

International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editors

Terry Barrett
Ohio State University

Peter Webster
University of Southern California

Eeva Anttila
University of the Arts Helsinki

Brad Haseman
Queensland University of Technology

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

ISSN: 1529-8094

Volume 17 Number 6

March 10, 2016

Learning about Leadership from a Visit to the Art Museum

Girija Kaimal
Drexel University, USA

Jon Drescher
Lehigh University, USA

Holly Fairbank
Maxine Greene Center for Aesthetic Education and Social Imagination,
USA

Adele M. L. Gonzaga
Drexel University, USA

Janelle S. Junkin
Drexel University, USA

George P. White
Lehigh University, USA

Citation: Kaimal, G., Drescher, J., Fairbank, H., Gonzaga, A., Junkin, J. S., & White, G. P. (2016). Learning about leadership from a visit to the art museum.

International Journal of Education & the Arts, 17(6). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v17n6/>.

Abstract

This qualitative study presents an analysis of how guided visits to an art museum can provide leadership lessons for developing school leaders. The principal interns participated in teaching artists-facilitated guided arts engagement sessions at a large metropolitan museum. The sessions included art-making, observations of portraiture in the visual arts, discussions around their reactions to the art, and information on the artists' choices, processes, and techniques. Data sources included observations of the sessions and interviews with participants; these were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. Findings indicated that guided engagement with the visual arts provided insights to participants about self (intrapersonal learning), understanding about how others learn (interpersonal learning), and development of a sense of agency through creative self-expression and changes in practice. The art-making and related narratives participants generated served as analogical bridges transferring learning from the arts experience to their leadership practice. Some participants also provided feedback on how they took this learning and translated it into action in their schools.

There is a great need for effective leadership training models for principals, and especially for principals in urban settings. The training experiences that principals have typically received in university programs and from their own districts do not prepare them sufficiently for their role as leaders in learning settings (Petzko, 2008). This study explores the ways that facilitated learning through a visit to an art museum and making art could build leadership skills.

Literature Review

Urban education settings have their own unique challenges for principals including responsibility for educating significantly higher proportions of economically disadvantaged, minority, special needs, and second language learner students (Williams, 2008). Given these challenges, urban principals need to expand their own level of training to increase their abilities to create learning opportunities with limited resources including employing creative means to begin addressing the educational needs within their classrooms and school environments. The field of educational leadership and management is pluralistic, with many competing perspectives and an inevitable lack of agreement on the exact nature of the discipline (Bush, 2007). Moreover, Bolman and Deal (1997) have argued that current urban leaders require both leadership and management skills. These two skills might be perceived as distinct; however, they are equally important, and the challenge is that modern organizations

require both the objective perspective of a manager and the flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides. What qualities, then, are needed for an effective leadership development program for principals, in this case urban principals? Williams (2008) conducted a study in urban schools and discovered that outstanding principals showed more consistent demonstration of both emotional and intelligence competencies across the sample. An important element in developing emotional competency is interpersonal learning; the ability to learn about yourself and others from interacting with others. As stated above, urban principals negotiate diverse settings and need to have the ability to learn about others and themselves from interactions. Principals need to learn to communicate, both verbally and nonverbally (including the use of the arts in learning), and they need to learn sensitivity to both direct and indirect communicators in order to be successful in their roles.

The training program discussed in this paper includes a “cohort creative learning format.” Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) described methods for creating effective training programs for principals. These included field-based internships, problem-based learning, and the use of cohort groups and mentors. Davis and colleagues (2005) listed the following benefits of cohort learning (or interpersonal learning): “...enhanced feelings of group affiliation and acceptance, social and emotional support, motivation, persistence, group learning and mutual assistance. Cohorts can help learners build group and individual knowledge, think creatively and restructure problems from multiple perspectives” (p. 11). The ability to learn from one another and participate in a shared learning environment not only creates a positive learning experience for the principal, it ultimately will impact the school environment where the principal leads. The expectation is that principals will begin to implement their new learning at the school and that there might be more collaboration and creative thinking in problem solving of day to day challenges at the school. This will, hopefully, provide teachers and other administrators with a sense of ownership in the school and what happens there. Finally, if teachers are feeling supported, they will lead within their classrooms, creating space for students to take a more active and participatory role in their own education. The principal models and exemplifies the culture of the school, which after this new principal training, will include collaboration, learning from peers and team members in the school building, and building the capacity for creative problem solving.

Creativity is an important word that Davis and colleagues (2005) introduced in their study; it seemed though that this word was only used in relation to problem solving. However, what happens when we begin to consider the word “creativity” as an integral piece of the leadership training process for principals? Ralph Smith (1996) considered leadership an aesthetic process; he defined aesthetic as follows: “[It] implies the philosophy of art which typically asks questions about the making of art, the nature of the art object, its interpretation and appreciation, its critical evaluation and its cultural context” (p. 39). Smith (1996) wrote that

“aesthetic education then not only cultivates the appreciation of art and the refinement of aesthetic vision it helps to develop reflective intelligence” (p. 48). Within Smith’s (1996) understanding of aesthetic is the creative process, and it is the engagement in aesthetics and the creative process, that

a general education in the arts fosters an appreciation and understanding of art, cultivates aesthetic vision, develops reflective intelligence, and encourages the study of cultural alternatives which...processes and promotes ideas, skills, dispositions and values that one may reasonably suppose can contribute importantly to the background, aims, structuring, and values of leadership understood as meaning making in a community of practice (p. 49).

As in the cohort model of learning which encourages collaborative learning, participation in the arts encourages development of new perspectives, learning together, and an openness to seeing and experiencing problems and leadership in a new way. Principals can take artistic experiences and begin to see new perspectives and imagine new possibilities within their schools. Goulding (2013) asserted that co-construction of meaning recognizes that learning is an active, collaborative, and social process. Goulding (2013) also asserted that learning occurs intrapersonally as well as interpersonally. An individual’s experiences and knowledge drive his/her intentions and choices; it is this personal experience coupled with the interpersonal experience that contributes to new learning and a deeper understanding of self and others. Goulding (2013) made a case not only for creative process learning, she also combined this with the interpersonal learning process. In an art museum learning experience, both intrapersonal and interpersonal learning contribute to the development of the principals’ leadership skills. According to Monk (2013), museums have a long history of educating the public through informal and nonformal learning. Monk (2013) further argued that museums have the power to confront individuals’ schemata and transform the way we view the world. Using John Dewey’s arguments for educating students in a museum setting, Monk (2013) also argued that this was important for the adult learner too, and we argue that this is important for the development of leadership training for principals in urban schools. To be effective leaders, urban principals must confront and work in contexts that often are underresourced, challenging, and diverse. This might require confronting an educational setting different from their own setting and from their worldview. Thus, having the ability to navigate these differences successfully is essential.

Many of the studies that have examined the role of the arts in urban schools have focused on its impact on students. For example, studies that focused on student achievement have found that when students have the opportunity to engage in the arts, it has a profoundly positive influence on their performance in school. This is particularly true of students from high

poverty backgrounds (Fiske, 1999). These studies, however, do not speak to how arts engagement impacts the effectiveness of principals and school leaders. A useful way to engage adult learners is through experiential learning. Moreover learning by doing (i.e., “experiential learning”) has been linked with a host of benefits including: increased student enthusiasm (Dabbour, 1997); increased performance on assignments (Perry et al., 1996); higher levels of self-confidence (Anderman & Young, 1994; Ramocki, 1987); enhancement of learning (Hamer, 2000; Lawson, 1995); enhancement of creativity and social skills (Livingstone & Lynch, 2002); and improvement in critical thinking and problem solving skills (Abson, 1994; Gremler et al., 2000; Zoller, 1987).

We have published previously about the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of leadership through lessons from the performing arts (Kaimal, Drescher, Gonzaga, Fairbank & White, 2014). Lindsey (2011) also suggests that “Art has the ability to provoke the unconscious mind revealing the self. Knowing one’s self is the foundation of leadership” (p. 56). Learning about art through a museum trip, within a cohort setting, develops the skills for a principal to begin to allow his/her worldview to be challenged, accept other perspectives, and learn from others. This paper considers the importance of learning leadership from both making art and participating in a guided art gallery experience; therefore, we will focus on a discussion about the role of adult learning in a museum context as a tool to develop leadership capacity in urban principals.

Methods

Project Summary

The study emerged from two leadership development projects set in urban school districts in the northeastern United States (US), aimed at preparing experienced teachers from the districts to take on leadership positions (as principals or assistant principals) in urban schools. Urban schools are notoriously underfunded and under-resourced (Jacob, 2007). Therefore, creativity is required on the part of the principal and other school leaders to promote quality learning environments for students (Pegg, 2010). An innovative feature of the curriculum was to foster learning in and through the arts by providing opportunities for creativity and imagination among the project participants. The projects incorporated aspects of the philosophy and curriculum of the Maxine Greene Center for Aesthetic Education and Social Imagination. The seminars contained four key elements related to aesthetic education – inquiry, art-making, contextual exploration, and reflection.

One of these sessions on creativity and imagination was conducted in a large art museum in the metropolitan US. The museum visit took place over two sessions during the summer semesters of the program. The sessions themselves included a workshop and visits to specific

art pieces at the museum. The first workshop session provided time for participants to explore the topic of portraits, laying the foundation for the gallery viewing which took place in the second half. Guiding the workshop were aesthetic and pedagogical lines of inquiry: (1) “In these chosen works of art, how do these artists address materials, context, and environment to explore different ways of creating a portrait and to address the relationship between subject/object?” (Aesthetic Line of Inquiry); and (2) “In what way do these experiences (workshop, museum visit, and Aesthetic Education pedagogy) support the discussion of leadership in schools?” (Pedagogical Line of Inquiry).

The classroom session was spent in a studio at a large urban museum. Participants were asked to share what they knew about portraits and were asked to introduce themselves by posing in a spot within the studio that would serve as their self-portrait. The teaching artist then handed out postcards to pairs and asked them to think about the setting and how this related to the subject of the postcard. They then moved on to thinking about a person they knew and guided their partners into a pose that would personify this person. The pairs transferred their portraits into a two-dimensional artwork made from construction paper. They were then given the time to examine each other’s work and note similarities and differences. The teaching artist modeled “guided noticing” where they described, analyzed, and interpreted the work being examined and used reflection and contextual information woven throughout their interaction. Participants worked in groups to come up with questions they may have about the artwork. The session ended with a reflection on the pedagogy used and their coursework experience.

The second half of the workshop took place in the museum’s gallery. The participants visited three works of art: (1) Pablo Picasso’s painting, “The Blind Man’s Meal;” (2) David Smith’s large scale sculpture, “Becca;” and (3) Alberto Giacometti’s sculpture, “Woman of Venice II.” The teaching artist guided participants in noticing specific details about the work of art such as the subject, the foreground and background, the colors and medium used, and how the artwork’s location in the museum might affect a viewer’s observations. They were asked to sketch or list their observations and were given time for discussion and sharing within the group. With Picasso’s work, they were asked to describe the subject’s posture, what might be contained in the pitcher in the painting, and how having the absence of sight would change how objects would feel. They were also asked to notice the artist’s use of colors, in this case blue, and to identify possible poetic names for the different shades of blue used in the painting. In the large scale sculpture, “Becca” by David Smith, participants were asked to sketch this portrait from one angle, then share their drawing with the other participants. With this sculpture, the teaching artist allowed participants the freedom to come up with their own interpretation of the sculpture before explaining that this was a portrait of the artist’s six-year-old daughter.



Figure 1. Participants creating aluminum foil recreations of a classic 20th century sculpture



Figure 2. Participants explore portraiture through sketches



Figure 3. Participants view and discuss artworks

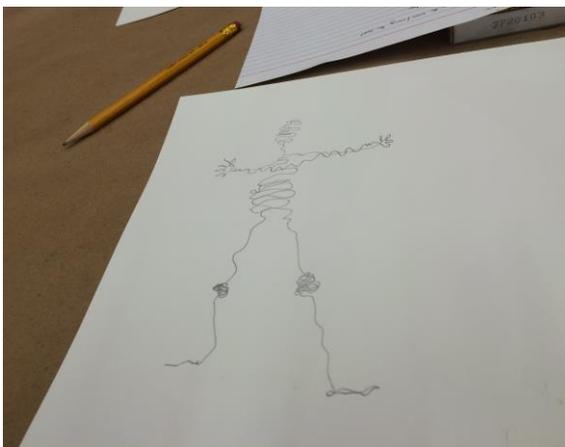


Figure 4. Participants view each other's sketches from the day for group discussion

At the conclusion of the gallery visit, participants returned to the studio space for final reflections. This provided them with an opportunity to process their experience with their group and the teaching artist. They were asked to share what they noticed about the teaching artist's methodology and how the classroom session prepared them for the museum visit.

They were given the time to ask questions about Aesthetic Education, and share their insights or relevance of the Gallery Visit related to their coursework in their Leadership Program.

Data Collection/Analysis

The data for this project were collected as part of the evaluation of the two leadership development initiatives. Authors of this paper include the lead faculty for the project, the principal investigator for the grant, the project evaluators of the two projects, a graduate student, and a teaching artist who conducted several of the workshops preceding the performances. The manuscript was prepared jointly involving discussion at several stages of the draft incorporating the perspectives of all the authors. Since the focus of the sessions described in this study was on observation (the title was the Art of Observation), most of the data refer to ways to 'seeing' in and through the visual arts, which serves as a metaphor for leadership.

Data for the study included feedback surveys and qualitative data including observations of the sessions by the co-authors, in session contributions from participants, and interviews with participants. Participants (n=14) had consented to the study as part of an overall consent for all program evaluation related activities for the grant. The notes and surveys were taken during the and after the sessions and included in the database later as part of the qualitative data. The interviews were transcribed and coded first using open codes identifying references to lessons learned from the visit to the museum. These open codes were then clustered thematically to identify emergent patterns in the data. These identified emergent themes were discussed within the research team of the co-authors through an iterative process until distinct patterns were evident (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 2008). The validity of the qualitative data were strengthened by prolonged time in the field collecting data, thick descriptions including verbatim notes and transcription, negative case analysis (Corbin, 2004), reflective discussions, peer debriefing and scrutiny (Creswell, 2003), and purposeful sampling of core study participants (Patton, 1990). Data from the observations and interviews were triangulated with numeric and narrative feedback on the surveys to help shed light on the learning processes and links made by the participants (Creswell, 2003).

Results

The main themes that emerged from the study included learning about self (intrapersonal learning), learning about others (interpersonal learning), and developing a sense of agency through creative self-expression. Feedback from participants indicated that the experience of visiting an art museum through the guided experiential engagement with a teaching artist who helped participants learn new aspects about themselves, about the subjectivity of individual perceptions of the world, and about the potential for democratizing of creative self-expression.

Participants reported enjoying the sessions, the novelty of the experience for many who were not actively engaged in the arts; they also reported that the sessions had been useful to their work in leadership and interactions with staff and colleagues.

Learning About Self/Intrapersonal Learning

The majority of the principal interns who participated in the workshops and the study were not artists. Their experiences in the arts session inspired them to reflect on new insights about themselves and their worldview. Specifically several participants referred to the lesson on perceiving experiences from multiple perspectives as a result of a guided visit to a visual arts museum. In particular, they made connections spontaneously to their own leadership practice:

Now I look at art differently... I look at it and say, what am I seeing that someone else may see differently, yet still have that same texture or color scheme... looking at it from close... looking from afar. As leaders we need to look at things?... but where we may not see everything the same way or we may see things from a different angle, and how does that perspective weigh/form a decision making process that we do or some of the discussions that we have or some of the collaborative efforts that we have, where it ultimately leads to a particular goal.

(African American female principal intern)

One of the most valuable things for me is looking at situations from different perspectives and I think that the class [session at the museum] was very useful in terms of getting more acquainted with the idea of sharing those perspectives and looking at situations or in that case pieces of art from different perspectives and opening yourself up and being willing to experience from those other perspectives.

(White male principal intern)

The articulation of the experiences led to a deepening of the group's understanding of what it means to be in a leadership position and how we can be sensitive to the implications.

I am more careful in observations and am more detailed. I try to include everything happening during observations.

(White female principal intern)

As the participants' reflections above indicate, the narrative descriptions of the experience bring together and bridge two traditionally unrelated fields, namely that of school leadership and artistic expression. The participants' responses to the experiences in art making and viewing art helped them articulate lessons that connected one discipline (arts) metaphorically

to another (leadership). References to the experience of the art in the workshop format can translate directly into future behaviors and actions. For example, these newly trained principals can begin their tenure of leadership with the realization and sensitivity to the reality that there are multiple perspectives in the school (i.e. administration, support staff, teachers, and students). Although it takes more time and intentionality, the principals can begin to weigh decisions, consequences, and initiatives from various perspectives to garner a more complete picture of the needs for the school. Several participants referred to the lesson on looking at things from multiple perspectives as a result of a guided visit to a visual arts museum:

... I sometimes wrongly place too much importance on my own reflections and not enough on others. The exercise (drawing a sculpture from one perspective) taught me that my perspective, as accurate as it may have been, was also limited. It doesn't matter how correct I think I am, because if I'm not getting the entire picture in the first place, I will produce a final product that is incomplete and flawed.

(White female principal intern)

I learned that others have different perspectives, and it's important to notice and value how each person sees a situation. This also helped with shaping my leadership style, as I don't want to be a dictator, but a leader who works together with his team and values the perspectives of all.

(African American male principal intern)

Interpersonal Learning Through Perspective Taking

Related to learning about self was the insight that all perception is inherently subjective and defined by the point of view of the observer. Literally viewing art in the museum helped participants understand that observing from one location necessarily implies that some other perspective might be unavailable for view. Thus abstract ideas about perspectives became experienced and concrete lessons about multiple realities and points of view.

One of the most valuable things for me is looking at situations from different perspectives and I think that the Art of Observation class was very useful in terms of getting more acquainted with the idea of sharing those perspectives and looking at situations or in that case pieces of art from different perspectives and opening yourself up and being willing to experience from those other perspectives.

(White male principal intern)

The benefit from working with others was seeing their thought process. For example, when I drew my picture, it was very plain and simple. However, my partner saw something totally different, and his picture was more complex. He saw the statue from a different angle and even drew the surroundings of statue including people in his drawing. For example, in the opening experience, we were able to act out what we saw in the pictures we viewed. What I was able to act out looked completely different than what someone else saw, given it was my perspective. Similarly, when others began to act out their pictures, my perspective of what their pictures displayed was very different. This shows how each one's background experiences help shape his or her perspectives, and the same occurs with our students.

(African American male principal intern)

Investing time and energy into knowing the other participants, particularly those who were different from me, broadened my perspective in all activities in which I participated. I learned from their expressed viewpoints and felt empowered by the overall progress of the group, not just my own thoughts. I found it so fascinating that some participants saw things from angles that I missed completely, and in this way, it was mind-opening to learn from the thought processes of others.

(White female principal intern)

I think just being there with other educators and other administrators... we all are always trying to connect it back to leadership so I do find them useful. When we're at the Museum, and we're all looking at a piece of artwork and we're seeing the same exact thing, we all had a different opinion of it...Even if it's the same picture, we all kind of internalized it and felt something different when we were looking at it. So sometimes putting that into perspective when you're talking or having observation conferences with teachers where you always kind of have to think back, okay, I saw the same thing they did, but, let's reflect; explain to me why you think it may be proficient and why, just kind of understanding that we all see things a little differently and you have to apply that in leadership as well. Because sometimes it can get frustrating ...But you have to think that everyone has almost like a different lens, when they're looking at things. Just being, able to feel confident and collaborate with other people. Just be creative and think outside the box."

(Hispanic female principal intern)

The participants shared lessons learned – it is important to consider the perspective of the teaching staff as well as your own perspective; that is, everyone has a unique interpretation of his or her world. From the narratives shared above, it is possible to extrapolate that these principals in training believed that their experience of considering artwork directly contributed

to their expanded view of what it means to lead a school. This leadership includes the use of creativity in problem solving and inclusion of perspectives different from your own – thus inviting teachers into the collaboration process.

Sense of Agency Through Creative Self-expression and Changes in Practice

Since many of the participants were not artists and had limited expertise in visual arts, there was some apprehension and concern about whether the session would be applicable to them. The teaching artist facilitated activities that were intended to help the participants overcome some of these challenges. These included modeling that artistry was not the aim of the session, rather that narrative meaning-making and translation of the experience into learning about leadership was the intended purpose of the arts experience.

Sometimes as adults, we tend to neglect the arts and think they are just for little children. However, we must sometimes think from an artistic perspective and include arts and feelings in our decisions. The aesthetic experience will help engage others, and enable them to own their differences. Sometimes when we get into leadership roles, we feel as if we have to change or fit a specific archetype of leadership. However, thinking from an artistic or creative lens will allow me to accept and embrace differences, as well as, inspire an environment of different perspectives in the workplace.

(African American male principal)

I witnessed the increased level of engagement that came with the unpredictability of the agenda, and I would like to take that back to anything (big or small) that I lead in the future. The aesthetic experience played an important role in that unpredictability. Because there are so many ways to creatively look at a work of art, or a problem at work, or an issue at a school, there are also many ways to harness the imagination of collaborative groups. Our responses were far more interesting because we were permitted to create without limits. I have learned that it is worth the time and effort to plan a creativity-based workshop, and I look forward to using this resource in my professional practice.

(White female principal intern)

The experiences served to encourage participants to try to develop a sense of agency as leaders – to try something new, to take a risk together to experience and potentially learn something together, and to reach out to others.

Another piece that was very important to me from that class was we made collages and it was a very open-ended project. We were given certain materials and what was very useful for me in that case was that the end product was not necessarily what I imagined it to be when I began working on it, and I think that was very useful to me. I've always been a step by step person... I like to have the instructions and like to know exactly where I'm going, and I think that was a useful experience for me to be able to take different pieces and let my kind of perception of what the end product would be to evolve as I was working on it, and to be okay with that and to inject some creativity and imagination into the process as compared to just doing things by the directions.

(White male principal intern)

Some participants were enthused by their participation in these sessions and took it to their own schools and professional contexts. They translated the conceptual lessons from the session in order to create new ways to bring about change in their schools.

So I think I've learned that a lot. You know, the, the rounds on my actual work to the art in the museum, and we had to look at the different pieces and, everyone saw something different, and I think that's the way we should see classrooms, that we shouldn't just try to see into one lens, and students and the way students learn, we should try to see it differently as well.

(African American male principal intern)

Participants also spoke about the unique qualities of art that help build connections, break down barriers, and link different communities and cultures.

I applied the skill of stepping back and looking at (observing) the whole picture based on our observation at the Museum of Art; it taught me that I can never look at things objectively if I am too close to them. So, when I encounter difficult situations, I step back and view from another angle.

(African American male principal intern)

Some participants reflected on the importance of considering alternate points of views among staff. Referring to a visit to an art museum, one respondent said:

We're looking at different pieces of art, and we were a very diverse group of people...your perception of what you're seeing changes based on the input that you get from different people...somebody else's perspective. Near the end, we discussed just the importance of being open-minded and the importance of gathering

everybody's input and being collaborative because you're not going to be able to assess the situation maybe accurately unless you've seen it from different angles and you've asked for input from others. So I thought that that was a pretty neat way to really make that less intangible for us and then also touched on the use of creativity and the use of the arts when it comes to, really engaging students and, trying to incorporate that, integrate that, into the curriculum.

(White female principal intern)

This awareness about differences in perspective and making connections was linked further to a better understanding about student needs in the schools.

I think it was looking at things from a different lens. When we were standing there, we were at the Poppy Fields painting, the one that stuck with me the first (most?), we were at the Poppy Fields painting and to me it looked like war and explosion and devastation and, but I think it was a very dark, sinister painting to me where other people...I'm looking at the guide and saying, I understand what you all see, but that's just not what I'm feeling out of the picture...That's what I took away from that experience is that we all have different connections and we all have a different way of looking at different things, and I try to bring that, if I'm in a classroom doing an observation I like sitting right behind a child and look and try to see the way they're seeing the teacher or the classroom and ... you are listening to the teacher and try to really hear what the kids are hearing so that you're not just going in there with a pre-established thought of I need to look for the agenda...

(White female principal intern)

I have been more appreciative of the arts and have now been more encouraging to students who are talented or interested in the arts.

(Hispanic male principal intern)

Despite the positive experiences and lessons learned in the sessions, some participants felt hindered by their school environments and unable to implement lessons learned. They struggled to implement the lessons learned in the context of their own schools. Some others, however (who are not yet in full-time leadership positions), have used it in their own classrooms as an instructional tool rather than as a leadership practice.

Discussion and Implications

The impasse with the challenges of staffing and retaining competent leaders in urban schools requires creative solutions. Pegg (2010) argued that creativity is perceived as a luxury in a

setting that is trying to combat criticism of inadequate instructional structures as measured by student achievement on standardized tests. These settings require leaders who can work around and with the system and its constraints in order to make the school a successful, innovative learning environment. School leaders are often in the unenviable position of creating a climate of high achievement in schools while having few, if any, options for changing the context of the instruction and professional development in the schools. In this paper, we argue for a simple introduction of artistic engagement and how that can change both individuals and their interactions with staff and students at their schools. We highlight how a guided visit to an art museum and experiential engagement in the arts can be an empowering tool for interpersonal and intrapersonal learning, a tool for aspiring urban school leaders and administrators. The main linking analogy that enabled learning transfer was that of perspective and point of view. Through making narrative descriptions of the process and product, sharing in a group context, listening to diverse points of view, creating art themselves, and overcoming initial inhibitions, leaders can gain new perspective on their role in schools and improve their skills and practice. The project serves as an example of how creativity can be a source of empowerment and agency, which in turn can lead to creative responses to the challenges in their schools.

Stoll and Temperley (2009) found that in times of constant change, as is typical of urban schools, teachers need to be flexible, adaptable, and creative. This article argues that promoting creativity of staff to enhance 21st century learning is a fundamental challenge for school leadership today. The participants in this study demonstrated the shift in flexibility and openness to new experiences through the simple act of active engagement in the art museum. Through the tangible experience of seeing a work of art in the presence of others who saw it differently and then discussing their experiences, participants learned about the unique aspects of self as well as the differences in perspective from others. This kind of concrete learning about intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of leadership cannot occur just by reading from textbooks about the importance of relational skills.

Eisner (2002) further argued for the integration of the arts in educational settings to: improve communication; improve relationships among students, staff, and administration; and express aspects of the human experience that cannot be captured adequately in other forms of expression. As seen from the quotations about sense of agency above, participants remembered the experience vividly and used the learning to make changes in their practice, specifically to: be open to new ideas; be open to different ideas; and create expressive opportunities for students and staff at their schools. The study also highlights the role of viewer and audience in effective engagement with the arts. Through reflective viewing and guided engagement, participants experienced both the role of artist (in creating art as part of the experience) as well as audience (in responding to the artwork of their peers as well as the

artwork in the museum). As stated in the introduction, there is a precedent for adult learning through art museum experiences. Our study has demonstrated that this style of learning can both teach *about* art and also be a vehicle to transfer lessons about being a socially and emotionally skilled leader.

In practice, teaching leadership in urban education settings requires creativity and “out of the box” thinking. Urban educators are faced with the daunting task of leading teachers in classrooms that are often under-resourced (e.g., books, classroom supplies) and are located in neighborhoods where students’ families are unable to pay for the required supplies. Teachers are often teaching in classrooms with 35-40 students, all with varying learning needs and with little support. This type of an educational environment is subject to the same rigors of assessment as all other schools where teachers and their students do not struggle with the same limited resources and funding. Providing leadership in under-resourced and under-funded urban schools requires leaders to make tough decisions related to budget and also to provide a balanced disciplinary environment to ensure certain students are not unnecessarily targeted and labeled the “problem.” As one participant stated in her narrative, “I try to sit behind a student and see the teacher from his/her perspective.” The ability to begin to view the learning environment from the perspective of the student or the teacher or even the parent may allow the principal to begin making choices and decisions that are informed beyond his/her own worldview. That is the importance of the art museum experience, to open the leader, that is, the principal’s mind to the possibilities about the creativity of hearing and learning from others in their schools. Yes, being a principal of a school can be isolating; however, engaging your staff and your students through the act of leadership allows for creation of ownership and renewal of ideas.

There are some limitations to this study. The respondents who participated were a group of aspiring and experienced school leaders who were open and willing to participate in the sessions. The creativity sessions were not mandatory to all participating school leaders, and as a result, not everyone chose to attend when given a choice. A few responses from those who did not attend indicated some residual emotions around prior negative experiences around the arts. Others who did not attend were individuals who did not stay connected to the leadership preparation program after graduation. In addition, at every session, there were individuals who spoke about their diffidence and lack of skill in the art form. Although the teaching artists and the facilitators helped dispel the perception that any skills were needed to participate and learn, it was possible that not all participants felt connected to or appreciated the visual arts as a modality.

Further study could examine how to encourage and foster creativity among participants who do not connect to the format of the sessions as described in this study. In addition, further

research could examine what might be ways to encourage innovative and imaginative thinking among students and whether they can be taught to seek out inspiring tools for their work as leaders in schools.

Conclusions

This study has demonstrated how the arts can be a learning tool and how individual leaders can potentially connect through reflection and insights gained from the arts into greater effectiveness in their everyday leadership practice. Further study is needed to understand how creativity and innovation can be inspired among school leaders and incorporated as part of a school's culture.

References

- Abson, D. (1994). The effects of peer evaluation on the behavior of undergraduate students working in tutorless groups. In H. C. Foote, C. J. Howe, A. Anderson, A. K. Tolmie, & D. A. Warden (Eds.), *Group and interactive learning* (pp. 153-158). Southampton, UK: Computational Mechanics.
- Anderman E. M., & Young, A. J. (1994). Motivation and strategy use in science: Individual differences and classroom effects. *Journal of Research Science and Teaching*, *31*, 811-831.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1997). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*, 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Bush, T. (2007). Educational leadership and management: Theory, policy and practice. *South African Journal of Education*, *27*, 391-406. Retrieved from <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/25107/4321>
- Corbin, J. M. (2004). Negative case. In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. F. Liao (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of social science methods* (pp. 717-718). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dabbour, K. S. (1997). Applying active learning methods to the design of library instructions for a freshman seminar. *College and Research Libraries*, *58*, 299-308.
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005) School Leadership Study: Developing successful principals. *Review of Research*, pp. 1-32. Stanford, CA:

- Stanford Educational Leadership Institute. Retrieved from http://deltastate.edu/docs/ruralschoolleadership/case_study_dsu.pdf
- Eisner, E. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Fiske, E. B. (Ed.). (1999). *Champions of change: The impact of the arts in learning*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
- Goulding, A. (2013). Older people learning through contemporary visual art - engagement and barriers. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 32, 18-32. doi:10.1111/j.1476-8070.2013.01751.x
- Gremler, D. D., Hoffman, K. D., Keaveney, S. M., & Wright, L. K. (2000). Experiential learning exercises in services marketing courses. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22, 35-44.
- Hamer, L. (2000). The additive effects of semi-structured classroom activities on student learning: An application of classroom based experiential learning techniques. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22, 25-34. doi: 10.1177/0273475300221004
- Jacob, B. A. (2007). The challenges of staffing urban schools with effective teachers. *The Future of Children*, 17(1), 129-153. doi: 10.1353/foc.2007.0005
- Kaimal, G., Drescher, J., Gonzaga, A., Fairbank, H., & White, G.P. (2014). Inspiring creativity in urban school leaders: lessons from the performing arts. *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 15, 4. Retrieved February 8th, 2016 from <http://www.ijea.org/v15n4/>.
- Lawson, T. (1995). Active-learning exercise for consumer behavior classes. *Teaching of Psychology*, 22, 200-202.
- Lindsey, J. L. (2011). Fine art metaphors reveal leader archetypes. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 18(1), 56-63. doi: 10.1177/1548051810378013
- Livingstone, D., & Lynch, K. (2002). Group project work and student-centered active learning: Two different experiences. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 26, 217-317.
- Monk, D. F. (2013). John Dewey and adult learning in museums. *Adult Learning*, 24, 63-71. doi: 10.1177/1045159513477842
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Pegg, A. E. (2010). Learning to lead the risk-conscious organization: An empirical study of five English primary school leaders. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 13, 121-139. doi:10.1080/13603120903410561

- Perry, C. L., Williams, C. L., Veblen-Mortenson, S., Toomey, T., Komro, K. A., Anstine, P. S., & Wolfson, M. (1996) Project Northland: Outcomes of a community-wide alcohol use prevention program during early adolescence. *American Journal of Public Health, 85*, 956-965.
- Petzko, V. (2008). The perceptions of new principals regarding the knowledge and skills important to their initial success. *NASSP Bulletin, 92*, 224-250.
doi:10.1177/0192636508322824
- Ramocki, S. P. (1987). Measured effectiveness of client-sponsored consulting projects in the marketing research course. *Journal of Marketing Education, 9*(1), 24-30.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Smith, R. A. (1996). Leadership as aesthetic process. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 30*(4), 39-52. doi:10.2307/3333179
- Stoll, L., & Temperley, J. (2009): Creative leadership: A challenge of our times, *School Leadership & Management: Formerly School Organization, 29*(1), 65-78.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13632430802646404>
- Williams, H. W. (2008). Characteristics that distinguish outstanding urban principals. *Journal of Management Development, 27*, 36-54. doi: 10.1108/02621710810840758
- Zoller, U. (1987). The fostering of question-asking capability: A meaningful aspect of problem-solving in chemistry. *Journal of Chemical Education, 64*, 510-512.

About the Authors

Girija Kaimal is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Creative Arts Therapies at Drexel University. Dr. Kaimal's research aims to understand the role of creativity and self-expression in wellness, empowerment and interpersonal learning. In addition to leading two multi-year evaluations study on leadership development funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Kaimal serves as a research adviser on international development projects related to gender equity and arts-based psychosocial support for vulnerable children in trauma zones, and is leading a study on the impact of art therapy on symptoms of PTSD and TBI on military service members through the NEA Military Healings Arts Partnership. She is a practicing visual artist and her work explores the intersection of transnational identity and sustainable artistic practices.

Jon Drescher is a Professor of Practice and the Founding Director, of the Urban Principals Academy at Lehigh (U*PAL) a 14 month Educational Leadership Master's program with an emphasis on creativity, imagination and organizational culture to enhance student learning.

Jon also teaches graduate classes in the Allentown Principal Leadership Initiative and the Global Educational Leaders program. Jon's previous positions include Project Director for the Center for Educational Innovation, Associate Director of the Summer Principals Academy at Columbia University, 25 years as a Principal in New York City and Westchester County, Head of School of a K-12 Charter in Massachusetts, group Leader at Harvard's Principal Center, and, producer and host for New York Public Radio.

Holly Fairbank is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Maxine Greene Center for Aesthetic Education and Social Imagination and is a consultant The Center for Arts Education. She is an adjunct at The College of New Rochelle, Lehman College, Hunter College and BMCC (CUNY). She was Assistant Director at Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) from 1997-2012. Ms. Fairbank received a BA from Sarah Lawrence College and an MA in Dance Education from New York University. Her book *Collection, Preservation and Dissemination of Minority Dance in China: An Anthropological Investigation of the 1980's* has recently been translated into Chinese and published by University of Yunnan Press.

Adele M. L. Gonzaga is a research coordinator at Drexel University's College of Nursing and Health Professions. She is currently working on a longitudinal research study funded by the U.S. Department of Education. She has worked on evaluation studies of leadership development, and urban teacher training programs. Prior to joining Drexel, she was a research assistant at Temple University's College of Education where she supported ongoing research and evaluation projects. Adele received her Master's Degree in Educational Psychology from Temple University, and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines.

Janelle S. Junkin is a PhD candidate at Drexel University's Creative Arts in Therapy program. She is a board certified music therapist working in Philadelphia, PA, with children and families. She has helped develop community arts programs in Philadelphia and in South and Central America. She is an adjunct in the Creative Arts in Therapy master's program at Drexel University.

George P. White is Iacocca Professor of the Educational Leadership and the Director of the Center for Developing Urban Educational Leaders (CDUEL) at Lehigh University. This program specializes in the training and development of school principals and superintendents at the regional, national, and international levels. CDUEL focuses on designing action research to establish programs that support leadership development of principals, teachers, parents and community members in urban communities to support student learning. Dr. White specializes in the areas of urban school reform, community engagement, organizational change, middle level education, and leadership development.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the U.S. Department of Education's School Leadership Program grants (#U363A100069 and #U363A080083) that enabled us to do the study.

International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editors

Eeva Anttila
University of the Arts Helsinki

Terry Barrett
Ohio State University

Brad Haseman
Queensland University of Technology

Peter Webster
University of Southern California

Managing Editor
Christine Liao
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Media Review Editor
Christopher Schulte
Penn State University

Associate Editors

Kimber Andrews
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Marissa McClure
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Sven Bjerstedt
Lund University

Kristine Sunday
Old Dominion University

Deborah (Blair) VanderLinde
Oakland University

Editorial Board

Peter F. Abbs	University of Sussex, U.K.
Norman Denzin	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
Kieran Egan	Simon Fraser University, Canada
Magne Espeland	Stord/Haugesund University College, Norway
Rita Irwin	University of British Columbia, Canada
Gary McPherson	University of Melbourne, Australia
Julian Sefton-Green	University of South Australia, Australia
Robert E. Stake	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
Susan Stinson	University of North Carolina—Greensboro, U.S.A.
Graeme Sullivan	Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.
Elizabeth (Beau) Valence	Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.
Peter Webster	University of Southern California, U.S.A.