of which contributed to the development of their cognitive capabilities (Eisner 1998).

Finally, I realized that this event helped students become more qualitatively intelligent. Artists continuously make decisions about the relationships that emerge in their work. For example, painters must determine whether the temperature of a colour is too warm or if the edge of an object is too sharp. Making decisions about the organization of qualities is not dependent upon a formula such as in spelling or arithmetic, whose correct answers can be proven. Artists' judgments are made in the absence of a rule;

they rely on feel. Artists must pay attention to subtle differences within their work, take action and then appraise the consequences of their choices. They revise, reject, sift and transform until the composition of qualities has a rightness of fit. Given the absence of a formula, judgments about rightness are dependent upon somatic knowledge (Eisner 2002). Artists must use their "senses, perception, and mind/body action and reaction." In doing so, they become more qualitatively intelligent (Kerka 2002, 1). These cognitive abilities are developed by working in and through the arts and can be applied to anything that is created, such as a written story, a musical composition or a scientific theory.

I would like to briefly discuss the relationship between our art exhibition, "How the Arts Impact My Life," and a document the Government of Alberta recently published called *Framework for Student Learning: Competences for Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial Spirit* (Alberta Education 2011). The framework is divided into seven competency groupings, each of which describes "a set of attitudes, skills and knowledge that is drawn upon and applied to a particular context for successful learning and living" (Alberta Education 2011, 3). For the Creativity and Innovation competency grouping, the document states that Alberta students should "appreciate the creative work of others, value aesthetic expression and demonstrate initiative [and] imagination" (Alberta Education 2011, 4). For our exhibition, students took the initiative and committed to producing and donating a work of art that expressed their ideas, insights and values. During the exhibition's opening reception, I witnessed our young artists sharing their creative processes and inspirations with one another. They discussed their concepts and inquired about each other's techniques. The document further states that students should "accept mistakes as part of the creative process" and persevere "when faced with obstacles" (Alberta Education 2011, 4). I watched as, week after week, one of my Grade 8 students struggled through the process of painting her portrait. Despite her tears, she never gave up. Instead, she continued to make adjustments to her work until she was finally satisfied with her creation.

Under the Communication competency grouping, the document states that students should "express themselves clearly and effectively and in appropriate ways" (Alberta Education 2011, 4). For our exhibition,

Arts-ful Features

the artists expressed themselves lucidly and confidently within artistic and literary contexts. Students represented their ideas in imaginative and symbolic ways using a variety of mediums; their works were creative, detailed and aesthetically pleasing.

Finally, under the Lifelong Learning, Personal Management and Well-Being competency grouping, the document states that students should “use their talents and passions to contribute to their communities” (Alberta Education 2011, 5). Participating artists spent many hours creating artworks that they generously agreed to donate to raise funds for Alberta’s sick children. Students saw beyond their own interests to the needs of the community. They made a commitment, followed through and thereby raised enough money to give four sick children the trip of a lifetime. The students involved in our exhibition demonstrated the competencies of “engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit” (Alberta Education 2011, 6).

Another document recently published by the Alberta government, *Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans*, discusses “the vision of what an educated Albertan might look like in 20 years” (Alberta Education 2010, 16). On reading the document, I envisioned my art students and the artists who participated in “How the Arts Impact My Life”; learners who partake in quality art programs and events *are* the educated Albertans in 20 years that the document describes. Art students are encouraged to discover, to pursue their passions and to join events that will help them successfully move into adulthood. Art students are coached to think critically and creatively and to use technology to learn, communicate and innovate. They demonstrate an attitude of optimism as they grow, learn and work cooperatively with others. Art students contribute to the world around them and build relationships through open-mindedness and fairness. They demonstrate respect and compassion for others and assume responsibility for their emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual health. Art students are tenacious. They strive for excellence and earn the respect of others through hard work and personal success.

How do the arts impact your life? I have provided evidence that the fine arts support *today’s* learners in developing the competencies of engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit. Quality fine arts programs and events led by passionate educators who possess a deep, broad knowledge are

supporting Alberta Education’s vision of an educated student, and they are doing it now. I am happy that Alberta Education has a vision of what an educated Albertan might look like in 20 years. I am disappointed, however, that fine arts education is not recognized as a leading contributor to developing in our youth *today* the qualities and abilities set forth in *Framework for Student Learning*.

On a final note, please join Calgary and area art teachers and their students in celebrating the ATA’s second annual Fine Arts Council Art Exhibition, which poses the question, How do the arts help me grow? The exhibition takes place from February 13–22, 2013. Our opening reception is on Wednesday, February 13, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM at the Calgary Board of Education, 1221 8 Street SW, Calgary, Alberta.

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Tammy Watt is a teacher an artist and a small business owner. She considers these roles to be interrelated and equally important aspects of her creativity. Tammy has been teaching

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art to preteens and teenagers for the Calgary Board of Education for 15 years.

She strives to create challenging and personalized art lessons to inspire youth to become creative problem solvers, critical thinkers and stewards of our culture. Tammy is committed to promoting the arts as a discipline of rigour that inspires us to think about who we are, where we come from, what our purpose is and where we are going. In her art practice, she

exhibits regularly in Alberta and Ontario and is represented by AyrSpace Gallery, in Ayr, Ontario. Tammy works with acrylic paint and takes pleasure in the challenges of design fundamentals and colour relationships. As a business owner, she is committed to creating an environment of belonging for artists and art enthusiasts alike. Tammy has a BEd with a major in fine arts from the University of Calgary and an MA in education (curriculum and instruction) from the University of Phoenix, in Phoenix, Arizona.



How the Arts Impact My Life Exhibit

Making Films, Making Graphic Novels: Two Experiments in Visual Thinking

Andy David



It's been a good three years for visual arts at the Chicago Teachers' Center (CTC). We are an outpost of Northeastern Illinois University, a professional development unit of the College of Education dedicated to school improvement through collaborations between

the university and the Chicago Public Schools. Our programs are many and wide-ranging. I have been lucky enough to join a team in developing summer film institutes for high school students that take place on our main campus and, subsequently, to propose a model for "visual thinking," with implications for curriculum development units. In addition to film, one of the units involves the creation of graphic novels.

Visual Thinking

Visual literacy and *media literacy* are not new terms in education. Overall, they refer to the ability to interpret and express oneself and one's learning through visual means and media that play an important part in 21st-century communications. *Visual thinking* has also received much attention, though the meaning and application of this term varies. While our interests include thinking *about* what we're seeing, as in art criticism, or visualizing what we're thinking, we have a particular interest in the compelling phenomenon of actually thinking through visual processing. We know that seeing occurs not in the eyes, but in the brain, and that different regions of the brain are accessed for verbal cognition than for visual/spatial awareness. A dramatic application of this dates back to as early as the 5th century BC, when Simonides developed a mnemonic device for memorization called *the Method of Loci* (often referred to as "memory palaces"). To use this technique, one imagines a familiar physical space, such as a museum, and mentally walks through it, depositing

information at various locus points. To retrieve the information, one revisits the space. This method is used today by many champions of memorization contests (O’Keefe and Nadel 1978, 389–90).

The Summer Film Institutes

This subject has come to our attention as we have observed the work of students in the summer film institutes. These institutes are two-week, hands-on immersion experiences in which students are exposed to and carry out every aspect of making short films, including initial concept; writing; acting; creation of storyboards; onsite production with camera, lighting and sound; editing; music; titling; and poster design. In small groups, they participate in full days divided into two sections: story workshop and media workshop. The story workshop provides opportunities for participants to reflect on their personal experiences, interests and concerns in order to arrive at the content for their final films. The media workshop provides hands-on time to explore media, equipment and processes through which the content can be expressed visually. Throughout the two weeks, an emphasis is placed on group process and working as a team. Film production is particularly conducive to this because it calls upon a wide range of skills and interdependent tasks.

This marriage of reflective content-based thinking and visual exploration has proven to be quite successful, but an interesting phenomenon has piqued our interest: some students were quite inhibited in the story workshop and had trouble focusing on meaningful themes, yet in the media workshop these same students took immediately to such things as web-based image searches. By zeroing in on their images, they were actually arriving at and refining what content was important to them, which resulted in their being more proactive in the creative decision-making of their teams. Could this be an example of a different form of cognition?

Authentic Voice

Another important lesson for us involved the parameters we set for structuring their final films. There was a significant difference in how we approached this between the first and second years of the institute. In the first year we felt it would be important to clearly

frame the project so that they could work within understandable limits. To accomplish this, we gave them the assignment of making public service announcements. This allowed them to determine important social issues in a familiar format. While they embraced serious issues, such as domestic violence and stereotyping, we concluded in our debriefing and planning of the second institute that this may have effected the opposite of what we intended. It is precisely because the format is familiar, with many existing examples, that students’ pieces tended to be derivative and emulated what they had already seen. Furthermore, they did not strike as deeply into their personal experiences as we might have liked.

Some of our staff discussions following this experience focused on the powerful concept of *authentic voice*. This term is widely used but remains elusive. A search based on the term yields interesting discussion. One example contrasts it with *personal branding*, a method of defining one’s self-representation according to the needs and expectations of others. On the other hand, an authentic voice expresses unique views that can be personally, even politically liberating (Harquail 2009). Another example deals with moving beyond the personal biases and prejudices that frame our thinking and uncovering more personal, experience-won truths that are buried beneath them (Woods and Dunlap nd). Yet another emphasizes self-acceptance, overcoming fear of judgment to find deeper truths, overcoming disempowering beliefs to speak from a place of felt power, and a willingness to be vulnerable and let real feelings come through (Noelle nd).

For the second institute, we struggled to come up with a required format that would be more likely to elicit authenticity. We finally decided to leave the format completely open, the only requirement being to limit the films to two minutes. This is extremely challenging, but the students rose to the occasion. The open format freed them—indeed, impelled them—to be innovative. One group focused on dysfunctional families and wove together interviews, images of family from popular culture, and the invented visual metaphor of a tree from which family pictures suspended by strings were cut and let fall to the ground. Another group went through an interesting creative process involving tough decisions and sacrifice. The subject they settled on was “The Unseen.” In an apparent paradox, how would they visualize this? As they struggled to find and agree upon a focus, their project expanded in both visual material and

content. Indeed, staff were concerned that they would not be able to pull it together. At the eleventh hour they decided to concentrate on a single powerful image, a tight close-up of people's eyes as they verbalized what the unseen meant to them. They had turned away from days of work in order to deliver the essence of their message. To see examples of student work, visit <http://tiny.cc/film2010> and <http://tinyurl.com/2011film> [editor's note: websites accessed November 30, 2012].

Frame-by-Frame Thinking

Based on observations of these and other projects, we began to expand our thinking to embrace other disciplines and areas of CTC's work. One of our most successful endeavours is our annual young adult literature conferences (YAL). Each year we select a small number of youth-oriented books with the intent of supplying one copy per student to teachers who commit to developing curriculum units to teach the book. The conference offers a wide range of suggested methodologies to apply to this task. To address the challenge of integrating visual thinking with traditional texts, we presented a model of frame-by-frame thinking. For example, the reader identifies key points in the text that constitute the essence of the material. Once identified, each point is assigned a frame, and visual content is assigned to each frame. This is a standard process in the film industry with the preliminary creation of storyboards. We asked the question, Would such a visual approach enhance the reader's ability for organization of thought, aptitude for critical analysis, and capacity for expression when returning to text-based works? The comic book and its big brother, the graphic novel, are other formats that use the frame-by-frame approach.

The Inquiry-and-Design Approach

For over ten years, the inquiry-and-design approach has played a central role in many aspects of our work at CTC. This approach is seen as a cyclical process through which learners find personal meaning, explore a wealth of content material, and construct knowledge that can be conveyed through products that are presented to an audience, often leading to further refinement

as the cycle continues. The cycle consists of six clearly defined components:

1. **Frontloading**—this begins the cycle by drawing upon pre-existing knowledge that is familiar and of interest to the students and sets the stage for a project that has personal meaning.
2. **Asking questions**—inquiry begins by asking open-ended questions in the area of interest that invite research.
3. **Gathering information**—research takes the form of gathering information and resources that shed light on the topic and with which students will participate in constructing knowledge.
4. **Constructing knowledge**—learners construct knowledge as they arrive at what they believe to be true and worthy of sharing with a larger audience. Sharing their learning requires making their knowledge visible.
5. **Making knowledge visible**—this can be achieved through a variety of media. Film and graphic novels are just two of the legitimate forms to meet this objective. Final products are submitted for presentation and feedback.
6. **Presentation and feedback**—in more rigorous cases, this feedback is used to refine the product by repeating all or parts of the cycle.

Note that the parts of the cycle do not take place in a strictly linear sequence. Any of the components may be called upon throughout the process.

Graphic Novels

In order to explore the potential of graphic novels for teaching academic content, we teamed up with an educator who had expertise in US history, particularly World War II. Together we decided to create a graphic page that tells a story of this historical period. A typical classroom activity employing the comic book form involves creating frames and drawing pictures to convey content. One of the problems with this process is that the final product is limited by the student's drawing ability. More important, the student does not use images to explore and arrive at content; rather, he or she must know the full story before applying visuals. Searching for images from Internet sources, on the other hand, invites inquiry and exploration of content through visual means.

When we first met with our history expert, he said that he was having trouble deciding what story to tell

about such a vast subject as World War II. He considered telling the story of a Holocaust survivor. But how could we find images to follow such a person through his experience in a series of frames? This is where our ideas about visual thinking came in. What if we simply conducted a Google image search to see what stories emerge through the images we find?

First we entered the search phrase *World War II*. As expected, this yielded images that represented a wide range of content, and further refinement of the search was necessary. Refining a Google search is an interesting lesson in textual thinking. What exactly are we looking for? In one of our sessions during the film institute, students said they were interested in the subject of beauty. A search using this word yielded images that were almost exclusively from the glamour industry. This is not what they were looking for. How about *natural beauty*? Same result! So we entered *beauty in nature*. Now we were looking at images of natural phenomena. We were getting closer. Someone suggested the phrase *cultural beauty*, and we found images of interesting faces from around the world, of every age and from every walk of life. This refinement process helped us discover and focus on what was most meaningful.

In the case of the World War II search, we followed up by entering the phrase *Adolph Hitler* and, after that, *Nuremburg Rally*. Surveying the images, we decided to create a page titled “Hitler’s Rise to Power.” One image depicted Hitler standing on a podium before a huge and regimented mass of people. We placed a speech bubble over his head and asked whether we could find actual text from one of his speeches. The history buff went off in a quest for this content. At one point he called and said, “Is the image from the 1936 or 1937 rally?” Furnished with the answer, he found the appropriate text and it was entered into the frame.

Here again, however, too much of the story was known in advance. If students were to take on this project, it might look very different and prove to be a perfect application of the inquiry-and-design approach. The initial search might yield images that interest them but the students might not know their significance. They could examine each image and form their impressions, for instance, of Hitler’s character. Further inquiry could take place by using the option of accessing the page from which the image is extracted, where there is much to learn. Instead of consulting published history

books that offer prepackaged interpretations of historical events, students would identify source material from which they could form their own interpretations. This would also be an opportunity to practise the assessment of the legitimacy of the source. For example, one image in our search depicted Hitler in a swimsuit with a surfboard. It was from a site that was clearly superficial and satirical and did not supply any useful content. Finally, the process of sequencing the images would begin to transform the story. In the film institutes, we believe we may have discovered that film can be considered a language with a vocabulary and syntax of its own, where *vocabulary* translates to composition and *syntax* to a sequencing process employed in the planning or editing of content.

While verbal cognition or textual thinking continues to dominate most educational experiences, it is the marriage of this with visual thinking and a focus on presentable constructed knowledge that is most likely to engage the whole learner and maximize the potential for critical thinking and clear expression. In our work, we have come to believe that this will become increasingly important as visual content and media are employed to meet challenges and overcome language barriers in international and intercultural exchange. This work represents simple beginnings with important and wide-ranging implications.

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Andy David is an educational project associate at Northeastern Illinois University. He assists in the development of curricula and programs for students of Chicago Public Schools, with a particular emphasis on college and career readiness. Most recently he has dedicated himself to film education and other visual arts.

HITLER'S RISE TO POWER!

FOLLOWING WORLD WAR ONE GERMANY'S ECONOMY WAS IN **SHAMBLES**.

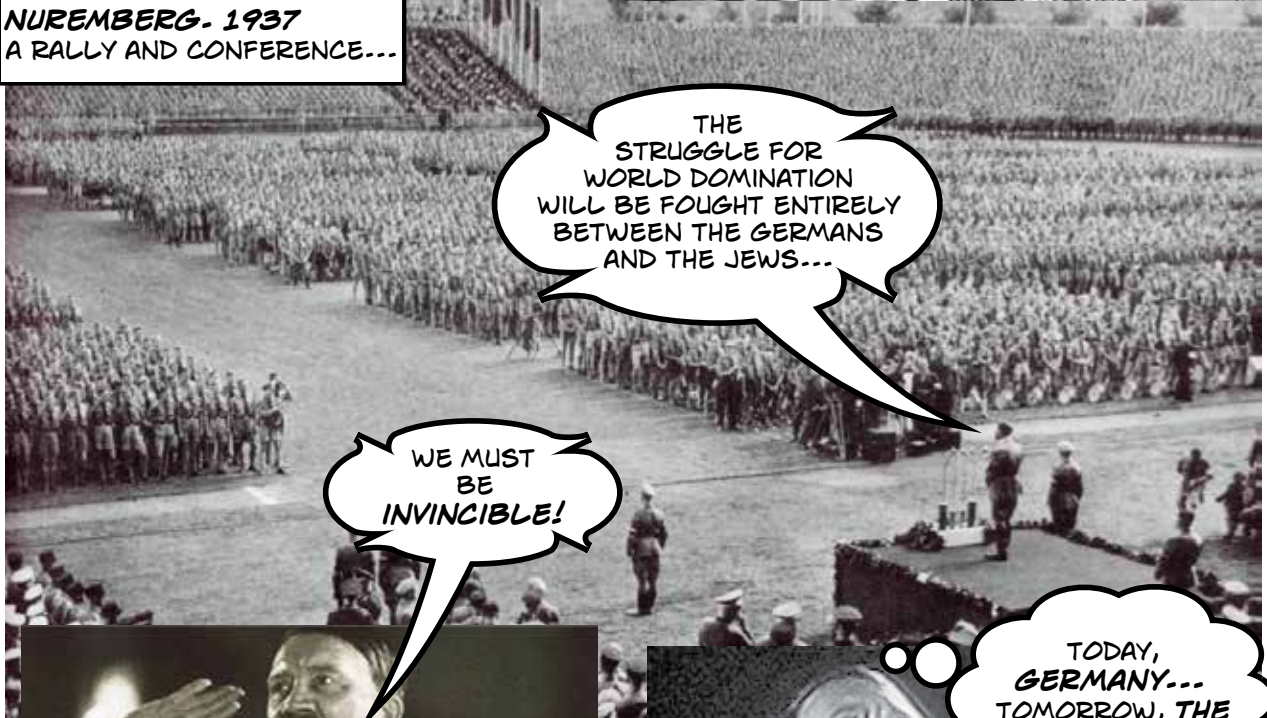
HIS POWER **RISING**, SOON HE COMMANDED A **RUTHLESS** AND **ELITE** POLICE FORCE.



EVERYONE WAS LOOKING FOR A **SAVIOUR!**



NUREMBERG. 1937
A RALLY AND CONFERENCE...



THE STRUGGLE FOR WORLD DOMINATION WILL BE FOUGHT ENTIRELY BETWEEN THE GERMANS AND THE JEWS...

WE MUST BE **INVINCIBLE!**



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TOMORROW, **THE WORLD!!**



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Deadline: April 1, 2013 for artist residencies taking place in the 2013-2014 school year.

How to Find An Artist: For assistance finding artists that provide school residency programs in theatre, dance, music, literary, visual arts, crafts, film & video please contact the Arts Touring Alliance of Alberta www.artstouring.com/yad.php or the ATA Fine Arts Council. Schools may choose to work with any professional Alberta artist on or off the listing.

Contact: Paul Reich, Arts Development Consultant (780) 415-0287, toll free by first dialling 310-0000 or paul.reich@gov.ab.ca.

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Grades K–3, 50 minutes without intermission

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Bring science to centre stage with this inventive and interactive program combining key topics from the Alberta science curriculum with core symphonic repertoire. By observing, experimenting and interpreting the evidence, students use their skills of science inquiry to explore fundamental topics like pitch, volume, and instruments of the orchestra.

Dates: May 7, 8, and 10, 2013, at 10:30 AM and 1:30 PM (50 minutes in length)


Thank you to ATCO Gas, the grades K-3 Education Concert Series Sponsor 

Grades 4–6, 1 hour without intermission

Music of the Night Sky

Blast off with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra to discover more about our solar system. Propelled by some of the most exciting music written for orchestra and guided by the Alberta science curriculum, this concert takes us into space to explore the motions and characteristics of stars, moons and planets, and helps us appreciate the beauty and mystery of the night sky.

Dates: February 11, 12, and 19, 2013, at 10:30 AM and 1:15 PM (1 hour in length)

Thank you to Lehigh Hanson, the grades 4–6 Education Concert Sponsor 

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Catch a sneak-peek of the ESO at work in our open dress rehearsals. Utilizing a live blog feed with symphonic performance, students are engaged in directed listening and an introduction to the historical context of great contemporary and classical symphonic works. As a special treat, special guest composers, conductors and musicians stop by before the show and during intermission to discuss their art form and provide mentorship to aspiring students. This is the ultimate experience for die-hard musicians!

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Arts-ful Features

Education Programs

Grades 4–6, Program runs from January to April

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-

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We want all schools to experience the ESO. That’s why we created Upbeat!, a grant program that helps schools with modest budgets attend the ESO’s education concerts and open dress rehearsals. With support from a generous, anonymous donor, we may be able to provide you with complimentary tickets and transportation.

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Specialist councils' role in promoting diversity, equity and human rights

Alberta's rapidly changing demographics are creating an exciting cultural diversity that is reflected in the province's urban and rural classrooms. The new landscape of the school provides an ideal context in which to teach students that strength lies in diversity. The challenge that teachers face is to capitalize on the energy of today's intercultural classroom mix to lay the groundwork for all students to succeed. To support teachers in their critical roles as leaders in inclusive education, in 2000 the Alberta Teachers' Association established the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee (DEHRC).

DEHRC aims to assist educators in their legal, professional and ethical responsibilities to protect all students and to maintain safe, caring and inclusive learning environments. Topics of focus for DEHRC include intercultural education, inclusive learning communities, gender equity, UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network, sexual orientation and gender variance.

Here are some activities the DEHR committee undertakes:

- Studying, advising and making recommendations on policies that reflect respect for diversity, equity and human rights
- Offering annual Inclusive Learning Communities Grants (up to \$2,000) to support activities that support inclusion
- Producing *Just in Time*, an electronic newsletter that can be found at www.teachers.ab.ca; *Teaching in Alberta*; *Diversity, Equity and Human Rights*.
- Providing and creating print and web-based teacher resources
- Creating a list of presenters on DEHR topics
- Supporting the Association instructor workshops on diversity

Specialist councils are uniquely situated to learn about diversity issues directly from teachers in the field who see how diversity issues play out in subject areas. Specialist council members are encouraged to share the challenges they may be facing in terms of diversity in their own classrooms and to incorporate these discussions into specialist council activities, publications and conferences.

Diversity, equity and human rights affect the work of all members. What are you doing to make a difference?

Further information about the work of the DEHR committee can be found on the Association's website at www.teachers.ab.ca under *Teaching in Alberta, Diversity, Equity and Human Rights*.

Alternatively, contact Andrea Berg, executive staff officer, Professional Development, at andrea.berg@ata.ab.ca for more information.

Submitting to *A Fine FACTA*

Add the goal of being published to your teacher professional growth plan and submit something to *A Fine FACTA*! Submissions may include the following:

- Practical classroom tips, lesson plans and rubrics
- Resource reviews
- Movie and book reviews
- Personal reflections on classroom experiences
- Stories and poems by teachers, students and student teachers
- Student artwork

Please include a short (three- to five-sentence) biography and your address so that a copy of the issue in which your work appears can be sent to you.

Submit signed permission forms for student work or photographs of students.

Send submissions to Bonnie Cohoe, 24 Signature Place SW, Calgary, AB T3H 3A1; e-mail thecks@shaw.ca

Permission to Print Photograph/Student Work

Your child has submitted a piece of work or appears in a photograph that we would like to print in the next issue of *A Fine FACTA*. *A Fine FACTA* is a journal that goes to teachers across Alberta who are members of the Fine Arts Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

By signing below, I give permission for my child's work or photograph to be considered for publication in an upcoming issue of *A Fine FACTA*. This permission form will be forwarded to the journal editor.

Parent/guardian name _____ Signature _____

Student name _____ Signature _____

Teacher _____ Signature _____

School _____ School location _____

Notes to teachers:

- When submitting student work, please include the Permission to Print form with all signatures completed. Send the student work/photograph and the permission form to the editor of *A Fine FACTA*, Bonnie Cohoe, 24 Signature Place SW, Calgary, AB T3H 3A1; e-mail thecks@shaw.ca.
- Work may be submitted electronically to thecks@shaw.ca. Please ensure that the permission form is mailed to the address above.

Fine Arts Council Executive 2012/13

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