HOW DO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS MEDIATE THE INFLUENCE OF STATE TESTING POLICIES ON ARTS EDUCATION?

THE CASE IN VIRGINIA

A Thesis in

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by

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ABSTRACT

Testing policy theory predicts that assessment, and particularly high-stakes assessment, will drive curriculum towards particular disciplines (Frederiksen & Collins, 1989; Popham, 1987). Conversely, untested areas of the curriculum will receive less emphasis and fewer resources than tested areas (Madaus, 1988). This theory would thus predict that the arts, as an untested area, would find resources and instructional time reduced. Arts educators and supporters argue that the arts provide unique cognitive and affective benefits for students (Eisner, 2002), and that a loss of the arts in schools would deny students access to these benefits. While quantitative studies have explored the impact of testing on the arts (von Zastrow, 2004; Center on Education Policy, 2006), there is a lack of qualitative research in this area.

In this dissertation, I address three questions: 1) How are visual arts teachers in four elementary schools, two that have a strong focus on the arts and two that do not, across a range of poverty levels, responding to Virginia’s high-stakes Standards of Learning (SOL) exams? 2) Are visual arts teachers’ responses to these high-stakes exams consistent or incongruous with principals’ views of the tests’ impacts on instruction, resources, and classroom assessment? 3) If the views and practices of both visual arts teachers and principals are consistent in their positive outlook towards the SOL exams, what principal and teacher practices allow schools to maintain their arts instruction? To answer these questions, I interviewed and observed visual arts specialists at the four schools, and also interviewed principals, classroom teachers, and district personnel. Interviews and observations were analyzed with the help of N6® qualitative software.

Findings yielded a mixed picture. Strong district support of the arts, strong arts missions at arts-focused schools, a belief in the efficacy of the arts at non-arts-focused schools, and a willingness among specialists to connect art lessons with tested content led to a general lack of
negative testing influence on the visual arts specialists’ practice. However, art as practiced by classroom teachers had been either reduced or highly modified to serve the tested areas, and communication between specialists and classroom teachers was constrained by common classroom teacher planning time. Thus, this study provides confirming and disconfirming evidence for testing policy theory, depending on where one looks in the school. This supports the idea of the uneven implementation of reform (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Future studies on testing policy impact should examine these intra-school differences.
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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents.
Introduction

Today, the standards movement is often pursued through high-stakes testing, usually tied to standards developed at the state level. As the National Research Council (1999) described, this movement “is premised on the idea of setting clear, high standards for what children are supposed to learn and then holding students – and often educators and schools – to those standards” (p. 13). Holding students, educators, schools, and districts accountable to standards has led to the introduction of tests as a measure of fidelity to those standards. These exams often carry “high-stakes” for schools, teachers, and students. These high-stakes can include promotion or graduation for students, and sanctions or financial bonuses for teachers and schools.

Supporters of testing as a means of educational reform argue that well-designed tests will both shine a light on areas of educational weaknesses and result in stronger instruction and student learning (Achieve, 2002; Grant, 2000; Resnick & Resnick, 1992). In contrast, critics have focused on the narrowing of curriculum and instruction, the deskilling of teachers, negative psychological consequences, such as anxiety and shame, a feeling that the tests are an invalid measurement of what students are learning, and the shifting of instructional time towards test preparation and testing (Cimbricz, 2002; FairTest, 2003; Kornhaber & Orfield, 2001; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001; Smith, 1991).

Testing policy theory predicts that assessment, and particularly high-stakes assessment, will drive curriculum (Frederiksen & Collins, 1989; Popham, 1987). Policymakers, seeking to influence teachers and students in the classroom, have long implemented testing partly for this reason, using testing to push for greater emphasis on particular disciplines (Natriello & Pallas, 2001). Conversely, untested areas of the curriculum would receive less emphasis. This theory has received support in studies that find reduction of instructional time and resources to untested
subjects and topics (for example, Center on Education Policy, 2006; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001; von Zastrow, 2004). Furthermore, the higher the stakes associated with testing, the more likely schools will alter their curriculum (Madaus & Clarke, 2001).

The arts are an untested area of the curriculum and thus open to the testing theory claim that untested areas will find their resources and instructional time reduced. Arts educators and supporters have argued that arts education provides unique cognitive and affective benefits for students (Csikszentmihalyi & Schiefele, 1992; Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Hamblen, 1993; Hanna, 1992; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004). However, the current state of the fine and performing arts in education in the United States is one of ambivalence. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2002), the arts are described as a “core” academic subject (Chapman, 2004a), and the arts are more accessible to more people than at any other time (Chapman, 2004b; Eisner, 2002). At the same time, funding for the arts in schools is quite small compared to other areas of the curriculum. Often the public does not hold art education to be critically necessary, even though public rhetoric towards the arts is positive and participation in the arts is substantial (Kopczynski & Hager, 2003; McCarthy et al., 2004). Consequently, the arts remain at the periphery of most American K-12 school curricula (Eisner, 2002).

High-stakes testing has raised fears in the arts education community that because the arts are not tested, schools will feel pressure to divert instructional time and resources to areas of the curriculum that are tested, such as reading comprehension and math (Chapman, 2004b). Arts education researchers have also pointed to the fact that universities often do not count credits earned in art classes in making admissions decisions, creating a sense that the arts are not valued (Chapman, 2004b).
Finally, testing affects disparate populations differently. This introduces important issues of equity. Tests carrying high-stakes are more likely to be required in states with higher minority populations (Reardon, 1996). And in states and localities where high-stakes assessments exist, minority and low-income students are more likely to be retained, despite evidence that retention is not beneficial (see Hauser, 2001; Holmes, 1989). Students are also more likely to drop out of school (Jacob, 2001; Reardon & Galindo, 2002).

However, a pilot study in Virginia, investigating the influence of testing on untested areas of the curriculum through principal interviews did not find that the arts had been undermined. This held true even in schools with high levels of poverty (Kornhaber, Mishook, Edwards, & Nomi, forthcoming). While this was surprising, theories in sociology, political science, and educational policy have pointed to the problems of translating policy into practice (for example, see Blank, Porter, & Smithson, 2001; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Another possible explanation for the maintenance of arts reported by principals and program directors is that principals are not regularly in the classroom, and must serve the interests of both their school and policies set by the district and state. Thus, they may be less likely to report negative aspects of state policies (Stecher, Barron, Chun, & Ross, 2000). Teachers also ultimately make the final decisions about course content and emphasis (Porter, 1998). This makes it imperative to move beyond principal interviews to talk with teachers and observe classrooms, and compare and contrast the reactions of both sets of interviewees.

This dissertation builds upon these initial findings, and addresses the following questions:

1. How are visual arts teachers in four elementary schools, two that have a strong focus on the arts and two that do not, across a range of poverty levels, responding to Virginia’s high-stakes Standards of Learning (SOL) exams?

2. Are visual arts teachers’ responses to these high-stakes exams consistent or incongruous with principals’ generally positive views of the tests’ impacts on instruction,
resources, and classroom assessment?

3. If the views and practices of both visual arts teachers and principals are consistent in their positive outlook towards the SOL exams, what principal and teacher practices allow schools to maintain their arts instruction?

This dissertation will be of interest to several audiences, including national and state policymakers, testing policy researchers, districts hoping to maintain a strong arts education program, and arts education researchers. It contributes to theories of systemic testing, which hold that external assessments, and especially those that are high-stakes, inevitably impact curriculum and pedagogical practice, especially in high-poverty schools and districts. It also grants insight into the “enacted curriculum,” showing the qualitative processes that transform the dictates of policymakers into actual classroom practice (Blank et al., 2001). There is still a great need to understand how high-stakes tests are “interpreted and engaged by teachers” and principals (Cimbricz, 2002).

This dissertation also contributes to knowledge of practice in those schools, districts and states hoping to maintain arts education, and in particular to leaders in high-poverty schools and districts who want to provide opportunities to learn in the arts. Studies of the impact of high-stakes testing on specialized schools, such as those that focus on the arts, are rare. Comparisons between such schools and “regular” schools are lacking as well. The qualitative nature of this study will add needed depth and complexity to these research areas, as most research on the impact of testing has been quantitative and survey-based (for example, Pedulla et al., 2003), though there are some exceptions (Booher-Jennings, 2005; McNeil, 2000). Finally, it is unclear from the pilot study whether interviewees interpreted questions in the way the researchers intended. Understanding the processes of teaching and learning within the “black box” of schools and classrooms (Black & Wiliam, 1998) – rather than merely reporting increases or decreases in
time allotted to particular subjects – requires a qualitative methodology.

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the literature surrounding the impact of high-stakes testing on the curriculum, with particular attention paid to issues of equity. It also briefly examines the state of arts education in the United States, the unique cognitive and affective benefits the arts can provide, characteristics associated with schools and districts that support the arts, and the empirical evidence for the impact of high-stakes testing on the arts. In Chapter 2, I describe the methods for the study. Chapter 3 provides the state and local context for the study, focusing specifically on accountability and the arts. In Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, I examine four elementary schools and the impact of the SOL exams on their visual arts education. Each chapter provides a historical, neighborhood, demographic, and testing context for the school. Following these contexts is a description of each school’s arts program. I then discuss the impact of the SOL tests on the arts in the areas of curriculum, time, resources, staffing, staff development, and classroom assessment. The impact on these areas are discussed from the points of view of various actors at the school, including the principal, arts specialists, and classroom teachers. In Chapter 8, I contrast the findings of each of the schools, and discuss the theoretical and policy implications of the study.
Chapter 1: Literature Review

This study incorporates three distinct educational literatures. The first concerns testing policy and focuses on theories and empirical findings concerning the impact of high-stakes testing on classroom practice and equity. With regard to the influence of testing on classroom practice, testing theory would claim (as mentioned above) that untested areas of the curriculum would receive less focus, instructional time, and resources, than tested areas. The empirical literature has largely supported this claim.

Second, I look briefly at arts education, particularly the current influence of accountability and testing policies on the arts. I also briefly note the practices and policies that contribute to a strong arts education in individual schools and districts, as well as claims of the arts’ unique cognitive and affective contributions to learning.

In addition, issues of equity are important for both testing policy and the arts for two reasons. First and foremost, support for high quality arts programs by affluent communities is a strong piece of evidence that a quality education in the arts is a marker of a high quality education (Bergonzi & Smith, 1996; Kozol, 1991). High-poverty schools, without these resources and protections, may be more vulnerable to a loss of arts education. Second, if the arts contribute to positive affective and cognitive outcomes, then students at poorer schools would suffer disproportionately from a diminishing or loss of arts programs.

Testing Policy: Theories and Empirical Findings Concerning the Impact of High-stakes Testing on Classroom Practice

Theoretical assumptions of high-stakes testing supporters

High-stakes tests are seen by policymakers as meeting a number of needs. The National Research Council (1999) has noted that testing policies “enjoy widespread public support and are
increasingly seen as a means of raising academic standards, holding educators and students accountable for meeting those standards, and boosting public confidence in the schools” (p. 1). The number of states administering high-stakes tests – where students can be promoted or retained, or graduate from high school as a result of performance on the exam – has been growing steadily over the past ten years (Achieve, 2002). By 2008, students in 28 states (including Virginia) will have to pass a state exam to graduate from high school. Under the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), all students in grades 3 through 8 are required to take a statewide exam in reading and math (with or without high stakes attached). Schools are held accountable for students’ test scores, with failure to make adequate yearly progress resulting in sanctions, including the possibility of allowing students to choose a transfer to another school.

There are several underlying assumptions used by supporters of high-stakes testing. First, tests will motivate students and teachers to greater effort in order to avoid the consequences of failing (Betts & Costrell, 2001; Bishop & Mane, 2001; National Council on Education Standards and Testing, 1992; Roderick & Engel, 2001). Second, tests reveal important information about students, teachers, and schools that can be used by government, the public, and businesses to make judgments about the quality of education in public schools, and reward and punish accordingly (Hess, 2003). Third, high-stakes assessments can bypass teachers’ resistance to or deflection of much school reforms (Porter & Smithson, 2001) and lead directly to positive changes in teacher instruction, if tests are designed well (Popham, 1987). And finally, assessing students is less expensive than other reforms (Hoxby, 2001; Linn, 2000).

Other researchers agree in principle that good tests can drive good instruction, but have argued that objectively scored multiple-choice tests cannot provide the depth of information that would permit inferences about students’ cognitive abilities or to make decisions about
improvement in classroom instruction (Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Wiggins, 1991; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Instead of broadly criticizing all large-scale, high-stakes testing, they have argued for assessments that provide rich sources of data, such as performance assessments, authentic assessments, or portfolios. These assessments have often been used in the arts, which in turn has informed performance assessments in other academic areas (Wolf, December 1987/January 1988). Authentic assessments and performance assessments would ideally give teachers the needed information to improve classroom practice, and value and promote higher order thinking (Haertel, 1999; Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Stiggins, 1987; Wiggins, 1991). Per Messick (1996), these tests would provide “positive washback” to the overall educational system, encouraging good instructional practices (p. 247).

However, even supporters of alternative forms of assessment note that they are expensive to design, administer, and grade, and teachers are often not prepared to develop instruction with performance assessments in mind (Baker, 1998). Assumptions that authentic forms of assessment will lead to less distortion of instructional practices, as well as promote equity for poor and minority students, are not well-founded (Madaus & Clarke, 2001). Furthermore, issues of traditional measures of reliability, validity, and generalizability of task performance have been recurring concerns (Baker, O'Neil, & Linn, 1993; Koretz, Barron, Mitchell, & Stecher, 1996; Linn, 1993, 2000; Linn, Baker, & Dunbar, 1991; Shavelson, Baxter, & Pine, 1992). Consequently, their popularity as large-scale, high-stakes assessments has dwindled.

Problems with theories of high-stakes assessments

Systemically valid tests should, through changes in instruction and curriculum, influence the educational system to “foster the development of the cognitive skills that the test is designed to measure” (Frederiksen & Collins, 1989, p. 27). In other words, teaching to the test should
result in a non-corrupted system where students’ knowledge and skills improve. The idea of testing as part of a feedback loop becomes problematic when the tests distort the educational process to such an extent that they become, in the words of George Madaus (1988), “the ferocious master of the educational process, not the compliant servant they should be” (p. 84). Distorting the educational system to such an extent through testing threatens its “systemic validity.” When this occurs, the cognitive skills that are supposed to be measured by the test become compromised, usually by emphasizing narrow, isolated skills, introducing validity-threatening test-taking strategies, and by displacing other learning goals (Darling-Hammond, 1991; Frederiksen & Collins, 1989). The real-world consequences of the uses of testing, sometimes referred to as the “consequential validity” of test scores, may then in fact be quite negative. These consequences may occur even if measures of reliability or other types of validity, such as content or criterion-related validity, are supported by evidence (Shepard, 1993).

The possibility of these undesirable systemic consequences of testing has been predicted by many in the educational community. These include the narrowing of content and instruction to tested areas of the curriculum (Madaus, 1988), the deskilling of teachers through a loss of autonomy (McNeil, 2000), and disproportionately adverse effects on poor and minority students (Clarke, Haney, & Madaus, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1991; Haney, 2000; Hauser, 2001; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001; Natriello & Pallas, 2001; Reardon, 1996; Reardon & Galindo, 2002). Madaus (1988) predicted that negative impacts on instruction would be felt even in low- and medium-stakes situations. Impact in these low- and medium-stakes situations can be based merely on perceptions; namely, if teachers, students, or other stakeholders believe that test results are important, then the effects of the test reflect these perceptions, not the actual stakes. Koretz and Hamilton (2003) provide confirming evidence of
such beliefs: Eighth grade teachers in Massachusetts, whose students did not face high stakes, were as likely to feel pressure to raise scores as 10th grade teachers, whose students were subject to the state’s high-stakes MCAS exams.

Furthermore, as the importance of a quantitative indicator increases, “the more likely it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor” (Madaus, 1988, p. 89). As a result, if important decisions are perceived by teachers to be based on test scores, then “teachers will teach to the test” (p. 90). And the longer a high-stakes testing regime is in place, the existence of a backlog of exams “de facto defines the curriculum” (p. 93). The format of the test (multiple choice, essays, short answer) also matters – teachers will adjust instruction to focus on particular formats (Madaus, 1988; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001).

Other theories of school change stress that testing is but one of many influences on schools, classrooms, and students. It is one lever of change, and impacts can be indirect or minor (Hamilton, 2003). There are several explanations for why we might see a minimal response to testing programs. The first is that teachers do not implement reforms exactly as they are written – teachers change reforms as much, if not more, than reforms change teaching practices (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Porter and Smithson (2001) distinguish between the “intended curriculum,” usually determined at the state level through policy documents and suggested curricula, and the “enacted curriculum,” or the actual curriculum delivered in the classroom to students. When the gaps between the intended and enacted curricula are large, then a reform’s impact will be minor or difficult to interpret.

Second, local context matters a great deal in how reforms are perceived and implemented. Local demands, pressures, and resources lead to uneven implementation of reforms, even those that carry large consequences for schools, teachers, and students, such as the
standards movement (Sipple, Killeen, & Monk, 2004). For example, Sipple, Killeen, and Monk (2004) investigated the responses of school districts in New York to the requirement that all high school students take the Regents exams. They found that while in some districts this policy change was met with praise, in others there was resistance and fear that local decision-making power was being taken away, resulting in a “shallow and meaningless curriculum” (p. 156).

This leads to central questions about the influence of testing policies. Is there a corrupting influence of high-stakes tests on classroom instruction? Do high-stakes tests inevitably narrow curriculum, focusing solely on the material covered by the test? Are resources diverted to areas of the curriculum covered by the test? And are there differential impacts of high-stakes tests on different student populations, negatively impacting educational equity?

**Empirical Perspectives**

**Impact on teaching and the curriculum**

One of the primary claims made by supporters of high-stakes tests is that they lead to positive changes in teaching and learning. They point to the rise in students’ test scores on standardized tests tied to standards as an indication that student learning has also risen (Grissmer & Flanagan, 1998; Hall & Kennedy, 2006; Spellings, 2005). Score gains by students, however, may or may not be valid indicators of student learning. In the classroom, some methods - teaching more, working harder, and working more effectively – will “produce unambiguously meaningful gains in scores” (Koretz, McCaffrey, & Hamilton, 2001, p. 17). However, the reallocation of time and resources to areas covered by the test, alignment to material covered on the test, teacher coaching and cheating “can produce inflated scores – that is, increases in scores that do not warrant the inference that students’ mastery” of subject matter covered by the test has actually improved when scores go up” (p. 17). Koretz and Hamilton (2003) used this typology in
surveying teachers in Massachusetts at both 8th and 10th grades, finding that student score gains were often attributed to strategies that artificially inflate score gains.

Another way to examine the validity of score gains is to look at whether the gains on one test generalize to gains on other tests measuring the same skills or content. A rise in scores on a state’s high-stakes exam should be reflected in a similar rise on other measures, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The evidence for the generalizability of score gains, however, is mixed. Neill (2001) found “no clear relationship” between score gains on tests in states with high-stakes exams and NAEP scores (p. 107). In fact, states without high-stakes exams were more likely to show NAEP gains that states with high-stakes exams, and these gains were more likely to be statistically significant. Similarly, Amrein and Berliner (2002), in examining 18 states with high-stakes exams, found very little evidence that score gains on these exams generalized to gains on other assessments, such as NAEP, Advanced Placement tests, and the SAT and ACT. These findings have been contested by several researchers, focusing on gains on NAEP (Braun, 2004; Carnoy & Loeb, 2003; Raymond & Hanushek, 2003; Rosenshine, 2003). Some added a comparison group of non-high-stakes states (Braun, 2004; Rosenshine, 2003), finding that states using high-stakes testing had larger gains on NAEP than those not using high-stakes testing. Amrein-Beardsley and Berliner (2003) countered these findings by noting the high rates of exclusion on NAEP made generalization of score gains difficult. Similar contested findings were reported from Texas. Grissmer, Flanagan, Kawata, and Williamson (2000) found that Texas students’ gains on NAEP were larger than most other states, and also that African American and Latino students made greater score gains than Whites on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) exams. Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, and Stecher (2000), on the other hand, reported that only in fourth grade math did Texas make greater gains
than other states. Otherwise, Texas’ gains were similar to those of other states.

It should not be surprising that transfer of score gains across tests has not been consistently shown. Students need multiple situations and representations to facilitate transfer across measurements of the same content (Perkins & Salomon, 1989). Unfortunately, in a situation where there is a “tendency to overemphasize the kind of performance valued on a single test, the current high-stakes testing policies will exacerbate, rather than mitigate” the problem of transfer of score gains across measurements (Kornhaber, 2004, p. 102).

At the classroom level, most empirical work using surveys or interviews has found that teachers make changes in their instruction to focus on high-stakes tests, narrowing instruction to focus on the test, and that schools narrow the curriculum by reducing instructional time for untested topics (Center on Education Policy, 2006; Clarke et al., 2003; B. D. Jones & Egley, 2004; M. G. Jones et al., 1999; Koretz, Barron et al., 1996; Koretz, Mitchell, Barron, & Keith, 1996; Kornhaber, 2005; Pedulla et al., 2003; Smith, 1991; Smith & Rottenberg, 1991; Stecher et al., 2000; von Zastrow, 2004; B. L. Wilson & Corbett, 1991). These empirical findings are highly contextualized, as the stakes of the test and overall climate in each state, district, and school may be very different.

For example, RAND studied three states – Kentucky, Maryland, and Washington – using a similar approach and similar survey instruments, creating an opportunity for interesting cross-state comparisons. In the two states using high-stakes performance assessments, Koretz, Mitchell, Barron, and Keith (1996) and Koretz, Barron, et al. (1996) found a mixed picture of test impact in Maryland and Kentucky, respectively. Results from the Maryland State Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) were publicly released, and schools with extremely low scores could be reconstituted, but there were no direct consequences for students. The
researchers found general support for the program, though nearly everyone believed that MSPAP had increased the burdens on schools. In the classroom, instruction increased in some areas, such as writing and particular mathematics skills, but decreased in untested areas, such as arts and music, and untested concepts in tested subjects. There was also concern (much like that reported in Koretz, McCaffrey, & Hamilton, 2003) that score gains could not be attributed to actual gains in student learning. Most teachers believed that scores could be inflated by familiarity with MSPAP, use of practice tests, and test preparation strategies rather than actual learning of content.

The Kentucky Instructional Results and Information System (KIRIS) carried higher stakes than Maryland’s MSPAP (Koretz, Barron, et al., 1996). Schools were sanctioned or rewarded based on test scores, which were publicly released. The impact of KIRIS on schools was significant. On the positive side, students wrote more and a majority of principals and teachers believed that KIRIS could induce reluctant teachers to change their practice. However, the focus of KIRIS led to deemphasizing non-tested subjects, and the strong emphasis on writing led math teachers to complain that they could not judge students' mathematical competence. Inflated score gains due to test-preparation activities were also a large concern.

In a study of Washington State’s objective-item testing system, Stecher et al. (2000) surveyed principals and teachers at 70 elementary schools and 70 middle schools. At the time of the study, exam scores were not used to make decisions about students, teachers, or schools, though eventually low-performing schools would be sanctioned. Like other studies, there were changes in the curriculum towards subjects tested by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and away from non-tested subjects (including the arts). There was a general alignment of tested subjects to the state content standards. It is worth noting for the purpose of
this study that principals were more enthusiastic about the testing reforms than the teachers. Overwhelming majorities of principals believed that the reforms led to improved instruction and greater student learning, while teachers were more mixed in their appraisal of the reforms. Teachers also reported that instructional emphasis shifted towards the tested areas and away from untested areas in a dramatic way. While majorities of teachers responded that writing, reading, and mathematics instruction had increased, a similar majority revealed that instruction in health, arts, social studies, and science had decreased, with very few reporting an increase. Given that the stakes of the WASL were not high for students or teachers, this lends credence to the idea that the mere perception of high stakes will lead to large changes in instruction (Clarke et al., 2003; Madaus, 1988).

Two studies should be noted because of their multi-state survey methodology. Pedulla et al. (2003) conducted a national survey of classroom teachers, and analyzed the responses by state according to the attached stakes for districts, schools, and teachers, and students. The study found differentiation in reactions to testing across states with different stakes, as well as differences among elementary, middle school, and high school. Not surprisingly, teachers in states with high stakes for districts, schools, and teachers, and students, were more likely to feel pressure to raise test scores and alter instruction towards tested areas than teachers in other states. For example, the authors found that “significantly more teachers (40%) in states with high stakes for schools and students than in low-stakes states (10%) reported that their school’s results influenced their teaching on a daily basis” (p. 7). Interestingly, though, elementary teachers felt a greater impact from high-stakes tests than secondary school teachers, even though consequences for students often fall at the end of high school. This finding may reflect the aforementioned perception of high-stakes consequences in non-high stakes situations (Madaus, 1988), or that
elementary school teachers are responsible for “the whole child,” whereas high school teachers are only responsible for “1/6th of the child.” When consequences fall on students because of high-stakes exams, the responsibility is “divided up” among all the students’ teachers in high school, not sitting atop one teacher, as is the case in elementary schools (Kornhaber, 2005).

In a related study, Clarke et al. (2003) interviewed 360 educators in Kansas, Michigan, and Massachusetts, which all had high-stakes for teachers, but ranged from low- to medium- to high-stakes for students, respectively. Not surprisingly, the higher the stakes, the more impact, both positive and negative, was reported on instruction. In Massachusetts, which has high stakes for students, roughly twice as many teachers reported changes in instruction, ranging from removing perceived unneeded content to a narrowing of the curriculum, than in Kansas and Michigan. Still, “In all three states, educators reported that preparing for the state test involved varying degrees of removing, emphasizing, and adding curriculum content,” again lending support to Madaus (1988).

The above studies were usually conducted using either quantitative, survey based methodologies, or a mix of surveys and interviews or limited classroom observations. Booher-Jennings (2005), McNeil (2000), McNeil and Valenzuela (2001) are exceptions, using in-depth, case study approaches in looking at the impact of the TAAS exams on schools. McNeil (2000) and McNeil and Valenzuela (2001) examined specialized magnet schools – one with a gifted and talented center, one focused on preparing students for medical careers, and one specializing in science, engineering, and technology – in Texas. The focus on magnet schools is especially relevant for this dissertation because magnet schools are like schools that focus on the arts in that they both have a special academic focus. McNeil (2000) found that the TAAS, which is tied to high school graduation, “reduced what was taught, constrained teachers in the ways they could
teach and, as a result, set in motion dynamics in which teachers would have to choose between
course content they felt to be valid and content that was required by the state” (p. 190).
Specifically, the TAAS prescribed course topics, and within those topics, “‘objective’
information, such as dates, formulae and rules for comma placement, fit the testing format and so
were listed as proficiencies to be mastered,” while more complex analytic forms of thinking were
not taught (p. 204). McNeil concluded,

> The proficiency system threatened the quality of the curriculum by institutionalizing
> consensus curriculum, by divorcing the knowledge of the teacher from the curriculum, by
> divorcing the knowledge and questions held by students from the required curriculum,
> and by subjecting all knowledge to a fragmentation filter that artificially altered its
> substance. These teachers often found their subject to be unrecognizable when processed
> through the proficiency system (p. 205).

McNeil and Valenzuela (2001) found that non-tested subjects were often replaced by TAAS
preparation materials, especially in high-minority, high-poverty schools, and that indeed, the
TAAS system had disproportionately negative effects on poor and minority students.

**The Impact of Testing on High-Poverty, High-Minority Schools**

Central to testing policy is the issue of equity. How do testing policies differentially
impact students of different racial, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic groups? This has become
especially important as tests have moved from their once-traditional position as diagnostic and
low-stakes assessments to summative and high-stakes tools of accountability. Supporters of high-
stakes testing and accountability argue that “such policies will increase equity by ensuring that
all students achieve at some predesignated level of performance” (Hamilton, 2003, p. 41,
emphasis in original). On the other hand, opponents of these policies argue that poor and
minority students will be disproportionately harmed when these high-stakes result in retention
and/or an increase in the dropout rate.

The impacts of retention-in-grade and dropout fall hardest on poor and minority students
(Clarke, Haney, & Madaus, 2000; Haney, 2000; Hauser, 2001; Natriello & Pallas, 2001; Reardon, 1996; Reardon & Galindo, 2002). Hauser (2001) reported that by ages 15 to 17, between 40 and 50 percent of blacks and Hispanics have been retained, versus 25 to 35 percent for Whites. Recent research has also explored the links between high-stakes testing, dropout rates, and race/ethnicity. Reardon and Galindo (2002), using NELS data, compared the dropout rates in states using minimum competency exams with those that did not. They found that the bottom 10 and 20 student percentiles in testing states were a third more likely to drop out than similar students in non-testing states (see also Reardon, 1996; similar results were found by Natriello & Pallas, 2001). Haney (2000), in his study of the TAAS exam in Texas, reported that following the introduction of the high-stakes test, Black and Hispanic dropout rates increased at a much greater rate than for White students, countering the state’s claim that the dropout gap between White and minority students had narrowed.

Several studies have looked at the differential impact of high-stakes exams on high- and low-minority or SES populations. These studies have found negative consequences for teachers and students, including decreases in instructional time for untested areas of the curriculum. Lomax, West, Harmon, Viator, and Madaus (1995) examined specifically the impact of high-stakes exams on high-minority classrooms. They found that teachers in these classrooms were more likely to teach test-taking skills, teach topics known to be on the test, use more than 20 hours of instructional time for test preparation, and use practice tests. Furthermore, these teachers were more likely to acknowledge that mandated exams influenced instruction and curriculum. For example, there was evidence of curricular narrowing, shifting of teacher assignment to increase test-passing, and unethical practices, such as having students practice on actual test items.
Herman, Abedi, and Golan (1994) had similar findings. They noted that even though low SES students were under less pressure to improve test scores, teachers were found to “give more attention to testing in planning and delivering their instruction, spend more class time in test preparation, are more likely to attribute changes in students’ test scores to school-based actions, report more school attention to testing, and are likely to give less attention to nontested content and thinking skills” (p. 481). Finally, in another study, using a nationally stratified sample, Moon, Callahan, and Tomlinson (2003) found that teachers in high poverty schools were more likely to use test preparation activities, felt more pressure to raise test scores from administrators, and faced greater consequences as a result of low student performance (such as loss of their position or reassignment within the school), than teachers in low poverty schools.

Von Zastrow (2004) surveyed principals on the impact of high-stakes exams on the liberal arts in Illinois, Maryland, New York, and New Mexico, and compared the results of high- and low-poverty schools. Overall, while three quarters of principals indicated increases in instruction and professional development in the tested areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, large decreases in untested areas were noted. These decreases in untested areas were magnified in high-poverty schools. For example, while 25 percent of principals reported decreases in instructional time in the arts, 36 percent of high-minority principals reported decreases in the arts. Similar findings were reported in social studies and foreign languages.

*Testing as an important, but not exclusive, lever of change*

As mentioned above, studies of the impact of high-stakes testing have generally found decreases in instruction in untested areas, as well as negative outcomes for minority students. However, context is important. In some studies, testing appeared to have a large negative or positive impact (for example, Pedulla et al., 2003). In others, only small or moderate effects were
seen (Cimbricz, 2002; Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998; Firestone et al., 2002). This result would fall more in line with the view that reforms are unevenly implemented, depend highly upon context, and are often modified or even ignored by teachers (Blank et al., 2001; Cohen, 1989, 1995; Porter & Smithson, 2001; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Cimbricz (2002), in a review of the literature, did find a relationship between state-mandated testing and teachers’ beliefs and practices, but asserted that testing was not a major, or perhaps even a substantive, means of changing these beliefs and practices. He then suggested that richer, more contextualized studies of testing impact were needed, and might find larger changes in instructional practice.

Firestone, Mayrowetz, and Fairman (1998) chided both supporters and opponents of high-stakes testing for overestimating the impact of testing on teaching. In a qualitative study of teachers and administrators, using interviews and classroom observations, the authors found instructional methods in Maine and Maryland had changed little with the introduction of high-stakes performance assessments. These assessments did not cause teachers to cover topics more in depth, one of the primary claims of performance assessment. But more opportunities were available to teachers for professional development, indicating at least the prospect of pedagogical change.

And in a study of New Jersey under a low- to medium-stakes accountability system, Firestone et al. (2002) surveyed several hundred fourth-grade teachers. The researchers observed and interviewed more than 60 teachers, looking for changes in instructional practice in science and mathematics, especially in the area of inquiry, as New Jersey’s state standards emphasized those teaching strategies. They found modest changes toward more inquiry-oriented practice, but teachers were “trying out specific techniques rather than changing their basic paradigms for
instruction” (p. 1499). There was a shift in science and math towards particular topics covered by the test and some test preparation activities, but principal support was cited as more important to instructional changes than pressure from the state test. They concluded that the test was “neither the magic policy bullet that advocates of accountability hope for nor the force for deskilling, dumbing down, and disparity of life chances that certain opponents have claimed” (p. 1518). Instead, a sensitively designed testing system along with ample professional development might be able to provide teachers with new ideas for instruction, but substantive changes in practice could not be induced by testing reforms alone.

**Does Testing Make a Difference on Arts in Schools?**

*The Place of the Arts in American Schools*

The current state of the arts in education is one of ambivalence. The arts are described as a “core” subject (Paige, 2004), and the arts are broadly available in schools (Chapman, 2004b). On the other hand, even though public rhetoric towards the arts in general is positive, funding for the arts in schools is quite small compared to other subjects, and the public does not hold art education to be critically necessary (Chapman, 2004b). Arts instruction, while widely available, is often taught sporadically (Chapman, 2004b). And the arts, in relation to other school subjects in terms of importance, are ranked near or at the bottom (Chapman, 2004b). Consequently, the arts remain at the periphery of most American schools (Eisner, 2002). Some possibilities have been advanced to explain this phenomenon: outside factors, such as the standards-based reform movement, have had a greater impact on arts education than the art education establishment (Chapman, 2004a; Eisner, 2000a; Hope, 2004); arts advocates have made claims about the impact of arts education (such as transfer of knowledge to other disciplines) that remain mostly unsupported by empirical evidence (Gee, 2004; McCarthy et al., 2004); and the arts today are
conceptually difficult for the public to understand, which is not aided by the fact that some artists are reluctant to explain their work (Koroscik, 1997).

Laura Chapman’s (2004b) study of recent trends in arts education in public schools shows that a large percentage of K-12 students receive some form of education in visual art, but that instruction is often sporadic, taught by non-experts, and more available to students in wealthier communities. Examining large-scale national surveys, Chapman found that 87 percent of elementary schools and 93 percent of high schools offer some instruction in the visual arts. Eighty-eight percent of high schools and 55 percent of elementary schools had a full-time art teacher. Forty-eight states have developed content standards in art, and 20 states mandate at least some art education. At the secondary level, 53 percent of students have taken visual arts courses (as of 1998), an increase of nine percent since 1982. However, these positive trends are balanced against the fact that “most classroom teachers lack the knowledge, skill, and compensatory support necessary to ensure that art learning is sound in content, standards-based, and systematically assured” (p. 10). By comparison, music instruction is offered in 97 percent of public elementary schools and 94 percent of public high schools. And while 70 percent of public elementary schools offer music instruction taught solely by a music specialist, only 43 percent have art taught by art specialists. Twenty-eight percent rely solely on classroom teachers to instruct students in art, with a comparable figure of only eight percent in music.

At the same time, outside forces have had a major impact on the field of arts education. The standards movement, now more than twenty years old, presented arts educators with a stark choice – jump aboard and develop formal standards, or argue that the “uniformity and predictability” of standards does not make a good fit with the aims of arts education (Eisner, 2002, p. 4). However, as Eisner puts it, “to be left out is to be disregarded, and to be disregarded
is no asset when it comes to competing for time and other resources to support one’s program” (p. 4). High-stakes testing for high school graduation and grade promotion has raised fears in the arts education community that because the arts are not tested, schools will feel pressure to divert instructional time and resources to areas of the curriculum that are tested, such as reading comprehension and math (Eisner, 2002). Arts educators have also pointed to the fact that universities often do not count credits earned in art classes in making admissions decisions, creating a sense that the arts are not valued (Chapman, 2004a; Eisner, 2002). This de-valuing of the arts has led many to attempt to justify arts education for its transfer to other disciplines (Darby & Catterall, 1994; Fiske, 1999; Hamblen, 1993). However, recent analyses have cast doubt on these assertions (Winner & Hetland, 2000).

Two trends have provided a counterbalance to this discouraging news. The first is that so many reforms aimed at improving American schools have proven unsatisfying that some have said, “Why not try the arts?” (Eisner, 2002). Charter schools with a focus on the arts have been created, even in states with high-stakes tests, though it is too soon to make judgments about their effectiveness as an educational alternative (Davis, 2000). Schools with an arts focus, especially magnet schools, try to serve academic, arts, and equity goals, often quite successfully (B. Wilson, 2001). These schools are marked by their strong mission, positive academic, creative, and affective outcomes, their openness to public scrutiny, and high student motivation. These traits are rarely found in non-arts-focused public schools (B. Wilson, 2001).

Several studies have explored the particular strategies school districts have used to maintain strong arts programs (Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, 2003; Day, Eisner, Stake, Wilson, & Wilson, 1984; Longley, 1999; B. Wilson, 1997). These studies found that strong district and principal support, written curricula, extensive professional
development, integration with non-arts subjects, community involvement, and the use of the arts to put a “human face” on school reforms were crucial to fostering strong arts programs.

Second, despite the lack of conclusive evidence that the arts contributes to learning in other disciplines, there is a growing interest in types of thinking that only the arts can provide, which could potentially be lost if testing negatively impacts arts education. Justifying the arts on the basis of its unique rewards has rested on several claims. First, the creation and perception of art requires cognitive skills that are “complex and subtle in character” (Eisner, 2000, p. 36), qualitative and relational thinking (Efland, 2002), “problem creation,” (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976), and the use of diverse symbol-systems (Gardner, 1982; Perkins, 1981). Second, the arts have positive and unique affective outcomes for students (sometimes referred to as intrinsic benefits), especially on attitudinal and behavioral measures (Ball & Heath, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi & Schiefele, 1992; Hanna, 1992; Heath, 1999; McCarthy et al., 2004), as well as releasing imagination (Greene, 1978), giving pleasure (McCarthy et al., 2004), and facilitating communication among people (Dewey, 1934).

Impact of testing on the arts

Testing policy theory posits that a high-stakes testing system will encourage a greater share of instructional time and resources to be devoted to tested subjects, while untested subjects will suffer (Frederiksen & Collins; Linn, 2000; Madaus, 1988). The arts are not tested for high-stakes purposes in any US state; thus, we would expect to see a decrease in the emphasis placed on the arts where high-stakes exams are in place. Yet, relatively little has been written about the impact of high-stakes accountability specifically on the arts. Many studies report a “narrowing of the curriculum” without specifying which subjects are receiving less emphasis. The empirical evidence does generally support the hypothesis that the instruction in the arts is being reduced.
Often, however, the loss of time and resources for the arts is not dramatic. This could support the view that the arts are being marginalized (von Zastrow, 2004), or that, relatively speaking, testing policies do not have a large impact on instruction (Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998), perhaps because external reforms are modified or even ignored by teachers (Porter & Smithson, 2001; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

The studies on states with high-stakes performance assessments found a slight decrease in teacher reports on arts and music instruction. In Maryland, 14 percent of teachers reported a decrease in the visual arts, while 11 percent reported an increase. In music, 11 percent reported a decrease, while none reported an increase (Koretz, Barron, Mitchell, & Keith, 1996). A similar study in Kentucky found a more striking decrease. Thirty-four percent of surveyed fourth-grade Kentucky teachers reported a decrease in arts instruction versus 10 percent reporting an increase. In music, 21 percent reported a decrease in music instruction, while only five percent said that instruction had increased (Koretz, Barron, Mitchell, & Stecher, 1996). Stecher et al. (2000) examined high-stakes testing in Washington, and found that approximately half of 4th grade teachers reported decreases in instructional time in the arts, while only five percent reported an increase. In a recent and broad study, Pedulla et al. (2003) reported that, in states with high-stakes exams instituted before the implementation of NCLB, 43 percent of teachers indicated that substantially less time was being spent on teaching the fine arts, especially in elementary schools.

The report by the Center for Basic Education (von Zastrow, 2004) is the only study found that addresses changes in arts instruction for both high and low minority schools. A quarter of principals surveyed in Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, and New York reported a decrease in arts instruction, versus just eight percent reporting an increase. But 36 percent of principals at
high minority schools reported decreases in arts instruction, and a third of these principals reported large decreases. Only 11 percent reported increases (and one percent indicated large increases). The future of arts instruction is even more dismal, according to these principals. A third of all principals, and 42 percent of high minority principals, predicted a future decrease in the arts, while only seven percent and 10 percent, respectively, predicted increases. Also, principals at high minority schools were more likely to report a decrease in the number of arts teachers (23 percent) than an increase (14 percent).

It is also clear that arts policy researchers and the public are concerned about possible negative impacts of testing on the arts. Boughton (2004) argues that most of these assessments contradict the core values of the arts – namely, “the freedom for students to pursue independent learning pathways and the autonomy of their expression” (p. 585). And Rose and Gallup (2004) recently reported that 81 percent of the public is concerned that focusing testing entirely on performance in English and math will mean that less time will be devoted to untested subjects, including the arts. This public concern has not yet been matched by research on the impacts of high-stakes testing on the arts.

There is also a need to understand how testing, equity, and the arts interact. As Chapman (2004a) notes, students who have access to strong arts instruction are also likely to have personal attributes that allow them to do well in school (though they may also develop these attributes through the arts), as well as strong symbolic supports (such as a stated commitment to the arts) and economic supports from their schools. To the extent that strong arts instruction overlaps with economically advantaged schools, then, we would expect that the arts generally would be buffered from outside policies, such as high-stakes testing regimes. In part, this is because wealthier students, on average, do well on high-stakes exams. Thus, instruction is less subject to
testing policy pressures. And where the arts existed in low-resource schools, we would expect to see negative pressure placed on time and resources devoted to the arts. As described above by von Zastrow (2004), this negative pressure does seem to impact arts instruction at high minority schools. If one believes, then, that the arts provide cognitive and affective benefits other areas of the curriculum do not, and that the best arts instruction generally is offered to students at advantaged schools, then inequities will be exacerbated.

Still, there is not much information about what is happening “on the ground.” There is little research on how arts educators and classroom teachers in arts-focused schools view the impact of testing. Most research has focused on responses from principals and classroom teachers without specialized training in the arts. Understanding this will not only shed light on the opportunities for arts education within a high-stakes accountability system, but also on testing policy and reform theories, which hold that either a) testing drives the curriculum and marginalizes untested areas such as the arts (Madaus, 1988), or b) that the “grammar of schooling” persists, and schools and teachers continue on with minimal impact from test-driven reforms (Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

**Pilot Study and Preliminary Findings**

In 2002, a pilot study was initiated by Dr. Mindy Kornhaber and several graduate students to explore the influence of high-stakes testing on schools that focus on the arts in Virginia (Kornhaber et al., forthcoming). Ten interviews with principals or arts coordinators were conducted by Dr. Kornhaber, transcribed, and coded using qualitative software. The preliminary findings from the pilot study were intriguing and unexpected. According to the principals and arts coordinators, there had not been a large negative impact of the SOL exams on either the arts or the tested areas in the areas covered by the interview. Some interviewees even
reported mildly positive effects, especially with respect to arts integration with tested subjects. These early findings did not support the testing policy theory that high-stakes tests will narrow curriculum to tested areas (Madaus, 1988). We developed several tentative explanations for this lack of large, negative impact, including possible protective effects of the school’s mission, strong administrators, students’ demographics and personal traits, substantial assistance from counties (the equivalent of districts), the lack of substantial consequences at the elementary school level, and the fact that scores “don’t travel” between arts high schools and the students’ base schools. Given that the pilot study only included 10 telephone interviews with principals and arts coordinators, it is difficult to know if these early findings are representative of the beliefs of teachers and reflected in classroom instruction. As mentioned earlier, principals often have more a more positive orientation towards testing and accountability measures than teachers (Stecher et al., 2000), so it was imperative to understand whether teachers (especially arts teachers) would corroborate these initial findings. If the principals’ and teachers’ responses are similar, it will be important to know how these schools are able to maintain their arts instruction, given the prediction that the arts would become marginalized.
Sample

Justification for Sampling

A multiple case study approach was selected for several reasons. Multiple cases offer opportunities both for internal comparisons (here, teachers, administrators, and classroom observations), and cross-site comparisons (Yin, 2003). These cross-site comparisons make it possible to tease out differences along two crucial variables of interest – arts focus and poverty status – providing theoretical or analytical generalization (Yin, 2003). This would not be possible with a single case study.

The first variable is whether or not a school has an arts focus. Testing policy theory holds that untested areas of the curriculum will receive less curricular focus and fewer resources, as these are shifted towards tested areas of the curriculum. If this is true, then we would expect schools with an arts focus to face greater stresses than a non-arts-focused school, since arts-focused schools are organized in a way to provide instruction in an area that is not tested. However, data from the pilot study did not tend to support the hypothesis that arts-focused schools would suffer from testing policies in Virginia. It is important to understand why this may be occurring, despite the fact that survey evidence shows a drop in arts instruction overall (Center on Education Policy, 2006; Koretz, Mitchell, Barron, & Keith, 1996; Koretz, Barron, Mitchell, & Stecher, 1996; Pedulla et al., 2003; Stecher et al., 1996; von Zastrow, 2004). Examining non-arts-focused schools will help to clarify whether this lack of negative influence on arts instruction found in the pilot study is something unique to arts-focused schools (in which case these schools may help to serve as models to those seeking to maintain arts instruction), or if arts instruction seems to be maintained district-wide (which would support theories of the
strength of stake [Madaus, 1988], or possibly district-wide strategies for the support of the arts).

Poverty status, as measured by percentage of students on free/reduced lunch, provides the second variable of interest. In this study, I sought a range of poverty levels, with each arts-focused school roughly matched on poverty status with a non-arts-focused school. Poverty status was chosen as a variable to strengthen the relevance of this research. Schools with low levels of poverty are less likely to react to high-stakes testing by changing curricula and pedagogy or by shifting resources away from non-tested areas (such as the arts) (von Zastrow, 2004). They are also likely to have parents and communities that support the arts, thus protecting arts programs from outside pressures (Chapman, 2004a). Choosing schools with a range of poverty levels inoculates this study from the potential of not finding negative influence from the testing because of low levels of school poverty.

Thus, the sampling strategy for the overall study combines elements of “critical case sampling” and “maximum variation sampling” (Patton, 2002). Theoretically, the pilot study used critical case sampling. It was hypothesized that if high-stakes testing policies have a disproportionately negative impact on non-tested areas, such as the arts, then schools that focused on non-tested areas (the critical cases) would face even larger negative consequences. Even though, provisionally, this was not found to be the case, this idea of disproportionate negative impact on arts-focused schools drives this dissertation. Non-arts-focused schools provide a counterbalance to these critical arts-focused cases. The inclusion of poverty status as a variable provides a basis for maximum variation sampling along that particular dimension. The strength of this approach is that “common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon” (Patton, 2002, p. 235). Understanding whether there are common
experiences across poverty status is important, both to help build and test theories about testing policies, but also to protect against the charge, mentioned above, of choosing wealthier schools where we might not expect a great deal of change in arts instruction.

Finally, this design uses a *purposeful sampling* technique. I do not seek to generalize the findings from the four cases to additional schools or contexts. The design presented here was chosen to shed light on assumptions of testing theory, which hold that a) non-tested subjects, such as the arts, will receive less emphasis, and b) low-SES schools are impacted more greatly by high-stakes exams than high-SES schools.

*School Sample*

The first round of data collection, the pilot study, yielded 18 interviews of principals and arts coordinators – 10 from arts-focused schools, and eight from non-arts-focused schools, scattered throughout Virginia. For this second round of data collection, I selected four elementary schools within one Virginia district – “Adams District1.”2 The school selection was guided by two variables – whether or not the school has an arts focus, and student SES (using free/reduced lunch percentages). However, the two non-arts-focused schools both had nearly identical (and relatively high) levels of poverty – 42 and 45 percent. The schools are shown below in Figure 2.1:

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1 The name of the district, as well as the four schools, are identified by pseudonyms throughout this dissertation.
2 This study only examined the impact of SOL testing policies on elementary schools. While high-stakes for students currently only exists at the high school level, there are several reasons why I chose to examine elementary schools. First, arts-focused schools at the secondary level tend to be highly specialized, with nonstandard student populations (Davis, 2000). Second, we discovered in the pilot study, at these arts-focused high schools, students are often “officially” still registered at their home school, so test scores do not follow them to their specialized arts school. Thus, it would have been more difficult to gauge an impact of the SOL stakes on arts programs in those schools. Third, there is much more integration of the arts and non-arts subjects at the elementary school level, which would allow me to probe the relationship between arts and non-arts teachers. Finally, as Madaus (1988) and others have reported, stakes at one point in the system (such as high schools) still influence the entire system (including elementary schools). As mentioned earlier, even teachers whose students did not face high stakes felt as much pressure to raise scores as teachers in grades where high-stakes exams were taken (Koretz & Hamilton, 2003). Furthermore, students take SOL exams in elementary school (grades 3 through 6), so teachers and classrooms are influenced by it even if high-stakes decisions, like graduation, are not being made based on test scores at that level.
While I was not able to study a non-arts-focused school with high SES, this does not present significant problems in addressing the questions for this dissertation. The major threat to this research would come from investigating only high SES schools. Schools with high levels of poverty, according to the literature, are more likely to see their arts programs suffer under high-stakes testing (Pedulla et al., 2003). Thus, given that the pilot study findings were surprising in not finding significant negative consequences for the arts in Virginia under the SOL tests, the emphasis on higher poverty schools will provide strong confirming or disconfirming evidence for those initial findings.

Data Collection

Data was collected primarily during November and December, 2005. One phone interview with a teacher, a face-to-face interview with the District Visual Arts Specialist, and one daylong observation of a professional development workshop occurred in January, 2006. There were seven modes of data collection for this dissertation:

1. Previously collected semi-structured phone interviews from the pilot study, and more specifically, the interviews from principals and arts coordinators from schools located in Adams District. These nine interviews – seven elementary schools and two high schools - are a subset of the 18 interviews conducted during the pilot research project, described above, and were conducted by Dr. Mindy Kornhaber. Two schools in this dissertation were also represented in the pilot study – Crosby and Porter. These are the two arts-focused schools. At Crosby, the principal
was the same in both interviews. At Porter, there had been a change in administration, though the new principal had also been interviewed by Dr. Kornhaber when the principal had been at another arts-focused school in the district. These pilot study interviews serve two purposes. First, for Crosby, the inclusion of principal interview data from 2003 and 2005 provide valuable contextual and historical information about the school, the responses of faculty and administration to the SOL tests, and the arts programs at the school. Second, the nine interviews as a group supply information about how schools in Adams District have responded to the SOL tests, in both the arts and in tested areas.

2. Interviews with the principals from the four elementary schools. The semi-structured interview guide from the pilot study was used here. The four sections of the interview included a) the school’s history and mission; b) demographics of students and teachers at the school; c) questions concerning possible influence from the SOL state tests on curriculum, staff development, time and material resources, hiring and allocation of staff, and student assessment; and d) the use of test results. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the Principal Interview Guide.

3. Interviews with visual arts teachers. The teacher interviews were structured similarly to the third and fourth sections of the interview guide used in the principal interviews. The questions focused on the impact of the SOL exams on the arts curriculum, time and physical resources, professional development, hiring and allocation of staff, classroom assessment. Another set of questions probed teachers’ perceptions and use of SOL test scores. Finally, the pilot study revealed the importance of arts integration. A set of questions was developed for this dissertation to elicit the ways in which the arts have been integrated into other school subjects. On two occasions, I interviewed music teachers using the same interview guide. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the Teacher Interview Guide.
4. Classroom observations of visual arts specialists. These were intended to triangulate the data collected during the teacher and principal interviews. Specific observations provided an opportunity to see if testing policies have influenced pedagogy in the areas of test preparation, content coverage, and arts integration. I also took digital photographs of student art and instructional materials in the classroom, and throughout the school. Please see Appendix C for a copy of the Observation Protocol.

5. Interviews with “regular” classroom teachers. A small subsample of regular elementary classroom teachers, usually from the two tested grade levels (3 and 5) were interviewed to provide a context for the influence of the SOL tests on the school and their own curriculum. They were also asked how large a role the arts play in their school and classroom, and whether there is an effort to integrate the arts into tested subjects. I made an effort to select these teachers based on length of tenure at the school, under the idea that teachers who have worked for many years at the same school would be able to describe changes over time regarding the influence of testing, as well as the school’s history in integrating the arts. The same Teacher Interview Guide was used with visual arts and “regular” classroom teachers, with the specific arts-related questions excised.

6. A semi-structured interview with the district’s Visual Arts Specialist. This interview was conducted for the purpose of gaining a better and broader understanding of the implementation of the visual arts in the district, the development of visual arts standards, and the response of the visual arts department to the SOL tests. Please see Appendix D for the District Visual Arts Specialist Interview Protocol.

7. Observations of two professional development workshops, led by a regional arts organization. One meeting was intended specifically for arts specialists and their role in
integrating the arts with non-arts subjects, while the other included both arts and non-arts teachers, and focused on integrating the visual arts into the curriculum.

**Justifications**

**Methodological traditions and theoretical justifications:**

While several surveys of testing policies’ influence have surfaced information about the impact on the arts (e.g., von Zastrow, 2004; Pedulla et al., 2003), this research has not been especially informative with regard to classroom practice. Instead, the primary discussion has focused on loss of time for the arts. The use of quantitative methods on questions of the impact of high-stakes testing has not yielded the kind of data either a) specifically focused on arts education; or b) useful for practitioners in arts education. I not only want to know about the quantity of impact of testing policies on arts education (i.e., the percentage reduction in time devoted to the arts), but *how* arts education is either maintained or not maintained in the face of these policies. If teachers and principals report that the arts are being maintained, that does not give insight into *how* the arts are being maintained. Is it because of a strong school mission, or that the school has a high percentage of highly qualified teachers, or that teachers can successfully integrate arts and tested content?

As a qualitative piece of research, this study offers several distinct advantages. First, the meanings and interpretations that teachers and administrators give to their experiences with high-stakes testing can only be addressed thoroughly using qualitative research (Maxwell, 1996). These meanings and interpretations are especially important here because, according to Madaus (1988), teachers and administrators will alter their curricula and pedagogy according to their *perceptions* of a test’s stakes, even if those stakes are low. Furthermore, administrators interviewed in the pilot study, after being given several Likert-type survey items and asked to
explain their answer, would often interpret the survey items in very different ways from the thinking underlying the items when they were written by the researchers. For example, if a researcher asked for an agreement or disagreement with the statement, “The changes that have been made in curriculum and assessment in response to the state testing program will help students to gain skills in the arts,” the respondent might say “agree.” However, when asked to explain that response, the principal might refer to making connections between the arts and tested areas. This response refers to learning in tested areas, and not a positive influence of testing on arts learning. These different interpretations of meaning in survey questions cannot be resolved by quantitative analysis – only qualitative research, using interviews and observations, will be able to capture teachers’ and administrators’ meanings in authentic ways. Additionally, the processes by which administrators and teachers interpret and react to high-stakes testing policies – the “black box” of schools and classrooms (Black & Wiliam, 1998) – is not well understood. For example, if arts teachers say they are “integrating” arts content and tested content, what does this mean in practice? Are the arts subjugated to tested areas (i.e., teaching the 50 states in song), or are they co-equals? These processes are not well understood, and rigorous qualitative research can not only help us understand them and build better theory.

Qualitative research is also sensitive to the “particular context in which the participants act” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 17, emphasis in original). While most quantitative research on the impact of high-stakes testing is generalized to the state or national level, responses to mandated reforms are heavily influenced by local contexts (Cohen, 1989; McLaughlin, 1991; Sipple et al., 2004). Qualitative research can explore these local contexts in much more depth, especially given that many of these contexts (arts-focused schools) are unusual and would be buried underneath an avalanche of other schools in a quantitative study.
Another distinct advantage of qualitative research is its ability to deal with “unanticipated phenomena” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 19; see also Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) discussion of naturalistic inquiry). The data from the pilot study interviews of administrators from arts-focused schools yielded surprising results, in terms of generally accepted testing policy theory. It is still unclear, however, if these findings actually reflect classroom practice, since we were only able to interview administrators. Qualitative data collection in this study will help understand “the black box” of classroom practice (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Data collection is inherently selective (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study is limited in duration and resources, and these limitations necessitate choices as to data sources and methods. The data collection methods that have been chosen for this study, however, are directly related to the main question I seek to address: How do schools mediate the influence of Virginia’s SOL exams on the arts? The main mediators of policy are administrators and teachers, and educational testing policy plays out most directly in classrooms. The primary data collection strategies for this study, then, include teacher and administrator interviews, as well as classroom observations.

I am employing a case study approach in this study (R. E. Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). Whether the case is the object of study or a distinct methodology is an ongoing debate (Creswell, 1998; R. E. Stake, 2000), but at its core, a case study uses multiple sources of evidence to focus attention on a particular object – for example, a person or an organization, to name just two. Cases exist within several contexts – state, district, school, and classrooms (R. E. Stake, 2000). For this dissertation, the objects under study are arts-focused and non-arts-focused schools in one district in Virginia. As in all good qualitative research, a good case study relies on triangulating multiple sources of data, and using that data to inform some aspect of theory (Yin, 2003). In this study, data have been collected from principal, teacher, and district specialist interviews,
classroom and professional development workshop observations, as well as data from the pilot study. This data will be triangulated to produce reasonable, defensible, and valid descriptions and analyses of these schools.

*Interview and Observation Statistics*

Twenty-seven individuals were interviewed for this study. See Table 2.1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher/Integration Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Instructional Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Fifth grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Fifth grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby</td>
<td>Third grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Music Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Third grade teacher (group interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Third grade teacher (group interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Third grade teacher (group interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Third grade teacher (group interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>Music/Dance Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>Third grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter (phone)</td>
<td>Third grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood</td>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood</td>
<td>Fifth grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood</td>
<td>Fifth/sixth grade special education teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood</td>
<td>Third grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakewood</td>
<td>Third grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams District</td>
<td>District Visual Arts Specialist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All but one of these interviews was conducted in person. One interview was not tape-recorded
because teachers were sitting at opposite ends of the room, and I took extensive notes instead. Two interviews (one with four teachers, another with two teachers) were conducted as group interviews due to time constraints and teacher convenience. Interviews lasted between 20 and 90 minutes. Principal interviews were typically the longest, due to the length of the interview guide. Transcription yielded approximately 350 pages of single-spaced text.

I observed the classrooms of seven visual arts specialists, two music specialists, and two arts integration specialists (who were also classroom teachers), as well as two daylong professional development seminars. I observed between 7-9 lessons in arts disciplines in each school. Looking at visual arts lessons only (including integration), observations ranged from 5-9 lessons. It should be noted that one arts specialist was ill for most of the week, and while I was able to interview her, I was not able to observe her lessons. I also made an effort to observe a wide-range of grade levels, especially the tested grades (3, 4, 5, and 6). Lessons typically lasted between 60 and 75 minutes. Tables 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 list the observations in each school.

**Table 2.2: Crosby Elementary Observations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Observed</th>
<th>Number of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts Specialist 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Specialist 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Specialist 3</td>
<td>None (ill for most of the week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration Specialist 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration Specialist 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.3: Porter Elementary Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Observed</th>
<th>Number of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts Specialist 1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Specialist 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and Movement Specialist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Robertson Elementary Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Observed</th>
<th>Number of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Specialist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: Lakewood Elementary Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Observed</th>
<th>Number of Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts Specialist</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

Qualitative coding of interview transcripts and observation notes used both pre-structured coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994), as well as open coding, using the constant-comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Because this dissertation is seeking to address particular questions about the impact of high-stakes testing on curriculum, resources, professional development, staffing, and classroom assessment, the interview guides have been designed to a) directly get at these issues, and b) allow for relatively simple coding. Many of the codes, then, have been developed prior to data collection and analysis, and could be termed a “start list”
(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58). Most of the codes in the “start list” are descriptive in nature, and do not require a great deal of inference. For example, many responses to questions of SOL impact have been coded in a “trivalent” manner – whether the respondent indicates the high-stakes test has had a positive impact, a negative impact, or neither positive nor negative impact.

Coding, however, was also “open” or “emergent” in the sense that often, explanations for how and why teachers and administrators are responding to high-stakes tests are not always categorizable in a trivalent manner or known in advance. For example, open coding yielded new categories in the pilot study, “grounded” in the data, about the issue of arts “integration,” which had multiple definitions, depending on who was speaking, as well as complex ways in which integration interacted with the influences from the state SOL exams. This “bottom-up” method is closest to Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theory. In practice, additional emergent (bottom-up) and descriptive (top-down) codes were developed for both teacher interviews and classroom observations, though overall the number of additional codes (as compared to the pilot study) was minor. A first round of coding and data analysis was done by hand, and then the codes were entered electronically using N6® qualitative software. Please see Appendix E for a printout of the N6® coding scheme.

Interview transcripts and observational notes, as well as the researcher’s own reflective memos, were written up, catalogued, and stored securely to preserve the anonymity of the research participants. Transcripts and notes bearing the names of participants will be destroyed seven years following the completion of this project.

Validity/Generalizability of Results

Important issues for any study are its validity (in a non-psychometric sense) and “generalizability” (here used in a non-statistical sense). The basic question for a study’s validity
is this: How do I know that the data I have collected, and the conclusions I draw from that data, accurately represent the cases under study? This is generally posed as a question of rigor, demonstrating the methods I am using are rigorous without the benefits of specific statistical criteria. One of the primary methods of insuring rigorous methods is using more than one source of data to shed light on a given question, known as triangulation (Patton, 2002). In the case of this dissertation, I am employing multiple sources of data – the use of interviews of arts and non-arts teachers, school administrators, and observations of arts classrooms – to understand the impact of the SOL exams on the visual arts. Furthermore, I have some ability to track changes over time, using the pilot study data (interviews of school administrators), and compare these pilot study responses with data from the dissertation. Within the dissertation, I can compare teacher responses and observations of their classrooms, teachers’ responses with one another, and teacher responses with principal responses.

“Generalization” in quantitative methods generally assumes random sampling, and is not typically not used in qualitative research. This findings of this dissertation should not be construed as generalizing to a population, but rather informing theory (Yin, 2003). In the pilot study, for example, administrators indicated that schools were not, by and large, being negatively influenced by the high-stakes SOL exams. This has implications for theories of testing policy, which hold that untested areas of the curriculum will receive less emphasis. These findings, however, are not generalizable to all schools in high-stakes situations, or even all arts-focused schools, or schools in Virginia.

3If similar responses are not found, this may not indicate a lack of “validity,” but actual differences in interpretations of the impact of high-stakes testing on schools. If there were large differences, they could be addressed with additional interviews and observations. However, in this study, I ultimately found great convergence in the multiple sources of data.
Limitations and Strengths of the Study

There are limitations to this study. First, I am only examining the testing policies of one state – Virginia. State testing policies are quite variable, and have differential impacts on students, teachers, and schools. Second, while efforts have been made to interview a wide range of people involved in the arts, these are the words and actions of a limited number of actors, and should not be construed as generalizing to a larger population of actors or schools. Finally, the data collection for this study took place during November and December, 2005. SOL testing occurs in the spring, usually in May. Because of this, I may be missing some additional testing pressures that build as the test draws nearer. While I did ask generally about possible modifications in curriculum, resources, staffing, and staff development because of the SOL, it may be that I was unable to directly observe some changes due to the timing of the study.

Despite these limitations, the study potentially offers several insights. It will provide concrete information about how school-level practice may be protecting the arts from marginalization, if teacher reports and classroom observations are consistent with principal interviews. If there is inconsistency between principal reports, teacher reports, and classroom observations, then this dissertation will provide an important caveat for future studies of the impact of testing policies. And it will provide additional information to the very little that is known from surveys about the influence of testing on arts education, both within schools that focus on the arts and those that do not. It also may provide concrete examples of preservation of the arts under high-stakes testing and accountability systems, and potentially give arts educators and administrators wishing to maintain arts education strong examples of successful arts programs.
Chapter 3: Study Context

Virginia

Virginia and High-Stakes Testing

Virginia has a long history with standards reform. Sweeping educational reforms were implemented in the mid-1990s, the centerpiece of which was the adoption of the Standards of Learning (SOL) in June 1995. The SOL “outline the minimum acceptable academic achievement by every student from kindergarten through 12th grade in the four major academic areas: English (including reading and writing); mathematics; science; and history and social science (geography, civics, and economics),” as well as integrated computer literacy standards (Thayer, 2000, p. 75). In addition to the SOL, three other related reforms were set in motion. Tests to measure student progress in the new standards were put in place in 1998. Students originally took SOL tests in English, mathematics, and science in grades 3, 5, and 8. A history/social studies exam is given in fourth or fifth grade, depending on district preference. There are also 11 “end-of-course” SOL examinations administered after students complete certain high school courses in the four core areas. An examination in computer technology was also implemented, but is no longer administered. The tests are generally given in a multiple-choice, criterion-referenced format, with a length of 20-50 items, with the exception of the Writing SOL, which combines multiple-choice items with a writing prompt. Cut scores for proficient performance range from 52 percent (on the high school biology exam) to 73 percent (on the grade 5 English: Writing exam) (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2000).

The implementation of No Child Left Behind in 2001 mandated that all students in grades 3 through 8 be tested in reading and mathematics. In response, Virginia began developing SOL standards and tests in grades 4, 6, and 7 in 2003, and pilot tested the assessments in 2004. The
2004-05 school year was the first year for official testing in these grades (Virginia Department of Education, 2003). Also, beginning in 2005, students with individualized education plans (IEPs) were eligible to take an alternative exam, the Virginia Grade Level Alternative, in math and language arts (science and social studies were to be added in 2006). This exam allows students to meet the Standards of Learning through portfolios that can include examples of student work, classroom tests, and videotapes of students meeting particular standards (Virginia Department of Education, 2006a).

The SOL tests hold students accountable by tying the tests to promotion and graduation. In 1997, the Virginia Board of Education adopted the Standards of Accreditation (SOA), which stated that “students must pass a minimum number of high school SOL tests to receive a diploma;…a student’s test results for grades 3, 5, and 8 must be considered in promotion decisions” (Thayer, 2000, p. 71). Students who do not pass an SOL test in grades 3, 5, and 8 are required by Virginia law to be offered instructional help “through programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation,” though no specific program is mandated (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2000, p. 19) High school students, beginning in 2004, are required to complete a minimum number of “standard credits” – earned after completing a course with 140 clock hours of instruction – as well as a minimum number of “verified credits” – earned when the student passes an end-of-course examination. (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2000).

Schools are also held accountable for student SOL test scores. The regulations for state accreditation have been implemented in several stages. A transition period existed between the 1999-2000 and 2002-2003 school years. During this period (during which time the pilot study took place), to achieve full accreditation, 70 percent of a school’s students had to pass the
applicable SOL tests (with a few exceptions for limited-English proficient and special education students). Schools falling below this mark could be labeled Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards, Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement, Accredited with Warning, or Conditionally Accredited. Schools designated as “Provisionally Accredited,” have a “less than 70 percent passing rate, but scores have improved over the previous year. Schools designated “Accredited with Warning,” had “no improvement or the scores have dropped from the previous year.” To be “Accredited with Warning,” a school must have fallen at least 20 percentage points below the accreditation benchmark. This designation sets into motion a series of improvement measures, including the mandatory adoption of a “proven instructional method” in the problematic SOL areas, as well as the development of a three-year school improvement plan (Virginia Department of Education, 2000a, p. 35). No school could lose accreditation during this 1999-2003 period, though performance report cards released by schools communicate the test scores, as well as other school variables, such as attendance rates, dropout rates, and school safety, to parents (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2000, p. 21). This public reporting is another form of stakes on the school. During the 2004-05 school year, the accreditation categories are collapsed into “Full Accreditation,” “Accredited with Warning,” and “Conditionally Accredited” (which is only a designation for new schools). Finally, in the 2005-06 school year, schools can be officially denied accreditation. If one-third of the schools in any one district are denied accreditation, the superintendent must be evaluated by the local school board.

It should be noted that earning state accreditation is separate from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) rules regarding labeling schools as failing. That is, a school can be accredited according to Virginia’s standards, but be labeled failing by federal NCLB regulations. This is due to
differences between pass rates required by Virginia and the federal rules regarding adequate yearly progress (AYP). Under NCLB, in each state, district, and school, scores must rise for all students, and all sub-groups, from year to year. In the 2004-05 school year (the last year scores were available), the pass rate for reading under NCLB was 65 percent for reading and 63 percent for math. In 2005-06, this rises to 69 percent for reading and 67 percent for math. By 2009-10, students must pass at an 85 percent rate in reading and an 89 percent rate in math (Virginia Department of Education, 2005). In 2014, all students in grades 3-8 must be deemed proficient in reading and math (No Child Left Behind, 2002).

While in 2004-05, the pass rate under NCLB was actually lower than the state accreditation requirement, another key difference separates NCLB from Virginia’s accreditation requirements: adequate yearly progress. School and district accreditation pass rates are determined by aggregating all student scores. However, under NCLB, all schools and districts must also show adequate yearly progress for all sub-groups. At any individual school, Virginia requires a minimum sub-group population of 50 to count towards determining AYP (Virginia Department of Education, 2003). Thus, if one elementary school has an African-American population of 45 and a special education population of 60, only the special education population must make adequate yearly progress in reading and math each year.

*State test results*

For the purpose of statewide accountability, overall passing rates – those earning advance or proficient on SOL exams – for third and fifth grade students in the 2004-05 school year are shown below:
Table 3.1: SOL Proficiency: Statewide scores in 2004-05*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level and subject</th>
<th>All students</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>LEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade Reading/Language Arts</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade History/Social Studies</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade Math</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade Science</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade Reading/Language Arts</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade History/Social Studies</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade Math</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade Science</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Virginia Department of Education, 2006b)

These proficiency scores are used in state accreditation. For 2004-05, 92 percent of Virginia’s schools were fully accredited.

Schools and districts must also make adequate yearly progress to fulfill the mandates of No Child Left Behind. Overall, in 2004-05, Virginia’s students scored 81 percent in English, 88 percent in math, and 84 percent in science. At the school level, 83 percent of Virginia’s schools met AYP in 2004-05, and 52 percent of the school divisions (i.e., districts) met AYP.

Research on Virginia’s SOL tests

A small amount of research has been conducted on the impact of Virginia’s SOL exams on classroom practice. Most of these studies suffer from multiple weaknesses, including weak sample control and an inability to verify the causal link between the SOL and classroom practice (flawed studies include Graham, Wilkins, & Westfall, 2002; McMillan, Myran, & Workman, 1999). One exception is Kaplan and Owings (2001), who surveyed 700 Virginia teachers “to determine their perceptions of the influence of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning,” and the conditions under which teachers believe Virginia’s testing program is moving in the right or wrong direction. They found that teachers tend to support the testing program when instructional
best practices exist, when student progress is closely monitored and assessment of student work is ongoing and aligned with state standards, and when underperforming students are given extra opportunities to learn. On the other hand, teachers did not support the testing program when they valued a principal who emphasizes instructional leadership, when they had more experience and higher-level degrees, and when they believed the curriculum should relate to real-life experiences.

Virginia and the Arts

Virginia is relatively supportive with respect to arts education. It is one of twenty-eight states in the U.S. that requires arts for high school graduation (National Art Education Association, 2003), and has adopted separate Standards of Learning in the visual arts, music, dance, and theatre. The arts, however, are not tied to any statewide exam, high-stakes or otherwise (this is true for all states). The visual arts standards reflect a discipline-based arts education (DBAE) approach to art (Eisner, 2000b), with areas of the arts standards titled, “Visual Communication and Production,” “Cultural Context and Art History,” “Judgment and Criticism,” and “Aesthetics” (Virginia Department of Education, 2000b, pp. 3-4). Each grade, from kindergarten through grade 8, has specific standards linked to each of these artistic disciplines. While information about the practice of arts education in Virginia is limited, a study of self-nominated exemplary districts throughout the United States that support the arts cited four from Virginia (Longley, 1999). Looking across these districts, there are common themes. Strong community support, including partnerships and feedback in designing and implementing arts programs, existed in all districts. Often, there was specific mention made of people at the district level – superintendents or school board members – who had made the arts part of their educational philosophy. And several of the districts made elementary arts education a priority,
providing a foundation for all students to move forward with their artistic study in later grades if they chose to do so.

**Adams District**

*District Description*

**Demographics**

“Adams District” was a large, wealthy, but diverse suburban district in Virginia. By student population, it was one of the 30 largest districts in the nation. The physical boundaries of the district extend over quite a large distance, incorporating many economically and ethnically diverse communities. District data showed that, in 2004-05, approximately half of its students were white. Between 1985 and 2005, there was more than a doubling of the percentage of Asian students and a five-fold increase in the percentage of Hispanic students. Both groups together constituted about one-third of the student population. Nearly a fifth of the students in Adams District were African-American. Economically, there was a large range across schools due to the district’s large area and diversity. Approximately 20 percent of students in the district were eligible for free or reduced lunch in 2004-05. The district-wide mobility rate overall was 15 percent. Additionally, Adams District high school students scored significantly higher on the SAT than the Virginia average of 1024 and national average of 1026.

**District Standards**

In addition to the Standards of Learning set by the state of Virginia, Adams developed their own standards that incorporated and added on to the state’s guidelines. According to Adams, teachers who follow the “District Curriculum Standards” address, but also go above and beyond, the state’s Standards of Learning. Each subject matter has its own District Curriculum Standards, including the visual arts, music, dance, and drama.

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4 A pseudonym to protect the district’s anonymity.
SOL Scores, AYP, and Accreditation

Adams District scores slightly higher than the statewide average on the SOL in third and fifth grades. Black and Hispanic students in Adams, however, score significantly lower than the district and state overall average. Additionally, in 2004-05, the number of Black and Hispanic students in Adams District earning proficiency was slightly lower than Black and Hispanic students statewide in third grade (though not in fifth). Compared with the statewide average of 92 percent, 99 percent of Adams schools in 2004-05 were state accredited. Only two schools were not accredited. In 2004-05 Adams schools met AYP, set under NCLB, at a slightly higher rate than the statewide level of 80 percent, and made a significant increase in schools meeting AYP from the previous year.

Additionally, Adams District developed their own SOL-like assessment to help students prepare for the SOL tests, as well as give information to administrators and teachers on students’ strengths and weaknesses. Schools had the choice to administer this district assessment to all of their students between one and four times during the school year. Curriculum guides and resources to help raise SOL scores developed at the district level were highly praised by principals in this study. As the principal of Crosby reported:

Adams stuff is good. It’s excellent. I mean, we have top notch curriculum writers. And I’m not saying that because I used to work over there [in curriculum development. I really admire all those people. And they’ve given a lot of resources for us, and I feel they wade through some of the junk. So when Adams says this is something they recommend “OK, I’ll take that to heart. Because we get lots of stuff here. “Buy this, and your scores will go up.”…And I rely on the Adams people to look through it because they do preview stuff pretty early, and they go back to publishers and say this is inaccurate or this isn’t useful. If you want us to purchase it, and we’re a big enough district that people sit up and pay attention. So when something comes out of our instructional office, it’s usually been pretty well vetted, and it’s worth having.

Remediation

The twenty lowest scoring elementary schools during the first administration of the SOL
tests in 1998 received significant additional resources from the district to help raise scores. These resources could be used to raise teacher salaries, hire additional faculty, and/or spend more on particular resources. Each school also had to choose a specific instructional model to implement. Two schools in this study – “Robertson” and “Lakewood”\textsuperscript{5} – received resources as part of this district program.

For elementary school students who did not pass the SOL tests, there was extensive remediation, usually in the form of summer school, which was located at selected schools and taught by district teachers. The remediation was not mandatory, but it was highly encouraged.

_District Arts Description_

Adams District had a long historical commitment to the arts, and was recognized in a national report in the 1980s for the quality of its programs. Adams was particularly strong in five areas – strong standards for arts specialists and numerous opportunities for professional development, instructional time devoted to the arts, robust arts standards and a well developed arts curriculum, a group of arts-focused schools, and a notable partnership with a regional arts organization that provided training for arts and non-arts teachers for integrating learning across the curriculum.

The district’s Visual Arts Instructional Specialist was responsible for screening, interviewing, and making the hiring decision for all elementary visual arts specialists for the district\textsuperscript{6}. She had a stringent set of criteria for prospective visual art specialists, above and beyond meeting NCLB’s definition of “highly qualified\textsuperscript{7}.” She looked for people “who have

\textsuperscript{5} Pseudonyms.
\textsuperscript{6} The Visual Art Instructional Specialist also screens and interviews candidates for high schools, and makes recommendations to high school principals. However, the hiring decision is made at the individual school, not at the district level.
\textsuperscript{7} To be considered “highly qualified,” a visual arts specialist must meet the requirements for minimum credits in studio art and pedagogy, as well as pass two exams, one art-specific and one generic. Teachers must pass these exams within their first year, or their contract is terminated.
been trained as art educators,” though she did hire people who had trained as artists and earned
an alternative licensure. More specifically, she reported:

I look for someone who has a good aesthetic sensibility, and I find that by reviewing their
portfolio as a practicing artist. That is a critical piece, and they must have a portfolio, and
their portfolio must contain examples of work done with students, whether it’s student
teaching or through experience, and it must contain evidence of their own work as a
practicing artist. That’s something else I look for. But in my questioning, the questions
are designed in such a way to see if they understand the stages of development and what
is appropriate to teach students at different age levels. And I look for someone who has a
good understanding of art history and its application to art education. And I look for
someone who has a good sense of how you assess and evaluate when teaching art. And I
think one of the most important things for me in interviewing candidates is to see not just
a “cut-and-paste” teacher.

Positions in the visual arts in the district were highly competitive, and several of the arts
specialists I interviewed mentioned the quality of the district’s visual arts program as a primary
reason they were drawn to teach in the district.

Once a visual arts specialist was hired by the district, he or she was required to attend a
first- and second-year mentoring program. At these monthly meetings, new visual arts specialists
discussed a wide range of issues, from learning how to fill out particular forms to request art
supplies to discussing particular art lessons to classroom management issues. All the new or
recent visual arts specialists I interviewed were positive towards this program. Two specialists I
interviewed served as mentors in the program.

Compared to other districts and counties, Adams mandated a high minimum number of
minutes for visual arts instruction in the elementary grades. In grades 1-3, students received a
minimum of 60 minutes a week in the visual arts from a certified visual arts specialist. In grades
four, five, and six, students could receive either 60 minutes a week, or 80 minutes every other
week. This policy had existed for several years. The ultimate goal, according to the district’s Art
Instructional Specialist, was “60 minutes weekly for everybody,” instead of grades 1-3 currently.
She was optimistic that students in fourth grade would receive a minimum of 60 minutes weekly instruction in the visual arts in 2006-07.

All students in elementary schools in the district were taught by a certified art specialist. This is the case in less than half of schools nationwide (Chapman, 2004). The district, over time, shifted its model of delivering art instruction from art resource teachers to specialists. The District Fine Arts Coordinator described the history of the visual art program in Adams:

At one point, many years ago, the entire elementary art program had fallen to budget cuts. As it slowly gained a new foothold, there were four art resource teachers in four areas offices. Their job was to go out and work with classroom teachers on strategies to incorporate the visual arts in their lessons. When I first came to the district [in 1990], elementary art teachers were still resources to teachers because they saw each classroom so few times. As the elementary art program grew, we knew that the school system would eventually not be able to afford to pay two teamed, certified teachers to deliver instruction.

To achieve the “goal of weekly art lessons of more than an hour uninterrupted for each child” taught by a certified art specialist, the District Arts Office was “willing to become part of the planning time for classroom teachers as a compromise.” As a result, elementary school principals had the option of giving classroom teachers common, grade level planning time during art instruction instead of attending art with their students. Some principals still required classroom teachers to attend arts classes with their students. The Art Instructional Specialist said that “you’ll see all scenarios.” Of the four schools in this study, only at Crosby did classroom teachers attend art with their students.

This compromise had trade-offs, according to the District Fine Arts Coordinator:

The bad news is that it is much more difficult to collaborate with teachers when you are providing their planning time. The good news is that as planning time for classroom teachers the elementary art program is a lock. It will more than likely not be seen as expendable any longer, even by the most unfriendly administrator or School Board member.

Thus, this compromise was seen as a way to guarantee the arts through its attachment to another
district policy, even though the District Fine Arts Coordinator acknowledged this would cause problems with teacher-specialist collaboration.

The elementary visual arts standards and curriculum for the district – the District Curriculum Standards – built upon Virginia’s Standards of Learning for the visual arts, but were much more specific in terms of standards, particular lesson plans, and connections between the visual arts and other areas of the curriculum. Like the state’s Standards of Learning for visual arts, Adams’s District Curriculum Standards for elementary visual art generally followed a discipline-based approach to visual arts. The main strands were Visual Communication/Production: Content, Visual Communication/Production: Skills, Cultural Context/Art History, Judgment/Criticism, and Aesthetics. Within each strand, there were required and suggested standards to be met by the art specialist.

For example, in third grade, there were approximately 80 total standards across the five strands. Within Visual Communication/Production: Content there were 28 standards, 26 of which are required. As art content standards, they described the types of art knowledge students should have. As an example, one standard states, “Distinguish among landscape, portrait, and still life artworks.” For Visual Communication/Production: Skills, the standards were defined as particular visual art skills that students were to develop. For example, students should be able to “draw a symmetrical face with features in proportion.”

The art content and skills described above are not related to any particular non-art curriculum. However, there were standards in the District Curriculum Standards that connected

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8 However, the Instructional Art Specialist said that, given “the changes in emphasis in philosophy from a national perspective in terms of incorporating visual culture and visual literacy,” they had recently revised their high school District Curriculum Standards to reflect those philosophical changes. Those changes, she said, would eventually be incorporated into the elementary District Curriculum Standards during the next revision of those standards” (last done in 2000; they are revised about every five years).
with non-art curriculum and Standards of Learning. For example, a major area of study for fourth grade that was covered extensively by the Standards of Learning exams was colonial Virginia history. Under Cultural Context/Art History, one standard states, “Identify attributes of American eighteenth century Georgian-style colonial architecture including simple boxlike forms, gabled roofs, windows arranged symmetrically, and simple ornamentation.”

Connections between the visual arts and curricular areas tested by Virginia on the SOLs were made more explicit in Adams’s visual arts scope and sequence, a curricular guide to visual arts instruction that provided suggested lesson sequencing and numerous lesson examples for addressing the visual arts District Curriculum Standards. Each grade – kindergarten through sixth – had a scope and sequence document, an 18-week sequence and description of visual arts lessons that the visual arts specialist could follow. Each two week period of the school year had a suggested visual arts lesson in a particular media – drawing, ceramics, painting, sculpture, architecture, collage, printmaking, or fibers (weaving or stitching). Many lessons were multi-session projects. The lessons themselves were quite detailed. There were stated objectives, a list of materials, terminology, evaluation criteria, detailed pedagogical strategies, and an area for the art specialist to note “Classroom Teacher Connections.”

While still addressing specific visual art content and skills, the connections in these lessons between the visual arts and tested areas of the curriculum were numerous. For example, a third grade lesson on butterfly paper molas (a cut-paper appliqué method used by the Cuna Indians of Panama) combined specific art content and skills, such as visual awareness, color, shape, symmetry, and a particular stitching method, with third grade science content – butterflies. The lesson strategies were quite detailed about the science content, indicating the teacher can ask the students about the number of body sections, number of wings, and features of
the head of a butterfly, as well as the purpose of these butterfly parts.

In our interview, the Visual Arts Instructional Specialist spoke candidly about the connections between the visual arts and other areas of the curriculum in the district’s District Curriculum Standards:

There are definite connections, and they are consciously drawn. And when [the District Curriculum Standards for elementary visual art] were written, we had all of the current [District Curriculum Standards] for all disciplines, and those are all aligned with the Standards of Learning for the state of Virginia…So we align ours with [the district] and knowing that we’re aligned with the state. And [the district] goes way beyond what the state says. So we make sure we do what the state says, but we want to do a lot more than the state says. And that’s not only true with the other disciplines, it’s definitely true with the art program. So we charted everything and developed this huge matrix in order to make sure that we were aligned with all the other disciplines in the appropriate year. And that’s why you see those connections in that [District Curriculum Standards]. And the need for revision now is based on the fact, in part, to the revisions that the state has made and the other disciplines have had to make, so we now will have to make it in ours, to make those valid connections. But at the same time, we also are adamant that we don’t compromise any one discipline in the instructional plan, so that each gets its due in terms of what art teachers are doing. We don’t want them doing social studies-related – I’ll say projects that don’t have the intrinsic value in art education.

The scope and sequence was an effort to both address the standards of tested disciplines while not compromising the visual arts in the process. The Instructional Specialist continued:

It’s not an easy balance to achieve, but we really work very hard to make sure that that is there. And we’ve done it by developing what we call a scope-and-sequence that we provide to the teachers, and we also have the lessons that go along with that scope-and-sequence that they can rely on if they feel the need to rely on it. And particularly for beginning teachers, we feel that that is important, after they get their feet on the ground and they’re free to improvise and do as they wish as long as they’re aligning with what needs to be done.

Thus, Adams District pushed high, DBAE-influenced standards while also being mindful of making connections between arts and tested areas, as well as giving specialists the freedom to branch out from the standards.

*Arts-Focused Schools and Partnerships in Adams*

Adams had a number of arts-focused elementary schools, some of which were magnet...
schools, while others were neighborhood schools. These elementary schools, and Adams, had a partnership with a regional arts organization that provided professional development and training for arts specialists and classroom teachers on how to integrate arts and non-arts content. Other districts were also involved with the regional arts organization. Adams had been involved with the regional arts organization for about a decade. The regional arts organization held that the arts should be part of the core curriculum. In line with leading scholars in the arts (Eisner, 2002; Gardner, 1989), the regional arts organization believed the arts provide students with cognitive and affective benefits only the arts can provide, help to reach at-risk students, give students an outlet for creativity, and build students’ affective skills (e.g., social, inter-personal, determination). Arts integration was the organization’s main focus, with an emphasis on teaching non-arts subject matter through the arts by making meaningful and “natural” – not forced – connections.

Participating teachers in schools partnering with the regional arts organization began in an “introductory” team with other teachers. In this first year, teachers were introduced to the program and took courses on integrating drama into the curriculum. Teachers moved on, in the second year, to an “intermediate” level, with more courses on integrating the visual arts and music into the curriculum. “Advanced” teachers continued taking integration courses, and also had the opportunity to engage in teacher research. School teams were expected to meet at least once a month to discuss integration and present evidence from arts-integrated lessons and units they have used in their classrooms.

In summary, Virginia has both a long history of high-stakes testing and commitment to the arts. The Standards of Learning exams are tied to promotion and graduation, and while a large percentage of schools and districts are meeting accreditation requirements and adequate
yearly progress according to NCLB, there are large score inequities among White, Hispanic, and Black students. Virginia requires a class in the arts, and has well-developed DBAE standards. Within Adams District specifically, there was a very strong commitment to the arts – in the time devoted to the arts, in its strong standards and curricula, in its resources devoted to the arts, and in its relationship with the regional arts organization.
Chapter 4
Crosby Elementary School: Integration and Urgency

History, Description, and Neighborhood

Crosby Elementary School was located in a modest neighborhood. The school was immediately surrounded by single family bungalows, though just a few blocks away stood a block-long grouping of slightly run-down apartment buildings. On the main thoroughfare a quarter of a mile away, day laborers stood outside a convenience store waiting for work. The principal informed me that a large apartment complex nearby “became a magnet for every immigrant population coming through the United States.” The neighborhood, over the past twenty years, had shifted from being predominantly Vietnamese and Cambodian to Hispanic (slightly more than half of Crosby students were Hispanic). The school itself was quite large – a two story main building adjoined by several “portable” classrooms – and serves more than 900 students. On the day I arrived at Crosby it was Election Day, and the school was serving as a polling location. Students were not attending school, but it was a teacher workday. Still, students were very much present: student artwork – for example, a collection of monochromatic self-portraits and paintings of students’ ideas of culture – crammed much of the available wall space.

Crosby Elementary has existed since 1950, and began as a neighborhood school. During the 1980s, Crosby was “about 95% second language learners, non-native English speakers, according to the principal, who was then a teacher at the school.” There was significant white flight, with white parents within the school boundaries sending their children to private schools. The district attempted to redraw the school boundaries, but became embroiled in a fight with another school. As a result, Crosby was unable to be redistricted. After that, the principal said, an idea took hold:

One of the things we were working on while that was going on [was], “What are the
better ways to meet the needs of the kids?” And so a proposal went to the school board that this become an arts and science school, and by that time the Hispanic community had developed a voice, a political voice, and so the school board agreed to fund this as a consolation prize. We didn't get redistricted, so we'll let you have a magnet school.

The principal also explained the reasons for choosing arts and sciences as the magnet focus for the school:

[We] determined that arts and sciences would be attractive for a lot of reasons, and would bring in kids. The science, of course, in the hopes they’d all get to go to…the magnet science [high] school. And it’s a nationally recognized magnet school. But that’s why sciences were chosen. But the arts were chosen because we felt that it’s another way to reach kids, it’s another way for them to be able to tap into learning and to express themselves, even if their English was not so great. So that was sort of the decision with arts and sciences.

In 1992, Crosby became a magnet school for the arts and sciences, and later joined in the district’s partnership with the regional arts organization. Thus, the school’s arts focus predated the district’s more formal arts-focused school efforts.

In addition to the arts program (described in more detail below), the school included a technology resource center, communications lab and TV studio, math Exploratorium, science laboratory, and a partial immersion Spanish program. The immersion program was implemented prior to the school’s magnet classification as a “first stab at drawing English speakers to the school,” according to the principal. An immersion program at the kindergarten level started three years ago, and included two classrooms.

**Demographics**

Given the composition of the neighborhood, Crosby was – not surprisingly – very diverse. Over the past 20 years, the neighborhood’s demographics went from heavily Vietnamese and Cambodian to slightly more than half Hispanic. Only about 5 percent of students at the school were Vietnamese/Cambodian. Asian/Pacific Islanders made up 13 percent of the student population, with Hispanics at 51 percent, Blacks at 5 percent, Whites at 24 percent, and six
percent were identified as multiracial. Within the White population, the principal said that a number of those students were Middle Eastern, Pakistani, and Asian Indian. Fifteen percent of students were designated as limited-English proficient. In a district with a high mobility rate, Crosby ranked in the top forty percent for mobility in the district, with just over 20 percent student turnover per year. This rate was down from previous years, when the school had one of the highest turnover rates in the district. The school was also designated as Title I, with just over 50 percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, as compared with the district rate of 20 percent. With this Title I designation, there were additional resources provided, which are described below.

Crosby served students in kindergarten through fifth grade (there was also a Headstart preschool program). A little more than 200 of the school’s more than 900 students came from outside the school boundaries for the magnet program. For out-of-boundary children who wanted to attend Crosby, there was a lottery process. The number of applicants ranged from a low of around 300 to over 1200, when the application was posted online. Students that were accepted into the program were invited to attend an open house at the school. The principal said that only a handful of magnet students left the school, sometimes because the parents believed the school had a gifted and talented (GT) program. The students from outside the school boundaries were demographically different from the neighborhood students. According to the principal, if the magnet students were removed (leaving only the neighborhood students), the free/reduced lunch rate would rise from 50 to over 80 percent.

Slightly more than 100 full time teachers worked at Crosby. There were a few itinerant teachers (in the music program, for example), but all visual arts teachers worked full-time at the school.

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9 The 1200 number is atypically high, according to the principal, and she speculated many parents applied online without thoroughly investigating the mission and purpose of the school.
school. About half of the teachers held masters degrees, and all were “highly qualified” according to NCLB. In addition to the 6.5 positions in the arts and music, Crosby’s magnet and Title I status allowed the principal to have a large number of specialists on staff, including a science lab teacher, technology lab teacher, communications lab teacher, an instructional coach, two arts integration resource teachers, and an additional six positions funded by Title I. The principal acknowledged, “We have staffing that other schools don’t have. I’m very aware of that.” She “traded a little of this, a little of that,” and created the new instructional coach position. The instructional coach position was a good example of how the principal benefited from additional resources. The coach “works predominantly with new teachers, or maybe some second years,” helping them with “scheduling, room arrangement, just things that new teachers often learn by trial and error…She also goes in and models lessons, or she’ll watch them and give them feedback.”

The principal characterized the staff as young, but “highly energetic, highly motivated.” Her philosophy was, “We like to hire them right out of school and bring ‘em up right so they don’t have bad habits to break.” She cited the number of teachers with masters’ degrees, as well as the more than 30 teachers involved with the regional arts organization. There was a “fair amount of turnover,” but the principal said this wasn’t “because they’re unhappy with the school.” In fact, some teachers returned after serving in different schools. According to the principal, turnover was mostly due to “life changing events” like having children or having spouses transferred out of the area.

**SOLs, Accreditation, and Reactions to Testing in Tested Areas**

Crosby consistently received accreditation from the state. However, in 2004-05, the

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10 Other instructional coaches are funded by the district for schools not performing well on the SOL exams. At Crosby, however, this position is funded internally.
school did not make AYP for three sub-groups – Hispanic, limited-English proficient, and students on free/reduced lunch – as required under NCLB. Scores over the past few years had declined, which the principal attributed to the inclusion of more limited-English proficient students in the SOL testing. The principal explained that even though a great deal of within-year progress was made with students, the federal NCLB policy did not measure that:

What we’d really like to be judged on is progress. You look at the kids when they come in, and then you look at what they do in third grade. Well, damn, we’re good [laughs]. You look at first grade. Last year, our first grade, at the beginning of the year, you had 18 percent of the kids reading at what would be considered on grade level. End of the year we had 69 percent of them. That’s a lot of teaching. Now, do we need more of them on grade level? Absolutely. But, you know, let’s celebrate that we moved 18 percent to 69 – that’s a pretty big leap. And second grade was able to take those kids that were 69 percent of the group was on or above grade level, and get 72 percent of them. So they maintained and pushed on. So that’s good stuff. But nobody’s looking at us with that lens…

According to the state of Virginia, we are totally accredited. We met their guidelines. When we start pulling out the subgroups [for NCLB] – gosh, let’s see, what groups did we fail in? Hispanic, LEP or limited English kids, free and reduced lunch. Well, one kid falls into all three of those categories pretty quickly. So, you know, it’s a challenge, and that’s where we are. Fighting that challenge and keeping up good instruction.

One consequence of not meeting AYP was increased stress among the faculty. The principal was concerned that the teachers are “going to burn out, and we won’t have any more really good teachers.”

A particular phrase – “teaching with urgency” – was used by both the principal and several teachers. This particular language, in part, reflected the school’s failure to make AYP. The instructional coach described the concept of “teaching with urgency” – especially for classroom teachers – at some length:

[N]ow that we didn’t make AYP last year, the panic is back in a little bit of a different way. I think our school this year is talking about it as “teaching with urgency.” I don’t know if anybody else has mentioned that. Thinking that everything that we do every minute of the day with these kids, we have to have a purpose behind it, and it has to be meaningful, and it has to be able to relate and integrate. You know, all of that together. That I can’t just, whip out a book and we can read it and that’s great for read-aloud, but if I have that read-aloud time, it has to be pertinent. And I should have a purpose for that,
whether it’s, you know, a reading purpose or a social studies purpose or whatever it might be.

The idea of “teaching with urgency” was not easily categorized as either a positive or negative reaction to the SOL tests. For example, one third grade teacher, while “see[ing] [the SOL tests] as a reality,” thinks “it’s been good to look at the curriculum and know what we’re responsible for,” especially since the school has been focusing on getting teachers “thinking about the big ideas” and “not just sort of checking off the list.” On the other hand, a fifth grade teacher spoke about the problems in having to focus so specifically on areas of the curriculum covered by the SOL tests:

I guess some of my basic teaching practices have changed…Like, I would not typically start with an SOL question to start off my math lesson ever before. But now, it’s like if they aren’t exposed to it repeatedly, repeatedly, they still are not going to – they don’t get how to do those problems, for some kids. So that exposure, it does help them. I’m not particularly happy to do that. I don’t enjoy it. It’s not fun teaching and I don’t think it’s good learning, but you know, they’re going to have to take that test.

However, if the changes in instruction received mixed reviews from teachers, the school’s resources and student remediation were seen as uniformly positive. These were often directly attributable to the district’s efforts. According to the principal, the district’s resources, in addition to the school’s magnet status, allowed the school to increase its collection of non-fiction books, purchase a computer-based mathematics program, and have students engage in “virtual field trips” to multiple sites in Virginia using distance learning technologies.

The school also promoted student remediation heavily for students who did not perform well on the SOL exams. The school had been a site for the district’s summer school for many years.

**Arts Program Description**

The principal believed that, even though the issue of making AYP might impact the arts
at other schools, at Crosby it was not feasible to cut the arts – “It’s in our title [as an arts magnet].” Even if the district were to put pressure on other schools to raise scores by possibly cutting the arts (which she did indicate had actually happened), “[T]hat’s not OK here.” The importance of the arts at the school was confirmed when I asked her about the philosophy of the arts education at the school:

I think we do a pretty good job. We’ve gotten to the place where we understand arts integration. It is that you have to have both objectives for the discipline and the arts are being met, it’s not just, ‘Make a diorama after you read the book.’ You know, we do some fairly sophisticated things with the kids in terms of understanding art. But that doesn’t mean we all understand the integration – We’re still evolving. We’ve got a long way to go, but I think we’re ahead of a lot of people. So our philosophy is that the arts is a way to express learning…and to our teachers’ way of teaching.

As mentioned above, the focus on the arts at Crosby dated back more than a decade, even before the regional arts organization partnered with the district and school. The school’s mission statement, included in a glossy brochure for students and parents thinking of applying to the school, promoted an “interdisciplinary approach to teaching” where “the arts are integral to our learning.” All students in the school received 60-75 minutes of arts instruction per week, which was significantly higher than the minimum required by the district\textsuperscript{11}. There were three full-time visual arts teachers, 2.5 music teachers, and a performing arts teacher. There was a recent reduction from 3.5 to 3 full time visual arts specialists, though this was not in response to lower SOL scores (see below). Each of the three visual arts specialists taught about four classes a day so that each student received weekly visual arts instruction. The workload for each instructor had risen somewhat as a result of the half-position reduction from the previous school year. There was one visual arts classroom, which was used by one of the visual arts specialists. The other specialists were “on the cart” – they rolled a cart full of art supplies to various classrooms around

\textsuperscript{11} According to the principal, the students also receive the district’s mandated time for music. However, strings are introduced in third grade, and second graders take recorder, a year earlier than most other schools. Fourth and fifth graders choose different instruments depending on their interests.
the school to teach lessons. Whether or not the visual art instruction took place in the art room or a regular classroom, the classroom teacher remained with his/her students throughout the arts lesson, though this was no longer required by the district. The arts classroom included both a supply room and kiln room. These are pictured in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1: Visual Arts Classroom at Crosby**

Among the three visual arts specialists in the school, one was in her first year, one was in her fifth year at the school (though in two of those years she was part time in Crosby and part time in another elementary school), and the third specialist was in her sixth year at Crosby. This sixth year art specialist previously served as a district mentor for incoming arts specialists, and
mentored the first year art specialist and observed her lessons. Each specialist described her philosophy of art education differently, ranging from wanting students to be able to see the connections between arts and non-arts subjects, to desiring that students gain confidence and continue to do art beyond the classroom, to seeing arts as a form of literacy and having students think “about what they’re trying to communicate to other people.”

In addition, there were two arts integration resource teachers, who spent half their time as classroom teachers with a team-teaching schedule. One taught language arts and social studies, while the other taught math and science. The other half of their day was used to teach lessons that integrated the arts with tested subjects, and observing and coaching classroom teachers on their own arts integration. These resource teachers were separate from the visual arts specialists. They were classified as classroom teachers, and their certification was in elementary education, not arts education. Furthermore, the visual arts specialists’ provided a greater focus on art production. The principal was able to carve out these arts integration resource positions within the school’s budget in the past year.

Because Crosby was involved with the regional arts organization, many, but not all, of the classroom teachers were trained in integrating the arts with other subjects in their own classrooms. In addition, two of the three visual arts specialists had participated in the integration training, while the other, a first year specialist, planned to take a course in the spring. Depending on the level of their training, the classroom teachers integrated drama, dance, and/or the visual arts with their lessons in science, social studies, math, and language arts. According to one fifth grade classroom teacher, he “tries to meet and plan once a week” with the arts specialists, in addition to integrating drama and dance into his own instruction.
Impact of SOL tests on the arts

In most ways, the visual arts at Crosby Elementary School were not significantly negatively impacted by the SOL testing. As described by the principal, a primary reason for this was the strong arts mission that largely protected the school from having to cut the arts. The arts, as practiced by the arts specialists, was influenced by the SOL through the use of integrated lessons. These lessons were “co-equal,” sophisticated, and reflected a strong collaboration process between specialists and classroom teachers, who attended art with their students. There was a small influence of the SOL on arts specialists’ professional development, but not on time, materials, staffing, or classroom assessment. Classroom teachers, through their involvement with the regional arts organization and assistance from the school’s integration resource teachers, regularly integrated the arts in their classroom. However, despite this, there was some loss of time devoted to the arts, especially in collaboration-intensive long-term projects.

Principal: Arts mission largely protected school

The principal reported no significant changes to the arts as a result of state testing. She said, “[A]s far as letting go of the arts, or pushing it aside or something, I don’t think that’s happening here.” Again, even though other schools may be cutting the arts, that option was not a possibility at Crosby because “[W]e’re an arts school. You can’t go around ignoring it. It’s in our title.” Later, she added that while at some other schools, “the last half of the day is SOL drill time, and everybody’s supposed to be drilling like the last half hour…that’s not happening here.” This lends support to the pilot study findings that arts-focused schools are protected in part by their strong missions.

This response by the principal was consistent over the two separate interviews. In the 2003 interview, when asked whether untested areas, such as the arts, had been modified in
response to the test, she said that “the only modifications…have been that…all the [art, music, and PE] teachers have worked hard to enhance the classroom teachers’ curriculum.” She said the specialists “talk about the process of creating art and how it relates to writing process and problem-solving processes, so that the kids get a real – they see all those connections.”

Even with this strong emphasis on integration and “connections,” the principal said in the most recent interview that during the specific time given to the visual arts (as opposed to arts integration in “regular classrooms”), “the arts objectives are stressed more highly during that time.” She admitted, “Sometimes that doesn’t work and we don’t push it all the time, particularly – every art objective doesn’t lend itself to every social studies objective.” So, despite the heavy emphasis on arts integration at the school, “there are times where they’re separate and they’re standalone, and that doesn’t worry me either.” This assertion that arts and non-arts objectives may not be compatible was reflective of the regional arts organization’s philosophy that the focus, in integration, should be on “natural,” and not “forced,” connections between arts and non-arts subjects. It also, again, suggests that the school’s mission to provide a strong arts education to its students protects the visual arts specialists from making “forced” connections between tested and arts content.

*Arts Specialists - Curriculum*

*Curriculum, Integration, and Collaboration*

When each of the three visual arts specialists was asked how the art curriculum had been modified in response to the state testing, they reported no direct testing influence. While initially puzzling, this finding may be somewhat explained by the first-year art specialist. She said,

I don’t really see [the SOLs] coming into it because, at this school, we talk to the [classroom] teachers…[S]o right now, I don’t see [the SOLs] entering into my lessons. I mean, I’m sure when they come around to the time [of the testing], maybe the teachers will say, “Well maybe we should go over this more and integrate this into art.” I’m not
really sure.

To this art specialist, a modification to the arts would begin with a classroom teacher expressing concern to the specialist about a particular tested concept and desiring some form of integration between the arts and tested areas. While this particular scenario had not happened, most, but not all, of the arts specialists’ lessons included the integration of tested and arts content. This integration of tested and arts content was an indirect influence of the SOL testing. Such lessons were often modified from the visual arts District Curriculum Standards, or emerged from courses taken at the regional arts organization. This integration was seen as legitimate by the arts specialists.

According to the sixth-year arts specialist, however, this integration “has to be something that happens naturally.” Again, one can see the idea of “natural connections” between arts and non-arts content, where connections are not forced. In practice, arts integration at the school often began with communication between the arts specialist and the classroom teacher. Because the classroom teacher stayed with the arts specialist (or the arts specialist takes the “art cart” to the classroom), there was an opportunity for discussion and collaboration. During the arts lesson, the sixth-year arts specialist described it as “usually like a team teach.” The specialist and classroom teacher discussed the arts lesson, including the use of vocabulary words that were used in the classroom, “so it’s repeating” for the students. The specialist “may teach part of the lesson and the teacher might teach another part of the lesson. So it goes back and forth.” The first-year arts specialist also talked about the relationship between her and classroom teachers:

[The sixth-year arts specialist] was telling me,…“Well, we integrate all the subjects, so you kind of have to go around and talk to the teachers, and the teacher is supposed to stay in the room with you, as opposed to other Virginia schools or Pennsylvania schools, where the teacher gets that as planning time. Here they don’t. So I thought that was very interesting. I’m like, “Wow, OK.” So the teachers stays in the room and kind of watches the art lesson or helps out if they want. Mainly they’ve just been watching it and doing
their own thing, but they’re supposed to kind of help out too. So yeah, I feel like that connects with my philosophy greatly, that all the other lessons are connected. And it feels better to go talk to a teacher and say, “Well, what are they learning in their classroom that I can put in the art lesson and connects?”

This level of collaboration between arts specialist and classroom teacher was unique among the schools I studied, and resulted in deeper, more complex lessons integrating the arts with non-arts subjects. For example, the fifth year visual arts specialist, in my interview with her, talked about collaborating with a classroom teacher to help students understand plant structure through observational drawing. (For a detailed example of teacher-specialist collaboration leading to complex arts instruction, see “Lesson Example #2” below.)

In my interviews with the visual arts specialists and observations of their arts lessons, the most common areas of integration were with social studies, science, and language arts. For example, the sixth year arts specialist described how she integrated language arts content into her lessons:

I tend to focus...on a lot of language arts things, so a lot of writing and reflecting and talking about how you would, in reading, try to find what the most important thing is that you’re reading and really understand. And some of the similar, using similar vocabulary the classroom teacher would use, I would use for analyzing art or creating artwork and then looking at it.

My own observations of visual arts lessons supplemented these reports from specialist interviews. In Figure 4.2, I list descriptions of classroom observations and indicate the lessons’ relationship, if any, to SOL content.
Table 4.1: Observations of Visual Arts Lessons at Crosby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Observed</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Art Medium</th>
<th>Description of Lesson</th>
<th>Relationship to SOL Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>1st year specialist</td>
<td>ceramics and sculpture</td>
<td>Students made animal “pinch-pots” out of clay</td>
<td>Animal classification (Science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>1st year specialist</td>
<td>collage</td>
<td>Students created a “community mural” using layered construction paper</td>
<td>Ideas of community (Social Studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>1st year specialist</td>
<td>painting</td>
<td>Students painted landscape, with foreground, middle ground, and background.</td>
<td>Virginia landforms (Science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>6th year specialist</td>
<td>collage</td>
<td>Students created a “self-portrait” using construction paper.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one can see from Table 4.1, there was an effort by the visual arts specialists to integrate the arts and tested areas of the curriculum, especially evident in science. In two lessons I describe in more detail below – the 2nd grade pinch-pot lesson and 4th grade Virginia landforms lesson – the integration of arts and tested areas is sophisticated and “co-equal” (i.e., neither arts nor tested areas are privileged above one another).

Lesson Example #1: Animal Pinch-Pots

In this integrated lesson, the arts and non-arts concepts stood side-by-side, sometimes literally. For this second grade ceramics and sculpture lesson on making animal pinch-pots, the first year arts specialist placed the arts and science (animal classification) ideas side by side on the blackboard:
Particular art knowledge and skills – pinch pot, score, and slip – were on the left, and the five kingdoms of animals were listed on the right. When the students entered the art room, the specialist had them sit down on a rug at the front of the classroom near the blackboard. She said to them that they have been working in their classrooms on animal classification, and asked them to “think about what animal you are researching.” She asked them if they are working on a mammal, reptile, fish, amphibian, or bird, and whether it has wings or legs or a tail. What’s the shape of its head? In this way, the specialist explicitly covered the second grade standard covering animal classification.

After the students responded, she explained they were going to be creating a pinch-pot animal. To keep the animal together, and not have the clay fall apart in the kiln when it is fired, she told the students they needed to learn how to score and slip the clay, thus introducing and defining two art terms into the class lesson. She continued the arts learning by having the children gather around a table while she demonstrated how to make a pinch pot with the clay, noting that clay needs to stay wet to stick together, and defining the “pinching” and “molding” actions with her hands. She finished the mini-lesson by demonstrating the concept of “scoring”
the clay by making crosshatch marks on pieces of clay that would be attached to one another (otherwise, the sculpture will fall apart in the kiln when it is fired), and telling the students that to “slip” the clay means to add water to keep the clay wet.

Again, both science and arts content were integrated in this lesson. Within each area, the specialist made explicit references to particular knowledge or skills: animal classification in science, and the skills of slip and score in working with clay. Neither content area was privileged above the other, resulting in a clear example of a “co-equal” integration lesson (Bresler, 1995).

Lesson Example #2 – Virginia Landforms

In an even more striking way, the fourth grade lesson on Virginia landforms incorporated knowledge and skills from the arts and a tested area – in this case, science. This lesson, also taught by the first-year art specialist, was designed to teach students about various landforms in Virginia. Landforms are covered on the SOL exam for social studies in the fourth grade. It also introduced students to the painting concepts of foreground, middle ground, and background. As the fourth grade students entered the art room with their classroom teacher, there were several displays on the blackboard and easels at the front of the classroom.
When the students were seated, the arts specialist began by telling students they were starting something new this week: Virginia regions. She pointed to the poster of the photographs of Virginia landscapes (located above left), and asked students to name each of them. They
answered quickly – Blue Ridge Mountains, Valley and Ridge, Piedmont, Coastal Plain, and Appalachian Plateau – and the specialist began filling in the poster titled VA Regions (bottom left and right). She then brought the students’ attention to the poster titled “Natural Features” (upper right), and asked the students to start matching the listed natural features to the appropriate Virginia region. For example, she asked, “Where would coal mining go?” A student answered, “Appalachian Plateau,” to which the specialist responded, “Does it overlap anywhere else, in any of the other regions?” The students agreed that coal mining is only associated with Appalachian Plateau, and the specialist wrote in “coal mining” in the appropriate place on the “VA Regions” poster (bottom right). This question and answer continued for a few minutes, until, to speed things up, the specialist pointed to each region and asked what natural features go in each box on the “VA Regions” poster. Students called out answers, and the specialist either accepted the answer, or corrected the student. All the students were very involved in assigning the natural features to each region. It was clear they had studied Virginia landforms extensively in their classroom. Interestingly, throughout this mini-science lesson, the classroom teacher sat quietly at one of the tables, watching attentively but allowing the arts specialist to lead the question-and-answer dialogue with the students.

The specialist then moved onto more arts-specific content. She told the students they would need to think about the natural features in each region in order to paint their landscape, and that one or two appropriate natural features needed to be in their respective landscapes. She asked the students what the term “foreground” means, and a student responded that things are usually bigger in the foreground, while another stated that stuff in the background may be bigger, but looks smaller in a landscape. Here, the specialist pointed to a poster titled “Showing Space and Distance,” which sat on the easel:
She asked the students to talk about visibility in the painting, and a student answered, “The foreground is clear, and the background is fuzzy,” while another responded, “The background fades out.” The specialist agreed, and added, “So when you do a landscape, you need to make the foreground clearer and the background fuzzier.” She then explained the concept of overlapping, and then returned to the art concepts of background, middle ground, and foreground. She asked the students to pick out each in a basic landscape she had done before class. Finally, the specialist called the students over to one table and asked them to explain the idea of a horizon line. A student answered, “Where the sky meets the ground.” Following this, the students finally break into groups to begin painting their landscapes. Photos from one table’s progress appears in Figure 4.5.
Note the river, waterfall, hills, and meadows in the Piedmont landscape on the left, and the ocean, peninsula, and marshes in the Coastal Plain landscape on the right. These details come directly out of the natural features listed with particular Virginia landforms.

During the lesson, the arts specialist helped students who weren’t sure if their chosen landform contains mountains, or rivers, or waterfalls. She referred them back to the poster for help. She also assisted students in getting more paint, or mixing paints together for new colors. The classroom teacher, still in the art room throughout the lesson, answered students’ landform questions like the specialist, and also painted her own quite sophisticated landscape, on which she has clearly spent considerable time.

This lesson, integrating visual arts and science, was striking in several ways. First, the connections with SOL content were clear – in fact, more clear than any lesson I observed in any of the four schools. The science content – Virginia landforms – was front and center, and included a mini-lesson, lasting nearly 15 minutes, solely devoted to science content. The materials were easy to understand, and obviously a great deal of thought and planning had gone into their creation. Second, visual art knowledge and terminology was just as explicitly taught as
the science content. Background, middle ground, foreground, visibility, horizon – all of these terms were defined within the course of the lesson, usually by the students themselves. And again, the materials used by the specialist were unambiguous in teaching the art-specific content. Finally, both teachers were knowledgeable of the other’s field – the art specialist taught the science content, while the classroom teacher could assist when students had art-specific questions, and was an accomplished painter in her own right.

Thus, the influence of the SOL on the visual arts was often direct, as taught by specialists at Crosby in the art classroom. But the SOL testing did not appear to compromise best practices in the arts, according to my interviews with and observations of the arts specialists. As mentioned before, this can be attributed to a sophisticated sense of how tested and arts concepts can be integrated in a way that does not compromise the arts, as well as continuous communication between arts specialists and classroom teachers.

_Arts Specialists - Time_

The arts specialists and principal reported no test-influenced reduction in instructional minutes in the visual arts given to students. Instructional time remained well above the minimum required by the district – a minimum of 80 minutes a week, versus either 60 minutes a week (grades 1-3) or 80 minutes every other week (grades 4-6) mandated by the district. However, with the reduction of a half-time visual arts specialist (not related to the SOL testing; see “Arts Specialists – Staffing” below), there had been a decrease in the amount of planning time available to the remaining arts specialists, and the school day for the specialists was, according to one, “more packed.” Also, the increase in the number of classes per arts specialist prevented them from attending grade level meetings. According to the sixth-year specialist, such meetings meant “we’re kind of in the same place they are. We know what they’re talking about, whether it
relates to us or not.” Now, “we can’t do that anymore.” These limitations in communication between specialist and classroom teacher were a smaller concern at Crosby because teachers attended art with their students. Specialists at other schools reported greater problems in this area.

Arts Specialists – Resources – Materials

There has been no loss of resources for the arts at Crosby, despite the high-stakes exams. “We just spend like crazy at this school,” the principal laughed. She believed that this was generally the case district-wide. And while she had seen a cut in staff development funds over the years, she attributed that to economics, and not the testing. The extra funding from the school’s magnet and Title I status allowed the school to have more resources than the typical school. The arts specialists concurred with the principal’s assessment. The sixth-year arts specialist said, “The school is pretty good at making the arts the focus and [the principal] is very supportive of the art department... In general, we get everything we ask for.” In my observations of the arts classroom and supply room, there did appear to be an abundance of art materials – see Figure 4.1.

Arts Specialists - Staffing

As previously mentioned, the arts specialist staffing was reduced by one-half position, from 3.5 to 3 full time positions. This reduction was unrelated to the SOL, and the decision was made at the district level. One arts specialist believed that it had to do with the district evening out the number of specialists among all the elementary schools. The addition of an arts integration resource specialist position (made up of two half-time positions) was carved out of the school’s budget within the past year. Overall, then, while there was a reduction in arts staffing, this was unrelated to the SOL testing.
Arts Specialists - Professional Development

The visual arts specialists received professional development through the regional arts organization and the district. The testing had no impact on the school’s relationship with the regional arts organization. They also attended staff development at the school. Some, but not all, of this professional and staff development was influenced by the SOL tests. For example, the first-year specialist was attending a district-sponsored program for beginning arts specialists, where they practiced arts lessons, and talked about what does and doesn’t work, but there is little talk of SOLs. On the other hand, there was also a monthly district-wide meeting for all arts specialists in the district. At these meetings, the fifth-year specialist noticed, there was more talk about the SOL tests and particular lessons “that would gear more towards that.” The sixth-year specialist said there was a worry about the arts in the district, “so they don’t get cut completely, so they don’t get funding cut from them.” As a result, the staff development at these district-wide meetings “is really focusing on the SOL test and helping [the students] with learning certain materials.” She did not find this type of district-level staff development useful because “it’s just too narrow.”

Finally, the arts specialists were expected to attend staff development at the school, which obviously had a heavier emphasis on SOL testing than the arts-related professional development. The principal estimated that perhaps 15 to 20 percent of all staff-development was test-related. For the arts specialists specifically, they did not find these meetings all that helpful for their own practice. While “it’s good to know what everybody else is doing,” said the sixth-year specialist, it’s not very useful “because it’s very specific” and not related to the arts, or was something the arts specialists are already doing, like open-ended lessons. For the first-year specialist, what stood out was primarily the classroom teachers’ test-related stress. However, the
staff development did not have a significant impact on her practice.

In summary, the arts specialists were expected to attend staff development related to test scores, which they did not find particularly helpful in their own practice. However, there was no indication that attending staff development related to test scores interfered with their own arts practice. And the specialists still attended workshops through the regional arts organization and received non-SOL-related professional development, such as the first year mentoring program.

*Arts Specialists - Classroom Assessment*

Classroom assessment by arts specialists was not affected by the SOL tests. They were responsible for giving a grade in art, which was based on effort and achievement. Students were also assessed through self-reflections and self-critiques. The introduction of formal grading in the visual arts was recent in the district, and it was not clear to the arts specialists why that was the case. However, there was no indication that the grading requirement was in response to the state testing. While the sixth-year arts specialist has heard that at some other schools arts specialists are expected to assess students in the format of SOL test questions, that had not happened at Crosby.

*Arts Integration Resource Teachers Not Adversely Impacted by SOL Testing*

The presence of two arts integration resource teachers at the school – classroom teachers who spent half of their time presenting arts integration activities to students and assisting teachers in their own arts integration – added a focus on the arts outside of the instruction given to students by the visual arts specialists. Their mere presence in a high-stakes testing environment supports the idea that the school’s strong mission in the arts was not compromised by the SOL testing.

In my observations of these resource teachers, and my interview with one of them, there
was a commitment by both of them to ensure that the arts were the starting point for learning, and not “subservient” to other disciplines (Bresler, 1995). There was also a conscious belief that the arts could contribute to learning in the tested areas, and even help raise test scores. Similar to the visual arts specialists, there was no reported or observed negative influence of the testing on their arts practice.

One arts integration resource teacher expressed the belief that knowledge and skills gained in the arts transferred to tested disciplines:

[T]he arts are the best vehicle for student learning, and I think if we can integrate dance, music, drama, any of the arts into our curriculum, it’s going to be more meaningful to the students. I think it will impact their student learning tremendously because they feel it, they see it, they experience it…Especially here with so many English second language learners, I can’t imagine teaching any other way.

In response to a question about how she went about integrating the arts and tested subjects, she said:

Well, any lesson that I do that’s integrated is going to have art objectives in it. It’s also going to have the subject area objectives. So I’m constantly looking at both and trying to find those natural and significant fits among the two, so that one is not more, you know, what’s the word I’m looking for, focused on than the other. You know, I’ve got five or six binders in the room, and I’m always going back to the standards in both the art forms and the regular curriculum area. And I think that one supports the other so often.

She also believed that these connections, drawn from standards in the arts and the tested areas, transfer to gains on the SOL tests:

I appreciate that we have the standards, and I think that since we have those that we teach them and so therefore when testing comes around, they’ve had lots of experiences with visual art, dance, drama, with all the key terms and people and events and can apply their knowledge to the test.

When scores were released, this arts integration resource teacher looked at every class “to see which classes use the arts and which didn’t. And there’s a definite correlation in the test scores.” Though she said that this may be because stronger teachers generally were more likely to use the
arts, she saw a clear relationship between integrating the arts and tested subjects within the curriculum, and high test scores. In this way, the chain of influence runs in reverse: Instead of thinking that testing may negatively influence her arts practice, she believed the arts could have a positive influence on students’ test scores.

Classroom Teachers – A Mixed Picture

As reported above, Crosby Elementary School was one of two arts-focused schools. Additionally, it was the only school of the four in this study where classroom teachers were required to attend art with their students. The principal had been able to buy some planning time for classroom teachers; in other schools, planning time took place during the time when students take art, music, or PE. As a result, teacher-specialist collaboration was more frequent, and led to more sophisticated, “co-equal” arts integration lessons in the art classroom.

More than 30 of the 100 plus classroom teachers at Crosby had been trained at the regional arts organization in arts integration. According to the principal, the school “has always done a ton of staff development,” especially around the arts. After becoming a magnet school, the staff wrote their own conceptually-based curriculum. They recently brought in Jay McTighe, who developed Understanding by Design, as “a way of tying the accountability to the big picture kind of teaching.” Understanding by Design is a backward design process, where one starts with the desired outcomes, determining how to measure these outcomes, and then designing a curriculum to address those outcomes (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). This resulted in the staff looking closely at the ways they assess students, especially in the arts.

The training at the regional arts organization had not been limited by the state testing. In fact, one fifth grade teacher did not see any conflict between the state testing and goals of the regional arts organization. He said,
It’s just aimed at meaningful ways to integrate…If you can integrate the arts well and have meaningful lessons…then you’re actually addressing the SOLs. So you’re doing more because the standard is very sort of discrete and says this. But if you can do more, get big ideas – “The earth moves in cycles,” or “Collect evidence, making models, and have an explanation,” those kind of big ideas – that should encompass the thing we need.

Classroom teachers were expected to integrate using the arts regularly in their own classrooms. The most common arts disciplines being used in the classroom were drama and dance, according to teachers. One impact of the SOL on the arts curriculum in classrooms was that classroom teachers chose SOL concepts to integrate with the arts. For example, one third grade teacher I interviewed integrated drama and art analysis with science and social studies. She said that this integration “gives the kids something to hold onto, it gives them an understanding of the concepts that are sometimes abstract.” To her, the integration with the arts “is absolutely essential. Not an add-on, but just a way to enhance the curriculum.” She saw the state testing as a pressure on classroom teachers, and “it’s still a struggle” at the school to keep the arts going. However, the addition of the two arts integration resource teachers has made her sense “a bit of rejuvenation in the program.”

Similarly, a fifth grade teacher, who had not been involved with arts integration recently, still used it to help students develop better writing and vocabulary: “You know, actual quality, and how you use words, and how you describe things, and the decisions you make as an artist versus a writer. It’s really similar.” Another fifth-grade teacher spoke enthusiastically about integrating drama and dance “probably three or four times a week,” especially in social studies and science. And, as reported above, the arts integration resource teachers regularly worked with other classroom teachers to improve arts integration practices.

Because of the arts-focused nature of the school, classroom teachers who integrated the arts in their classroom were also experienced at assessing through the arts. The principal cited an
increase in the use of rubrics and self-assessment. This was not in response to the testing, but as a way to make expectations clear to students. The fifth grade teacher who regularly integrated social studies and science with drama and dance described how rubrics allow him to assess in both the arts and non-arts area:

What I think is nice about that is the students all have an opportunity to see what is expected of them. Yeah, you need to know about landforms, you need to…either tell me or show me what a convergent boundary is, what is subduction, what is diversion, what is rifting. And then through the science, through the dance, I can look and see if you understand the elements of dance. Did you choreograph? You know, those kind of things. So a lot of that is rubric-based.

There was an influence of the SOL on his assessment, however, in that he did present multiple-choice questions to students. As he put it,

You know, you still give math tests. I still give science quizzes. And again, it’s because you can’t send a fifth grader to a multiple choice test having experienced very few of them. You know, you’ve got to be fair to them.

The testing influence on classroom assessment for non-arts teachers, then, was primarily in familiarizing students with test formatting, but this did not appear to interfere with assessing through the arts.

When I spoke with the principal, she reiterated the teachers’ enthusiasm for integrating the arts within the classroom. She did report, however, that “there might be a couple teachers who say they’re really stressed and they’re feeling like they have to give up things…but that’s their own stress. That’s not my saying, ‘Too much art time!’” Thus, to the principal, any reduction in the arts was external to the school, and did not reflect any action on part of the administration to cut the arts.

Even though the pressure to limit art in the classroom may not have come from Crosby’s administration, there was some evidence that the test did limit long-term projects involving the arts. Two teachers reported some loss of the arts due to testing pressures. The fifth grade teacher
who integrated the arts and writing said that while this helped her students become better writers, the writing prompt on the SOL exam “is so not that.” “That” meaning the integrated art and writing process. As a result, she focused on arts integration with writing for the first two quarters of the school year, then “veer[ed] away from it” in the third quarter when students took SOL tests, and returned to it at the end of the year. So while the main focus on arts integration remains, there is some evidence here of movement away from the arts around the time students take SOL exams.

Another fifth grade teacher spoke at length about how the stress, as well as the sheer amount of material that needs to be covered for the SOL, had cut into the time for using the arts:

[O]ne of our thoughts about testing is we had that, you know, 400 years of Virginia history we had to teach in nine months. Which is insane. Fine. Whatever it is, it is. But what we did – one of the ways that we wanted to respond to that is to have a museum towards the end of the year, right around that time, the museum itself, as we taught the materials and saved all the work, and we’d bring in one of our [regional arts organization] liaisons, and she would work with our kids. How do you display? How do you teach? What’s the purpose of museums? So on and so forth. And that year I had a small group that worked on transportation issues. And one of the things that we looked at through those 400 years was dugout canoes – Native Americans. And so we created a model, we created small models, and then we created at 25-foot canoe that we suspended from the ceiling made out of chicken wire and paper and all that. And so that night, the museum, among all the – there was a Mt. Vernon model, there was a…longhouse, all these big model things that you see in a museum. Kid-created stuff. It was great. And then when we reviewed and took our kids through that, and they acted as docents, it was an actual review for the test. Well, to spend that kind of time now on, I mean – where in reading and writing and math and science and social studies are you going to find the time to build a 25-foot canoe somewhere? It just goes by the wayside. You don’t have the luxury anymore to do that kind of thing. So it’s much more – I’ll tell you what I think - in the big scheme of things, it has eliminated the ability for teachers to really collaborate on a grade level, and forced teachers to work more out of their classroom. And you might get some team teaching and things like that, which I’ve seen a lot of these days, but less of those sort of grade level “Let’s all do this together and make something really cool and big and whatever.” Not gonna happen. And I first started seeing that in fifth grade. The idea of a museum was gone by my second or third year. Because they’re just under so much pressure.

There are two major time-related consequences for the arts in this statement. The first is simply
that the pressure to cover many topics for several exams – reading, writing, social studies, science, and math – necessitated cutting back on time-intensive arts-related or arts-integrated lessons in the classroom. The arts, as this teacher puts it, become a “luxury.” Which is not to say that this teacher has eliminated integrating in the arts in his classroom. Again, he reported integrating drama and dance “probably three or four times a week.” What had changed was not the presence of the arts, but the length and complexity of projects that include the arts, such as the museum and the canoe building. Second, the testing limited the amount of collaboration time among teachers for large-scale projects that might include the arts. This loss of collaboration and collegiality has been found under other high-stakes situations (Booher-Jennings, 2005). The severity of that loss at Crosby appeared to be mitigated by the high level of dedication, professionalism, and common beliefs about the strengths of using the arts in the classroom.

Conclusions

As an arts-focused school with a strong emphasis on integrating arts and non-arts subjects, the potential impact from the high-stakes SOL exams on the arts was not limited to just the arts specialists, but also to classroom teachers, including the two arts integration specialists. However, I found little widespread negative impact of the SOL tests on the visual arts. The time and resources devoted to visual arts instruction, as taught by the arts specialists, had not decreased, despite the fact the school did not make adequate yearly progress the year before. While the number of arts specialists had been cut by a half position from the previous year, that cut is not due to testing or the school’s SOL scores. Furthermore, the quality of arts instruction was quite high. When I observed visual arts instruction by the arts specialists, there was a mix of lessons that could be described as “arts-for-arts sake” and those that integrated arts and non-arts subjects. When there was integration, it was most often sophisticated, collaborative, and “co-
equal” (Bresler, 1995). Professional development opportunities were abundant for the arts specialists, including training at the regional arts organization, monthly districtwide meetings, and a program for first year specialists. There had been some movement towards talking about testing at district and school meetings, which manifested as a desire to include tested content in arts lessons. This was seen as an attempt to make the arts relevant and not have funding cut. At the school, staff development focused on testing was not generally seen as useful by the arts specialists, though it was helpful to hear about classroom teaching. Finally, classroom assessment by arts specialists had not been modified due to testing pressures.

More than 30 classroom teachers at Crosby were involved in arts integration. Among the classroom teachers I interviewed, the arts were seen as major contributors to student learning, both as discrete disciplines, and in their power to transfer to learning in non-arts areas, such as social studies and science. The teachers involved in arts integration were most likely to integrate dance and drama, though one of the arts integration resource teachers often integrated visual arts analysis with writing and social studies. The presence of these resource teachers provides classroom teachers with models and mentors for their own arts integration. Teachers were also required to attend art classes with their students, which contributed to good communication between teachers and specialists, and the ability to more comprehensively integrate the arts and tested areas of the curriculum within the visual arts.

While arts integration was common – one teacher said he integrated dance and drama into his curriculum three or four times a week – the “urgency” brought about by low SOL test scores led two of three interviewed classroom teachers to report a reduction in long-term, arts-based projects, especially those that required collaboration across multiple teachers. The tendency for high-stakes exams to limit collaboration or even collegiality among teachers has been noted
elsewhere (Booher-Jennings, 2005). Even at an arts-focused school such as Crosby, where classroom teachers attend art with their students, this strain on collaboration was noted by several specialists and teachers. At other schools in the study, this issue was even more pronounced.
Chapter 5
Porter Elementary School: Transitions

History, Description, and Neighborhood

Porter Elementary School was the first school developed as part of a planned community within the district. This community was one of the first of its kind in the area when it was designed more than 30 years ago. As the principal described, the original philosophy behind the community was “to attract diversity, to have affordable housing, but also have people at different economic levels.” As a resident within the community, she still believed “there is an appreciation for diversity that started way back then.” The school was located within the earliest development in the community, which was then the center of the town. Subsequently, the town had greatly expanded, with an upscale outdoor mall, high-end grocery stores, and fine restaurants, along with high-rise condominiums mixed in with townhomes and the older bungalows. The original neighborhood, in which Porter is located, was more modest than these newer upscale areas, and included single family homes and a large apartment complex. There were also a homeless shelter and women’s abuse shelter, which provided temporary influxes of students into the school.

The school served 570 students in grades K-6 and also included a preschool and Headstart program. The building, built during the 1960s, was one story, brick, with two large wings. It was located on the main thoroughfare in that part of the town, across from well-kept moderately sized apartment buildings. Student art lined the walls throughout the school, including paintings in the style of Fauvism, drawings of students’ families, painted self-portraits, decorative mirrors, and paper-mache figurines. Porter primarily served its own neighborhood, and was not classified as a magnet, though it did, like Crosby, have an arts-focus and was one of the schools partnering with the regional arts organization. The school had been involved with this organization for the past decade. The small number of students who did come from outside
the school’s boundaries had applied to take part in the school’s Spanish partial immersion program, and were primarily White students.

The school was in transition when I visited it in December 2005. The previous principal had left, and the current principal had been brought out of retirement to oversee the school for one year until a permanent replacement could be found. The reasons for the previous principal’s departure were not entirely clear. Several teachers mentioned conflicts between parents and the principal and the school not making adequate yearly progress under NCLB in the prior school year. I could not ascertain how much inadequate test scores had to do with the change in administration. The current principal not only lived in the area, but had been principal of another arts-focused school in the district.

**Demographics**

Porter had a very balanced racial-ethnic student population. Thirty-seven percent of the 570 students were White, 22 percent were Black, 21 percent were Hispanic, 10 percent were Asian, and 10 percent were multi-racial. Thirteen percent of the school’s students were defined as limited-English proficient. Although the school was located in a community with a fair degree of wealth, the school itself had higher-than-average poverty for the district. About 30 percent of the students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This was the lowest percentage among the four schools studied, though it was higher than the district rate of about 20 percent. The school also had a higher-than-average mobility rate of 24 percent, compared to the district’s rate of 16 percent. This might have been due, in part, to students attending the school who lived at the nearby homeless shelter or women’s abuse shelter.

There were more than 50 teachers and specialists at the school. The faculty were experienced according to the principal. Forty-three percent of teachers held a masters degree.
The principal noted the stability of the school’s faculty, and that many staff lived within the community or had children at the school. Every grade had at least one Spanish immersion classroom, with two classrooms for first and second grades. Outside of the Spanish immersion classes, teachers generally operated in teams, with one handling English and social studies, and the other teaching math and science. There were both full time and itinerant teachers in music, but the two art specialists were full time.

**SOLs, Accreditation, and Reactions to Testing in Tested Areas**

Like the other schools, Porter Elementary School had been consistently accredited by the state. However, similar to Crosby, the school failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) according to the federal NCLB standard for 2004-05. Specifically, the high-poverty sub-group did not make AYP. That any sub-group was large enough to be counted under NCLB rules was a surprise to the principal. As she put it, “You have to have 50 kids in a sub-group [to be counted under NCLB]. And last year they had – I think what happened when the testing happened [there] were 52 kids in the poverty group, and possibly they didn’t even anticipate that they were going to make the 50, and then…they did.” She attributed this increase in disadvantaged students to an influx of students from the homeless shelter and women’s abuse shelter in the area. After a recent analysis, the principal indicated that more sub-groups would reach the 50 student threshold for the spring 2006 testing, including special education and Black students. “So we’re at very high risk [of not making AYP] in many areas,” she said.

In her short time at the school, the current principal had begun several initiatives to help raise scores. The first was to bring in a testing expert from the district to review test scores “strategically” with her. After this review, she went to every grade level team meeting and analyzed the scores with teachers. These analyses took “hours and hours and hours.”
In my interviews with two classroom teachers, they reported a significant influence from the SOL testing. When I asked one third grade teacher how much of her classroom practice was connected to the Standards of Learning, she replied, simply, “Everything.” The other third grade teacher felt positively towards the Standards of Learning in some ways. For example, though the curriculum for third grade was “specific,” it was also “broad” and “meaty,” covering many different topics, especially in social studies. She used “those SOL guidelines to direct my District Curriculum Standards, or my classroom lessons.” Moreover, she now assessed “more in line with the SOLs.” However, the SOL testing had constrained her ability to allow students to stray off the specific lessons. She provided an example of a time when her class was studying colonial history, and a student wanted to talk about his trip to a colonial farm the previous year. She continued:

And I had in front of me what SOL I wanted covered, and I shut that child up. I said, “Yeah, yeah. It was a good trip? Yup, OK.” And I went right on, and I thought, “I feel bad about this.” You know, I would like to have said, “OK, tell me what a colonial person’s like. Talk to me about that.” And I don’t know…I mean, teachers cut kids off for years, but I felt like having the SOLs always in front of your nose does keep you from going places you’d like to go.

The SOL had also cut into her personal planning time as she spends significant time working on a school plan “according to the SOLs.” As a teacher who integrated the arts, she worries that she will not be able “to incorporate enough of the arts in the school plan.”

The second initiative by the principal was to communicate with the parents about testing because, in the principal’s view, “most people in the public do not understand it…even though I keep teaching it.” The PTA brought in someone from the district to help explain No Child Left Behind and its testing and accountability provisions.

Third, remediation for students was being ramped up. Children who failed the SOL tests were “encouraged to attend summer school,” according to the principal. In addition, Porter was
developing an after school program for students at-risk of failing the test. “At-risk,” as defined by the principal, might be students with borderline scores, students who are learning English, or students identified by teachers as needing assistance. This after-school program – two hours of remediation two days a week – was to begin in January and continue until mid-April (the tests are given in May). Students also received in-school remediation, either through a volunteer program, or were taught by a remedial teacher who had been added to the school (through a district grant) to supplement the one full-time reading teacher.

The school had elected to take the district SOL-like exam three times prior to the actual SOL administration in the spring. The principal felt these practice tests are useful “because they tell strengths and weaknesses.” However, she also believed they were problematic in that the students were tested on content they have yet to learn. The school also assessed students using Developmental Reading Assessments (DRAs), which measures primary students’ reading ability over time using literature-based reading materials. Additionally, the school was in the process of developing “cross grade level assessments” to facilitate “common conversations” among teachers.

Arts Program Description

The school had been involved with the regional arts organization for nearly a decade. Nearly 75 percent of the school’s teachers, including both arts specialists, had some training with the regional arts organization. As mentioned earlier, the current principal had served at another arts-focused elementary school for many years before being called out of retirement to be the principal at Porter. In talking about the school’s mission, she discussed the importance of the arts:

[The arts are] one of the ways that we teach a broad base for children and capitalize opportunities to address different learning styles for our children, and also make learning
meaningful. Which is a really big part of helping all children learn. They have to have a hook on knowledge in order for it to be highly meaningful…And so we see the arts as a strong part of our program in doing that. And also preparing children for their grown-up life, having a broad basis so that they can view themselves, their talents and opportunities, in a much broader base than, perhaps, other children in other schools.

To the principal, then, the arts served three important purposes: 1) to provide an opportunity to learn in “different styles,” thus providing a “hook” to interest students; 2) to connect with other areas of the curriculum, such as language arts, as well as to the students’ own lives; and 3) to help children prepare for the adult world by providing multiple lenses with which to view the world and their own “talents and opportunities.” This philosophy was supported through the school’s connection with the regional arts organization with its emphasis on arts integration.

The school employed two full time visual arts specialists. Both specialists were in their third year, though one had only been at the school for two years. In addition, the school also had two full-time specialists in music and one in drama. There were two itinerant specialists in strings and one in band. Additionally, there was an arts integration coordinator at the school, a third grade teacher, and former dancer. The coordinator position paid a small honorarium.

The visual arts specialists both taught about fifteen classes per week, with one day for planning. Every student received 80 minutes in the visual arts per week, which was substantially higher than the district minimum of 80 minutes every other week. Unlike the other arts-focused school, Crosby, the classroom teachers at Porter did not attend art with their students. However, several years ago it was a requirement. Each specialist had her own classroom, in separate wings of the school. One of the arts classrooms was new and designed exclusively for that purpose. That new classroom had a kiln in the supply room. There was another kiln in the other classroom, but it was broken and sat out near the students, much to the consternation of the arts specialist. Photos of each arts classroom are shown below:
Both teachers had distinct philosophies towards the arts. The specialist in her second year at the school saw the strengths in the district’s visual arts curriculum and tried to follow that curriculum. She noted that the weekly 80 minute art instruction allowed her to more easily integrate, as well as create “continuity” and “flow” because her classes wouldn’t be chopped up in shorter time periods (such as 60 minutes). Her difficulty in implementing this philosophy of arts education was to not “present misinformation” about non-arts topics while integrating. This required her to “get on top of your social studies…You know, you have to have valid information to build up their interest in the project and make it relevant to what they’re learning in the classroom.” The other specialist, in her third year at the school, saw her arts philosophy as “very child-centered,” and sought to have children recognize the art in everyday life. This philosophy came out of her prior career as a graphic designer.

**Impact of SOL Tests on the Arts**

Like Crosby, Porter’s affiliation with the regional arts organization meant that students
received a greater number of minutes in the arts. Additionally, 75 percent of classroom teachers had received at least some training in arts integration. The arts specialists reported little direct negative influence from the testing on their curriculum, staff development, resources, or assessment. Integration in the arts classroom was generally not as sophisticated as the integration at Crosby, but was “co-equal” and influenced by the district’s visual arts curriculum and regional arts organization. The specialists were being encouraged by the principal to think more about integrating the arts and tested areas. The two primary negative influences from the testing were 1) a reduction in communication and collaboration between arts specialists and classroom teachers because teachers no longer attended art with their students and 2) a number of third and fourth grade students being pulled from portions of their arts instruction to receive remediation. In contrast to Crosby, there were no reports of a negative SOL influence on classroom arts integration.

**Principal: Encouraging “connections”**

The interim principal initiated a district-wide reform, professional learning communities, where the principal and teachers were “having lots and lots of conversations about kids and learning and what they need to learn.” Arts teachers were included in these learning communities. According to the principal:

> [T]here is an expectation that what you’re doing in the arts supports the content that needs to be learned, as measured by the Standards of Learning. Right now we’re in the midst of writing a school plan for two years, how we’re going to address our students’ needs as learners, and the ultimate assessment tool, as you know, is SOLs. And if you’re a teacher of the visual arts, or a drama teacher, or a dance teacher, still the question is how you’re going to use the arts to make the connection with the academic.

This particular focus on connections between the arts and tested areas of the curriculum in the professional learning communities indicates that ultimately, the arts existed to serve the tested areas. Later in my interview with her, she elaborated on the relationship between the arts and
tested areas:

You have to show the connections [between the arts and tested areas]. It’s just like in terms of teaching best practices. Learning has to be meaningful for a child, if you believe that. I do. It has to be meaningful for a child to retain it. There’s got to be a hook to current knowledge or something else in order for the kid to grab onto it.

Integration, making connections, was part of making learning meaningful for students. The arts also needed to integrate to remain relevant. She said, “I think the need [is] to be much more strategic and much more integrative. That message is being shouted loud and clear throughout the arts.” To that end, the principal pushed these connections through encouraging integration and asking for lesson plans from specialists that integrate the arts and SOL areas. She reported:

I just met with the music teacher, and this is the kind of thing I do, I asked them to write plans for a quarter. And then I look at those plans. And as I meet with that teacher, I said, “Oh, so I see here an integration of social studies in fourth grade because I see the music you’ve chosen connects with social studies in fourth grade.” And so I applaud it and emphasize it so that they also get the message: that’s where we’re going and that’s what’s helpful for the kids.

The principal had also requested that the arts specialists give input, through a written report, as to how the arts could support learning in math, science, and social studies. One arts specialist said that this was done because of the school’s concern that “we get to these kids in any way that we can.” However, she never felt pressured to make specific changes to her art curriculum. Rather, the principal was “just asking how [I] think [I] could help out here. And whether or not the ideas are used, you know, we’ll see. But it’s possible, you know, it’s very possible to help the kids with fractions and geometry and art.” To this specialist, then, there was no compromising of the arts because of this request to submit a report on integrating the arts with tested areas, but was done in the best interests of students’ learning.

However, when I asked her whether best practices (such as making these connections) match up with the SOL testing, she said:
We could be here for three hours on that one. We push the best practices. But sure, I would have to admit philosophically, personally, that there is always concern that if a child shows an interest in a side issue that is not part of it, can we afford the three days to let that child explore and delve into that topic that he has just become interested in during class time? I’m going to say we can’t as much now because of that accountability.

This idea of not being able to sidetrack into areas not covered by the SOL tests was also reflected in my interview with the third grade teacher who quieted a student interested in telling the class about his trip to a colonial farm (see Classroom Teachers below).

Thus, there was an explicit push from the principal to integrate the arts and tested areas that is now a formal part of the arts curriculum (lesson plans), which the principal believes generally reflects best practices. However, both the principal and a third grade teacher reported that the ability to cover topics in depth was somewhat compromised by the testing.

*Arts Specialists – Curriculum*

**Curriculum and Integration**

Neither of the visual arts specialists reported significant changes to their arts curriculum as a result of the SOL testing. One arts specialist noted that the district’s art curriculum had been recently revised, but she was not sure if this was in response to the testing, or just that ineffective lessons had been modified or removed. The other specialist reported no change to her arts curriculum.

Both specialists had been trained in integration through the regional arts organization, and some of the lessons I observed integrated the visual arts with language arts and social studies, though not as often as in the other arts-focused school (see Table 5.1 below). The two specialists also spoke about the strengths and limitations of integrating their arts lessons with non-arts content. One specialist looked at the content being studied in the classroom – whether its Egypt or colonial Virginia – and tried to determine what art project would fit best with what
the students are doing. She integrated as much as possible. Aside from the two lessons I observed, in her interview the specialist talked about integration in several areas – pastel drawings on Virginia landforms (science), painting Chinese dragons (social studies), and paintings of trees and leaves in first and second grades (science). To her, these integrated lessons served two important purposes. First, there was the obvious content knowledge that students gained through the integration of arts and other subject areas. Second, she believed poor readers could learn to develop reading skills through the visual arts. Her own experience with a learning disabled child led her to study this connection between art and reading. As she mentioned above, however, she did not want to present misinformation to children. To make sure that the students were learning the correct social studies or science content, she had to make sure she has “valid information to build up their interest in the project and make it relevant to what they’re learning in the classroom.”

The other arts specialist believed that integration worked most effectively when there are “natural connections” between the arts and the other area being studied. This thinking reflected her training at the regional arts organization. She cited a lesson she had done on Greek masks, where there is an obvious art technique – mask-making – and a rich content area – Greek history and culture. She stresses that there must be a “balance” in the curriculum between the arts and tested areas. However, as an art specialist, she has specific skills in art, and not in the tested areas:

If the schools are trying to boost SOL scores, [I] look for the natural connections and build off of those and not make forced connections because it weakens art, and I’m not skilled to teach math or language arts or science because that’s not what I studied. I’m skilled to teach art. I know how to teach art. So my skills would be best utilized by teaching that.

Later in the interview, she spoke more specifically about the differences between these “natural
connections,” and connections that are forced:

I will not do a lesson on, I don’t know, meal worms if there’s no connection between meal worms and art – I’m not because it goes against what I believe in, and I don’t want to give anyone the impression that we’re just here to support the classroom. We are here to support the classroom, but art also stands alone. And sometimes I feel that if we do too much integration, it takes away why art is important. I think there needs to be a balance. I think when there are areas where there’s a rich connection, like ancient civilizations – Egypt, Greece, China, early man, where there was visual communication, that’s how they communicated, I think yes, then there should be collaboration. But when you’re doing something like, maybe, I don’t know – I mean light, when they study light, you can do value, but when they’re doing something that just doesn’t relate, I don’t feel that we should have to make it relate. Because it doesn’t, and I don’t want to – if it’s not there naturally, it shouldn’t be forced. And the kids will see that, and you won’t be happy about teaching it, so it doesn’t work for anybody.

These responses indicate there was no concrete change in the curriculum. There was clear support by both visual art specialists for integration. This integration, though, needed to be “real,” both in the sense of the need for genuine, accurate content and that the connections between arts and tested areas be “natural.”

At Porter, I observed six art lessons, one for every grade level except kindergarten. The lessons ranged across a wide number of artistic media. A short description of each lesson and its relationship, if any, to SOL content, is listed below in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1: Observations of Visual Arts Lessons at Porter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Observed</th>
<th>Instructor Art Medium</th>
<th>Description of Lesson</th>
<th>Relationship to SOL Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>3rd year at school</td>
<td>weaving/textiles</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students made paper “winter weavings” using symbols of winter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>3rd year at school</td>
<td>drawing</td>
<td>Social studies Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students drew cardinals and wrote a poem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>2nd year at school</td>
<td>collage</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students made a collage of a landscape using layered construction paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>2nd year at school</td>
<td>weaving/textiles</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students stitched a colonial “sampler”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>3rd year at school</td>
<td>ceramics</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students made coil pots with faces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>3rd year at school</td>
<td>printmaking</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students began a lesson on making prints of an animal they had selected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of SOL-related arts lessons I observed was lower at Porter than at Crosby, the other arts-focused school, and the number of “arts-for-arts sake” lessons was higher. Two of the six lessons I observed were related to specific SOL content, though the fourth grade “colonial sampler” lesson was focused on developing stitching skills rather than colonial history (the specialist said she would cover more of the tested social studies content in subsequent weeks). This ratio of integrated to arts-for-arts sake lessons may not be representative of the amount of integration normally done at the school. I observed these lessons two weeks before the winter break, where it might be expected that holiday-related art lessons, like the “winter weavings” in first grade, took some precedence.

Lesson Example

One arts-integrated lesson in particular – the second grade lesson – tied together three separate areas – drawing, writing, and a small amount of social studies. When the class began, the arts specialist told the students they would be writing a poem about the cardinal they drew in
the previous class, integrating the arts and language arts. The cardinal is the Virginia state bird, and represented the small tie-in to social studies content. She asked the students to look at an example of a cardinal drawing (done by the specialist) and think of “four special words we think of when we look at this.” The students came up with “winter,” “berries,” “red,” and “windy.” The specialist then said, “Now that we’ve got these words, we need to put them into sentences” with a beginning, middle, and end. The students collectively came up with the following poem:

Berries are red
Winter is white
Red is like a rose
Wind is blowing.

The specialist emphasized that a poem does not have to rhyme, and in fact that the students should not write a rhyming poem. She then informed the students they would be writing a poem using one of four word groups. She wrote the word groups on the board (see photo on following page):

Figure 5.2: Poetry Words and Cardinal Painting

Students were given pencil and paper, and the specialist told them, “Poetry is kind of like
fishing. Words are like bait, trying to ‘catch’ a poem.” She pantomimed throwing a fishing line, and the students imitated her. And if the “bait” (word) wasn’t “catching” (working) a “fish” (poem), the students could use different words, or mix and match words from different lists. Students worked on a rough draft of their poems about cardinals and winter for 40 minutes while the specialist assisted students with ideas or spelling. Towards the end of class, students wrote their final draft on a separate piece of paper. Two examples of student work are shown below:

**Figure 5.3: Student Cardinal Paintings and Poems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardinal poem and drawing #1</th>
<th>Cardinal poem and drawing #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Cardinal poem and drawing #1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Cardinal poem and drawing #2" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The specialist informed me that this project was something she learned through her training at the regional arts organization. Third grade teachers also used this, and gave her the idea to use it in her own class. However, the classroom teachers do not always pair the poem-writing with student artwork. They often used a piece of art or a picture that is not student-created. What was interesting about this particular arts integration lesson was its near-lack of specific SOL content (the cardinal being Virginia’s state bird). This occurred despite the principal’s view that there should be more connections between the arts and SOL concepts.

This integration without much SOL content was rare among the integrated lessons I
observed at the four schools. This can be explained by several factors. First, the lesson was adapted from classroom teachers at the school who learned about it from a training at the regional arts organization. This accounts for its lack of SOL specificity, since teachers from several states are trained by the organization, and the organization itself took no stance on high-stakes testing. Second, second graders were not tested, which may have given the specialist some room to integrate outside of specific SOL content. And finally, it was entirely plausible that this integration between art and writing would help students on the writing SOL, though the connection was not as direct as, say, practice with writing.

*Arts Specialists - Time*

**Principal Reported Scheduling Challenges**

The principal reported during her interview that time in the arts had not been modified in response to the SOL testing. She did say, though, that it had been a challenge to find time to make sure that students are receiving their state mandated time for tested subjects while still receiving the expanded amount of instruction in art, drama, and music. “It’s the hardest thing,” she said.

**Remediation Cut Into Art Time**

A month after the principal’s interview, while attending a workshop at the regional arts organization, I learned that students were being pulled from “specials” – meaning art, music, and PE – to receive remediation in reading. A classroom teacher confirmed that some students in third and fourth grades were missing the first 20 minutes of their art, music, or PE time to receive this remediation. When I asked her why students were being pulled, she replied, “We didn’t make AYP. So they want to make sure we make AYP this year.” This new policy did not violate the minimum time for art since Porter’s students received 80 minutes per week, rather than the
district minimum of 80 minutes every other week. Interviews with arts specialists took place prior to this new policy. Both visual arts specialists at that time reported that they had not seen a reduction in the amount of time given to the arts. One specialist said that at her previous school, her day had been so tightly scheduled that she had no time to eat lunch. At Porter, though, “it hasn’t really been a problem here.”

“Duties” Interfered With Art Planning

The arts specialists, however, did report three time-related issues. First, and not directly related to the SOL, was that all “specials” teachers were required to do a “duty” before or after school. Duties included acting as the crossing guard near the school, making sure students got on the appropriate bus, or acting as a hall monitor. A duty could last up to 35 minutes and cut into planning time. As one specialist put it, her duty “really impacts getting ready for my class,” and thought “there could be a better solution to this.” While the issue of duties is not directly related to the SOL testing, it does reflect to some degree the school’s support of the arts.

Staff Meetings Cut Into Art Planning

Second, some planning time for arts specialists had been lost due to staff meetings related to SOL scores and “get[ting] the school back on track, coming up with the school plan, [and] discussing test scores,” as one specialist stated. This significantly interfered with her ability to plan for her classes. The other specialist concurred, saying, “If I’m spending time at meetings looking at SOLs, I can’t clean my room and prepare for art class.” She added that she often has to stay late to get her room ready for students, and was developing a plan for students to help her clean up after classes.

Communication/Collaboration Problems

The third time-related issue was the problem of communication between arts specialists
and classroom teachers. A major contributor towards this lack of communication was the policy that allowed classroom teachers to have common planning time and meet in grade level teams during the time for art. At the same time, the principal was encouraging the arts specialists to make more connections between the arts and tested areas. One specialist in particular was frustrated with the lack of collaboration and communication. This led to some feelings of marginalization:

We have a lot of faculty members that aren’t [involved with the regional arts organization] and that don’t integrate. There’s a very loose integration here. In order to get – sometimes – information from teachers about what they’re teaching in the classroom is very difficult. It’s not – you can go on Blackboard [an online resource where teachers post lesson plans] and you can look up all the information, but sometimes things change. Like, for instance…I guess that was 2003, the kids studied butterflies. They study them in the spring. Well last year, they decided to make a switch and they studied them in the fall. But I wasn’t made aware of that. So then I could have done a lesson with them, but I think there’s a little bit of lack of communication in my school about it, where people aren’t as collaborative, and they’re not, maybe, into it as much. Some teachers really are and really do it and it’s wonderful. But maybe some of them aren’t and don’t. You know, and I have some teachers be like, “Oh, we’re studying this? What can you –?” And then I’ll do that, but we won’t necessarily come up with a lesson together. We won’t sit down and say, you know, “What concepts do you want to go over?” They’ll say, “Oh, I’m teaching this” and then leave it up to you to figure out.

This specialist then related the district policy allowing classroom teachers to have common planning time during art with a sense of marginalization from some classroom teachers, and isolation of the arts at the school:

I do think that I work with a lot of wonderful teachers. But I do think that some people still don’t really fully understand what you do. And some of them still – not all of them, but there are a few – that still kind of sometimes give you the feeling that they think that you’re just there for their planning. Which I guess technically we are there for the planning because that’s when they have their planning, when they [students] are in art. But I feel that what I do is a lot more than that. And I think that teaching is an isolating field sometimes because you’re in your room all day with children, and then when there are no children in your room, people want to go home. So you don’t have a lot of time to interact and to talk to other people. And I do have a few teachers that will be like, “Oh, you did that?” But a lot of people I’m finding didn’t even know…that I had a curriculum that I follow. When I said to somebody, “Oh I have to check my objectives” and stuff, they’re like, “Oh, you have those?” And I’m like, “Is it 2005?” I’m like, “Yes I have
those. I’m not just in there with, you know –” And, for instance, we were doing something and they canceled specials because we had a special career day for the kids. And there’s about 10 minutes left of special time, but it was already talked about that there was no specials. One teacher informed me that they were bringing their class anyway and I could just have them color. So when I get a remark like that from a colleague, I feel like – it offends me because I do more than just have my kids come in here and sit with a box of crayons. You know? For some – that’s a minority in our school, people I think who feel that way. But I think being an arts focused school, we could be a stronger arts focused school. I think that there are some weak links in our program, and I think that there isn’t as much collaboration between the arts specialists and the classroom teachers, and just even maybe amongst the arts specialists in general. That there is – it’s kind of a little bit more segregated, like we’re doing our thing here, you’re doing your thing here, and we’re doing our thing here.

In contrast to the situation at Crosby, where teachers attended art classes with their students, the use of arts time for classroom teacher collaboration limited classroom teacher-art specialist collaboration. This occurred even though the principal wanted more integration between tested areas and the arts. This, in turn, has contributed to a situation where some classroom teachers are either unaware of arts standards and curricula, or more generally dismissive towards the arts.

Arts Specialists – Resources

Because she had only been at the school a few months, the principal was unable to say if resources in the arts had been modified because of the SOL testing. She did note, however, that at her previous school, she purchased reading materials about artists that would be used in the art room. This would promote reading skills, which are tested. The arts specialists differed when asked if their resources had been modified. One specialist reported that she did not receive all the materials she requested, though she did not know why this was the case. She also said that her kiln, which had been damaged over the summer, had not yet been removed from her classroom, even though she had printed out articles from the internet pointing out it was a health safety hazard. She said she had given the articles to the principal and hoped the kiln would be removed soon. The other arts specialist, on the other hand, said that she was satisfied with the materials
she received. She added that in corresponding with other art teachers in other districts and states, she’s “one of the lucky ones” because the district is so generous with their funding of the arts, and that the school had an arts-focus. In addition, the previous year she was given a brand new classroom that was specifically created for the arts.

Arts Specialists - Staffing

There has been no modification in arts staffing at the school, according to principal, teachers, and specialists.

Arts Specialists - Staff Development

When asked if there had been any modification in staff development for arts specialists due to the testing, the principal replied that there had been a general shift towards staff development that helped specialists to show the connections between the arts and other areas of the curriculum. This movement towards more integration and connections had not negatively influenced the staff development offered to arts specialists or to classroom teachers interested in the arts because the regional arts organization’s mission was to provide such integration training. The specialists’ own professional development in the arts had not been limited by the testing, and both attended numerous workshops and classes offered through the district, the regional arts organization, and outside organizations.

Arts Specialists - Classroom Assessment

The arts specialists graded students based on their artistic products, effort, and behavior. Both specialists sometimes had students write, which was also graded. One specialist also indicated she might give her students the district’s sixth grade art assessment, which measured knowledge of art, as well as required students to draw. However, their classroom assessments had not been modified in response to the SOL testing.
Classroom Teachers – Strong, Consistent Integration

The arts integration coordinator, who was a classroom teacher, indicated that over 75 percent of the classroom teachers at Porter had been trained at the regional arts organization in arts integration. The previous principal had also required first-year teachers to attend the regional arts organization, as well as had every teacher submit one arts integrated lesson every quarter. At the time of my visit, this was no longer the case.

However, the two interviewed third grade teachers, both of whom had been trained by the regional arts organization, reported a strong effort to integrate the arts, often drama and dance, with tested areas. For example, one teacher spoke about integrating history/social studies SOL content with the dramatic technique of tableaux:

I did the Silk Route, in this book on China, and we actually did the Silk Route: We made it with our bodies. And each child had a part – “I am a horse that goes through the Pamir Mountains. And the picture of the Silk Route, we made it with our bodies, and then we wrote about it.

The other classroom teacher had actually been a professional dancer before becoming a teacher. Her philosophy of education and learning reflected that artistic background:

I’ve always felt there are many kinesthetic ways to learn, and I’ve tried to incorporate that into my teaching. My philosophy is that you can reach a child in a lot of different ways, and the arts make that even better. But I also feel that the arts teach you how to be disciplined about learning, and that working towards a goal will pay off. So that carries over into my philosophy on teaching any other subject matter. I learned as an artist, and so I teach as an artist, and I expect my students to learn that way.

In practice, this teacher incorporated dance as well as visual art consistently in her curriculum while integrating with tested content. She described this integration generally:

I integrate in various different fields. I have a minor in art history also, so I use a lot of art – visual art – in my classroom, more in terms of art appreciation. Analyzing a painting and then carrying it over to how you could analyze a piece of written work, or how you could write. So I use visual arts. I use a lot of dance in my classroom…dance to me is very close to theatre…And then I use music in my classroom a lot.
This teacher’s integrated lessons are reflective of the kinds of teaching that are promoted by the regional arts organization, as well as the school itself. Furthermore, she was not opposed to the SOL standards – she liked “the meat of it” – and described how she used them specifically in a lesson on Egypt:

For instance, maybe we would be doing something on ancient Egypt social structure, and I would be trying to get the concept across that you had a pharaoh, and then you had a lot of people at the bottom of the social structure, and one person at the top. Then I might use a dance lesson that related to floor pattern or related to spatial awareness, or a drama lesson that related to character or roles to get that across.

The teacher also spoke about the more general problem of having non-artists integrating in their classrooms, where “sometimes they’re just layering things on top of the SOLs, and…you might say you’re integrating the arts, but you’re really singing a song about an SOL, or doing a dance about an SOL, but you’re really not integrating the learning process.” She said, “And that’s probably the worst kind of lesson and the easiest kind of lesson to try to integrate the SOLs.” Despite this report, I did not observe or hear about other teachers engaging in these types of lessons.

*Classroom Teachers – Recognition of Collaboration Issue*

There was no indication from my interviews with classroom teachers that time devoted to the arts within their own classrooms had diminished as a result of the SOL tests. What had changed at the school, according to one teacher, was a move away from close collaboration with arts specialists to common planning time for classroom teachers. The classroom teacher said, “We had a much better collaboration process going when I first came here [several years ago]. We had a different faculty in the art studio part of the building, and they were very instrumental in starting the [arts integration] program.” With the additional support of the assistant principal at the time, “we had a really strong program in studio art.” However, when the administration
changed, “[The administrators] listened to a lot of the grumpy teachers, especially the old time teachers, who wanted their planning time and felt like they weren’t getting their planning time, even though we had additional art. So things are not as integrated as they used to be.”

This particular teacher, however, did communicate regularly with both the art and music teachers at the school. Also, even though there were communication and collaboration issues with the visual arts specialists, they were involved with the regional arts organization and were working to integrate in their classrooms. Furthermore, she said that “our music program has become much more integrated than it used to be.” She cited the regional arts organization for helping to bring about that integration: “Thank God for [the regional arts organization] because it’s hard to explain what integration is without having taken the courses and the classes.” Thus, there was a recognition by this classroom teacher that collaboration with visual arts specialists had suffered, but also a hopefulness that a robust collaboration would return, similar to the integration with the music program at the school.

Conclusions

The impact of the SOL testing on the arts curriculum at Porter was not generally characterized by the teachers, specialists, or principal as negative or positive. Similar to Crosby, the school’s focus on the arts was not severely compromised by the testing. However, the principal indicated that ultimately, the arts needed to serve the tested areas of the curriculum. The primary change to the arts curriculum had come from the principal, who has asked specialists (including music) to develop more ways to integrate the arts and tested areas of the curriculum. This request from the principal was seen by an art specialist as another way to look for ways to help students learn.

All students received 80 minutes a week in art instruction, which was much higher than
the district minimum. Both arts specialists used the district’s visual arts curriculum – with its emphasis on integration – to drive their own practice. Given their training with the regional arts organization, they were able to use integration in more sophisticated ways than non-arts focused schools, but this integration was not always focused on specific tested content (e.g., the cardinal painting lesson).

Seventy-five percent of classroom teachers had been trained at the regional arts organization. According to the two third grade teachers, classroom art was often integrated, using especially dance and drama. However, there was some constraint on using the arts because such a great deal of SOL-related content must be covered.

There were two primary negative influences from the SOL tests on the arts. One was a limit on communication between arts specialists and classroom teachers. Because classroom teachers no longer attended art with their students, there was little time to collaborate. At the same time, the principal expected more integration between the arts and tested areas. Thus, the planning for arts integration fell primarily on the arts specialists. Furthermore, according to one specialist, there was an assumption that integration is the specialist’s responsibility, even if connections between arts and non-arts areas were not “natural.” This led to some feelings of marginalization. Second, soon after my visit to the school I learned that some third and fourth grade students with problems in reading were being pulled from art classes to receive remediation. While the 20 minutes cut out of a student’s art instruction still left students at Porter with more time than the district’s minimum, it was considered to be a major disruption by one art specialist. This tradeoff between art instruction and reading remediation is predicted by the testing policy literature (Madaus, 1988), especially at schools like Porter that are not meeting testing goals (Booher-Jennings, 2005).
History, Description, and Neighborhood

Much like Crosby Elementary School, which was located nearby, the neighborhood surrounding Robertson Elementary School was made up of modest single family homes, with some apartment buildings mixed in. Robertson was nestled in a predominantly residential area a half-mile from the main commercial street. The composition of the neighborhood surrounding the school had recently shifted, according to the principal. The homes in the neighborhood, which had been predominantly owned by senior citizens, were slowly being replaced by young families. Most of the school’s students were bus riders. The school itself, serving 450 students in grades K-6 (it also included a preschool), was a modestly sized, one-story brick building built in the 1950s. Like the two arts-focused schools, there were student artworks displayed on many of the hallways, including monochromatic self-portraits and butterfly drawings. There were also a series of photos of various teachers, administrators, and other personnel reading books, all with the captions “Read” or “Robertson Reads.”

The principal came to Robertson, a non-arts-focused neighborhood school, as a classroom teacher nearly two decades ago. Shortly after my visit, she left Robertson to become principal at a new elementary school in the district. The principal had seen a marked change in the neighborhood and in the student population. When she started, “diversity was just coming to this school, and I came because myself and two other teachers started the first learning disabilities program here.” The second-language students who attended the school at that time, according to the principal, were highly educated in their home countries, and came to the area to “pull their resources together” and eventually move to more affluent areas of the district. More recently, many students and their families came from a wide range of places, including Congo,
Central America, and South America. However, in contrast with earlier immigrant families, the principal said, “I’m finding that many of these parents are coming not even literate in their first language.” This situation “presents an even greater challenge for us.” The school served students from the neighborhood exclusively, though in previous years it had served as a center for ESOL students as well as a special education center.

**Demographics**

Robertson was designated as a school-wide Title I school, with a level of student poverty of 45 percent according to the state (the principal cited 47 percent, which may be due to within-year fluctuations). According to the principal, Robertson had “a large ESOL population…[and a] large learning disabilities population.” The district’s website listed the percentage of ESOL students at 31 percent. Ethnically and racially, the school was diverse. The predominant ethnicity was Hispanic, at 41 percent. Twenty-one percent of Robertson’s students were White, 10 percent were Black, 18 percent were Asian, and nine percent were listed as “other.” Like Crosby, a large number of students listed as White were of Middle Eastern descent, according to the principal.

All teachers were labeled as highly qualified, as mandated by No Child Left Behind. Sixty-three percent of teachers held masters degrees, well above the statewide average of 43 percent. Teacher turnover was low – the principal only hired between two and five new faculty every year. The principal was very complimentary towards the teaching staff, saying, “[T]hey are phenomenal. They are very different than teachers in a lot of schools. I call them ‘out of the box thinkers.’ They are not the type of teachers that come in in the morning and shut their door and do their thing and leave at the end of the day. They are very much involved.” She cited the school’s site-based management style, which gave teachers a greater degree of decision-making power. The principal also noted that teachers presented at state and national conferences and that
the school was a demonstration site for the district, so other schools’ teachers and principals often observed their classrooms.

**SOL Scores, Accreditation, and Reaction to SOL in Tested Areas**

When the SOL was first administered to students in 1998, the state mandated that everyone be tested, including second-language learners and learning disabled students. Because Robertson had high numbers of students in both categories, the school “crashed,” according to the principal. The SOL scores at Robertson were so low that the superintendent at that time chose the school, along with 20 other elementary schools, and provided it with an additional funding on top of the regular school budget. In addition, the school was required to articulate its instructional model. The principal described how that extra funding was used:

> We implemented full-day kindergarten; before that, it was a half day program. [The superintendent] gave us a year to study ourselves and decide what instructional model we wanted. So we worked with school data, we worked with the instructional services department, we worked with my teachers-as-researchers group here, and we just tore everything apart, looking at data, looking at best practice[s] in classrooms, doing observations of teaching. And what we did was we came up with what we called the Robertson Model, and we used resources. The teachers were offered a seven percent pay raise. We decided to decline that, and we used that money for additional resources. So we have a reading teacher, a language arts specialist, we have a Step Up language arts specialist, and we have a Reading Recovery teacher. We have a Step Up math teacher, we have a math specialist, we have two social studies/science specialists.

Apart from examining data closely and hiring resource teachers in the tested areas, the school also decided to provide more resources for their art and music program:

> We also knew that the arts were very important to keep in the school, so in our research, we looked at a lot of brain research, and what we kept on coming across was that students who had some connection to a musical instrument did well in reading and math. And Adams District students have the opportunity for strings in fourth grade, band in fifth and sixth grades, so we said, “What can we add to this?” And we decided piano, so we bought…portable keyboards, so if they’re not in band or strings, they’re in piano. Chorus is mandatory here. So we beefed up the music program. We also beefed up the art. Art

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12 It is interesting to note the principal’s belief in the transfer of musical knowledge to knowledge in reading and math, or at least a correlation between the two. There is only very limited evidence for this claim (Hetland & Winner, 2000).
before was two weeks on, two weeks off, and art teachers traveled throughout the district. We decided to hire a full time art teacher. And so we put the fine arts people in place – music, art, PE, and came up with our model that gives our teachers an hour to an hour and a half planning time. This worked very well for us.

Furthermore, the school was able to regularize the art teacher’s schedule and provide more music instruction. Thus, the “Robertson Model” involved a heavy reliance on data-driven decision making, hiring specialists in tested areas, and a “beefing up” of the arts program. This commitment to the arts is notable given that Robertson was not an arts-focused school. Like Porter and Lakewood, Robertson adopted the SOL-related district policy whereby art, music, and PE instructional time was used by classroom teachers for planning time, rather than having classroom teachers attend these classes with their students.

It was the principal’s belief that these additional resources and changes brought about a significant increase in the school’s SOL scores. As she put it,

> The superintendent at the time had an accountability formula based on the Stanford 9 in grades four and six, and the SOLs in three and five. He wanted a five point increase. We did fifteen. We have been fully accredited for many, many years. We’ve met all the No Child Left Behind mandates, and we’re also a demonstration site for Adams District and the state of Virginia.

The school’s scores on the SOL jumped considerably over the past few years. For example, in third grade reading/language arts, the overall passing rate rose from 57 percent in 2002-03 to 67 percent in 2003-04 to 85 percent in 2004-05. In third grade science, the overall passing rate rose from 72 percent in 2002-03 to 79 percent in 2003-04 to 94 percent in 2004-05. The 2004-05 scores were significantly higher than the district or state average. Because the school population was small, many sub-groups did not make the minimum number to be counted for state accreditation or NCLB purposes. The principal’s biggest concern was students with disabilities, as well as the widening achievement gap in her school between African-American students, and White and Hispanic students.
Overall, the principal supported the accountability policies put in place by the state and federal governments. She said,

I think that with this accountability – yes, there are parts of it that are unfair – but when you look at it overall, I think it can be very fair in some ways because this country has had children, pockets of children, for decades that haven’t been successful. No Child Left Behind pulled away that curtain, and you can’t hide those kids anymore that are not being successful. When we [were given extra resources by the district after doing poorly on the SOL tests] and had to deal with the state Standards of Learning tests, it changed the way we looked at instruction. I think that has been the greatest gift, that we realize that there’s not one type of instruction that fits every child. I think the teachers are more versed in instruction, they know how to tailor their instruction, there’s more differentiation. You’re not always looking at your low performers. You also are focusing on your high performers, and those kids in the middle – the kids in the middle were always the kids that seemed to get lost. Now, those kids in the middle, you’re looking, “OK, how can I move them here,” so I think that’s been the great thing about it.

The principal’s belief about reaching all students counters the more negative findings of educational “triage” (Booher-Jennings, 2005), where the focus is specifically on students at or near the cutoff point for passing a high-stakes exam. Support for the principal’s view came from the music specialist, who spoke about reaching every student, as well as the “open-door policy” for all faculty at the school.

We are blessed and very fortunate in this school because we don’t have teachers that shut their doors to everyone else – “This is my thing. This is what I’m doing.” We are definitely a team-oriented school. What concerns first grade in science concerns me. What concerns someone else with reading concerns me. So when you have a problem with that kid in reading, that means I have a problem with him here because he’s got to read for me to. So we have an open door policy. No one…really, the principal lets you know up front you are not allowed to be an island. Everybody – there are no hidden secrets anywhere. If you know anything that’s going to help us help this kid, everybody has to come to the table. We are not labeling students. It’s one thing I’m very proud of here. We don’t label kids. We identify them when they have their weaknesses and those issues. When they have their strengths, obviously we try to filter them into the gifted and talented program. But no kid is left behind. And we were doing that before Bush came down with the policy of No Child Left Behind. We were literally taking every single kid seriously. And I think you have to as well, when you’re being judged by how well they perform on the SOL. So, you know, it’s in your best interests not to let any kid fall through the crack. And so I’m very proud of what we do here.

This comprehensive, data-driven approach to meeting accountability standards involved more
than the structural changes noted above. Administrators and faculty were been trained in how to use computer data disaggregation programs provided by the district. Based on areas of testing strengths and weaknesses, teachers, working in disciplinary teams, developed objectives and workplans to raise student achievement. In addition, teachers provided test-wiseness strategies for students beginning in third grade to familiarize students with the format of the SOL exams. The third grade teachers reported these strategies were taught starting at the beginning of the year, in small doses of instruction. This way, according to the teachers, they did not have to spend three entire weeks on test-wiseness in the spring prior to administration of the SOL tests.

Students identified as at-risk were encouraged to attend after-school remediation from January to April. Most SOL exams are given in May, and the principal ended the remediation a month early “to give them some down time before they have to bring it up again to face those tests in May.” The school also elected to take the district’s SOL-like test the maximum four times. All teachers were trained in Developmental Reading Assessments (DRAs), which were given to all first and second grade students. In addition, there was a school-wide writing assessment given four times a year. This assessment involved standardized writing prompts. Teachers graded the assessments using district and state writing rubrics. Finally, as the district encouraged professional learning communities, teachers began to develop common assessments. The math committee was developing a common math assessment for each grade.

Arts Program Description

As mentioned above, there was one full-time arts specialist at the school. She was in her fourth year at Robertson, and fifth year as an arts specialist overall. She also served a mentor for the district’s new arts specialists. She described the arts as a “safe haven,” and while “it is great that it can reinforce what students learn in the classroom…it also has a place unto itself. It’s a
great creative outlet…for kids to express their emotions.” She also referred to the SOL exams saying, “And, with testing and stuff, it’s also just a really great place to unwind.”

The arts specialist teaches three to five classes per day, ranging from 60 to 80 minutes per class. Students in grades K-3 receive an hour of art instruction per week, and students in grades 4-6 receive 80 minutes of instruction every other week. Lessons took place in an art-specific classroom. Figure 6.1 shows a photo of the art classroom:

**Figure 6.1: Art Classroom at Robertson**

![Image of the art classroom](image)

In addition to the visual arts specialist, the school also had a very experienced full-time music specialist, one itinerant general music specialist, two itinerant strings teachers, and two itinerant band teachers. The school has both a music room and a large rehearsal space. The piano lab, with its 13 keyboards, was one of the few of its kind in the district. The centrality of the music program for Robertson led me to interview the music specialist and observe his classroom lessons as well.

**Impact of SOL Tests on the Arts**

At Robertson, the emphasis on data-driven instruction led to encouragement from the principal to integrate tested content into the art and music curricula. The art lessons I observed did include tested content, but usually implicitly. While there was occasional loss of time for the
arts and music because of the SOL, there was no loss of resources, staff development, staffing, or modifications in classroom assessment for the specialists. In the regular classrooms there was “subservient” arts integration described by classroom teachers, and a limited amount of time to include the arts. Communication between specialists and classroom teachers was also an issue because classroom teachers had common planning time during art and music.

*Principal: Encouraging Integration*

The principal reported that each grade had a mapped curriculum. This curriculum was distributed to all teachers at the school, including the art and music specialists. Thus, the specialists “know monthly what the focus in every curriculum area is for that grade level, and so they tie their lessons into what’s going on in the classroom as well.” In addition, the school examined the district’s District Curriculum Standards for art, which addressed SOL objectives in tested areas. “Looking at student need and what the need is in this building, the teachers adapt what they’re doing.” This was a shift for the untested areas of the curriculum, according to the principal:

> For a long time, arts, PE, and music really kind of sat outside of what was going on with the SOLs. And because it’s such a massive effort – I mean, everybody’s understanding that, you know, everybody, every adult in this building has a role to play in the success of our kids, so not only art, I mean food services, the custodians, everybody plays a role in this.

Later in the interview, the principal reiterated the role of the arts at the school: “The arts are very important to this school, and they’re not just something that sits off to the side as an extra thing. It’s fully integrated into what we’re doing.”

This “massive effort” also included having the fine arts committee sit in with classroom teachers to examine test data and modify their own curriculum. The art and music specialists are very much a part of looking at that data and understanding where this school is, not only in their discipline, but in all the disciplines – English, math, social studies, science –
so all these specials…pulled in and everybody’s looking at what they can do within their curriculum to move kids forward.

The principal, then, saw the arts as contributing to a school-wide effort to raise achievement by including the specialists in data-driven analysis and integrating the arts and SOL content.

Art and Music Specialists - Curriculum

Limited Impact from SOL Testing for Art Specialist

The arts specialist did not believe her curriculum had been significantly influenced by the SOL testing. She said, “I would say we’re probably the least impacted by the big tests of anyone in the school.” However, she reported a distinct pressure in the district for the arts specialists to connect with the classroom curriculum. As a district mentor for new teachers, she spoke about the district’s expectations for arts specialists:

[I]t definitely is highly emphasized for the new [arts specialists] that they need to connect to the curriculum, and if they don’t, a lot of these [classroom] teachers have been used to having art teachers who do, and they’re going to be expecting it, for one. There’s a huge push to make sure that we’re connecting back…I think it is a huge shift in thinking because…I didn’t student teach in [Adams District], and coming into [Adams District] was…a bit of an abrupt transition. Because going from teaching kind of arts-for-arts sake, sometimes connecting to the curriculum if you felt like it and if it worked, and then [in Adams] it’s a much more rigid, I think, way – model – of teaching art. But at the same time, as a new teacher, it’s wonderful to have that kind of support.

She saw the District Curriculum Standards for the district as representing “good” arts practice, but if it were up to her, she would “definitely tweak it a little bit more for arts-for-arts sake.”

However,

I think that there is great fear in doing that because, you know, this whole “we’ve got to make it a valid curriculum in order for it not to go away.” And I think there’s a great fear that the funding will go away. I mean, we’re always proving how much we help, and it’s got to be, I think every year, it feels like a more and more direct connection in order to validate art and taking kids out of testing areas in order to give them art.

Still, the arts specialist felt very supported by the Robertson administration, and “lucky” to be at such an “excellent school.” Furthermore, she came to Adams District “because it was probably
the best place I could go, as far as finding a job and being supported,” and praised its mentorship program and high retention rate for arts specialists.

In her own practice, the arts specialist said she mixed lessons that focused more on artistic skills and concepts with those that integrated the arts and tested areas. With respect to linking the arts and the classroom curriculum, she said that some connections – such as shapes, symmetry, and patterning – were “pretty easy.” Other areas were not as easy to connect, and could even constrict artistic creativity. For example, she said, “I mean, ‘Look at these Egyptian paintings and then you go and draw like an Egyptian would draw.’ It’s a very confined way of teaching art. So sometimes it does get a little stifling to have to go along with certain areas.”

Over a week period, I observed five art lessons in different grade levels. A short description of each lesson is provided below in Table 6.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Observed</th>
<th>Art Medium</th>
<th>Description of Lesson</th>
<th>Relationship to SOL Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>architecture</td>
<td>Students made houses using paper bags and construction paper</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>collage</td>
<td>Students created Native American dancing dolls</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>fibers: stitchery</td>
<td>Students stitched butterflies</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>architecture</td>
<td>Students constructed a Georgian-style home from construction paper</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>printmaking</td>
<td>Students made prints from etchings of leaves</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the five lessons I observed had a connection with SOL content. The fifth, a printmaking lesson where students etched leaves into a clay-like material and used it to create a series of prints, could have been connected to the concept of scientific observation, though the arts specialist said it was largely an “art-for-arts sake” lesson.
The primary difference between the lessons I observed at Robertson and the integrated lessons at, say, Crosby was the specificity and directness of the connections to tested content. Whereas a lesson like “Virginia Landforms” at Crosby explicitly taught SOL content alongside arts content, at Robertson the lessons tended to include SOL content more implicitly.

**Lesson Example #1**

An example of this implicit SOL content was the fourth grade lesson on constructing a Georgian-style home from construction paper. The arts specialist noted that the Georgian-style fit in with the colonial Williamsburg time period and was covered on the fourth grade history/social studies SOL test. She also said that architecture was a large unit in the district for this grade, and it was tied to the Virginia history portion of the fourth grade history/social studies SOL test. This lesson was adapted from the District Arts Curriculum for the visual arts for fourth grade.

When the students entered and were seated, the specialist told them they would be making a Georgian-style house. On the board were several displays, including photos of colonial Williamsburg and a flattened, specialist-created version of the paper house the students would be constructing (see Figure 6.2).
The specialist then showed the students how to fold their construction paper, and then cut it in selected places. Following this, she demonstrated how to fold and glue the basic house structure together. Students worked on making their houses for about 15 minutes. Then the specialist taught the students how to make the house “roof” and “shingles.” One student asked about Jamestown houses. The specialist replied that Jamestown houses, from the 17th century, were basic structures with wood, but by the time they got to Georgian architecture, the homes were much fancier. She then said they would talk about the historical differences between the two types of homes the following week in more detail. Two examples of student work from the lesson are shown below in Figure 6.3:
Certainly, there was a connection between this architecture lesson – the Georgian-style houses – and the fourth grade history/social studies SOL. I did not, however, observe a great deal of tested content. There was some discussion of the differences between Jamestown and Georgian houses, and there were references to Williamsburg. And the specialist alluded that there would be more history/social studies specific content in subsequent weeks. The focus in this lesson, though, was primarily on art production – making particular folds and cuts to construct a three-dimensional house, and designing, cutting, and gluing flourishes such as shingles.

Lesson Example #2

In a similar vein, the third grade lesson loosely connected the development of stitching skills with butterflies – a topic covered on the third grade SOL test in science. In this lesson, the specialist focused almost entirely on helping students develop competence in a particular kind of technique – the couching stitch. In fact, the development of stitching skills was a continuous focus at Robertson (and throughout the district, for that matter). Most of the students, according to the specialist, would have already been introduced to the couching stitch in a previous grade. See Figure 6.4 for a photo of the different types of stitches students learn at Robertson.
After demonstrating the stitch to students – where one threads the yarn back through the same hole in the burlap – students began to stitch their butterfly, using both that stitch and the running stitch. What was particularly interesting about this lesson was the specialist’s insistence that students develop their artistic competence without a great deal of assistance, even when frustrated, in order to eventually gain confidence in their art-making abilities. This focus on developing skills in the arts took precedence over any SOL content. Even though butterflies were covered by the third grade SOL tests, there was no instructional time spent on particular parts of the butterfly or the life stages of the butterfly in art class. The connection, then, between the art in this lesson and SOL content was superficial. The main effect of the SOL was to prescribe the choice of content – the butterfly. See Figure 6.5 for photos of student work.
Music Specialist: Making Connections

Because the music program at Robertson was so highly regarded, I interviewed the full-time music specialist, asking him the same questions as those posed to the visual art specialist. I also observed his lessons. The music specialist reported that the primary influence from the SOL tests on his regular curriculum was through the district’s District Curriculum Standards for music which, like the District Curriculum Standards for visual art, emphasized making connections with tested areas of the curriculum. He described some of those connections to me:

Well, reading, first of all. Obviously they don’t read that much in kindergarten, but I have a curriculum that has them singing two notes, two rhythms, with simple words like “see how they run,” “hot cross buns.” So these are words they literally have to read and connect with. As it relates to math, you’ve got whole notes, half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes. So when you’re working in that regard, you’re doing fractions. If I say there are four measures, and there are four beats in each measure. How many beats do I have in the entire line? Well, now we’ve got a word problem. Four times four equals sixteen. But you’d be surprised how many of them really don’t make that connection. Until you actually write it up on the board, and they say, “Aha!” So these are the ways that I connect with what they do. Also, we talk about angles. For example, when we were dancing, I’ll say, “I need a 45 degree angle.” Or “I need a 90 degree.” Or “I need a 180 degree.” So I’m able to connect in that regard. Again, if they’re studying Greece, then fine, we’re working on some music that comes from that same culture. China, whatever it is that they’re working on. The Civil War. We do a lot of patriotic music, folk
music related to the Civil War. So there’s a lot of stuff I do in here that helps them connect with what they’re doing in the classroom.

These connections to tested content, however, were not always recognized by some classroom teachers at Robertson. As described below, this was partly due to the lack of communication between the specialists and classroom teachers.

Issues with Communication and Collaboration with Classroom Teachers

Similar to Porter, there was concern about a lack of communication between specialists and classroom teachers. These communication problems were at least partly due to the fact that classroom teachers had common planning time during art, music, and PE instructional time, limiting face-to-face interaction. The art and music specialists differed in the importance they attached to interaction with classroom teachers. The art specialist noted that, while earlier in her career she spoke with classroom teachers often, “[N]ow I kind of know more what they’re teaching as far as the anatomy of a cricket or butterfly or whatever it is that they’re learning about. So I don’t need necessarily the information from the teacher as much.” She said she spoke with teachers just before or after they brought their students to art class.

On the other hand, the music specialist spoke about feeling somewhat marginalized at the school and needing to make the case to classroom teachers about the connections made between music and the tested areas:

[O]ftentimes I do feel as though the fine arts are put on the backburner. And it could be because, perhaps, I’m not alerting them to how it is that I connect with what they do…I do feel as though sometimes the fine arts is the place for the kids to go to do something nice while everybody else is planning and coming up with the curriculum for them.

WHEN YOU SAY THAT THEY MAYBE DON’T REALIZE WHAT YOU CONNECT WITH –

Well, case in point: they say things like, “Sing pretty for [the music teacher].” Now, you know, singing is only 40 percent of what we do. They never say, “Work hard for [the music teacher].” Or, you know, they just naturally assume that all we do is come in here
and sing. So much of what we do in here is math, reading, writing, connecting with the various curriculum that they’re implementing in their own classroom. So perhaps, I haven’t done such a great job of standing up in staff meetings and say, “Hey, this is how we connect with what you’re doing.” We’ve done that recently because we just recently finished a school plan. And I kind of waved the red flag and said, “Listen. Hey, this is what we do. This is how we enhance what you do in the classroom.” So, and they were all like, “Oh, you do?” So, yeah.

Additionally, he described the difficulties in planning for his classes at Robertson, and how this lack of communication with classroom teachers had begun to be addressed:

Planning is so hard around here. We have team planning, but it’s hard for me to gauge my planning with them. So what I basically do is catch them in the hallway or catch them in staff meetings, or I’ll catch them during lunch. And I’ll – oftentimes we’re talking about the kids anyway. And so that’s how I find out their strengths and weaknesses. Now recently, I was on the panel for writing the school plan, and that was my main concern, is I’ve got to be able to know exactly what’s going on with that kid, especially as it relates to any kind of weaknesses. So what we’re doing now is we have something that’s called “identified students meetings” that happen, I think, every two to three months. What fine arts is doing now is we’re literally getting the minutes from those meetings, so now we know exactly what the classroom teachers know. So that’s going to help us even the more help this kid progress. That’s something that’s just now taking place because I think classroom teachers, up until recently, have felt as though… the fine arts was just a place for the kids to go and let them baby sit, while the real teachers do the planning. So I think we’ve awakened them to the fact, “Listen, everything that we do in our classroom is SOL-related, and what you do in your classroom, I can connect to it.” So that was a very [laughs] – that was a very heated discussion, but I think a lot of minds were opened to the fact that fine arts is just as important as the core curriculum. And as a matter of fact, when you go to our music in-services, we personally believe that music is part of the core curriculum.

The belief that the arts can and should connect in meaningful ways to classroom learning was echoed by the art specialist:

[S]ometimes it would be nice to know what areas that the students are needing when they do the practice test or whatever. What areas are they kind of struggling in? Because if it’s vocabulary or rhyming or – I mean, there’s a lot of things that we could be doing that I don’t think – I think they’re still missing the connection between what we could do – I think something’s missing. I mean, I think you can’t just teach a little bit about Egyptian art and then think that that’s going to make a huge impact on a SOL test. I mean, I’ve never even seen an SOL test. I mean, those sorts of things. I still don’t think they’re finding an importance in the arts and PE necessarily. It’s kind of still roundabout.

These three statements highlight the specialists’ desire to be seen as relevant and important to
students’ learning in the tested areas. The principal’s expectation was that “the arts…[are] not just something that sits off to the side as an extra thing” and should be “fully integrated into what we’re doing” in the tested areas. However, the lack of specialist-teacher collaboration frustrated the desire of the specialists to be relevant to the tested areas and provide meaningful integration.

Art and Music Specialists - Time

The principal reported that the SOL testing had no impact on the amount of time given to art instruction. In fact, it was only recently that Robertson hired a full-time art specialist. Before, the art specialist was itinerant, teaching at the school for two weeks, and then in another school for two weeks. However, the principal did say that large assemblies, such as music concerts, were scheduled after the SOL testing in May “because we’re gearing up for testing.” She described her reasoning for these scheduling issues in more detail:

[I]t’s the pressure of us being a Title I school, really under those No Child Left Behind mandates. You know, we really have to stop and really focus on what we’re doing. And I tell my parents, you know, “Be happy that this school is doing well. Think about other schools that don’t have their accreditation, that you know, have had to offer choice. You know, there is a balance here. You may not see it, but I make sure that there’s a balance here.” But my first thing is I need to protect the accreditation, and I do not want this school to go into choice [i.e., the option for students to transfer to another school].

This “balance” helped to maintain the time allotted to the arts at Robertson. However, as is reported below, time for communication between specialists and classroom teachers had caused some tension and feelings of marginalization for the arts.

Like the principal, the art specialist agreed that there had been no significant loss of instructional time in art. Students in grades K-3 received an hour weekly of art instruction, and students in grades 4-6 attended art for 80 minutes every other week. The fact that kindergarten students received an hour of art instruction weekly, higher than the district’s minimum of 30 minutes weekly, was noted by the art specialist as “one way I would say that my principal really
supports the arts.”

However, both the art and music specialists confirmed that they lost some class time during SOL test administration. The art specialist noted that this loss of art instruction fell hardest on older students:

I think the thing that sometimes gets missed [with the loss of art time] is that, if you’re in grades four through six here, you get fifteen art classes a year, when you come right down to it, and when you look at holidays and all of that. So if you take away one or two of those for testing, I mean, that’s a substantial amount of your art time. Whereas, you know, younger grades, it’s not such a big deal because they have weekly art.

The testing pressures also occasionally affected students’ music instructional time. One case in particular was recounted by the music specialist, which resulted in some conflict with other teachers and the administration:

Well, there was one situation last year where I had a cultural diversity program scheduled for February. And we had inclement weather, which impeded on the fifth grade teachers’ time for getting the kids ready for SOL writing. So when we got back, I was told that my concert had to be put on hold until the fifth grade teachers felt more secure with the kids’ writing. And my argument was, “An hour and a half out of their schedule is going to make all the difference in the world? Now you’ve been teaching writing in fifth grade since September. Here it is, February. And so you’re saying that an hour and a half is going to make all the difference in the world?” So I was very angry with that because the principal backed the classroom teachers. But again, who can blame the principal? If your teachers don’t feel comfortable with where they – you know, they’ve done the assessment, they’re not happy with what they see. Certainly I can see that.

This statement supports the principal’s view that above all, the school’s accreditation must be protected, even, in this case, at the expense of some music time.

**Art and Music Specialists - Resources**

Neither the principal nor either of the specialists cited any loss of resources due to the SOL testing. The principal said that she tried to distribute resources evenly among the teachers. For example, when the art specialist requested a particular software program to help with the school’s literary magazine, the resources to purchase it were provided. The art specialist said, “I
think I have a very large budget, and…there’s never been one thing I’ve needed that I’ve never gotten. I’m very lucky to say that.” As an example, she reported that the principal had provided the funds for a new kiln the previous year. Similarly, the music specialist felt very supported for resources, both by the administration and the district. He said,

I am in a utopia. Whatever I feel these kids need, it’s literally given to me. I have at least three different curriculums to choose from in my storage room. I have the wealth of the music staff accessible upon demand. I can literally call the music office and ask for someone to come and watch me do what I do, to provide some kind of help, some kind of constructive criticism. There is no excuse for failure in Adams District. I have never seen anything like it in my entire life.

He praised both the administration and the school’s PTA for providing him with lighting and sound equipment, a VCR, a DVD player, a laptop, and a desktop computer. He concluded, “It’s the perfect teaching situation, to be honest with you. I really couldn’t have asked for anything better.”

Art and Music Specialists – Staffing

The staffing in the arts at Robertson had not been modified in response to the SOL testing. In fact, the school had been able to secure a full-time position for an art specialist after the introduction of the SOL testing.

Art and Music Specialists – Staff Development

The art and music specialists praised the professional development the district offered, and neither said that their opportunities had been limited by the SOL testing. The art specialist reported she attended four or five district wide in-services per year on various issues, such as the use of digital cameras or PowerPoint®. In addition, the district provided resources to take courses in particular artistic media. She also taught the district’s course for new art specialists. The music specialist was impressed with the quantity and quality of the professional development offered by the district:
I can’t begin to tell you how much stuff I discard. There are conferences, there are state conferences, local conferences. There’s the – I forget what it’s called – but it’s like an academy, where you can literally register to take these free classes. Again, I’ve never seen anything like it. The fine arts office has two in-services a year, and they actually allow us to say what we’d like to look at or revisit in the in-service, which we had in the fall, and then we usually have it in the spring. And we address issues where we think we need a little bit more staff development on.

The principal said that the district’s fine arts office had responded to the SOL testing – “They’ve had to, with the demands of the state SOLs and No Child Left Behind.” She had heard presentations given by the fine arts office at leadership conferences, and was informed about curriculum updates in the fine arts.

*Art and Music Specialists – Classroom Assessment*

Neither the principal, art specialist, or music specialist reported any major modifications in classroom assessment as a result of the SOL testing. The art specialist did say that in certain cases, tested content was assessed but only within the context of an artistic product. For example:

> [W]ith Egypt, last year a lesson that was in our curriculum and that I did, was based on drawing a profile. And we looked at how we draw profiles, how Egyptian draw profiles, which are very different. You know, body facing forward, face…you know, they have a canon, a set of rules that they use. So when they drew their portraits they were using Egyptian canons to draw them…[O]r second grade, they’re graded in art, one of the criteria would be that their cricket is anatomically correct, if it was a realistic drawing.

Generally, however, a student’s grade in art was based on art achievement and effort. There was also no assessment given in the format of SOL questions.

*Classroom Teachers*

*Arts Subservient to Tested Areas*

Art done by classroom teachers at Robertson was heavily influenced by the SOL testing. In my group interview with four third grade teachers, the three examples given of classroom art were interactive notebooks, SOL-related songs, and computer-based drawing related to social studies and science. According to one teacher, an interactive notebook consisted of a set of
notebook pages. On one side of the paper, students wrote facts about a particular concept in, say, social studies or science. The students then drew pictures of that concept on the other side of the piece of paper. Then, as one third grade teacher said,

[The students] have to look at their drawing and then they have to tell their partner everything that was on the paragraph without looking at the paragraph. They can only tell it from the picture. And then the partner says, “Well, you left this part out,” and then they know they have to go back and modify their artwork.

Another primary way the arts were incorporated into the classroom was through singing SOL-related songs. One third grade teacher reported that she had her students sing a song about the continents to help them prepare for the SOL testing. Finally, several teachers reported having their students use computer-based art programs like KidPix® to do a variety of projects, such as the butterfly cycle, geographical maps, and the phases of the moon.

It should also be noted that the classroom teachers I interviewed very much supported the work the art specialist did in her classroom. As one third grade teacher said, “[The art specialist] does a really good job of integrating our content into her – into what she has them doing. If they’re going to be doing whatever sort of art technique and she does a really good job of integrating content areas into that.” Another teacher reported that it’s good for the kids because then they’re hearing it again and they see how it all connects, how it’s supposed to. I mean, in a perfect world, that’s how it would be. You know, everything that always – but I mean, she does a great job with that. And I think the activities the kids really enjoy. So it puts a fun spin on that.

While there is clearly a great deal of appreciation for the work of the art specialist, there was some fuzziness about how to connect the arts to the classroom curriculum.

Limited Time for Arts in Classrooms and Coordination with Specialist

While the third grade teachers I interviewed professed strong support for the arts, they said they did not have enough time to use them extensively in the classroom. One third grade
teacher said,

I think that Robertson, as a school…value[s] the arts in education. And I think people try to integrate it in the classroom, and certainly I think when it comes to the testing years, you find that that slips away some. And I mean, I know, like we’ve said, I don’t do it nearly as much as I’d like to, as far as building models and things like that because the prep time and then the amount of time for them to do it and the cleanup time, you’re like, “Gosh, we don’t have time to do it.” That’s what it feels like. But I think we all value it in that, you know, nobody wants to take away art and say, “OK. We don’t have time for art. They really can only have it once a month because we need to be doing more instruction.” You know, I think that, you know, we value that piece and that it’s not all just about content, you know, that fine arts are also an important part of education.

Another teacher later in the interview agreed, saying, “I wish we could do more of it…I wish we had more time for it because there’s so many cool things we could do, but there’s just no time.”

When I asked the third grade teachers how they coordinate with the art specialist, they responded that in previous years they had given the specialist their yearly scope in science and social studies, as well as a guide of projected topics. However, now, as one teacher reported,

[I]t’s just been [on] a very informal basis. You know, like picking them up, like, “Hey, yeah, we finished butterflies, or we’re going to be…doing ancient civilizations this time.” Or [the art specialist] will ask, “Hey, when are you doing ancient Egypt?” And just very informal in passing. I guess there was a base there last year, just our basic scope and sequence, and now it’s just informal.

Another teacher said that their nine week goals were posted, “so she can always refer to those.”

While the classroom teachers have become more “informal” in communicating with the art specialist, the specialist, as mentioned above, did not report this change as negative.

Conclusions

Robertson Elementary School, once labeled one of the lowest performing schools in Adams District, made a remarkable turnaround with respect to test scores. They accomplished this through a close attention to data, increased resources from the district, and a focus by classroom teachers on strategies to raise test scores, such as test-wiseness strategies. It was somewhat surprising, then, that the arts remained largely unaffected by the SOL testing. The
visual art specialist, using or modifying the District Curriculum Standards for visual art from the
district, focused the bulk of her instruction on improving students’ skills in art. Several of the
lessons were connected with tested content, but there was little direct instruction on tested topics.
The relationship to the tested content was generally implicit. This differs from Crosby
Elementary, and was more similar to Porter and Lakewood.

The classroom teachers I interviewed gave strong support for maintaining the arts at the
school. Music and visual art practiced in their classrooms was directly related to tested content,
unlike the more implicit connections in the art classrooms. Interactive notebooks, songs about
SOL topics, and computer drawing of maps and the butterfly cycle used the arts as a means to
teach tested content. While the teachers were uniformly positive towards the visual art and music
programs at the school, they felt they did not have enough time to use the arts to the extent they
would have liked. This lack of time for the arts was a result of spending the bulk of instructional
time teaching tested disciplines. They also felt they lacked time for coordination with arts
specialists.

For the most part, the specialists had not sacrificed time for testing, except close to test
administration and other isolated circumstances. However, the specialists did report that it was
difficult to find time to meet with classroom teachers to discuss possible connections that could
be made between the arts and tested areas, even though this was an expectation of the
administration. The art specialist felt that something was “missing” and more could be done to
link visual art and the tested areas. While expressing overall satisfaction with his situation, the
music specialist expressed frustration that some teachers did not respect the power of the arts to
help children in the tested areas. Furthermore, the music specialist believed that some teachers
thought of music as “babysitting time” while the classroom teachers did “the real planning.” This
marginalization of the arts had begun to be addressed through meetings and increased communication with teachers.
Chapter 7

Lakewood: A Veteran

History, Description, and Neighborhood

Lakewood Elementary School was tucked away in a neighborhood filled with unique glass-sided homes designed by an architecture professor several decades ago. The neighborhood had recently become popular for artists and other young professionals. The surrounding areas that feed into Lakewood were more economically diverse, with federally subsidized housing, a 1400 unit apartment complex (the “biggest single area students live,” according to the principal), and a trailer park. The principal, in his fourth year at the school, noted it was unusual to have such a mixture of housing types feeding into one school. The neighborhood’s demographics had shifted over time. The principal said, “A higher percent of free and reduced lunch or come from disadvantage, as well as different ethnic and cultural groups started to become a larger part of the school.”

Lakewood Elementary itself was forty years old, though it has been expanded several times, most recently to include a new wing. This expansion has increased the population of the school from 200-300 students when it opened to a current population of 575 students. The single story school was divided into a main building, where most regular classrooms were located, and a separate, smaller, building. That smaller building housed the main arts classroom, as well as classrooms and facilities for the school’s emotionally disabled (ED) student population. There was a separate, portable classroom used by the part-time art therapist. Artwork – including still life fruit basket weavings and Fauvist paintings – could be seen throughout the school, but especially around the art classroom.

The school did not have an arts focus. Instead, the school has a math and science focus.
The principal said that math and science were “integrate[d] into all areas.” The school received additional resources in math and science, which allowed the school to have a science lab as well as science- and math-focused teachers. These two teachers “provide additional support, whether it’s supporting the teachers with helping them with instructional strategies or assessments, as well as doing model lessons, co-teaching, [and] teaching in the classroom.”

**Demographics**

Along with Crosby and Robertson, Lakewood Elementary School was designated as school-wide Title I. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch was 42 percent, nearly identical to Robertson Elementary. The school served primarily neighborhood children, except for students in the ED program. In 2004-05, its student population was 37 percent Black, followed by White at 25 percent, Hispanic at 20 percent, and Asian at 12 percent. The remaining students were classified as “Other.” Approximately 18 percent of students were labeled as limited-English proficient. The mobility rate at Lakewood was quite high – the principal said “it’s one of the higher in the district. In fact, one year we had the highest in the district.” According to the district, in 2004-05 the mobility rate was 21 percent, higher than the district rate of 15 percent. The prior year, the mobility rate was above 27 percent.

The principal reported that Robertson had “about 35 classroom teachers, and then additional resource teachers, special education teachers, English language teachers.” In total, there were 61 full-time equivalent teachers at the school. All teachers were considered highly qualified according to No Child Left Behind. The principal also said that about 40 percent of the teachers held advanced degrees. The principal reported that teacher turnover was “maybe 15 to 20 percent a year.” He cited relocation, retirement, and having children as some of the reasons teachers left the school.
SOL Scores, Remediation, and Reaction to SOL in Tested Areas

Like Robertson, Lakewood Elementary School scored poorly on the SOL tests in the late 1990s, and was given extra resources by the district. This was several years before the current principal came to be at Lakewood. The school continued to receive these additional resources. According the principal, these resources were used so that

our students all get two and a half hours more of learning time per week because we don’t have the early-release Mondays, like the other schools. That’s probably the single biggest factor. So our teachers, instead of working a seven-and-a-half hour contract, work eight hour contracts. That is the biggest single funding. I mean, you can imagine, you start funding staffs – so our teachers are all paid seven percent more than teachers across the district, but that’s a huge expenditure right there.

I asked the principal where the additional instructional minutes went in terms of particular subjects. He responded that the minutes were not specifically allocated, but allowed the school “to have a consistent schedule all five days of the week.” He added, “We’re going to make sure that our kids get specials every day of the week, that they’re going to go to art, music, or PE.” In addition, the school added full-day kindergarten (which had subsequently been expanded throughout most of the district) and adopted an instructional program that focuses on literacy. This program “focuses on kindergarten through second grade, professional development for those teachers, [and] embedded staff development.”

Lakewood increased their SOL scores significantly after being given these additional resources. The school was accredited by the state and met AYP in 2004-05, though the school did not meet AYP in 2003-04. According to the principal, two subgroups – African-Americans and economically disadvantaged students – “made the biggest growth” on the SOL tests. These were the two groups that did not meet AYP in 2003-04. He said this was “a pretty significant undertaking and accomplishment.”

When I asked the principal to what he attributed this recent success on the SOL testing,
as opposed to not making AYP in 2003-04, he responded:

Well, I mean, I wouldn’t underestimate hard work, but I think…we really focused on what the instructional strategies that we were using in the classroom to teach the intended curriculum, and really spent a lot of time looking at what were the best instructional strategies to teach the intended curriculum. And going back and forth between those two and having those. We also emphasized co-planning, collaborative planning, teams getting together, talking about what they were going to be teaching. So those would be the things that – there was no silver bullet, no magic one thing that I could put my finger on – but a lot of it I think had to do with really focusing on instructional strategies and allowing those instructional strategies to work with teaching the intended curriculum.

He also talked about the positive role of the district in providing attention and resources to Lakewood when the school did not make AYP:

[When you’re in a position where your scores didn’t look good, the…school system is paying attention to what you’re doing. They’re going to come out – and they’re very supportive. And I mean – I don’t want people to say it was necessarily a punitive thing, but there were a lot of people coming around, saying, “How can I help?” You know, we’ve got resources [and] people will come in and work with your staff. “You need money?” So the state scores go well beyond the walls of this school in what’s looked at.

Classroom teachers reported a significant influence from the SOL testing on the tested areas of the curriculum. A third grade teacher reported that curriculum maps tied to SOL standards drove her teaching – “So, for example, in September, we were supposed to cover 5.2A or whatever, and that’s done for each subject and for the entire year.” Another third grade teacher said that classroom assessments have been modified to look like SOL questions to help students “become more familiar with the test, so it doesn’t trip them.” The teacher in the emotionally disabled (ED) program showed me a particular pneumonic device, introduced by the principal, to help students on the test. At the front of her classroom there was a large sign with letters assigned to particular colors. It is shown below in Figure 7.1:
Each letter was associated with a word that ties into the decision-making process on a multiple-choice item. A handout described what each letter meant:

- **T** = Title (box it)
- **P** = Paragraphs (box and number them)
- **Q** = Questions (from the story or from your mind?)
- **DR** = Do Read (read each paragraph one at a time)
- **P** = Paraphrase (a few words about each paragraph)
- **A** = Answer the questions
- **C** = Check you answers

The ED teacher continued:

> [W]e’re hoping that those different colors really get it in their head. Because during the test, we turn it around so those letters aren’t showing, but hopefully they’ve got those colors where they remember, “Oh, I’ve got to do this step, and this step, and this step,” and each of them mean a different thing that you have to do.

In addition, the principal said that remediation was offered both to students who did not pass the SOL tests and students “who we believe would benefit” from remediation. These students, according to the principal, “are all invited – and I use the word ‘invited’ [as] in ‘strongly invited’ – to attend our after-school remediation program, which is a 12-week program that starts in
January.” To the principal, this was both “a reactive and proactive measure.” In addition to the SOL testing, the school participated in the district’s SOL-like assessment three times (out of the maximum four scheduled administrations). Teachers also used Developmental Reading Assessments (DRAs) and their own classroom assessments.

**Arts Program Description**

The principal described the role of the arts at Lakewood:

> Well, [the arts] certainly [are] a big part of our program. Every child here has art, music, or PE everyday, or at least one of those every day. It is something that we don’t see them as core curriculum, as far as science, social studies – but they are ways that we can enhance and support the core curriculum. They offer different modalities of learning...[A]nd the other thing I think about the art and music is that students – it’s a very sequential curriculum, [so] students who stay here for several years are able to experience a quite a robust curriculum experience.

The arts, then, served two primary purposes at the school. First, they supported the tested areas of the curriculum by presenting the material in “different modalities.” And second, students gained a strong grounding in art production through the district’s sequential art curriculum.

Lakewood employed one full-time visual arts specialist. Another specialist had additional certification as an art therapist and worked mostly with the emotionally disabled (ED) population. She was at the school 1.5 days per week. There were 1.5 FTE general music teachers, as well as itinerant band and strings teachers. Students in grades K-3 generally received 60 minutes per week of arts instruction, and students in grades 4-6 received 80 minutes of arts instruction every other week. However, according to the arts specialist, some classes in grades K-3 receive 80 minutes of instruction weekly so that classroom teachers “can have planning time with their own groups.” This policy was put into place by the principal. In a typical day, the full-time arts specialist teaches 3-4 classes in grades 1-6.

There were two classrooms used for the visual arts at Lakewood. All of my observations...
took place in the primary classroom used by the full-time art specialist. This art room had seating for about 20-25 students, a storage room, and a kiln room. This classroom is shown below in Figure 7.2:

**Figure 7.2: Primary Art Classroom at Lakewood**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art classroom</th>
<th>Art classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiln Room</td>
<td>Art supply room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was also a second classroom sometimes used by the part-time art specialist/art therapist, though she frequently did lessons in the rooms of classroom teachers. This second classroom, shown below in Figure 7.3, was a “portable” classroom without running water. Because of the
lack of water (necessary for many art projects) the art specialist/therapist had asked the principal to be assigned to a different classroom.

**Figure 7.3: Part-time Art Classroom at Lakewood**

The part-time art specialist/therapist taught all kindergarten classes and emotionally disabled classes. She was in her second year at Lakewood. The lessons with emotionally disabled students were in a small group – six to eight students – with an additional aide. They were less structured than regular art classes and were used as therapy in addition to building artistic skills.

The full-time art specialist had 40 years experience as an educator, the majority of that time in Adams District. She had been an art educator for approximately 25 years. She was in her fourth year at Lakewood Elementary, and had taught at a nearby elementary school for eight years prior to teaching at Lakewood. She was one of two art specialists in the district to be nationally board certified in elementary art. To become nationally board certified, she did a “year study” of her classroom practice, including self-evaluations, videotaping of lessons, and extensive written and photo documentation of her practice.

When I asked her to describe her philosophy of art education, the art specialist responded:

Well, I’m interested mainly in the students enjoying art, and having them feel good about their projects. And I want them to be working hard, but the outcome of the art has to be
good for them. They have to like what they’re doing…And they really enjoy having the art connect to what they’re doing in the classroom because it gives them more of a background into the subject, and they can see how art can cross countries and all aspects – they just learn so many new things by studying art.

This response is similar to the principal’s description of Lakewood’s art program, with its focus on connections with classroom curricula. There was also a strong emphasis on affective outcomes for students.

**Impact of SOL Testing on Visual Arts**

*Principal: Arts Integration and “Modalities”*

The principal reported no significant modifications to the visual arts taught by specialists due to the SOL testing, though “we make sure we’re aligned.” He gave several examples of this alignment between the arts and tested areas:

Well, they study ancient Rome in fifth grade, so giving the students that experience in our class, supporting us. And it’s part of the art curriculum…They need to have that type of experience in art, so she’s saying, “Well, why not do it with something that they’re going to relate to their social studies learning.” Probably the integration that occurs in the art and music, oftentimes is around social studies, I find. It seems like that’s the most common area I see integration.

He then broadened the idea of integrating the arts and tested areas beyond specific content to the concept of “modalities” of learning:

For example, I guess I’m picking on fifth grade here, but fifth grade last year, our fifth grade students and the music teacher did an Egyptian musical, which was great. [T]he thing I think that the arts does is that it gives that other modalities of learning and embedding that and helping students really understand it. Because, you know, most of what goes on in the classroom is going to be visual/auditory…I’ve read research that says at least 40 percent of the students are tactile/kinesthetic learners…[F]or example, when you talk about struggling learners, those oftentimes are the kids who, if we have them act it out or do it in a play, or create a sarcophagus, which is something that we do to reinforce some of – they study Ancient Egypt. In third grade, we study Mali, and they made masks and stuff, so it’s pretty fascinating stuff.

These statements by the principal reveal two particular ways in which the arts were influenced by testing at Lakewood. The first is that the art specialists were encouraged to integrate with
tested, classroom content. This is consistent with the findings of the other schools, and was a stated goal of the district’s visual arts program. Second, the arts at Lakewood were said to help reinforce tested concepts by presenting them in a different “modality.” Similar to the principal at Porter, who referenced different “learning styles,” there was a belief at Lakewood that some students need to be presented concepts in more than the traditional “visual/auditory” pedagogy. These “tactile/kinesthetic” learners, according to this belief, learn more effectively through non-traditional means, such as the arts. The arts, then, become relevant to learning in the tested areas by providing different and unique “modalities” or “learning styles” for students.

Art Specialist – Curriculum

The full-time visual arts specialist was influenced by the SOL testing through the District Curriculum Standards, and by requests by classroom teachers to integrate the visual arts with tested, classroom content. She strongly praised the district for its visual arts program:

“It’s great. I can remember – this district has a wonderful art program – and before I came to this district, I don’t think I was nearly as good a teacher as I am now because I didn’t do important things. I would do maybe more holiday-type art, or we’d do more crafts. There’s very little emphasis on crafts in this district. In our [District Curriculum Standards] in art, we cover architecture, we cover painting, the fibers, sculpture, pottery. And we can take all those areas, those major areas, and divide them into the little subjects that they have in their classroom.

The specialist drew a connection between the district’s District Curriculum Standards in visual art and the SOL testing, saying, “Our [District Curriculum Standards] follows their SOLs [in the classroom]. And we’re even given a timeline. And with the [classroom] teachers [who] are teaching the subjects, or that class, or that [classroom] unit, we have something to go along with it.”

On the other hand, later in the interview the art specialist reported that while there were connections made between the art and classroom curricula, there was no discussion as to how the
arts could help raise test scores. Nor was there a close connection between the district’s art curriculum and the SOL objectives:

I’ve never heard art even brought up for any of the testing. I don’t even think they would think that maybe art would be of any value to bring up a score. And mainly because we’re not given anything to work with that goes with the SOLs. We’re just given our [District Curriculum Standards] from [the district], which is much more vague. And we have so much flexibility with that. When we’re told to do a lesson, we can do it 18 different ways. Like we do crickets in second grade because of second graders study crickets. So I teach all the body parts they’ve already had, and we make these big crickets. And then you look at another art teacher’s work with the same lesson and it’s very different.

These responses are seemingly contradictory. It may be that while the District Curriculum Standards in visual art did follow the Standards of Learning in the classroom areas, providing a guideline for art topics, the visual art standards were too vague to actually “bring up a score” on the SOL tests.

The specialist tried to accommodate the requests of classroom teachers to link the visual arts with classroom lessons. Because classroom teachers often modified the scheduling of particular topics (such as moving a topic from the fall to the spring), the specialist said, “[S]o usually I approach a classroom teacher and say, ‘What are you doing now?’ Or, ‘Are you doing this yet?’ Or, ‘Let me know when you’re doing this.’ And I’ll ask them if they want anything special tied in because a lot of times, they have an idea that they would like to have their class do, and I try to do it for them.” A fifth-grade teacher agreed, saying, “I think that the art teacher does a really good job aligning [the arts and tested areas].” Overall, the specialist commented, “The teachers love what I do. The administration enjoys it, the parents comments on the art in the hall all the time.”

She estimated that “more than 50 percent” of her lessons “connected with [the classrooms’] District Curriculum Standards.” She found that
it’s easy to tie ours in with that because if they’re doing, say, something on Mexico, it’s very easy for me to do a mural, if I could do a mural, and make the mural tie in with Mexico or make the fibers tie in with Mexico. You can tailor your work to go along with their subject, and maybe just give a different lesson in that country.

The visual arts specialist reported the subjects most often integrated were with social studies and math. She cited lessons on tessellations with fourth grade and OpArt in sixth grade as examples of integration with math. In the lesson on OpArt, the students

had to line the paper, and had to cut in segments, and we have to often – anytime we’re folding a paper and finding the middle, and/or finding sections, we’re working with fractions. So yeah, we tie in math and I often let them know that this is math that you’re doing right now as you divide this paper into six different sections.

I observed eight lessons in grades 1-6 over the course of a week at Lakewood Elementary.

Because classes within the same grade were working on different projects, I was able to observe a wide array of lessons. A short description of each lesson is provided in Table 7.1 below:
Table 7.1: Observations of Visual Arts Lessons at Lakewood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Observed</th>
<th>Art Medium</th>
<th>Description of Lesson</th>
<th>Relationship to SOL Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>printmaking</td>
<td>Students etched leaf patterns into Styrofoam, and used them to make ink prints</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>collage</td>
<td>Students created Native American Kachina dolls out of paper</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>drawing</td>
<td>Students created Native American parfleche and hide out of paper</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>drawing</td>
<td>Students constructed Egyptian sarcophagi from cardboard and decorated them with symbols</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>painting</td>
<td>Students painted Chinese brush paintings</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>drawing</td>
<td>Students drew “gesture drawings”</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>drawing</td>
<td>Students created foil Greek and Roman coins</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>ceramics</td>
<td>Students worked on clay figurines that represented them</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six of the eight lessons I observed had some relationship to tested content, usually in social studies. This tested content was usually presented in an informal manner. Two integrated visual art lessons at Lakewood deserve mention: the third grade lesson on Egyptian sarcophagi and the second grade lesson on Native American Kachina dolls.

**Lesson Example #1**

The third grade lesson was scheduled for 60 minutes, but began 10 minutes late because the students had not arrived. It turned out that the class had a substitute teacher that day who did not realize the students were expected in art class. Students had been working on their Egyptian sarcophagi for two weeks, and this was their third class period for this specific project. The
sarcophagi were made of two pieces of white cardboard, with a wrapped “mummy” inside made from a toilet paper dowel and white cloth. The mummies were complete, and students were only going to work on finishing coloring their sarcophagi. Taped to the blackboard were examples of a sarcophagus drawing and a photograph of a mummy. Also, at the table was a handout of sarcophagus patterns. These are shown in Figure 7.4 below:

**Figure 7.4: Teacher Example and Student Handout for Sarcophagus Lesson**

The specialist asked the students if they were still working on Egypt in their classroom. Most of the students responded affirmatively, though a few said “no.” After spending a few minutes discussing the next project (Chinese brush paintings) and the previous project (clay face masks), she returned to the sarcophagi, asking “Why must the top be flat?” A student answered that if it was taped together, it would be difficult to draw on it. The specialist then told the students to “put some hieroglyphics” on their sarcophagi. She continued, “Egyptians believed in reincarnation, right? You can put ‘rest in peace’ or ‘see you later’ on your sarcophagus.” She then said, “The more decorations, the richer the person who died,” so the students should
students not to use only one color on their sarcophagus. That was “lazy and you won’t get an A” on the project. She then pointed to the photo of the sarcophagus on the board (see Figure 7.3), which had a great deal of detail. As the specialist walked around the room, she gave students suggestions on colors and designs, sometimes even taking a pen or marker and coloring a bit of the sarcophagus to show the student how it might look. She told one student to “outline the eyes, nose, and mouth” of the figure drawn on the sarcophagus “to make them stand out.” A few minutes later she informed the students she would be walking around with her gradebook. Some students could not quite fit their sarcophagus top on the bottom, so the specialist helped them re-tape it. Examples of student work are shown in Figure 7.5 below.

Figure 7.5: Examples of Student work for Sarcophagus Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student example #1</th>
<th>Student example #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

While I was only able to observe one class period of this multi-week project, it was clear that the
emphasis in the sarcophagus lesson was on artistic skill – such as using multiple colors and making sure the construction of the sarcophagus was sound. There were informal references to social studies content on Egypt. The specialist referenced reincarnation and the elaborate decoration of the sarcophagi. Some of the students also used Egyptian symbols and hieroglyphics on their sarcophagus. However, there was less direct instruction of tested content than at Crosby.

**Lesson Example #2**

In the second grade lesson, students created Kachina dolls of the Pueblo Indians. Before class, the specialist informed me that second grade students studied three Native American cultures: Pueblo, Sioux, and Eastern Woodlands. When the students arrived at the arts classroom, the specialist told them they would be creating kachina dolls of the Pueblo Indians. She went on to say that they would study the Pueblo Indians in their classroom after the Plains Indians, which they were currently studying. The specialist then began the lesson by showing an overhead of a sand painting of a Kachina doll (see Figure 7.6). She said the Kachina dolls were “like gods or spirits” to the Indians. The specialist showed a photo of Kachina dolls from a book to the students (see Figure 7.6).
She said to the students, “You can make it any way you want,” and then showed them different decorations for the paper Kachina. She read a description and history of Kachina dolls, and then said, “We’ll talk more about this when you get to these Indians in your class.” There will be “more history as we work.” She called the students over to one of the tables and demonstrated how to make the body of the doll, the two arms, and how to attach the “belt.” The students returned to their seats and began to create their doll. After a few minutes, the specialist asked for the students’ attention demonstrated how to curl strips of paper and create fringe for the garment. She also demonstrated to the students how to make the “shoes” for the Kachina dolls. The students work on putting together their Kachina dolls for the rest of the class period. Two examples of student work are shown below in Figure 7.7:
Much like the third grade lesson on Egyptian sarcophagi, the second grade Kachina doll lesson placed most of the focus on art production, with a few nods to classroom content – the Kachina dolls as part of Pueblo culture and the reference to Kachina dolls as representing “gods or spirits.” The influence of the SOL testing, then, was subtle and secondary to artistic production in the lessons I observed at Lakewood.

_Art Specialist – Time_

The principal reported that with the additional resources given to the school due to their low test scores, the amount of overall instructional time was increased and classroom teachers began meeting regularly in grade level teams. This classroom teacher planning time occurred during art, music, and PE classes, leading to “a little bit” of an increase in the time given to the arts. Thus, indirectly the SOL testing slightly increased the time given to the arts, as taught by the arts specialists, at Lakewood.

The art specialist confirmed that the SOL testing did not impact time given to the arts in her classroom. She said, “Now, I bet I lost, at the most, two classes last year because of testing.
They’ll usually test around me so that they won’t miss art.” The principal changed some scheduling for particular classes around the testing, but this did not result in students losing art time, according to the specialist. She also stated, “I think teachers want that. They want to have that break that art will give them, so they will work with the principal to get it and to help him show me where it goes. You know, I lose very little time.”

However, communication between the art specialist and classroom teachers was limited, as reported by the specialist:

[Classroom teachers] never come to me. Well, I’d say rarely, because they have. But normally, I go to them. I’m the one that wants to make the connection. I don’t think they think it’s, you know, it’s worth their time to come and give me 20 minutes and say what we’re doing. I’m the one that finds that out, and I think that might be for most art teachers. They go to the classroom teacher so they can tie in at the right time with the right subject and make it worthwhile for them. But then again, a few people do come and say, “Can you do this?” And usually it’s not about the SOLs. It’s usually about, “Can my kids make a piece of clay shaped like a hand for a little soap dish for a gift?” which I’ve gotten one time. You know, people will want certain things, but not usually SOLs that they care about.

She also reported she did not receive curriculum maps from classroom teachers, though “I should be getting one every month from every grade level.” Those she did receive, usually from first grade, were often “things like their field trip is scheduled, or their planning some party, or some activity, and it isn’t always important to me.” Though not mentioned by the art specialist, this lack of communication – like at Robertson and Porter – might have been due to the fact that classroom teachers did not attend art with their students because they were in grade level meetings.

Art Specialist – Materials

The principal and art specialist both agreed that materials have not been sacrificed due to the SOL testing. The principal credited Adams District for maintaining a high level of resources for the arts:
I don’t feel like I’ve had to make those hard decisions, and go, “Gosh, we can’t order, you know, that instrument that you want for your music classroom. I’m sorry, I know that yours is all broken down and you need to get a new one, but I’ve got to order this material for us.” I’ve been fortunate, and it may be, having worked in other areas besides [Adams District], I’ve got the feeling, and also just the firsthand knowledge, that perhaps schools are funded a little more robustly in [Adams District] than perhaps other areas of the district. So that’s just a perception and a perspective that I have.

The full time art specialist reported that she had not sacrificed any materials because of the SOL testing, though she characterized herself as a “thrifty” teacher who did not ask for much. She also said that the PTA had stepped in to provide resources that were not in the school’s budget, such as the stools in the art classroom used by students. The only problem related to resources for the arts was the portable classroom without running water used by the part-time art specialist/therapist.

Art Specialist – Staffing

There was no change in the staffing in the arts at Lakewood Elementary. The school consistently funded one full-time art specialist and one part-time art specialist or art therapist. This part-time position, according to the full-time art specialist, was usually filled by a different person from year to year.

Art Specialist – Staff Development

Professional development for the full-time art specialist was not limited because of the state testing pressures. She reported that the district paid for an art-related course yearly, and had recently taken courses on digital photography, painting, sculpture, and ceramics. The district also held non-arts related professional development on a variety of topics, such as technology. She said these professional development workshops were “always interesting, they’re always something new, and I’ve been in [the district] now many, many years, and I still want to go to them because we’re always going to find something that we haven’t done before.”
The art specialist also attended school staff development meetings around test scores, though she did not find these useful to her. She said that test scores were “a big part of the faculty meetings, and as I say, most of the teachers here are classroom teachers that need this, and the specialists that are here – they see it, they don’t really use it.”

*Art Specialist – Classroom Assessment*

There was no impact from the state testing on the evaluation of students by the art specialist. While the district had introduced formal, quarterly grading for students in art, and encouraged the use of rubrics, the specialist said she would “collect all the work, look through everything, put a grade in my grade book, but it might not be by going through any rubric. It’s just me looking and assessing it with what I think it should look like, or what they’re capable of doing.” Also, she said that though other specialists had their students “write something about what they learned,” after having students do the same for a period of time, “the writing took so much time away from the art class” that she stopped. The specialist graded students on art achievement, effort, and behavior.

*Classroom Teachers*

*Subservient Arts Integration in the Classroom*

In my interviews with three regular classroom teachers, much of the art done in classrooms was related to SOL objectives (this was not the case with the ED teacher). One fifth grade teacher reported she used art in science, social studies, and language arts. She described a particular language arts project that incorporated art:

It’s easier to do language arts projects that are related to art, with like books, biographies. The children are actually getting ready to do a “bottle person.” They took a person from biography, took a bottle and they had to dress a person. One kid actually did Dr. Seuss. They’re working on them.

AND WOULD THEY WRITE SOMETHING?
Yeah, actually, they have to give you five facts about the person on a card. It’s an oral presentation, and a written presentation, and a visual presentation.

The teacher went on to say that students were graded solely on their language arts content knowledge, not the quality of the art. A third grade teacher said that students were able to create handmade books with digital photos; however, that was the only art project she had time to do with students.

There was support from the classroom teachers for the art students did in their visual arts class, and teachers generally held the arts in high regard. For example, I asked a fifth grade teacher the value she saw in the arts:

[The arts are] huge. They need to see it. I mean, it’s visual, they need to see it. In my classroom, I have lots and lots of visual learners, and if they can see it, it makes sense to them. Lecturing them or discussing is really hard for them because they don’t always understand. Their synapses aren’t working, it’s not going to the same places. It’s really important for me to be able to understand it and see it. A lot of times, especially in social studies and science, we talk about a concept and illustrate it.

To address these “visual learners,” she used interactive notebooks, like the third grade teachers at Robertson. For example, in one lesson she described, students would describe an Egyptian pharaoh on one side of the paper and on the other side draw a picture of a pharaoh.

SOL Negatively Influenced Time Devoted to Classroom Art

The principal did report that art done by classroom teachers might be limited because of the focus on the tested curriculum:

We haven’t added more, but I think we’ve really emphasized that you’ve got to make sure that if it says you’re going to have a 90 minutes or a two hours of language arts, you do. You know, that that is something that we honor and we don’t interrupt, and then we say we’re going to – so I think we haven’t reduced or anything too much. No. There is that issue, though, that comes up that the tested curriculum can be so emphasized that areas of the curriculum that aren’t tested on the SOL tests are going to not be experienced. And I was talking to a teacher, perhaps, just wanting to do like a class play, and she was concerned that, well, you know, I have so much to teach and so much. So that doesn’t mean she’s reduced her minutes of language arts because your class play
would be part of language arts, but she’s not doing the class play because she’s feeling like, “Oh my gosh, I’ve got to make sure that I’m getting my students every opportunity to learn these SOL objectives that are going to be tested,” and she wasn’t quite sure that she felt like that that class play, although it may well have reinforced an SOL objective, she just didn’t feel, you know – and years ago, she probably would have said, “Yeah, yeah, I’ll do that. That’s a great experience for the kids to have, you know, that some of your kids need that theatrical, dramatic,” and we talked about different modalities of learning, and different ways of expressing themselves, and now, you know, she may feel like, “Uh-uh, I’m not going to do that this year.”

The three classroom teachers I interviewed all said that testing cut into the amount of time devoted to the arts in their classrooms. One third grade teacher had a background as a craftsperson and miniaturist. If it were up to her, she said, “I would have the students drawing 40 minutes a day.” She believed that students gained pride from being able to draw representationally, activating “the more abstract parts of the brain” and opening “a side door to their visual and kinesthetic abilities.” However, due to the testing, there was “not much art and not enough and it is painful.” The SOL pressure “doesn’t give us opportunities to plan to include art.” Partly this was due to her belief that “it’s much more difficult to address the SOL objectives through art.” Another reason was that the teachers, throughout the year, were presented with new ways to raise test scores, and thus they have to continually “reinvent the wheel.” This meant there was not enough time left over to bring art into the classroom, aside from the project where students created handmade books and used digital photographs. “There is a certain amount of fear” due to the consequences associated with the testing, she said. As a result, “the bulk of the energy goes towards giving students the skills to pass the test.” Field trips had also been curtailed due to the pressures from the testing. The fifth grade teacher said, “I’d like to take them to [a regional museum]. But I don’t have enough time because we have to keep plodding through the SOLs.” The time allotted for field trips was only after SOL testing had taken place in May. However, the district will only provide buses for field trips until May 31st. “So,” the teacher said,
“if you want to take a field trip, we have to go somewhere locally we can walk.”

The fifth grade teacher, while reporting that she was not able to do “as much [art] as I would like,” was impressed with the amount of art at the school. “In coming to [Adams District], I was able to do more,” she said. “At my previous school, and it was a third grade class, which was an SOL class, I did even less. They didn’t have art as often as they do here.” This evidence supports the idea that while the arts done in the arts classroom had not been compromised, art in the classroom had been negatively influenced by the testing.

Art in the Emotionally Disabled Classroom

The classroom teacher in the ED program worked with the art specialist/therapist to provide numerous art-related activities for her fifth and sixth grade students. According to this teacher, the students in the ED classroom “do the same activities that are done in the general ed classroom, but with much more focus on their creativity. It’s not so much, ‘This line has to be perfectly straight and in that spot.’ It’s more flexible for them to put in a little bit more of their own self into it.” Though much of the art done in the ED classroom was related to the students’ therapy, there were examples of SOL-related art projects. One mentioned by the ED teacher was a project on cave drawings. She said, “That helped with both fifth and sixth grade because they both start off – sixth grade does a unit on ancient civilizations, where it comes into play in both areas. So that was really helpful for both.” Examples of these cave drawings are shown below in Figure 7.8.
In addition, because all ED students had individualized education plans (IEPs), they were eligible to take Virginia’s alternative to the SOL tests – the Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA) assessment. This was a new assessment when I spoke with the ED teacher, and she was beginning to think of ways to incorporate art into some art-talented students’ portfolios to represent their tested content knowledge:

For these students [with strong art skills], I’m going to, I’m really going to use – I’m going to push art. Because the two of them are very artistic, and so I’m really going to push that to see how it works. Last year was the first time that it was done in [the district], and this is the first year that it’s being spread – it started out as just math and language arts. And so this is going to be the first year where we can use it for social studies and science as well. So I’ll be very interested to see how it works. You know, as far as the pass/fail ratio for the students. But I have some high-level projects for art for them that I really want them to use, and then I’m going to submit it as their entries for this assessment.

The ED teacher went on to explain a specific project incorporating art for the VGLA:

I’m going to have them do a data disk for an explorer. And it will be – it’s a round circle, and it’ll be cut into different pie slice areas where they’ll have to give specific information about the explorer. Now, on the front cover is going to have to be a design of that explorer’s time period. So if it is Christopher Columbus, I want to see him coming from Spain, I want to see what Spain looked like at the time that he was coming from there. What kind of clothing did they wear? What did it look like him to come across the ocean? What did the ocean look like? You know, so it’s going to be very – a lot of detailed artwork.
AND THAT WILL ADDRESS PARTICULAR –

SOL objectives. Absolutely.

Unlike the non-special education classrooms, this ED classroom incorporated arts throughout their curriculum – in many ways it was similar to the arts-focused schools. Undoubtedly, this was due to the importance of art in students’ therapy, as well as the applicability of art to the students’ portfolios for the SOL-alternative VGLA. It should also be noted that the art therapist and ED classroom teacher planned and worked together to provide art to students, which was in many ways analogous to the situation at Crosby Elementary School.

The educationally disabled (ED) program offered a consistently high number of minutes in art for its students. ED students “have art 40 minutes twice a week. A lot more art than general ed,” reported the fifth/sixth grade ED teacher. She continued: “And it really makes a difference…[A]rt is not leaving our ED program at all because it is a huge part of their therapy and their success.” Also, as mentioned earlier, the ED teacher communicated regularly with the art specialist/therapist concerning particular art lessons, and the teacher was present during art lessons given by the specialist/therapist. The ED teacher reported, “Anytime they start a new project, I’m always talking to [the art specialist/therapist] about it. She has a curriculum map for fifth grade, and she can see what we’re doing, but then if we shift, then we’ll shift too…[W]hat she’s doing in art class supports our curriculum.”

Conclusions

In many ways, the situation at Lakewood Elementary School resembled that of Robertson Elementary School, the other non-arts-focused school. Both schools were demographically similar, with nearly identical free/reduced lunch rates. They also had a similar history of initially low test scores, precipitating an influx of resources from the district, and resulting in significant
score gains. More importantly, the influence from the SOL testing on the visual arts manifested itself in similarly subtle ways. The testing had only an indirect impact on the visual art curriculum, as taught by the full-time specialist. The district’s visual arts curriculum, tied to classroom content, allowed the specialist to link art lessons to tested areas. However, the lessons I observed, such as the Egyptian sarcophagi and Native American kachina dolls, presented tested content in an informal manner. Furthermore, while the art specialist saw the district’s visual art curriculum as very useful, she also thought that it was not as helpful in making direct connections to SOL tests. Still, it is clear that overall, the impact from the testing on visual art lessons was not negative.

Time devoted to the visual arts as taught by specialists actually increased slightly as a result of the additional instructional time paid for by the district. However, like at Porter and Robertson, classroom teachers did not attend art with their students, in order to have grade level meetings. This contributed to a situation where there was limited communication between the art specialist and classroom teachers. Also, classroom teachers, though required to provide the art specialist with copies of their curriculum maps, only did this sporadically. This made it more difficult for the specialist to tie her lessons in with classroom content. Materials, staffing, staff development, and classroom assessment were not significantly impacted by the testing. Both the principal and art specialist credited the district for providing ample resources for materials and staff development.

In contrast to the art teachers and similar to the classroom teachers at the other schools, the classroom teachers at Lakewood felt strong pressures from the state testing. These pressures limited the number of art-related lessons taught in their classrooms, as well as made it difficult to take students on field trips to cultural institutions. Where art was used, it was typically tied
strongly to tested content, such as the interactive notebook lesson. Classroom teachers expressed a desire to use more art in their classrooms, but were constrained by the amount of material needed to be covered for the SOL tests. The exception to this limiting of classroom art was in the ED classroom. There, the teacher worked closely with the part-time art specialist/therapist to provide art lessons for both tested-content related and therapeutic purposes.
Chapter 8

Discussion

Introduction

The previous four chapters described the influence of the Standards of Learning exams on the visual arts at four elementary schools in one Virginia district. Through interviews and observations over a week period at each school, I sought to address three primary questions. First, what impact did the state testing have on the visual arts in the areas of curriculum, time, resources, staffing, staff development, and classroom assessment, both at schools with an arts focus and those without, across a range of poverty levels? Second, were the responses of principals and teachers consistent? And third, if the responses were consistent, and the findings of the pilot study were supported in this dissertation, what policies and practices led to the maintenance of strong arts programs at these schools?

Summaries of School Findings

At Crosby, the arts were present throughout the school. There were serious concerns about not meeting AYP the previous year, leading to an emphasis on “teaching with urgency.” Even though no specific sanctions had been leveled against the school, the perception of serious consequences still had a significant effect on classroom teaching (Madaus, 1988). However, there was no movement away from the arts in order to focus on tested areas. The arts were the pride of the school. As the principal said, “It’s in our title.” Students received significantly more minutes in the visual arts than at other, non-arts-focused schools. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on collaboration between the visual art specialist and the classroom teacher in the art classroom. Because classroom teachers attended art with their students, it was possible to integrate the visual arts and tested content in sophisticated and co-equal ways.
Where the testing had a noticeable negative impact on art was in the classroom. More than 30 classroom teachers had been trained in arts integration by the regional arts organization. Teachers integrated regularly in the classroom, often using drama and dance. However, there was some evidence that long-term projects involving the arts had been curtailed because of the testing (e.g., the Native American lesson where students created a life-size canoe).

Porter Elementary School was going through a change of administration when I visited. The temporary principal, brought out of retirement, had experience as a principal of another arts-focused school in the district. This served to stabilize the program. Like Crosby, test scores were a large issue as the school had failed to make AYP in the prior year. Because of this, the principal had asked the visual art specialists to think of ways to integrate the arts and tested areas. Students received 80 minutes of weekly art instruction, much higher than the district minimum of 60 minutes weekly in grades 1-3 and 80 minutes every other week in grades 4-6. Similar to Crosby, a large percentage of teachers were trained in arts integration, and integrated the arts in their curriculum. The two main negative influences from the SOL testing were on teacher-specialist communication and remediation that cut into some students’ art instruction. Porter adopted the district policy that allows classroom teachers to have common planning time during art. This limited collaboration time between specialists and classroom teachers at the same time that the principal had asked the specialists to make more connections with tested areas. One art specialist reported that the responsibility to make connections between the arts and tested areas had fallen solely on her. After the introduction of a new principal at Porter in January, a new policy was instituted where some third and fourth grade students were being pulled from 20 minutes of their art instruction to receive remediation. This was the one case across the four schools of art instructional time being sacrificed to help raise test scores. This
was made possible because the school already offered more than the minimum number of minutes for art.

Unlike the arts-focused schools, Robertson had significantly raised its test scores through a commitment to “data-driven” instruction and an influx of resources from the district. The arts in the arts classroom, however, had not been sacrificed in this push towards data-driven instruction. Drawing from the district’s visual art curriculum, there were some indirect, implicit connections with tested content. However, the focus of the visual art specialist was improving students’ artistic skills.

While time in the arts was only sacrificed around test administration, time for collaboration with classroom teachers was limited. There was also a sense by the art and music specialists that something was “missing,” that the arts could be used more effectively to help students in the tested areas. However, according to the music specialist, some classroom teachers saw his class as “babysitting time” while they did the “real planning.” As a result, the music specialist initiated dialogue between the specialists and classroom teachers to heal this divide. Art as practiced by classroom teachers was directly connected with tested content, rather than having the arts be “co-equal.” Classroom teachers also wanted to offer more art to their students, but were constrained by time, most of which was devoted to teaching tested topics.

Similarly to Robertson, Lakewood Elementary School had significantly raised its test scores through a commitment to examining data and receiving resources from the district. The full-time art specialist, a 40 year veteran of teaching with 25 years of experience as an art specialist, praised the district’s visual art curriculum as strong, and relied on it for the bulk of her lessons. However, she also said that the connections between the arts and tested content in that curriculum often weren’t specific enough to help raise test scores. Her communication with the
administration and classroom teachers was sporadic, and teachers did not attend art with their students. Still, there was no significant negative impact from the testing on her practice. The part-time art specialist/therapist and ED teacher collaborated closely, and used art both to connect with tested areas and as therapy. The ability for students with IEPs to include artistic products for the SOL-alternative VGLA exam allowed the ED teacher to expand the use of art in her classroom.

Art used by classroom teachers was usually directly connected, and subordinate, to the tested areas. Several teachers also reported that time significantly constrained their use of art in the classroom. They all expressed support for the art specialist and the art program at Lakewood.

**Impact of SOL Testing on Visual Arts**

In a broad sense, the main findings of this dissertation are consistent with the findings of the pilot study (Kornhaber et al., forthcoming), especially with regard to the practices of visual art specialists. There was no substantial negative impact from the SOL testing on the visual arts curriculum, the time devoted to the visual arts as practiced by the specialists, staffing in the visual arts, staff or professional development opportunities, or classroom assessment. This was the case across arts-focused and non-arts focused schools, and a range of socio-economic status. However, *art in the classroom* did suffer because of the state testing in all schools, though classroom teachers in arts-focused schools integrated the arts more often, and in much more “co-equal” ways. Poverty status did not appear to influence classroom art in these four schools. However, classroom teachers faced increased stress in schools that had not met AYP (both arts-focused schools), and art specialists at Porter were asked by the principal to find more ways to connect with the tested curriculum.
Consistency of Principal-Teacher Responses

The responses of principals and teachers were generally consistent with one another, though the specialists and teachers were able to be much more specific in their responses about possible influences of the state testing. In the case of Porter Elementary School, specialist and teacher interviews and observations were crucial because the principal had only been at the school for a few months (and would leave shortly after my visit). And at Lakewood, while the principal talked generally about the visual art program at the school, the visual art specialist indicated that the principal rarely, if ever, visited her classroom. So even though the responses of Lakewood’s principal and visual art specialist were not at odds, the information gleaned from the interview with the specialist and observation of her lessons allowed for a much richer picture of the arts at that school.

Two principals – at Crosby and Lakewood – even reported possible negative influences from the SOL testing on classroom art. This was somewhat unexpected, given prior empirical work where principals were less likely to report negative influences from state policies (Stecher, Barron, Chun, & Ross, 1996). However, this is where face-to-face, case study research has a distinct advantage over survey research or remote qualitative research (e.g., phone interviews). Given that I was at each school for a week, talking and observing multiple teachers, and building rapport, it was less likely that a) principals would be able to shield me from any possible negative influences from the testing on the arts, and b) it was more likely that an elaborated set of views would emerge.

Explanations for lack of major testing impact on visual arts classrooms

Taken together, these four elementary schools paint two pictures: a relative lack of negative influence on arts specialists, and a decidedly negative influence on art in regular
classrooms. This was more the case for the non-arts-focused schools, though there was some negative influence on regular classrooms in one of the arts-focused schools (Crosby). I would suggest several explanations for the general finding that visual arts classrooms were largely not impacted by state testing: district support for the arts and poor-performing schools, the strength of the arts mission at arts-focused schools, the belief in the efficacy of the arts at non-arts-focused schools, and a willingness on the part of most visual arts specialists to connect their curriculum with tested content in an attempt to ensure the relevance of the arts at their schools.

**District support for the arts**

In Chapter 3, I described Adams District’s visual arts program as one that provided strong support for the arts. The district ensured that every elementary school student in grades 1-3 received at least 60 minutes weekly of visual art instruction, and 80 minutes every other week for students in grades 4-6. All students were taught by a certified visual art specialist. Every first year specialist attended a monthly meeting to receive mentoring. Also, the district’s visual arts instructional specialist said that a strong group of community members would meet any threat to the arts in the district.

In addition to the stability of the visual arts in Adams District, there was an emphasis in the visual arts District Curriculum Standards on making connections between the arts and tested, classroom content (See Chapter 3 for more detail on these standards). As the district’s visual arts instructional specialist put it, “There are definite connections, and they are consciously drawn.” However, she emphasized that she was “adamant that we don’t compromise any one discipline in the instructional plan, so that each gets its due in terms of what art teachers are doing. We don’t want them doing social studies-related – I’ll say projects that don’t have the intrinsic value in art education.” Thus, there is a clear recognition of the danger of creating a situation where
“subservient” integration overwhelms any significant art content.

By my count, a little more than half of the lessons included in the visual arts scope and sequence were connected to classroom content, most often in social studies and science. According to specialists who had worked in other districts, this focus on integrating or connecting the arts and tested areas was unusual. Most specialists said that the district’s visual arts curriculum related directly to SOL concepts. According to one specialist at Crosby, “For new [art specialists]…they took every SOL and did a lesson to show each one, so that they don’t even really need to look at the SOL [standards in the tested areas] because everything – all these lessons they give you are covered by the SOLs.” However, there was one dissenting voice – the full-time specialist at Lakewood reported that the district’s visual art curriculum was too vague to connect directly with SOL concepts. The frequency of integration observed in this study, and the willingness of visual art specialists to integrate, is described in more detail below in the section titled, “Specialists and Integration.”

Arts mission

There was some uncertainty, when this dissertation began, how schools with an arts focus would respond to state testing. If, as testing theory predicts, untested areas of the curriculum receive less instruction and fewer resources in order to focus on tested areas, then one might predict that schools with an arts focus would be thrown into turmoil. Under this assumption, the disproportionate amount of time and resources devoted to the arts would be at odds with a culture of testing and accountability, perhaps leading to a crisis of identity. The other possibility, hinted at by the pilot study, would be that the strong mission and commitment to the arts at arts-focused schools would allow the arts to survive in a hostile climate.

This dissertation provides support for the second argument. Both Crosby and Porter
maintained a strong mission to provide a high quantity and quality of arts instruction, in the art room and the classroom. Both schools continued to send large numbers of teachers to the regional arts organization to receive training in arts integration. And the district supported this affiliation with consistent resources for over a decade.

This maintenance of mission was noteworthy especially because both arts-focused schools had not met AYP in the previous year. The strong pressure to raise test scores was clear at these schools. In Crosby’s case, there was an added pressure from the local media. When, in 2005, the school feared that it had not made AYP (later, a number of coding errors were discovered, and the school eventually met AYP), the principal sent a letter home to parents expressing support for the school’s arts focus, regardless of whether it met AYP goals. This letter was eventually given to a local reporter, who visited the school and wrote a positive profile for the newspaper. Another reporter at the newspaper, an education writer and strong supporter of test-based accountability, wrote an article in response that was critical of the principal’s stance towards testing. This caused consternation at the district office, though eventually the education reporter spoke with the principal and a balanced portrayal of the school was written. The principal said that all feedback she received from the community, parents, and even former students was positive.

As the principal described the situation, “What was going on that time was I didn’t know where we were, and we felt real strongly that we were unhappy with this test. We still feel that way here, that we shouldn’t be judged on this one slice of what we do.” When I asked her later if the district had asked her to cut art because of the school’s test scores, she replied, “Not yet [laughs]. Maybe. But it still won’t be OK here…They’re not going to tell us to cut art, I don’t think, time-wise. I don’t think they’ll tell us to change much of anything because I think we have
really good instruction here, and we’re a little baffled why we aren’t getting test results.” The principal had even requested an instructional audit from the district. She was confident about her school’s performance when the auditor came to the school: “I think they’re going to be very surprised at the amount of stellar teaching they’re going to see.”

The strength of the arts mission was also reflected in the statements of the principals, specialists, and classroom teachers about the power of arts integration for improving students’ learning, and even to raise test scores. Crosby’s principal, when asked to describe the school’s arts philosophy, said, “[O]ur philosophy is that the arts is a way to express learning, and is a tool for learning. It’s integral to kids learning here, and to our teachers’ way of teaching.” A third grade teacher at Crosby also saw the benefits of the arts:

I’m…really excited about the arts integration piece. It’s sort of become like a new passion for me, and a new focus, just because of what I’m seeing from my kids, and just the level of conversation, and the level of understanding. It’s just, it’s really an exciting thing. And I think, I actually do think it’s going to be reflected in the scores in my class. I hope it is.

The classroom teachers at Crosby and Porter were more likely to use the arts in their classroom than teachers at Robertson and Lakewood, and their descriptions of their use of integration presented a picture of “co-equal” arts integration.

An arts specialist at Crosby noticed a difference between the arts done at her school versus others in the district. When I asked her whether she used lessons developed by the district, she said,

I don’t use all of them. But, see, you have to understand also that our school has a very different mentality when it comes to arts with other schools. Like, a lot of the other schools, they don’t integrate their arts with their classrooms, and they just kind of do their own art lesson. Teachers do their own thing. And so some of their lessons tend to be kind of crafty – like, it’s Halloween, let’s make pumpkins. That kind of stuff. So not to say that the new lessons are all like that, but some of them tend to lean towards that side, so I don’t always follow all of them.
There is an assertion here that the arts as practiced at an arts-focused school were fundamentally different than at other schools, especially in the area of arts integration. While this study found roughly equal amounts of integrated lessons at each school, art in the visual arts classrooms in the arts-focused schools was often more sophisticated than at non-arts-focused schools (e.g., the Virginia landforms lesson).

At Porter, there were similar references to the arts-focused mission of the school, particularly when it came to resources. One visual art specialist said, “I feel lucky to be at this school. Because of the arts focus, I know that if we’re an arts focused school, I need to have the resources I need to maintain that. So I do feel lucky by having that kind of safety net.” And the music and movement specialist reported that, even though the school’s arts-focused status did not confer extra funding for materials from the district, she had not been constrained in any way from purchasing what she needed.

Belief in efficacy of the arts at non-arts-focused schools

While the non-arts-focused schools obviously did not have a stated mission to provide a high level of arts education, the administration and faculties at Robertson and Lakewood professed strong support for the arts. This is even more remarkable given that both schools had recently been among the lowest scoring schools in the district on the SOL exams, a situation where one might expect the arts to be sacrificed (or made “subservient” to the tested areas) in order to raise test scores. It might be counter-argued that the low scores precipitated intervention from the district, which provided substantial resources, and thus allowed the arts to be maintained. However, additional resources were not specifically earmarked for the arts, yet Robertson spent funds to purchase a set of keyboards for the music program.

When discussing the arts, principals and classroom teachers at Robertson and Lakewood
mentioned both the intrinsic values in the arts and the ways in which the arts could support the tested areas. Often, there was mention of how the arts helped to present tested content in a different “modality.” For example, the principal of Lakewood said the arts “offer different modalities of learning.” A fifth grade teacher at Lakewood mentioned she had “lots and lots of visual learners,” so the arts were valuable in presenting information in this way.

What explains this strong support for the arts from schools without an arts focus? First, it is clear that Adams District was strongly supportive of the arts, which may have created an institutional culture in which support for the arts within schools was high. Second, the rapid rise in test scores at Lakewood and Porter could have lessened any need to sacrifice the arts. And third, it is clear from the statements from these principals and classroom teachers that they believed that learning in the arts is compatible with learning in the tested areas. The arts, as long as they were addressing some tested content, could contribute to helping students learn tested material, either through the concepts of “learning styles,” “modalities,” or multiple intelligences theory. Thus, the tension that one would expect between tested areas and the arts was lessened in the arts classroom, though not in the classroom, where the arts had been made “subservient” to the tested areas, or sacrificed altogether.

Specialists and Integration

Most art specialists I interviewed and observed were quite willing to integrate the arts with tested, classroom content. This was surprising given the skepticism towards arts integration in the art education field. Notably, Bresler (1995) characterized most arts integration currently in schools as “subservient.” Clearly, the promotion of integrated or connected arts lessons promoted by both Adams District and the regional arts organization impacted the frequency of arts integration in the arts classroom. Sixteen of the 23 lessons (70 percent) I observed in the four
elementary schools were connected or integrated with tested content. The two subjects most often integrated were with social studies and science, though several lessons also had writing components.

Arts integration, as practiced by visual art specialists in this study, was either “co-equal” with tested areas or, more commonly, privileged the development of artistic skills and knowledge over tested, classroom content. Examples of co-equal lessons included the Virginia landforms lesson at Crosby and the cardinal paintings and poetry lesson at Porter. Lessons that privileged the arts above tested content were numerous, such as the butterfly stitching lesson at Robertson or the animal pinch pot lesson at Crosby. This finding was in stark contrast to Stake, Bresler, and Mabry (1991), who found that most arts integration they observed was of the “subservient” variety (e.g., “50 Nifty States in Song”). However, this difference can be explained – the examples from this study came from the arts classroom, while the findings from Stake, Bresler, and Mabry (1992) described lessons in academic classrooms. Still, it should come as comfort to art education advocates that art as practiced in the art classroom, as observed in this study, was not “subservient” to tested areas of the curriculum. Furthermore, the privileging of arts content under a high-stakes system is important to note, given testing theory predictions that arts would be negatively influenced.

*Elementary Schools vs. Middle and High Schools*

It needs to be mentioned that elementary schools in Adams District may be influenced in different ways than middle schools or high schools. Evidence of this came from the District Visual Art Specialist:

In the secondary program, there has been some negative impact [of the SOL testing on the arts]...[B]ecause those programs are elective, and because students who don’t succeed on their Standards of Learning tests must be remediated, they are forced into remediation programs, and that takes away from them that elective opportunity.
Therefore, enrollment in some of those programs, particularly in the middle schools, has dropped. And that’s where you may begin to see an impact. Now we’re trying to do everything we possibly can to reverse that, but it’s an uphill battle, and I have to be honest. So it’s an enrollment issue in terms of its impact.

She contrasted this negative evidence from middle schools and high schools with elementary schools, giving an example from a elementary school principals’ meeting she had attended:

Recently, I did go to the leadership team…of the administrators of the school system to ask them to support an increase in the number of elementary art positions. I wanted to move this forward. And there was a great deal of discourse at the table. And there were supporters and those who didn’t support it. And one of the elementary principals said, “You can’t – first of all, you can’t cut back this program, and you need to make this program go forward because this elementary art program has its act together. And I can tell you right now that my third graders in the art classroom are focusing on I think it was butterflies. And they are learning more about butterflies through that art teacher than they are probably learning in their science unit. And it’s because of that art program that some children that can’t learn otherwise are learning what they need to learn in order to be successful.”

Thus, the focus on integration in the elementary visual art program generated support from principals. In middle and high schools, however, the arts are elective, and can more easily be negatively influenced by testing (through remediation, for example).

**Negative effects from testing**

*Art in the classroom*

While the overall findings from this dissertation suggest that visual art was not been significantly negatively impacted by the SOL testing in these four schools, a closer look reveals that testing policies had stronger effects on some actors than others. A reform often does not have a uniform impact on everyone, due to differences in local contexts, philosophies, and practices. This has been termed the “uneven penetration of reforms” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 55). For example, visual art specialists at these four elementary schools generally did not suffer loss of time related to the arts, many lessons were integrated yet still possessed strong art content, and little had changed with respect to staffing, staff development, assessment, or
resources. However, if one looks outside each school’s visual arts program, the influence of testing on the arts was much more apparent.

Classroom teachers I interviewed were universally complimentary towards the arts programs at their schools. Many also spoke of the power of the arts in helping children learn. These beliefs spanned across the arts-focused and non-arts-focused schools. However, classroom teachers were far more likely to use the arts in “subservient” ways to address tested content. Furthermore, field trips and projects involving the arts in many cases had been curtailed because teachers needed to cover tested topics in a more “efficient” manner. Integration of the arts in a “subservient” manner was most often seen at the two non-arts-focused schools. One example of a “subservient” arts integration lesson was the use of interactive notebooks, where students would draw a particular person, idea, or concept covered by the SOL testing on one side of the paper, and a written description on the other side. What made this a clear example of a “subservient” integrated lesson was the fact that students were assessed solely on their tested content knowledge, not their artistic competence. This particular type of lesson was observed at three of the four elementary schools, including both of the non-arts-focused schools.

There was also some evidence that projects involving the arts were being cut to focus on more direct instruction of tested topics. This was found in both arts-focused and non-arts-focused schools, though classroom teachers in arts-focused schools were more likely to continue to regularly integrate the arts in more “short-term” ways (i.e., within one or two lessons). For example, the fifth grade teacher at Crosby described how a quite involved project on Native Americans, culminating in the creation of a life-size canoe, had been cut because of testing pressures. Even though the project was related to the SOL in social studies, as the teacher put it, “You don’t have the luxury anymore to do that kind of thing. So it’s much more – I’ll tell you
what I think - in the big scheme of things, it has eliminated the ability for teachers to really collaborate on a grade level, and forced teachers to work more out of their classroom.” A third grade teacher at Lakewood, who had previous experience as a miniaturist and artist, also reported a cut in the art she was able to bring into the classroom because of the testing. She had only been able to have the students do one project using digital photography. These examples are more indicative of the loss in arts from testing reported in other studies (Center on Education Policy, 2006; von Zastrow, 2004).

*Pressures to integrate rose, while opportunities for collaboration were difficult*

Another finding of this dissertation is that communication between specialists and classroom teachers was problematic, especially at schools where classroom teachers no longer attended art with their students. This was a result of two policies. First, a district policy allowed schools to have classroom teachers have common planning time during the time their students were attending art. This was up to the principal’s discretion whether or not to adopt this policy. Of the four schools in this study, only Crosby mandated that classroom teachers attend art with their students. At the other three schools, teachers used this period of time for planning.

Second, in two cases – Porter and Robertson – the principal was encouraging the specialists to integrate more to address tested content. However, because of the problem in collaborating or communicating with classroom teachers, the integration planning fell solely on specialists, who were not tested content experts. Sometimes, this raised tensions between specialists and classroom teachers, with specialists feeling marginalized.

The district policy can be seen in both positive and negative lights. On the positive side, the District Fine Arts Coordinator argued that this policy solidified the place of the arts in schools. Common planning time guaranteed that the arts would take that period of time during
the day, and thus survive. The Coordinator also recognized that the district policy limited collaboration. In my interviews with specialists, this lack of communication was largely seen as negative. Several art (and music) specialists reported that it was difficult to meet with classroom teachers to discuss planning art lessons, even when those lessons would integrate or connect with classroom content. At Porter, an arts-focused school, teachers previously were required to sit in with students in art and music. When I visited the school, that was no longer the case. According to a third grade teacher, some teachers had petitioned the previous principal to have planning time instead of attending art with their students. This was granted, and as a result, “things are not as integrated as they used to be.” This particular teacher did work closely with the art and music teachers because of her commitment to arts integration, but other teachers at Porter did not communicate consistently with the visual art specialists.

One art specialist at Porter said that a “minority” of teachers at Porter made her feel as if she was “just there for their planning.” She only had limited interaction with classroom teachers, leading to some feelings of isolation. She also reported that teachers sometimes failed to inform her that their classroom lesson plans had changed, leading her to use integrated lessons that were not appropriate. Recently, the art specialist had spoken with a classroom teacher involved in the regional arts organization and “brainstorming together on how to kind of make the program at our school stronger, and she recognized that – this is, you know, a classroom teacher – she recognized that classroom teachers maybe need to come to art again, or more, because that’s where things were happening.”

Similarly, the music specialist at Robertson reported that it was difficult to find time to collaborate with teachers, and that some teachers did not see the potential for music to help students learn in the tested areas. As he put it,
Often times I do feel as though the fine arts are put on the backburner. And it could be because, perhaps, I’m not alerting them to how it is that I connect with what they do. So I don’t know. Again, I do feel as though sometimes the fine arts is the place for the kids to go to do something nice while everybody else is planning and coming up with the curriculum for them.

He had recently begun speaking with teachers and the administration to alert them to the idea that the fine arts was an area that could help connect with the tested areas of the curriculum.

Contrast this with the situation at Crosby, where classroom teachers and visual art specialists collaborated and taught together. One art specialist described a typical lesson:

It’s usually like a team teach. I mean it depends teacher to teacher, but most of my teachers, all the teachers usually stay, and most of the teachers, I talk to all of them about what we’re doing, and they use the same vocabulary in their classroom, and I use the vocabulary that they use in their classroom so it’s repeating. And sometimes I may teach part of a lesson and the teacher might teach another part of the lesson. So it goes back and forth.

The importance of collaboration was also discussed by one of the arts integration resource teachers at Crosby. When I asked her if she worked with other classroom teachers to make sure that their integrated lessons were “co-equal,” she said,

I do. I do. And that’s probably where my focus really is because they really know their content. You know, their science, their social studies, and they aren’t always aware of the national standards or the state or the [Adams District] standards for art. So educating them has been a big process. And we’re still getting there, you know? We’re certainly not there yet, but we are on our way, with that just becoming a part of everybody’s teaching. And that’s a challenge because most people don’t have a background in that…I think it’s great that, how at our school, the teachers take art with their students. So, gosh, that makes a big difference. I mean, I sat back as an observer the first year and just took art with my kids, and now I work with the art teacher to make sure that it’s integrated. But just to be a student is such a great opportunity.

The positive impact from classroom teachers’ and arts specialists’ collaborating was clear in this study. The strongest “co-equal” integration took place at Crosby, and required strong collaboration. It was also clear, however, that unless strong norms and policies within schools exist to promote communication and co-planning (like at Crosby), two things happened. First,
without strong collaboration, integration in arts classrooms only superficially connected the arts with classroom content. While this was not negative for the arts per se, it did not accomplish the goals of integration. Second, a lack of collaboration led to classroom art that was “subservient” to the tested areas. At Crosby, where there was negative influence from the testing on classroom art, there was still a strong understanding of “co-equal” integration that classroom teachers used in their lessons. At the non-arts-schools, art in the regular classroom was nearly always “subservient” to the tested areas.

Occasional loss of time for the arts

It should also be noted that though most specialists reported no loss of time devoted to the arts, some loss did occur. A few specialists said they sacrificed a couple of art classes around the time of SOL administration in May. However, some also cited field trips and other school-wide activities as taking away even more arts time than the testing. At Porter, subsequent to my visit in December 2005, I heard reports from an arts specialist and classroom teacher that third and fourth grade students needing remediation were being pulled from 20 minutes of art. This policy had been put in place by the new principal, who had replaced the interim principal I had interviewed. Because students at Porter received more than the minimum number of minutes for art required by Adams District, this school policy did not violate the district’s required instruction for art. However, it was an instance of a direct, negative influence from the SOL testing on the arts. It should also be noted that at Lakewood, where additional district resources were used to lengthen the school day, there was a small increase in time scheduled for the arts

Theoretical Implications

Testing policy theory holds that higher stakes brings about a focus on areas that will be tested, and movement away from areas that are untested (Linn, 2000; Madaus & Clarke, 2001).
Given that the No Child Left Behind Act and Virginia’s SOL assessments do not test students in art, I expected to find in these four elementary schools some evidence that the arts were being sacrificed or modified to focus on preparing students for the SOL tests. Three of the four schools – Crosby, Porter, and Robertson – were designated as school-wide Title I, and poverty rate is associated with increased test-prep activities and narrowing of the curriculum (Lomax, West, Harmon, Viator, & Madaus, 1995; Moon, Callahan, & Tomlinson, 2003). Two schools – Crosby and Porter – failed to make AYP the previous year, and it might be expected that curricular narrowing would take place because of this.

What emerged from this study, however, was both confirming and disconfirming evidence for testing policy theory, depending on where in the school one looked. The bulk of the data collection for this dissertation took place in and around art classrooms and visual art specialists. The story there was one of consistent time and resources in the arts, a strong district curriculum that emphasized making connections with classroom content without compromising artistic production or knowledge, and limited involvement in school-wide discussions around test scores. There were differences between arts specialists in arts-focused schools and those in non-arts-focused schools. Specialists at Crosby and Porter were more likely to collaborate with classroom teachers and use more sophisticated forms of integration. But all specialists relied on the district’s visual arts curriculum for the bulk of their lessons, giving a general sameness to the lessons I observed across the four schools. So if one were to look solely at the visual arts programs at these four schools, one would conclude that the SOL testing had little impact, aside from the connections pushed by the district and occasional loss of time.

However, testing pressures on the arts were much more pronounced in regular classrooms. Here, the arts were more likely to be used in a “subservient” manner to support
learning in the tested areas, and there was evidence of a reduction in the number of arts-related activities, especially those embedded within long-term projects. Differences between arts-focused and non-arts-focused schools were more pronounced in classroom art. Classroom teachers in arts-focused schools, while facing similar pressures to raise scores, still integrated the arts regularly in their classrooms, though some art-related projects had been curtailed. Classroom teachers in the non-arts-focused schools, on the other hand, reduced the use of art in the classroom to activities solely promoting tested content.

These inter- and intra-school differences highlight the uneven impact of reforms on schools (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). While inter-school (McNeil, 2000), inter-district (Sipple, Killeen, & Monk, 2004), and inter-state (Clarke et al., 2003; Pedulla et al., 2003; von Zastrow, 2004) differences in reactions to testing have been noted in the literature, to my knowledge no study has described differential testing impact within individual schools. What might explain the differential impacts on art education in these schools as practiced by visual art specialists and classroom teachers, especially in the non-arts-focused schools? I would suggest three reasons: that high-stakes testing is a, but not the, driver of reform, the actions of the district’s arts office, and “relevance-seeking” behaviors by arts specialists.

First, similar to the findings of Firestone, Mayrowetz, and Fairman (1998) and Firestone et al. (2002), it appears that in these four schools, testing did not have a huge negative influence on the arts as testing opponents would predict. The arts in the arts classroom was largely unaffected, and the arts in the classroom did survive, though in altered form. This supports others who have argued that reforms have multiple, uneven effects on practice (Blank, Porter, & Smithson 2001; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Second, it is clear that strong district support played a major role in securing time and
resources for the arts, and provided a buffer against possible testing influence on the visual arts in the art classroom. Adams District was unusual in its longstanding support for the arts. The number of minutes guaranteed to elementary schools students – 60 minutes per week for grades 1-3, 80 minutes every other week for grades 4-6 – was an understandably proud accomplishment by the district’s arts office. By mandating that all students be taught by a certified visual art specialist, the district ensured that arts instruction was set apart from the rest of the curriculum. Despite this separateness, the district made sure to develop an art curriculum that emphasized making connections between the arts and tested areas, while still maintaining a discipline-based art education philosophy that focused on art production and skills.

Art in the classroom, however, was not protected or buffered by district policy. So while all classroom teachers I interviewed valued the arts, many of them, especially in non-arts-focused schools, had to either cut the number of arts-related activities in the classroom, or use the arts solely in service of the tested areas. These teachers were going to be judged on test results, even if only indirectly, and felt an obligation to help their students do well. It is this finding that most closely resembles the empirical literature and theories of testing policy.

Third, while this separateness between the arts and the rest of the school did guarantee instruction from an expert in an “arts-only” environment, it also in some cases isolated and marginalized specialists who were not seen as part of the core, tested curriculum. This was compounded by the policy, adopted by three of the four schools, to schedule common planning time for classroom teachers during art, music, and PE. Some specialists were frustrated by this lack of communication and collaboration, and occasionally they felt disrespected by classroom teachers who saw the arts as “babysitting time.” Furthermore, these specialists believed that the arts could be connected to, and help students learn in, the tested areas. They engaged in what I
term “relevance-seeking behaviors,” trying to help classroom teachers understand their possible contributions to student learning in the tested areas. Even though the arts specialists were, in many ways, buffered from negative impacts from the SOL testing, several specialists expressed concern that the arts might eventually be diminished due to the testing. Thus, they sought to make the arts relevant to the school through promoting these arts-classroom connections.

**Informing Policy**

The findings from this study can inform multiple policymaking audiences: national and state policymakers, districts hoping to maintain a strong arts education program, and departments of art education. National and state policymakers have put forth two statements about testing and the arts – that testing students and holding people accountable for those scores will lead to a stronger educational system, and that the arts have a place within the accountability and high-stakes testing movement (Huckabee, 2006; Paige, 2004). These policymakers should be somewhat encouraged by the findings of this study. High-stakes testing and arts education are not mutually exclusive, and strong arts education programs can be maintained. However, moving beyond arts-positive policy rhetoric to concrete ideas about how the arts can be maintained through specific policy actions is necessary. Some possible policies, in both the district and teacher-preparation spheres, are described below. These are designed to secure a place for “arts-for-arts sake” while also acknowledging the need for strong arts-specialist/classroom teacher integration and collaboration.

Districts seeking to maintain strong arts programs can look to the example of Adams District. Besides guaranteeing a high number of minutes for instruction in art and music and mandating that all students be taught by certified specialists, the district also provided extensive professional development and mentoring opportunities. Additionally, the district’s continuing
commitment to partnering with the regional arts organization and supporting a number of arts-focused schools within the district should be taken as evidence that high-stakes testing policies and devoted arts programs can co-exist.

However, in the process of increasing teacher collaboration through common classroom teacher planning time, districts can limit a different kind of collaboration – between classroom teachers and arts specialists. This occurred even in a district with a historically strong commitment to the arts, and was a conscious tradeoff to protect time for the arts. Including arts specialists in school-wide planning around testing may be difficult, given the responses of specialists in this study that such staff development was unhelpful for their own practice. This approach may “inoculate” the arts somewhat from testing pressures; however, limiting teacher-specialist collaboration contributes to the historically isolated position of the fine arts in schools. Having classroom teachers attend art with their students led to sophisticated and meaningful integration at Crosby because of the ability for co-teaching and collaboration. If classroom teachers do not attend art with their students, as was the case at the other three schools, policymakers should look for a middle ground between Crosby and the other schools. Perhaps schools could provide weekly or monthly planning time for specialists and classroom teachers to meet and collaborate around the arts, or at least ensure the minutes of planning meetings get to the arts specialists, as was true at Robertson.

This dissertation also suggests that art as practiced by certified visual art specialists is less negatively influenced by testing pressures than art as practiced by classroom teachers. However, only 43 percent of elementary schools offer students art taught by a certified specialist (Chapman, 2004). While these findings are preliminary, it may be beneficial for districts to move towards a instructional model where art is taught by certified specialists rather than classroom
Finally, there is the vexing issue of where the arts should stand within the testing and accountability movement. Should art education remain at the periphery, arguing that the “uniformity and predictability” of the standards movement is incompatible with the aims of art (Eisner, 2002, p. 4)? Or should art educators acknowledge, as Eisner (2002) said, that “to be left out is to be disregarded, and to be disregarded is no asset when it comes to competing for time and other resources to support one’s program” (p. 4)? This has implications both for school districts who wish to build or maintain a strong arts education program and departments of art education, where the vast majority of art teachers are trained. In this study, specialists at the four schools in this study grappled with the ensuring students a strong basis in art skills and knowledge while recognizing the need to connect what they did with tested areas of the curriculum. In a major sense, Adams District provided specialists with the tools to do both through their development of a curriculum that tried to balance the development of artistic skills and knowledge with these connections to the classroom curriculum. It may, in fact, be a reality that to preserve the arts in a high-stakes testing climate, some teaching in the arts must be directed with an eye towards the classroom curriculum. However, district policymakers can mitigate the temptation to make the arts “subservient” to tested areas by developing standards that balance the “arts-for-arts sake” with “making connections.”

Similarly, art education departments at universities may need to adjust their training for both art education majors and general education students to reflect state and national policies that emphasize testing and accountability in non-arts disciplines. Though requirements vary from state to state, students majoring in art education are expected to earn the bulk of their credits through art-specific courses, such as studio art, art history, and art criticism (Day, 1997).
Prospective art teachers are also usually required to pass a basic skills exam, such as PRAXIS (Sabol, 2004). A few states require some coursework in the social and philosophical foundations of education, psychological foundations of education, general curriculum theory, and teaching methodologies (DiBlasio, 1997; Galbraith, 1997). Art education majors are not expected to have a foundational knowledge in a non-art discipline, such as social studies or science. Similarly, general education majors are not expected to have foundational knowledge in the arts. However, more than half of elementary arts instruction is provided by classroom teachers, not arts specialists (Chapman, 2004b).

Art education programs, then, are out of step with the current policy environment, where the arts are expected to make connections with tested areas of the curriculum, and the bulk of art education in elementary schools is taught by classroom teachers. These programs have not engaged in the kinds of “relevance-seeking behaviors” that were evident in Adams District and the four elementary schools in this dissertation. This divide between programs preparing art educators and the current focus on testing and accountability was represented clearly by an elementary school principal interviewed for the pilot study. This principal taught a general education course at a local university that was well-attended by aspiring music teachers. She expressed to the students that, as music teachers, they would be expected to make connections with tested areas of the curriculum:

These are students who haven’t gotten out into the field yet. And they were like, “Well, we’re not going to do that if that doesn’t have anything to do with music.” And “Why should we do things that support content areas? What are the classroom teachers doing to support the music program?” And I just had to laugh, because I said, “You wait ’til you get out into the real world. Nobody cares about you as a music teacher. How well are these kids going to do on this test and what did you do to help them pass the test? If I have to choose between a test-wiseness session and music class, guess what’s going to be eliminated? Music class.” They were not happy with me at all.

Given this policy reality, I would suggest three possible courses of action for art education
programs to maintain its relevance. First, art education programs could require its students to take some coursework in non-arts disciplines, especially in social studies and science. In this dissertation, these were the most common tested areas to be integrated with the arts. Second, if non-arts coursework proves too onerous a requirement for art education majors, art education programs could offer specific courses on arts integration. These classes could be attended by both art education and general education majors. The focus would be on the types of co-equal arts integration favored by researchers and the regional arts organization from this study (Bresler, 1995). Arts integration classes with a focus on co-equal integration would serve two purposes – to make arts education in the arts classroom more relevant to tested areas of the curriculum, as well as to make art in the classroom less subservient to tested areas. Finally, given the fact that the majority of elementary arts education is taught by regular classroom teachers, it is important to offer a wide range of arts education courses to general education students. If the findings of this study are supported by additional research, then the brunt of the negative impact from testing on the arts is in the regular classroom. A strong arts education for the prospective classroom teacher may mitigate this negative testing impact on the arts.

**Looking Forward**

Given the findings from this study, one would expect that art in schools where art is provided by classroom teachers is more negatively influenced by testing than schools where art is provided by art specialists. The qualitative, case study nature of this dissertation does not allow for these broad generalizations about the impact of testing policies on the visual arts. However, I hope that this study can help to move the debate away from the zero-sum “testing versus arts” discussion towards more nuanced views of the impact of testing on untested areas of the curriculum. Because so much of the research on the impact of testing on the arts has been
quantitative and survey-based, we are left with gross quantitative indicators. Did time devoted to the arts go up or down? Are there fewer art teachers now because of testing? These are important questions, but they miss subtle effects, such as the differential impact on specialists and classroom teachers, or the loss of collaboration time. Future studies should examine districts and schools in states with high-stakes situations where art is provided solely by classroom teachers. They should also pay additional attention to how reforms affect particular actors within schools, not just across schools, districts, or states.
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Principal Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for being willing to speak with us today. The interview today is aimed at understanding how your school is responding to state and federal policies that require testing of students.

The interview itself is in four parts. The first part asks about the history of the school and its mission. The second asks about the school's student and teacher population. These two parts are very brief. Part III explores how your school may be responding to testing policies. Part IV asks about how the test results are used. Most of the questions call for you to just respond conversationally. A few ask you to respond by indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with a given statement.

In reports or presentations about this research, we will not to identify individual interviewees or particular schools. We will also carefully avoid using descriptions that would make you or your school identifiable. But just to make sure the information we collect is as accurate as possible, would it be alright with you to tape record this interview?

Before we start, do you have any questions for me?

Part I.
OK, let's start with some brief history and background.

1. First, could you tell me please when your school was started, as well as a general history of your school?

2. What motivated the founding of your school?

3. How would you describe your school's mission to a prospective parent or student?

4. Is your school a state or federal magnet program? Is it a charter school?

5. How would you describe the philosophy of the arts education your school provides?

6. Is there anything else I should have asked or that would be helpful for me to know about the history or mission of your school?

Part II:
TRANSITION: Alright, let's move on to the second part of the interview, which asks about the teachers and students.

7. Would you please tell me how many teachers work in your school?

8. About what percent of the teachers hold bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees?
9. Approximately what percent are certified in the instructional area that they teach?

10. How many students attend your school?

11. What grades does your school include?

12. What percent of students in your school are on free and reduced meals (FRM)?

13. What is the ethnic and racial breakdown of the student population in your school?  
   - About what % s of Asians, African Americans, Latino, Native Americans, White, Other?

14. On what basis or bases are students admitted into your school?  
   e.g., everyone who wants to is accepted, role of grades in admission

15. - Does your school/program serve primarily its local neighborhood?  
   If yes: How would you describe that neighborhood?  
   If no: How would you describe the neighborhoods from which your students come?

16. Are there other aspects of the teaching staff or student population that I should have asked about or that would help me to understand your school?

TRANSITION

Part III. In this section, we ask about your school's responses to your state test, in the areas of curriculum and assessment, instructional resources, and staffing and staff development.

17. In the subject areas that are tested by the state, in what, if any, ways has the curriculum been modified in response to the state testing program?

18. Again, in the subject areas that are tested, in what, if any, ways has curriculum been adapted to help students to understand the test's structure?  
   e.g., practice of short answer questions, practice of brief reading comprehension sections; fewer long projects

19. For the subjects that are tested, in what, if any, ways has classroom based assessment been modified in response to your state's test?

20. What are the consequences for students in your school who fail the state test?  
   e.g., summer school; retained in grade

21. Are students who fail the test removed from your program or school?

22. Now, in the arts, in what, if any, ways has the curriculum been modified?  
   e.g., we spend less time on those subjects now; we have increased our hands-on activities
in those subject areas.

23. Again, in the arts, in what, if any, ways, has the classroom based assessment been modified in response to your state's test?  
   e.g., we haven't modified it; we have introduced more multiple choice questions; we assess less frequently than we used to

24. The next question asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:  
   The changes that have been made in curriculum and assessment in response to the state testing program will improve students’ knowledge and skills in the academic subject areas.  
   Do you strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Would you briefly explain this response?

25. The next question also asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:  
   The changes that have been made in curriculum and assessment in response to the state testing program will help students to gain skills in the arts.  
   Do you strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Would you briefly explain this response?

TRANSITION:  
This section is about instructional resources, which is a bit more brief.

26. Could you help me to understand whether books or software that have been purchased in response to the state testing requirements?  
   - Would you please give some examples of the types of books or software?

27. Are there materials that have NOT been purchased as a response to the state testing requirements?  
   - Could you give some examples of such materials?

28. Would you please describe how class- or school schedules may have been modified in response to testing requirements?  
   - Could you give some examples of such modifications?  
   e.g., more time given to math, less to science classes

29. The next question asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:  
   The changes that have been made in the use of instructional resources in response to the state testing program will improve students’ knowledge and skills in the academic subject areas.  
   Do you strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Would you briefly explain this response?

30. The next question asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:
The changes that have been made in the use of instructional resources in response to the state testing program will help students to gain skills in the arts.

Do you strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Would you briefly explain this response?

TRANSITION:
Now we’re moving on to questions about staffing and staff development

31. In what, if any, ways has the staffing of your school/program been modified in response to the state testing program?
   e.g., have test prep people been hired?; have planned hires been put on hold?

32. Could you please describe any changes in the assignment of teachers to particular classrooms or grade levels that may have occurred in response to the testing program?

33. Could you please describe any changes in the area of professional development that your school has undertaken in response to the testing program in your state?
   e.g., in the past, no p.d. at all; in the past, no p.d. aimed at test improvement;

34. How much, if any, professional development is directly aimed at improving student’s test performance?
   [e.g., almost all of it; none of it]

35. What, if any, change in professional development has occurred for the arts teachers in response to the state testing program?

36. The next question asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:
   The changes that have been made in staffing and staff development in response to the state testing program will improve students’ knowledge and skills in the academic subject areas.
   Do you strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Would you briefly explain your response?

37. This question also asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:
   The changes that have been made in staffing and staff development in response to the state testing program will help students to gain skills in the arts.
   Do you strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Would you briefly explain your response?

38. Are there other things that I should have asked about how instructional resources, such as curriculum and assessment, instructional resources, or staffing and staff development, may have been modified in response to your state test?

39. Switching gears for a moment, although the Federal legislation, the No Child Left Behind
Act, is still fairly new, we are wondering if your school is adapting curriculum, instructional resources, staffing, professional development, or teaching practices in response to it?

IV. TRANSITION
We are now at the last part of the final section of the interview. This part concerns the use of test results.

40. Could you please walk me through what happens in your school when the state test results arrive there?
   - What does the school leadership do with the test results?
   - What do teachers do with the test results?

   e.g., do they review results together?

41. Could you give me some example of the ways that your test results have been useful in improving your school?

42. On the most recent test results that were released, how have the students in your program/school performed?
   - % proficient, % pass % need improvement % fail.
   - Or just percent pass and percent fail, if no further breakdown exists

43. How do these results compare to results for prior years?
   [higher, lower, or about the same]

   If there has been a big change in scores: To what do you attribute this change in results?

44. How have parents responded to your test results? [examples]

45. In what, if any, ways have the test results influenced recruitment of new teachers to your school?

47. How have test results influenced student enrollment in your school?

48. Besides the state-mandated test, what, if any, what other indicators do you use to assess the quality of the teaching and learning in your school?
   e.g., other standardized tests; "authentic assessments"; portfolios, grades, graduation rates, etc.

49. What do these other indicators reveal about the quality of teaching and learning in your school?
   e.g., Other standardized tests reveal x percent passing/failing/above the national norm…; authentic assessments reveal…; graduation rates reveal …; grades reveal…

50. To what extent have these other assessments been useful in improving teaching and learning
in your school?

51. Is there anything else about how the state test results are used that I should have asked about or that would help me to understand how the feedback from the test influences what happens at your school?

WRAP UP.

52. Is there anything else that I should have asked that would help me to understand how your school is responding to state/federal testing requirements?
APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE
Teacher Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for being willing to speak with me today. The interview today is aimed at understanding how you are responding as a teacher to state and federal policies that call for testing of students.

The interview is in 4 parts: The first asks about your history as an art teacher and your approach to teaching art. The second section asks about the art instruction in your school and how it may be influenced by testing policies. The last section asks about you draw on student test data. Most of the questions call for you to just respond conversationally. A few ask you to respond by indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with a given statement. Also, some questions refer to your experiences as an arts educator, while others ask about your perceptions of the entire school.

In reports or presentations about this research, we will identify individual interviewees or particular schools. We will also carefully avoid using descriptions that would make you or your school identifiable. But just to make sure the information we collect is as accurate as possible, would it be alright with you to tape record this interview?

Before we start, do you have any questions for me?

Part I.

OK, Let's start with a brief overview of your experiences as an art educator?

1. How long have you been an arts teacher?

2. What kind of certification or training have you received in arts education?
   What other certification, if any, do you have?

3. Is this the only school you teach in right now?

4. How long have you worked here at this school?

5. What grades do you teach?

6. How would you describe your philosophy or approach to arts education?
   e.g., discipline-based arts ed, integration, cultural studies, etc.

7. Is your philosophy or approach to arts education reflected here at the school?

8. Is there anything else I should have asked or that would be helpful for me to know about your history or prior experiences as an art educator?
9. Describe a typical day or week for you here at this school.

TRANSITION

Part II. In this section, we ask about your, as well as your school's, responses to the Virginia SOLs, in the areas of curriculum and assessment, instructional resources, and staffing and staff development.

10. Are you familiar with the arts SOL standards? If yes, ask if they influence their arts practice.

11. How has the school as a whole responded to the Virginia SOLs?
   a. changes in curriculum
   b. changes in classroom based assessment
   c. changes in staffing/hiring
   d. changes in professional development

12. In your work as an art teacher, in what, if any ways, has the art curriculum been modified in response to the state test?
   e.g., we spend less time on those subjects now; we have increased our hands-on activities in those subject areas.

13. Again, in the arts, in what, if any, ways, has the classroom based assessment been modified in response to your state's test?
   e.g., we haven't modified it; we have introduced more multiple choice questions; we assess less frequently than we used to

14. The next question asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:
   The changes that have been made in curriculum and assessment in response to the state testing program will help students to gain skills in the arts.
   Do you strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Would you briefly explain this response?

TRANSITION:
This section is about instructional resources: materials, use of time, which is a bit more brief.

15. Are there materials in the arts that have or have NOT been purchased as a response to the state testing requirements?
   - Could you give some examples of such materials?

16. Would you please describe how your class schedules may have been modified in response to testing requirements?
   - Could you give some examples of such modifications?
   e.g., more time given to math, less to science classes
17. The next question asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement: 

   *The changes that have been made in the use of instructional resources in response to the state testing program will help students to gain skills in the arts.*

   Do you  strongly disagree  disagree  agree  strongly agree

Would you briefly explain this response?

**TRANSITION:**

Now we’re moving on to questions about staffing and staff development

18. What, if any, change in professional development has occurred for the arts teachers in response to the state testing program?

19. This question asks you to rate the extent would you agree with the following statement:

   *The changes that have been made in staffing and staff development in response to the state testing program will help students to gain skills in the arts.*

   Do you  strongly disagree  disagree  agree  strongly agree

Would you briefly explain your response?

20. Are there other things that I should have asked about how instructional resources, such as curriculum and assessment, instructional resources, or staffing and staff development, may have been modified in response to your state test?

**IV. TRANSITION**

We are now at the last part of the final section of the interview. This part concerns the use of test results.

21. Could you please walk me through what happens in your school when the state test results arrive there?
   - What does the school leadership do with the test results?
   - What do teachers do with the test results?
     e.g., do they review results together?

22. Could you give me some examples of the ways that the test results have been useful in improving your classroom practice?

23. In what, if any, ways have the test results influenced recruitment of new arts teachers to your school?

24. How have test results influenced student enrollment in your arts classes?

25. Besides the state-mandated test, what, [if any, what] other indicators do you use to assess the quality of the teaching and learning in the arts?
   e.g., other standardized tests; "authentic assessments"; portfolios, grades, graduation
26. To what extent have these other assessments been useful in improving teaching and learning in the arts?

27. Is there anything else about how the state test results are used that I should have asked about or that would help me to understand how the feedback from the test influences what happens in the arts?

WRAP UP.
28. Is there anything else that I should have asked that would help me to understand how you are responding to state/federal testing requirements?
APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL
Observational Protocol (adapted from Creswell, 1998)

Date:

Location:

People Observed:

Length of Activity:

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<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
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District Visual Arts Specialist Interview Protocol

Background & Position

1. Could you tell me about your background in the visual arts and how you came to be in your position in [Adams District]?

2. What are your responsibilities as Visual Arts Specialist?

3. What is your philosophy or approach to arts education? Do you think that [Adams] reflects this approach?

4. What do you perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the [Adams] Visual Arts Program?

Visual Arts Standards

5. How were the [Adams District Curriculum Standards] for Visual Arts developed?

6. What, if any, influence did the SOLs in the tested areas have on the development of the [Adams District Curriculum Standards]?

7. How are the [Adams District Curriculum Standards] different from the Virginia Visual Arts SOLs? Why did you take a different approach?

Visual Arts and the SOLs

8. When the SOLs were introduced in Virginia, how did the visual arts department respond, if at all?

9. What influence, if any, do the SOL tests have on the visual arts curriculum in [Adams District]?

10. What influence, if any, do the SOL tests have on visual arts teachers in [Adams District]?

11. What influence, if any, do the SOL tests have on arts resources in [Adams District]?
N6 Coding Scheme

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JACOB J. MISHOOK

Education
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania (2002-present)
- Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Theory and Policy. Minor, Educational Psychology
- Received University Graduate Fellowship, 2002-03.
- Received Muller Graduate Fellowship, 2005-06

Stanford University, Stanford, CA. (1996-2000)
- BA in Sociology (concentration in Organization Studies) and English, June 2000.
- Honors, Interdisciplinary Honors Program in Education. Thesis: We’re not methodologists: How an inquiring school and its community value their data.

Research Experience
Department of Education Policy Studies, Penn State University
Researcher and Research Assistant (October 2002-present)

Center for Technology in Learning, SRI International, Menlo Park, CA
Educational Researcher (June 2000-May 2002)

Center for Research on the Context of Teaching, School of Education, Stanford University.
Research Assistant (October 1997-June 2000)

Language Learning and Policy, School of Education, Stanford University.
Research Assistant (June 1999-August 1999)

School of Education, Stanford University.
Research Assistant (April 1997-June 1997)

Selected Publications


Presentations:
Mishook, J. J. The impact of a high-stakes exam on arts-focused schools: The case in Virginia. Presented at the National Art Education Association Annual Convention, March 22-26 2006, Chicago, IL.