

Factors that influence school board members when eliminating, expanding, or maintaining
curriculum in visual arts education

by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in
Education

Approved: Two Semester Credits



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University of Wisconsin-Stout
December, 2005

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Title: *Factors That Influence School Board Members When Eliminating, Expanding, or Maintaining Curriculum in Visual Arts Education*

Graduate Degree: Master of Science in Education

Research Advisor: Mr. Ron Verdon

Month/Year: December, 2005

Number of Pages: 56

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5th edition

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find factors that influence school board members when expanding, eliminating, or maintaining curriculum in their schools, especially visual arts education. Data was collected through a survey completed by school board members of the CESA 11 district in northwestern Wisconsin during the fall of 2004.

Through years of research, the presence of visual arts education in the public schools has shown to make positive impacts on the mental development and growth of children. Overall academic performance and critical thinking skills are also strengthened. Both teachers and schools are benefited by the presence of visual arts education in their schools. Though positive research exists about visual arts education, the discipline is not recognized as basic such as math, science, or English.

The researcher identified school board members as key elements in determining the amount and quality of visual arts education being offered in the Wisconsin schools. At the federal level, standards have been developed for visual arts education, but the discipline is not federally established as basic like mathematics, science, or English. Given this, individual states are then left to adopt the federally *suggested* standards created for visual arts education. In Wisconsin, the basic, core disciplines are adopted and mandated with standards. Visual arts education is mandated, however, the standards developed for the discipline are not adopted. Because of this, the standards for visual arts education are considered to be voluntary. They are created to be used as guides for visual arts educators. As a result of visual arts education being unrecognized as a basic discipline in Wisconsin, the local school boards make decisions about the discipline. Compared to math, science and English, visual arts education is in more of a vulnerable position when decisions are made at the local level.

The researcher determined that if factors could be identified that influence school board decisions about curriculum and visual arts education, then teachers, parents, students, and art advocates would have a better understanding on how to approach, cooperate, and proactively reach school board members. In efforts to maintain visual arts education in the Wisconsin schools, this knowledge could also help foster foundations and relationships for the future.

Acknowledgements

The journey of writing this paper has been especially rewarding. To each of you who have helped me along the way, I am deeply appreciative and sincerely thankful for your insight, knowledge, kind words of support, and advice. To you, I say *thank you*.

You are all extraordinary people.

Mom and Tom

My dearest girlfriends, Kari and Lauren

My friend, Mrs. Jody Engeldinger

My dedicated research advisor, Mr. Ron Verdon

My research professor, Dr. Amy Gillette

My mentors and very special friends, Pat and Charlie Wimmer

The very insightful librarian, Mrs. Jana Reeg-Steidinger

&

My 'editor', Dr. Bill O'Neill

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Profound benefits have been found through contemporary research about students who have the opportunities to participate in visual arts education in their schools. Research has revealed that participation in visual arts education can deter delinquent behavior of at-risk youth, creative and critical thinking thrives through the exposure, students learn to develop a positive work ethic, and skills necessary for life such as problem solving, decision making, and the ability to start and complete tasks are fostered. It has also been found that students who participate in the arts for at least nine hours a week, for a one year period, show academic improvements. The students benefiting from participation in visual arts education are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair, and three times more likely to win an award for attendance at school (“Highlights of Art Education Research”, n.d.). According to Doyle and Cundiff (2000), the Educational Testing Service found that students who participated in the arts out-performed their peers on the Scholastic Achievement Test in the math and verbal sections. The Arts for Academic Achievement program in the Minneapolis, Minnesota public schools looked to research the benefits of integrating visual arts education into regular curriculum and how it affects not only student behavior, but teacher behavior as well (“Arts for Academic Achievement”, n.d). This program, launched in 1997, found that teachers and their instruction techniques have been impacted by the integration of arts into their teaching methods. For instance, the presence of visual arts education increased teacher perceptions about students’ intelligence, leadership, and motivation. With an integration of the arts, instruction was seen as more child focused. Through this program, teachers expressed that they became facilitators of learning rather than mere

messengers of knowledge. The study also found that teachers were more creative with their methods of instruction and they embraced revision, improvement, and reworking opportunities to produce better results (“Arts for Academic Achievement”, n.d.). This successful program is now being modeled in schools throughout greater Minnesota.

Though important, insightful, and thorough research on the benefits of visual arts education have been discovered and examined, the discipline remains in the margins of state and national school curricula. Several reasons explain why this is so. Some explanations highlight the influence of historical time periods on education, others speak to a familiar educational trend, initiated in the early eighties, of the standards-based accountability movement (Chapman, 2005), while others express attitudinal rationales.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the goal of education could be seen in two ways. First, education served as a way to create citizens who could intellectually interact in a democratic society. Secondly, education helped students build skills that would prepare them for the workforce after high school (Doyle & Cundiff, 2000). This preparation for skills post high school could be seen during the 1950’s ‘space race’. In response, the educational agenda in America began focusing on math and science disciplines in the schools. It was viewed that if we had students who were participating and achieving in the fields of math and science, the U.S. would be preparing citizens for careers in technology and science. Visual arts education was not seen as a discipline that could aid in this educational focus and agenda (Doyle & Cundiff, 2000). This push for the basics and standardizing education has re-appeared yet again, in the underpinnings of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001.

The federal government is again pressing standards and assessment as measures of how schools and students are performing. It is high stakes learning where higher test scores result in

more educational funding (Doyle & Cundiff, 2000). As a result, schools are spending more time on subjects such as math, science and English. By 2014, improvements must be seen in these disciplines according to NCLB mandates (Chapman, 2005). It is also known that to raise test scores of certain subjects, schools will narrow curriculum if they are unlikely to appear on state tests. Subjects such as art and music are those that are feeling the effects of this (Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Halvorson (1999) states that the arts community was shown where visual arts education was placed among the basic disciplines in 1990 at the National Governors Association conference. The findings from the association cut art from one of the educational goals. The goals stated that students should demonstrate competency in English, math, history, geography, and science as they leave grades four, eight, and twelve. These goals would mobilize art education associations to develop standards for visual arts education and determine that the created standards had to be measurable and assessed much like the basic disciplines were. This meant that visual arts education would be taught with standards similar to the core disciplines. However, these standards would then need to be adopted by state and local school districts. These standards would also need funding for the assessment procedures. Due to visual arts education not being recognized at the state level as a basic discipline, these standards do not have to be adopted in Wisconsin. They are voluntary standards that educators can use as guides in their curriculum. Because visual arts education is not a recognized basic discipline and has standards that are only voluntary, it is the local school boards who are given the decision power on the state of visual arts education curriculum.

Another explanation why visual arts education has not been adopted alongside the basics is that it is not viewed as a way to stimulate the economy. Parents may feel that their children will not be able to make a living from a career in the arts. According to Kaagan (1990), art

education is seen as dealing with emotional intelligences rather than cognitive intelligences. It is then damaging to the earning potential of future workforce employers. In reality, the nonprofit arts industry generates 134 billion dollars per year in total economic activity in the United States. Non profit arts organizations spend 53.2 billion with an additional 80.8 billion spent by those who take in the arts. This ultimately supports 4.9 million jobs related to the arts. This is a greater percentage of the U.S. workforce than is employed as accountants, lawyers, physicians, or computer programmers (Americans for the Arts, 2002).

In 1994, visual arts education made positive strides as a discipline. The discipline was included as an integral part of the curriculum in the Goals 2000 and Educate America Act, but only one percent of the 500 million dollars allocated under the act went to visual arts education in 1998. This is because the federal government allocates or earmarks the majority of the funds to subjects such as math and science first. Given this limited federal support, it clearly leaves state and local officials to decide on how the funds are used (Doyle & Cundiff, 2000).

If visual arts education is to have a proper place in our schools, it is imperative to look into local school boards to find what influences them in their decision making processes regarding curricula in their schools. There are more than a quarter million Americans who serve on nearly 14,500 school boards in 40,000 city and counties in this country (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), 1995). Finding the factors that influence decisions of expanding, eliminating or maintaining visual arts education will be very valuable knowledge for those who support visual arts education. Parents can be very influential to school board decisions regarding visual arts education, but many times their concerns go unheard. Even affluent school districts, when budgets get tight, are vulnerable when school boards attempt to balance their budgets (Doyle & Cundiff, 2000).

Major decision authority regarding visual arts education rests in the hands of local school boards. This knowledge is pertinent and beneficial when determining the factors that influence them most when they decide to expand, eliminate or maintain visual arts education. Art is our past, our culture, our legacy. Historian Eugene Ferguson says, "Pyramids, cathedrals, and rockets exist not because of geometry, theories of structure or thermodynamics, but because they were first a picture-literally a vision-in the minds of those who built them" (as cited in NASAA, 1995, p. 8).

This research paper strives to objectively find factors that influence those in charge of curriculum decisions. Several of the influences were revealed through surveying approximately 280 school board members in the CESA 11 district of northwest Wisconsin. There are a total of twelve CESA districts in Wisconsin. CESA stands for Cooperative Educational Service Agencies and was legislated in 1965. The agencies provide educational services that may not be easy for districts to provide on their own ("The CESA Story", n.d.).

Statement of the Problem

Despite evidence showing the positive benefits visual arts education creates for the student, teacher, and school as a whole, visual arts education programs continue to sit in the margins of curricula nationwide. Decision making power rests in the hands of the local school boards when it comes to disciplines that are not recognized as basic subjects. This research will look to find the factors that influence school board members in regard to expanding, eliminating, or maintaining visual arts education programs in their schools. This research will help establish the factors that influence local school boards when it comes to visual arts education. This is one approach to researching the decision making processes that our local school boards face in

regards to visual arts education. Data was collected via a survey sent to Wisconsin school board members in the CESA 11 district of Wisconsin during the fall of 2004.

Research Questions

The following questions were intended to achieve an objective understanding of the factors that influence school board members most when making curriculum decisions. There were three main questions of inquiry the researcher had proposed among a total of nine pertinent questions:

- 1.) What factors influence you most when cutting a program?
- 2.) What factors influence you most when expanding a program?
- 3.) In making a decision to expand or eliminate a visual arts program, do you consider educational data on visual arts education as a factor in the decision making process?

Definition of Terms

The definition of visual arts education according to Martin Rayala (1995) in a *Guide to Curriculum Planning in Art Education*:

Visual arts is a broad category that includes the traditional studio arts such as painting, drawing, and sculpture; communication and design arts such as film, television, graphics and product design; architecture and design arts such as urban, interior, and landscape design; folk arts, and work of art such as ceramics, fibers jewelry, works in wood, paper, and other materials. (p.23)

In addition, under the Wisconsin Model for Visual Arts Education, there are four domains created by the Department of Public Instruction. Those domains are: visual learning, art and society, design arts, and studio arts (Rayala, 1995).

Assumptions

It was assumed that school board members who answered the survey did so candidly, honestly, and without influence of any other individuals other than themselves during completion.

Limitations

The goal of this study was to survey Wisconsin school board members from one CESA district in Wisconsin and receive honest feedback from them. However, this is a sample reflective only of those school board members who completed the survey. It should not be seen as representative of all Wisconsin school board members.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In America, visual arts education history dates to the early 1800's. The present state of visual arts education has come a great distance in the nation's schools since that time. Visual arts education benefits students, teachers, and the school as a whole. The skills developed in the visual arts education environment are valuable and sought after in the workforce. Post high school benefits gained from participating in visual arts education prepare students to enter college or the workforce.

The first portion of chapter two will highlight the beginnings of what would eventually become visual arts education in America. The peaks and valleys of the discipline throughout the course of time will be displayed in this history of visual arts education section. Next, federal and state standards of visual arts education will be covered and an explanation of the reasons visual arts education rests in the hands of the local school boards will be offered. The final focus of chapter two will bring to light the benefits visual arts education creates for children, schools and the workforce.

History of Visual Arts Education

Before the nineteenth century, visual arts education was unknown in Europe or America. It was during the 1800's, as Hobbs and Rush (1997) suggest, that educational reform included the teaching of drawing. Horace Mann was influential in this area of educational reform. He traveled and performed research in European countries where they were already teaching drawing. When he returned to the United States in 1884, he published his observations in a volume called, *The Common School Journal*. Up until this time, the instruction of drawing was randomly dispersed and isolated. This push for drawing instruction came under pressure due to

international competition. It was an attempt to keep up with world competitors who were designing quality products. It went so far that in 1870 Boston's business leaders came to the Massachusetts's Board of Education and pushed for the creation of the Drawing Act of 1870.

A year later in 1871, an English drawing master familiar with the British drawing system developed ten years prior to the Drawing Act, accepted the position of art supervisor in Boston. His name was Walter Smith and he played a pivotal role with the beginnings of American visual arts education. He eventually became the first head of the Massachusetts's Normal Art School and would be the first individual to systemize art in the schools (Hobbs & Rush, 1997).

As the push for industrial drawing in education became an issue of the past in America and Europe, the child centered movement spurred new interest for educators on how to educate children. The foundations of this movement were based around the needs of the child rather than merely subject matter. Involvement with direct contact of the physical world was also an important aspect of this movement (Hobbs & Rush, 1997). The child centered movement reached its height in the late nineteenth century (Smith, 1996). The roots of the movement stretched across the Atlantic, but G. Stanley Hall led the trend in the United States into the later part of the nineteenth century. In 1891, his publications stated that children were more cognizant with pictures rather than words. Simply, Hall was interested in the role art played in the clinical sense rather than art for its aesthetic value. In the end, his ideas of education and art laid groundwork for visual arts education at the time. At Johns Hopkins University, Hall had a student by the name of, John Dewey. In 1894, Dewey was writing and publishing his theories on education. He had a substantial following in the 1920's where the term "progressive education" would be coined by him. He had an impact on visual arts education where terminology such as

creativity, child as artist, and expression, began to appear in popular educational literature due to his published research (Hobbs & Rush, 1997).

In 1947, Victor Lowenfeld published a highly influential book called, *Creative and Mental Growth*. Lowenfeld felt that modern society could subdue natural creativity. He advocated for specific age appropriate strategies that helped to create student's self-expression. He also believed that art in education had a purpose and that was to contribute to human development (Greer, 1997). He later developed a psychologically based description of the stages of artistic development. Lowenfeld stated that if a child did not receive art in school, his or her growth into a normal, healthy adult could be harmed. According to Hobbs and Rush (1997), this tone set by Lowenfeld helped support the ideas of the newly developed National Art Education Association in 1949. However, world events during the 1950's would change the thoughts and direction of the educational system. The successful launching of the Russian space satellite, Sputnik, would aid in the change of supporting more of the basics such as math and science. In efforts to keep visual arts education from sliding more into the margins of curricula, visual arts education literature began publicizing that it could augment the math and science disciplines and enhance creative problem solving (Hobbs & Rush, 1997).

The 1960's brought a re-examination of Lowenfeld's early findings and thoughts about visual arts education, but art education scholars felt he left out integral parts about art such as the history and criticisms of it. This was a time of rediscovery and research regarding visual arts education. Aesthetics and perception were the topics of several doctoral dissertations at the time. In 1966, Ralph Smith, launched the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, but it was a seminar at Penn State University in 1965 that influenced the idea of aesthetics in visual arts education. The seminar would produce the *Penn State Papers*. The overall findings suggested that, like any

other discipline, visual arts education should possess a structure where it also includes art history and criticism. This was deepening the description of the discipline and moving it beyond just the production of art (Hobbs & Rush, 1997).

However, it was back to the basics by the mid 1970's. The push was for more quality in the schools and support of the core disciplines. As art educators saw this influence pushing visual arts education into the margins of curricula, they saw a strong need to draft a rationale for visual arts education to be basic alongside math, science, and English. Unfortunately, the early 1980's brought a separation of visual arts education from the basics once again. Public schools were feeling severe budget cuts nationally. Many art teachers lost their jobs throughout the country. The infamous Proposition Thirteen in California highlighted this situation. The proposition was initiated to reduce property taxes, but the results caused a significant number of the state's public school elementary art teachers to lose their jobs (Hobbs & Rush, 1997).

As a result of this downward turn, an upward direction came about for visual arts education through persevering ideas of W. Dwaine Greer, an art educator. He was an advocate for visual arts educators in California and he would eventually develop what is known as Discipline Based Art Education or DBAE. It was in 1984 when he published his principles of DBAE through the National Art Education Association. The principles were about content in curriculum. The content was to be based on four disciplines. They were: aesthetics, studio production, art criticism, and art history (Greer, 1997). According to Greer (1997), DBAE was meant to adapt to the already existing school practices and curricula. It was also to be taught in the same ways as other disciplines with formal curricula. Greer's model of visual arts education pushed for the interrelation of all disciplines which would then be supported by a written curriculum. However, Greer's new model and approach to visual arts education was not met

without resistance and acceptance. Art educators felt that by integrating disciplines along with visual arts education would take away the importance and respect of the discipline (Greer, 1997).

During the 1990's, outcome statements written by state boards of education reflected the principles of DBAE. Parallel to the publishing of the outcome statements, textbooks on art and art appreciation increased at amounts not observed since the turn of the century. Most recently, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, highlighted that visual arts education should be viewed equally to other core subjects in educating students (Hobbs & Rush, 1997). This act produced national standards created by the National Art Education Association (Halvorson, 1999). Those standards aimed to ignite state education departments to adopt and reflect the standards in a similar light. The difficulty with the adoption of standards rests in a monetary dilemma at the local level. For local districts to be able to do this, funds need to be available to conduct assessments of the standards. However, assessment creates the need for more teachers and increases the amount of classes that need to be offered. Without funding, none of this can happen. Kaagan (1990) stated that local school district officials alone turn policy into practice, but also added that the hope for change sits in the hands of societal institutions, parents, and educational professionals.

Educational Standards at the Federal and State Level

After DBAE was introduced, the standards movement was growing and becoming more prevalent. Standards specify what students should know, what they should be able to do, and determine how well students must perform ("Defining Academic Standards", 1997). As Greer (1997) suggested, it has been one of the most important currents in school reform. The movement has led to laws that mandate or promote the development of standards in various subjects. It was in the early 1970's that the movement began to surface, but when *A Nation at*

Risk was published in 1983, the movement was further ignited. Eflund (1990) stated that this publication was a way for the Reagan administration to place blame on the schools for the nation's lack in world market competition. The fifties showed us technology competition and the late seventies and early eighties would unveil the economic competition. Greer (1997) suggested other factors that contributed to this phase in education. He stated that some critics felt the standards movement highlighted to the American public how much better students in other countries were performing than U.S. students were. Other critics of the standards movement felt that the public, legislature, and educators saw a critical need for an equitable education for all children through higher standards in education. Regardless of the standards movement criticisms, they are still visible and evolving. The trend has surfaced once again with the No Child Left Behind Act as the foundation. According to Amrein and Berliner (2003), NCLB has been one of the most expensive experiments in United States reform history and is moving forward in the absence of accurate, scientific evidence in support of it.

The publication of, *A Nation at Risk*, highly motivated those in educational policy to create goals. By 1990, six national educational goals were established (Music Educators National Conference, 1994). Out of these goals came broad efforts to describe, specifically, the knowledge and skills students must have in all subjects to reach their personal potential and become productive citizens in a global economy. Currently, with the passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the national goals are written into law. In these national goals, art is named as a subject along side English, math, science, history, civics and government, geography, and foreign language.

The inclusion of art in the national standards raised the hopes for many art educators. The reality of the implementation has not matched the hopes of the art educators and intentions

of the policy makers in most states. In many situations, several states have either put the implementation of the standards on hold or delayed acting on them. The National Art Education Association did see the inclusion of art in the national standards as a breakthrough and felt it would be best to adopt the commitment to the standards. The associations felt this would aid in making visual arts education a reality for all students (Greer, 1997).

Along with visual art educators, music educators created a statement regarding the national standards on what every young American should know and be able to do in four art disciplines: dance, music, theater, and visual arts. They also created standards, which were meant to create vision rather than a cookie cutter mold for all visual arts programs in the nation. Overall, the standards were meant to offer educational goals, not curriculum and to assist all types of art instruction. The importance of these standards fall under two points. Firstly, they declare what a solid education in the arts should consist of and secondly, when states and school districts adopt the standards, they are taking a stand towards a discipline that, for too long, has been optional (Music Educators National Conference, 1994).

As a result of these actions, the state of Wisconsin does have policies regarding visual arts education (“State Arts Education Policy Database”, 2005). Arts education is mandated in the state of Wisconsin. Kindergarten through sixth grade must offer art, at least weekly, during the whole year by a licensed art or music teacher. In grades seven through twelve, music and art must be offered in the same way. Also, any student requesting art or music cannot have the opportunity denied. The Wisconsin Department of Instruction has developed and published visual arts education standards. This development is different than the actual adoption and practice of the standards. The legislature has adopted math, science, English, and social studies standards. Visual arts education standards have not been fully adopted. There are twelve visual

arts standards placed under six categories. These categories are: knowledge, skills, communication, thinking, understanding, and innovation (“Developing the Academic Standards”, 1997). The standards serve as models for districts to voluntarily adopt or adapt if they choose. Currently, there are no visual art assessments in Wisconsin and participation in visual arts education is not a requirement for high school graduation (“State Arts Education Policy Database”, 2005).

This voluntary choice of visual arts education standards can result in several situations as Halvorson (1999) pointed out. It can create poor working conditions for teachers and students as there are no requirements for working conditions, only recommendations. Due to this, art educators are teaching at various schools during the week, teaching more than appropriate amounts of visual art classes in the course of a day, and teaching in classrooms that are not designated for visual arts education. School districts are left to decide on these issues. Kaagan (1990) stated that the important players are the local school districts. They play a critical role in the microcosm of forces that push for educational change. The Music Educators National Conference (1994) indicated that it will be the teachers to push for implementation of the standards. Their support will be highly imperative for the standards to succeed.

Benefits of Visual Arts Education

Students learn skills in visual arts education that can be beneficial in the long term. Research shows that students who have the chance to participate in the visual arts have positive cognitive consequences (NASAA, 1995). Through the creative thinking process and use of imagination, students see that problems can have multiple solutions and that well done projects come to completion in different ways. These skills are important for them as they develop the ability to visualize life’s situations and solutions. As decisions have been made over the years

regarding visual arts education, it is the benefits of the discipline that more recently has assisted in the understanding that art should be basic to curriculum alongside other core disciplines. Art education not only benefits the students while in school, but also benefits them when they enter the workforce. Employers look for skills that art education fosters early on.

According to Howard Gardner, a contemporary psychologist from Harvard, a well rounded education is one that promotes intellectual growth through attention to all intelligences (as cited in Grytting, 2000). The cognitive abilities drawn upon when responding to art are not the same as the cognitive activities required to master subjects like math and spelling (Honigman & Bhavnagri, 1998). Oftentimes, schools embrace the language and mathematics intelligences, but areas of other intelligences such as spatial or interpersonal also need to be supported for the total education of a child. Berry (1998) went on to suggest that visual arts education lets children develop multiple ways to solve problems. A student may be working on an art project that has various ways of completion. Through this thought process, different options arise to meet that goal.

The imagination is substantially benefited in the art classroom. A child must tap into visual imagery to imagine a resulting outcome of their project. They must draw on “what might be” or future tenses and visualizations. Berry (1998) further elaborated that imagination is key to invention, problem solving, and innovation. He felt it is the art classroom that can provide activities to foster the imagination of the student. Everyday, people are tapping into their running lists of imagery which help them to visualize and imagine their tasks at hand.

Through creation and imagination of art projects, visual arts education can also promote meaning and cultural awareness. This happens when going beyond production of the project. The offering of projects that move away from process only and into meaning can help students

learn about various beliefs, cultures, and values from throughout the world. Hurwitz and Day (1991) state, “Art is one of the most revealing human activities and one of the richest sources for understanding human societies and motives of those who created them” (p. 31).

Visual arts education benefits emotional growth in children. The art class can be a place where students are allowed to express and explore their emotions. When looking at visual imagery, emotions are heightened and evoked. In the art classroom, students are offered the experience to look at various imagery which invites interaction and release of emotions. This interaction can show students how to take different perspectives, embrace empathy, and relate to their world more openly (Honigman & Bhavnagri, 1998).

Intellectual, imagination, and emotional growth are enhanced and supported through the exposure of visual arts education. By challenging our students to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, schools will better prepare them to be leaders of the future (Grytting, 2000). The workforce is in need of what visual arts education fosters in students. Berry (1998) states that visual arts education produces students who learn to communicate effectively, express themselves, and understand relationships. The workplace looks for individuals who possess these skills. They seek employees who can analyze a problem, find multiple solutions, communicate them effectively with coworkers, and finally produce a creative solution. Businesses are constantly in flux in order to compete with other companies and keep up with demand. It is the individual who can embrace innovation and avoid stagnation who will help companies keep moving forward. Some businesses feel that this could save them time and money in training costs. Companies such as Sony, Toyota, Microsoft, and Hallmark are using the exposure to arts and creativity to nurture their employee’s current skills (Berry, 1998). Some companies are practicing theater and drama skills to help improve management skills. One such

organization called the Business Committee for the Arts Incorporated supports the business world in efforts to make ties with art and business. Powerful names in the business world that serve on the Business Committee of Arts board range from executives at Crate and Barrel, Target Corporation, Forbes, and H & R Block (“Board Members”, n.d.). This organization, founded in 1967 by John D. Rockefeller, has recently provided grant money to companies that wish to provide their employees with workshops infused with the arts (“Case Studies”, n.d.). This relates back to what Berry (1998) mentioned about how exposure of the arts in the workplace can benefit the employer and employee. The economy benefits from a workforce that is positive and productive. John D. Ong, retired chairman of B.F. Goodrich, sums this up well when he says,

People who create in our companies - whether they be scientists, marketing experts or business strategists - benefit from exposure to the arts. People cannot create when they work and live in a culturally sterile environment....The economic benefits of the arts greatly transcend and outlive any of the normal cycles....That is why business invests in the arts -- even when times are tough, and when there is increased pressure to manage money carefully. (“Notes and Quotes, n.d., n.p.)

Summary

Over the last century, visual arts education has been part of a changing world and society. Positive research regarding visual arts education has been a rallying instrument for support from federal, private, and societal institutions. The trend appears to be moving forward as research and awareness grows about the benefits of visual arts education. Most importantly, it is the research that highlights what art can do for those in the nation’s schools. Those who support visual arts education need to be proactive in keeping the arts in the schools. Visual arts

education is especially in need of support as it feels the effects of the standards movement under the No Child Left Behind Act. This researcher wishes to use this paper to empower those in support of the arts. The local school boards make decisions that have significant impacts on the vitality of visual arts education in our local schools. The researcher feels that it is essential to discover the factors that influence school board members when they make decisions on the balance of support for various disciplines. If these factors are made known to those who support visual arts education, they will serve as tools to help move visual arts education out of the margins and alongside the basic disciplines in our schools.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence school board members when deciding to maintain, expand, or cut back on curricula, especially visual arts education. In this chapter, the following topics will be presented: a description of the subjects, the instrument chosen, methods utilized for data collection, and an explanation of how the data was analyzed. The conclusion of the chapter will highlight the study's methodological limitations.

Selection of Subjects

The subjects of this study were school board members from the CESA 11 district located in northwestern Wisconsin. Approximately 280 school board members make up this district. There are thirty-nine total school districts represented in CESA 11. The state of Wisconsin is divided into twelve CESA districts with an estimated population of 3,000 school board members statewide. The researcher resides in the CESA eleven district making that the primary reason it was selected as the sample district to conduct the study.

Instrumentation

This descriptive research study employed a survey constructed by the researcher. It was only distributed to this sample of school board members for this study. Due to that, measures of validity or reliability could not be taken into consideration regarding the instrument. It is unknown if the instrument is consistent over time and situation and if it is measuring only what it intends to. Other than the initial question that asked the amount of years the school board members had served on their respective boards, the survey consisted of nine questions to be

answered in sentence form by the school board members. The survey questions presented the opportunity for the school board members to voice perceptive and attitudinal feelings towards their district, its curricula, and its visual arts programs. The researcher wanted the school board members to have the opportunity to express themselves freely, openly, and candidly. This was a main reason the questions were assembled to be answered in sentence form. Two questions specifically ask them to rank given factors that affect them most when deciding on curricular programs in their districts. Within those same two questions, they were also afforded space to write in factors that may have not been mentioned by the researcher as choices to be ranked. The researcher also provided a definition of visual art education at the beginning of the survey to assist in answering questions regarding visual arts education. A copy of the initial survey can be found in appendix A.

Data Collection

During the spring of 2004, the researcher phoned the thirty-nine school districts of CESA eleven. This alerted the district offices that packets of surveys would be arriving to their district offices, via the mail, at the start of the fall, 2004 school year. The thirty-nine district addresses were derived from the CESA eleven district website.

The beginning of September, 2004 approached and the researcher began to send out the packets of surveys to each of the thirty-nine district's administrative offices. The introduction of the survey indicated that the participants had a five week window to complete and return the instrument in the provided pre-stamped envelopes. The surveys began coming back in September and October, but at a low return rate. Soon after the five week time-frame had passed, the researcher sent out a reminder postcard to all thirty-nine school district administrative offices. A total of thirty surveys came back from the initial mailing.

After counsel and advisement by the researcher's research advisor, a decision was made that the surveys should be sent to the thirty-nine school boards a second time. This was in an effort to increase the data for more thorough research. They were sent out at the end of November where the school board members were given a final three week window to complete and return them for a last chance of participation in the study. A change was also made to the survey for the second mailing. The researcher built in the option on the survey for the school board members to receive the final assembled results of the study provided they gave their names and addresses. Eight school board members chose to submit their personal information to the researcher. This second mailing was completed at the end of December, 2004 resulting in the return of twenty more completed surveys. The researcher then began computing the data presented on the fifty total surveys at the beginning of January, 2005.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The first question asked the school board members the amount of years served on their respective boards. This required using measures of central tendency such as mode, median, and mean. The following questions on the survey were computed using percentages. Common themes were also used in translating particular answers due to the nature of how the school board members were required to answer in sentence form.

Limitations

A limitation of this study, previously mentioned, is that the instrument has no measures of validity or reliability as it was created specifically for this study. Another limitation is that the study was only offered to one CESA district out of twelve statewide in Wisconsin. Only 50 of 280 (18%) surveys were returned, from this sample, which indicates that this low number should

be considered cautiously and carefully. The findings from the fifty returned surveys should not be inferred on the whole CESA eleven district nor the rest of the CESA districts in the state of Wisconsin.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

This chapter will include the results of this study. Demographic information and item analysis will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with the research questions under investigation.

Demographic Information

Of approximately 280 school board members that make up the CESA eleven district in northwest Wisconsin, fifty participated in the study. This represents 18% of the school board members in this CESA district. These fifty participants represent 2% of the estimated 3,000 school board members in Wisconsin.

Item Analysis

Question One: How many years have you served on your school board?

The time served ranged from five months to thirty-two years. The mean or average years served by the fifty school board members was eight years. The mode or most reported years served was six years.

Question Two: Do you feel the visual arts are important to offer to the students in your district? Why?

This question is two-fold. The answers submitted from the first portion of the question will be stated first. The findings of the second part of the question will be reported in the following paragraph. Forty-eight participants (96%) felt that visual art education is important to offer in their districts. Two participants (4%) answered no.

Common themes were found from the participants who answered the second part of the question. Fifty-two suggestions were given by the participants who felt visual art education is important to offer to students in their district. Eighteen school board members stated that visual art education provides for a well-rounded and diverse education. Mentioned by ten school board members each was that visual arts education promotes the development of the whole child through creativity, imagination, communication, thinking outside the box etc. and visual art education prepares students for careers post high school. Next, reported by six participants was that visual arts education is a discipline that serves as motivation for those students who may not excel in other areas of the curriculum. Lastly, reported by four school board members, was that visual art education offers hands-on learning and helps students to understand themselves and the world around them. Of the two school board members that answered that visual art education is not important to offer to students in their districts, one answered why he or she felt so. The participant stated that visual art education is not important because it does not prepare students for careers post high school.

Question Three: Do you feel the visual arts should be basic to the curriculum alongside math, science, history, and English? Why?

This question is two-fold. The answers submitted from the first portion of the question will be stated first. The findings of the second part of the question will be reported in the following paragraph. Of the fifty participants, thirty (60%) answered that visual art education should be basic to the core disciplines. Nineteen (38%) stated that it should not be considered a core discipline. One (2%) participant responded that he or she was unsure.

Common themes were found from the participants who answered the second part of the question. Twenty-eight participants answered yes and submitted reasons why they felt visual

arts education should be basic alongside the core disciplines. Eight school board members reported that it should be basic because it prepares the students for careers post high school. Seven stated that visual art education was important to have as a basic discipline because it provided for a well-rounded and diverse education. Following this, five participants responded that visual art education promotes the development of the whole child through creativity, imagination, communication, thinking outside the box etc. Another five replied that visual arts education helps students to understand themselves and the world around them, and finally, three said visual arts education should be basic alongside the core disciplines, but budgetary matters negatively affect electives such as the visual arts.

Nineteen participants answered visual arts education should not be basic alongside the core disciplines. Of the nineteen, eighteen school board members answered why they felt this way. Nine participants said no because core classes are most important and should come first over electives such as visual art education. Three stated that visual arts education should be mixed within the core classes. Following that suggestion, two school board members stated that it should not be basic because visual art education does not provide necessary life skills post high school. Another two participants answered that there is not enough time in the school day to make all electives basic. Finally, one school board member said there was not enough funding to make visual arts education basic to the curriculum and one last participant stated that other electives such as technology education should take precedence over visual arts education.

Question Four: Do you consider the present visual arts program in your school to be meeting the needs of students?

Forty-two participants (84%) answered that they felt their visual arts education program was meeting the needs of their students. Five school board members (10%) stated no and three (6%) said they were unsure.

Question Five: Have you expanded a program (English, math, history, music, visual arts, sports, etc...) in your district? If so, what program in the curriculum and why?

This question is three-fold. The answers submitted from the first portion of the question will be stated first. The findings of the second part of the question will be reported in the following paragraph. The findings of the third section of the question will be stated in the final paragraph. Of the fifty school board members, twenty-seven (54%) stated they had not expanded a program in their district. Twenty-two participants (44%) replied that they had expanded programs in their districts. One participant (2%) submitted no answer.

Of the twenty-seven participants who stated they had not expanded programs in their districts, eight answered why that was so. The eight school board members stated they did not expand programs due to budgetary reasons. Of the twenty-two school board members who stated they had expanded a program in their district, four further answered why. Three stated they have a growing district and all programs are resulting in expansion. One participant stated their programs are under continual revision by specialists for change or expansion.

Seventeen school board members further stated in their answers the disciplines expanded in their districts. Seven participants listed mathematics, five school board members listed English, sports programs were listed by four school board members. Music, technology education, advanced placement, and humanities programs each were each listed twice. Finally,

art, reading, media, science, agriculture, foreign language, and physical education were listed once each.

Question Six: Have you cut back a program (English, math, history, music, visual arts, sports, etc...) in your district? If so, what program in the curriculum and why?

This question is three-fold. The answers submitted from the first portion of the question will be stated first. The findings of the second part of the question will be reported in the following paragraph. The findings of the third section of the question will be stated in the final paragraph. The results of this question were almost split in half by the fifty participants. Twenty-five (50%) school board members stated they had not cut back on programs in their districts. Twenty-four (48%) said they had cut back on programs in their districts. One participant (2%) submitted no answer.

Of the curricula reported as having been cut, nineteen participants provided those specific programs. Eight mentioned gifted and talented programs, five stated technology education, four participants listed mathematics. Music, home economics, foreign language, and sports programs were each stated twice. Agriculture, English, business education, art, and staffing were each listed once.

Of the twenty-four participants who stated their district had cut or cut back on programs, twenty answered why that was so. Ten school board members stated it was because of low student enrollment and another ten said it was due to budgetary reasons.

Question Seven: What factors influence you most when cutting programs? Is it teachers, parents, budget, local industries, private interests, or other?

When cutting programs, the number one factor that influences the school board members most was budget. Number two was parents and teachers ranked number three. Private interest

and local industries were ranked closely as four and five. Of the write-in section or 'other', the school board members were offered the chance to write in other factors that influence the cutting of programs. Twenty-eight participants reported and ranked their number one responses in this write-in area. Twelve school board members stated that low student enrollment affects their decision making when cutting programs. Five school board members responded that they take into consideration the benefits of the program. Another five said that student interest is a factor that influences cutting of programs. Four school board members wrote in that administrative recommendations come into play as influence when deciding to cut a program. One school board member said they are affected when cutting curriculum if the discipline has qualities that can prepare the student for college post high school. Another participant stated that space in the school affects decisions made when cutting programs.

Question Eight: What factors influence you most when expanding programs? Is it teachers, parents, budget, local industries, private interests, or other?

When expanding programs, the number one factor that influences the school board members most was budget. Number two was teachers and parents ranked number three. Private interest and local industries were ranked closely as four and five. Of the write-in section, the school board members were offered the chance to write in other factors that influence the expanding of programs. Twenty-seven school board members reported and ranked their number one responses in this write in area. Thirteen school board members responded that they take into consideration the need of student numbers or interest in the program by the students. Ten school board members responded that they take into consideration the benefits of the program when deciding to expand programs. Another three participants stated that administrative recommendations come into play as an influence when deciding to expand a program. One

school board member said he or she is affected when expanding curriculum if the discipline has qualities that can prepare the student for college post high school.

Question Nine: In making a decision to maintain, expand, or eliminate a visual arts program, do you consider educational data regarding visual art research as a factor in the decision making process? If yes, what data do you utilize?

Twenty-nine (58%) of the participants stated that they did not consider educational data in their decision making activities. Nineteen (38%) of the school board members answered that they had considered it. One participant (2%) stated that he or she did not know if they had done so in their district and one (2%) final school board member submitted no answer.

Research Questions

The researcher was highly interested in discovering what influences school board members most when deciding to cut or expand curriculum. Items seven and eight on the survey aimed to answer those questions. The researcher constructed a chart to visually lay out how the school board members ranked the given suggestion on the survey. A total of fifty school board members ranked the factors, thus the chart was fifty columns horizontally. The six factors of influence were then listed vertically. The researcher then color coded the factors to visually see where most of the numbers were being ranked most. It was then a process of counting what factor was ranked number one most, what factor was ranked next as number two, and so on with each factor. When it came to the 'write-in' factors, the researcher did the same as to what was ranked number one most for these given or suggested factors by the school board members.

The next question the researcher was especially interested in was if school board members felt that visual arts education was important to offer to the students of their district and why they felt either way. Item number two on the survey addressed this topic. This was found

by reading over the fifty responses and computing percents regarding those who said yes or no. Common themes or answers were then found regarding the second part of the question that asked the school board members why they felt it was or was not important to offer to their students. The researcher read and compiled all the answers. Many participants were suggesting the same reasons, but stating it in different ways. This meant the researcher had to find common themes among the hand-written suggestions.

The last question the researcher wished to uncover regarded awareness or use of recent research on the several benefits that visual arts education provides for students and schools. While conducting research and reading several articles for this research paper, the researcher discovered several studies and organizations highlighting the valuable benefits that visual arts education presents for students. The researcher felt it would be helpful to know if this available data is accessed, used, or taken into consideration when visual arts education is being decided by the school board members. Item number nine on the survey addressed this idea. The researcher read over the fifty surveys to discover the school board members who answered yes, no, or unsure. These findings were computed using the totals and then converted into percents.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will highlight and discuss the findings of the survey with the information presented in chapter two, suggest conclusions to the findings, and lastly, submit recommendations for further research and investigation.

Discussion

This study made evident that school board members (96%) felt it was very important to offer visual arts education to students in their districts. Many of these same school board members (38%) felt that the presence of visual arts education in the curriculum provides for a well rounded and diverse education. Sixty percent of these school board members also felt that it should be a basic discipline much like math, science, social studies, and English. These were positive findings from individuals who are in unique positions to greatly affect what is offered in our Wisconsin schools. However, another main aim of this study looked to discover the factors that influence how these individuals decide on certain areas of curriculum. Visual arts education is one of these unique areas of curriculum that rests in a very vulnerable state as it is not a core discipline adopted by the state of Wisconsin.

In our last century, the development of art education has maintained a resiliency and growth during an ever changing world and society. It has evolved from a necessity of skilled drawing during the 1870's to an organized discipline emphasizing the production of artwork, discourse of aesthetics, and its historical and multicultural facets. It has now come so far as to have mandates and voluntary standards at the federal and state level. The economic competition during the eighties in the U.S. spurred a push for standards of all disciplines in education. As

mentioned in chapter two, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, placed art as a core subject alongside other core subjects such as math, science, history, and English. This inclusion of art in the national standards gave hope to art educators and art education advocates. However, these standards visual arts education are in the hands of the individual states to adopt them if they choose. Presently in Wisconsin, the Department of Public Instruction has developed standards for visual arts education, but the standards are not adopted. This leaves the field of visual arts education as a marginal discipline. In relation to this topic, 60% of the school board members surveyed felt that visual arts education *should* be considered a basic discipline. The standards only serve as a model for the districts and teachers. Therefore, the school board members are the unique group left to decide on the discipline good, bad, or otherwise. These marginal disciplines are put in vulnerable positions as they have no adopted standards as foundations to protect them from changes or decisions made by the local school board members. It is this information that prompted the researcher to discover how decisions are made towards non-basic disciplines.

For the researcher, a stirring question was raised regarding visual arts education at the genesis of this study. Why does visual arts education sit in a 'voluntary' position, yet current and solid research shows the invaluable benefits visual arts education presents for those students participating in it. Research studies have shown that there are both positive intellectual and emotional consequences gained for students participating in visual arts education. Relating to this, the researcher found that 58% of the school board members stated they did not consider educational data highlighting the benefits of visual arts education. The experience in the visual arts education classroom can enhance multiple intelligences beyond language and mathematics. It can promote meaning in life, cultural awareness, and the students' place in the greater world around them. It is a discipline that also highly impacts and serves as an asset to the basic or core

disciplines. In essence, visual arts education benefits the student and the school as a whole. When the school board members were asked if they considered educational data highlighting the benefits of visual arts education, 58% stated they did not consult this research before making decisions regarding visual arts education. There is an abundance of pertinent and current research in support of visual arts education, but often times goes unnoticed by those who should be most aware. This irony further prompted the researcher to inquire about the local school board members who are deciding on a discipline that substantially benefits the most important people it serves - the students. This knowledge encouraged the researcher to develop a question on the survey looking to find if the school board members could be influenced by factors in the school or community when making decisions regarding visual arts education.

The researcher felt it was imperative to discover the factors that influence the school board members when deciding to make changes to curriculum. What are these factors and are they also considering the recent research available about the benefits of visual art education? The knowledge found could show how those who are in support of the arts can be proactive. How can it be maintained at an appropriate level and offering in the schools? What groups do the arts education advocates approach when looking for support of the arts? Which groups do they also approach who negatively affect the decisions made by school board members about visual arts education? These all seemed evident questions for the researcher, but the reality of visual arts education was made apparent by the results of the survey.

The school board members may have felt a desire for visual arts education to be in their districts, but they are faced with factors that ultimately trump their 'feelings'. When deciding to *cut* a program, the number one factor that influences the school board member is budget, number two was teachers, and number three was parents. Budget was also the number one influential

factor when deciding to *expand* programs. Following budget was parents and number three was teachers. As mentioned previously in this paper, parent's voices can be very influential to a school board. The findings from this study only strengthen that idea, but they must become involved. This is the same for teachers. After all, it was the California art educator, Dwaine Greer, who developed what would later be called Discipline Based Art Education. The principles he developed would later be reflected in outcome statements written by state boards of education during the early 1990's. Ultimately, the hope for change to better visual arts education rests with educational professionals, parents, and society.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, factors were found that influence school board member most when making curriculum decisions. The most influential factor was budgetary issues when deciding to cut, expand or maintain visual arts education in their schools. As the researcher found, it takes funding and support to assess educational standards in our schools. The creation of standards during the early eighties laid foundations for multiple disciplines. However, these standards must be assessed to understand if students are meeting them. Funding is allocated for our schools to assess the core disciplines, but a discipline like visual arts education would also need funding in the event that it has standards adopted at the state level. Budgetary issues for local and state schools are very real and pressing matters. Even though the majority of school board members felt that visual arts education is very important to offer the students of their districts, they must face the monetary realities.

The survey also highlighted how influential parents and teachers can be to their local school board members. They were either listed as number two or three behind budget as important factors that influence their decision making. Teachers and parents must come together

in the attempt at maintaining an appropriate level of visual arts education in their schools. In the event a program is being cut or expanded, it is the people of the school and greater community who can make a very large impact on what is offered in their schools. That is a powerful notion and a conclusion this researcher was pleased to uncover in conducting research on a contemporary educational dilemma.

Recommendations

Recommendations to Parents and Teachers

- Collaborate to present information on the many benefits of visual arts education to the school board members
- Plan student art events such as a student art exhibit and formally invite and include their local school board members in the activity. Possibly, they could be a member of the 'jury' to choose the artwork for the art show.
- Establish relationships with local artists, artists co-ops, university art departments, art galleries, and arts advocacy groups to volunteer their time to visual arts education classrooms.
- Promote high school career offices to offer information that supports careers in the arts

Recommendations to the Field

- Collaboration with visual arts educators and visual arts education advocacy organizations to publish brochures on the benefits of visual arts education. Disseminate this information with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin school board members, visual arts educators, other teachers, and parents.

- Develop outreach programs to deliver visual arts education research to school board members directly via the internet, higher education institutions, or through art advocacy groups.
- Develop organizations of visual arts educators in each Wisconsin CESA district in efforts to strengthen the discipline and profession. This would also serve as a support system for the educators of visual arts education.
- Make visual arts education visible to the community through student displays, art exhibits etc.
- Build relationships with local government representatives and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to push for visual arts education to be adopted into Wisconsin educational standards.

Recommendations to School Board Members:

- Before making changes to visual arts education, consider educational data and research on the benefits it has for the students in their schools.
- Consult art and design professionals at universities and in business
- Visit art education classes in their districts
- Attend art education events in their schools

Recommendations for Further Study

- Research the attitudes of students about visual arts education
- Find out how arts advocacy organizations are disseminating their research on the benefits of visual arts education
- Research the economic contributions the field of art makes to society

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Appendix A: Survey

A Survey to Promote an Understanding of School Board Decision Processes

Explanation of the survey:

I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout working on my Master's of Education degree. As part of my thesis, I am conducting a survey that will look into the factors that influence you, as a school board member, when making decisions to *expand, cut or maintain* a program in your curricula. My goal is to gather pertinent information that will be used in my study to understand what influences you when making decisions. The purpose of this study is to promote an understanding of how school board decisions are arrived at.

I am contacting all school boards from the CESA eleven district in the hopes that they might be willing to supply information about decisions made in their curricula. I have selected school board members because as community representatives, you are in unique positions to greatly affect what is offered and available to the students.

I have supplied general and specific questions in this survey. Most of the questions revolve around visual arts education in the curriculum. I have included a definition of the visual arts to assist with some of the questions.

This survey is made up of nine questions and should take about ten to fifteen minutes to complete. I would be most grateful if you would respond to this survey and place it in the provided envelopes as soon as you are able or before December 20, 2004.

Informed Consent

I understand that by returning this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that only minimal identifiers are necessary and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about the research study should be addressed to Farrah Fossum (507.319.4617), the researcher, or Ron Verdon (715/232.1166), the research advisor. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI, 54751, phone 715/232-1126.

- 4.) Do you consider the present visual arts program in your district to be meeting the needs of students?
- 5.) Have you expanded a program (English, math, history, music, visual arts, sports, etc...) in your district? If so, what program in the curriculum and why?
- 6.) Have you cut back or eliminated a program (English, math, history, music, visual arts, sports, etc...) in your district? If so, what program in the curriculum and why?

7.) What factors influence you most when **cutting** a program? Please rank the factors below that influence you most. List in priority order starting with number 1.

_____ Teachers

_____ Parents

_____ Budget

_____ Local Industries

_____ Private Industries

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

8.) What factors influence you most when **expanding** a program? Please rank the factors below that influence you most. List in priority order starting with number 1.

_____ Teachers

_____ Parents

_____ Budget

_____ Local Industries

_____ Private Industries

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

9.) In making a decision to expand or eliminate a visual art program, do you consider educational data on visual arts research as a factor in the decision making process?

A sincere thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

**It is highly appreciated in my efforts to
contribute to educational research.**

Appendix B: Amended Survey

Dear School Board Members of the CESA 11 District,

I want to thank all of you who recently filled out this survey titled, *A Survey to Promote an Understanding of School Board Decision Processes*. The information you provided has been invaluable in starting my research project. However, if you haven't completed this survey, I need your help in achieving the most reliable results by increasing my current return rate to more than 10% of 280 sent out. This would also aid in securing a better representation of acting school board members in CESA 11 and increase the most complete data for this research project.

Your knowledge, insight, and experience are important and valuable to the success of this project. Your efforts will be very appreciated and useful. If you would like to receive a copy of the results once I assemble the information, I would be pleased to share it with you. If you wish to receive survey results, please provide your name and address in the box below.

Name: _____
Address: _____

I would be grateful if you would complete this survey and return it in the self-addressed envelope by December 20, 2004. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Farah Fossum
University of Wisconsin-Stout, Master of Education Graduate Student

A Survey to Promote an Understanding of School Board Decision Processes

Explanation of the survey:

I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout working on my Master's of Education degree. As part of my thesis, I am conducting a survey that will look into the factors that influence you, as a school board member, when making decisions to *expand*, *cut* or *maintain* a program in your curricula. My goal is to gather pertinent information that will be used in my study to understand what influences you when making decisions. The purpose of this study is to promote an understanding of how school board decisions are arrived at.

I am contacting all school boards from the CESA eleven district in the hopes that they might be willing to supply information about decisions made in their curricula. I have selected school board members because as community representatives, you are in unique positions to greatly affect what is offered and available to the students.

I have supplied general and specific questions in this survey. Most of the questions revolve around visual arts education in the curriculum. I have included a definition of the visual arts to assist with some of the questions.

This survey is made up of nine questions and should take about ten to fifteen minutes to complete. I would be most grateful if you would respond to this survey and place it in the provided envelopes as soon as you are able or before December 20, 2004.

Informed Consent

I understand that by returning this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that only minimal identifiers are necessary and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about the research study should be addressed to Farrah Fossum (507.319.4617), the researcher, or Ron Verdon (715/232.1166), the research advisor. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI, 54751, phone 715/232-1126.

- 4.) Do you consider the present visual arts program in your district to be meeting the needs of students?
- 5.) Have you expanded a program (English, math, history, music, visual arts, sports, etc...) in your district? If so, what program in the curriculum and why?
- 6.) Have you cut back or eliminated a program (English, math, history, music, visual arts, sports, etc...) in your district? If so, what program in the curriculum and why?

7.) What factors influence you most when **cutting** a program? Please rank the factors below that influence you most. List in priority order starting with number 1.

_____ Teachers

_____ Parents

_____ Budget

_____ Local Industries

_____ Private Industries

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

8.) What factors influence you most when **expanding** a program? Please rank the factors below that influence you most. List in priority order starting with number 1.

_____ Teachers

_____ Parents

_____ Budget

_____ Local Industries

_____ Private Industries

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

_____ Other: _____

9.) In making a decision to expand or eliminate a visual art program, do you consider educational data on visual arts research as a factor in the decision making process?

A sincere thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

**It is highly appreciated in my efforts to
contribute to educational research.**

Appendix C: Wisconsin Art Advocacy Organizations and Their Websites

Wisconsin Art Education Association

<http://www.wiarted.org/>

Arts Wisconsin

<http://www.artswisconsin.org/>

Wisconsin Assembly for Local Arts

<http://www.wisconsinarts.org/advocacy/advocacynews.htm>

Wisconsin Arts Board

<http://arts.state.wi.us/static/>

PORTALWISCONSIN.ORG

<http://www.portalwisconsin.org/>