

aviso



The Magazine for Nova Scotia's Teaching Profession
La revue de la profession enseignante en Nouvelle-Écosse

Spring 2011



THE ARTS



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When you read through this season's copy of Aviso I believe you will not only picture the scenes in the following pages, but you will hear them. Hear the violins tuning up... A piano player is warming up with a few scales... And the distant sound of voices in harmony echoing through the hallway.

Growing up I was primarily focused on sports with music a close second. Like the writers in the following pages I still have fond memories of performing in school concerts when I was a student. I can remember performing under the lights in the Bel Ayr Elementary School concert having to stand on the stage and sing and dance. It was always tough to remember the words while scanning the crowd looking for my proud parents.

The 13 years I spent in schools gave me an appreciation for the skills fine arts brought to my students. As a physical education teacher I would always use music as a catalyst for movement, not only during the dance themes, but as part of our daily routine.

In a recent Aviso Editorial Content Team meeting with the NSTU's Professional Development Committee, I was pleased to hear a comment about Aviso from one of the members. As a teaching veteran, she often urges teachers to pick up a copy on a day when they are feeling particularly defeated. She says she has always looked to Aviso for its inspirational stories about teachers who are celebrating success stories. In this edition, I think it's particularly true. We learn about a successful program that aims to get students to find a balance between using social media and face-to-face interactions with peers. We take trips through history, to Kenya, and choir camp. As a former Physical Education teacher, I really enjoyed the story from a Annapolis Valley Regional School Board teacher who combines the strength of athleticism with the grace of dance.

I hope you find inspiration in these pages, and all the future pages of Aviso. As the new editor of Aviso, I invite your feedback. This is your magazine and with your help we can make it the best it can be. Please take note of a few changes we have made this time around. We've added a photo essay in both official languages and we are also trying out a cartoon. Let us know what you think.

In the meantime, sit back and enjoy the Spring Edition of Aviso.

Have a great summer.

Simon Wilkin

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Editor Simon Wilkin

Production Manager Mary Jane Webber
Clare MacIntyre

Secretary Lillian Pottie

Graphic Design Paul Hamer

Content Editorial Team Angèle d'Entremont
Terry Doucette
Dayna Enguehard
David Ritchie

Advisory Board Dan Stephenson
Angela Deagle
Leon Swinkels
Jill Burton
Tonia Cromwell
Jaylene Chase
Sue Hannem
Betty-Jean Aucoin

Advertising Sales Mary Jane Webber
(902) 479-4735

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TEL: 1-800-565-6788 or 902-477-5621

FAX: 902-477-3517

E-mail: aviso@nstu.ca

Look for aviso on the NSTU Web site:
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“So You Think You Can Dance!”

Where Fine Arts Meets Physical Education

Jim Bryan

“We are doing dance?!” gasp the new students as I explain the course outline. Some stare with horrified looks, while others respond with a curious anticipation. Snapshots in their minds turn to middle school or elementary physical education classes with folk dancing, line dancing or holding hands and square dancing.

“Relax, it’s not what you think,” I continue, knowing full well it is doing nothing to lessen their anxieties.

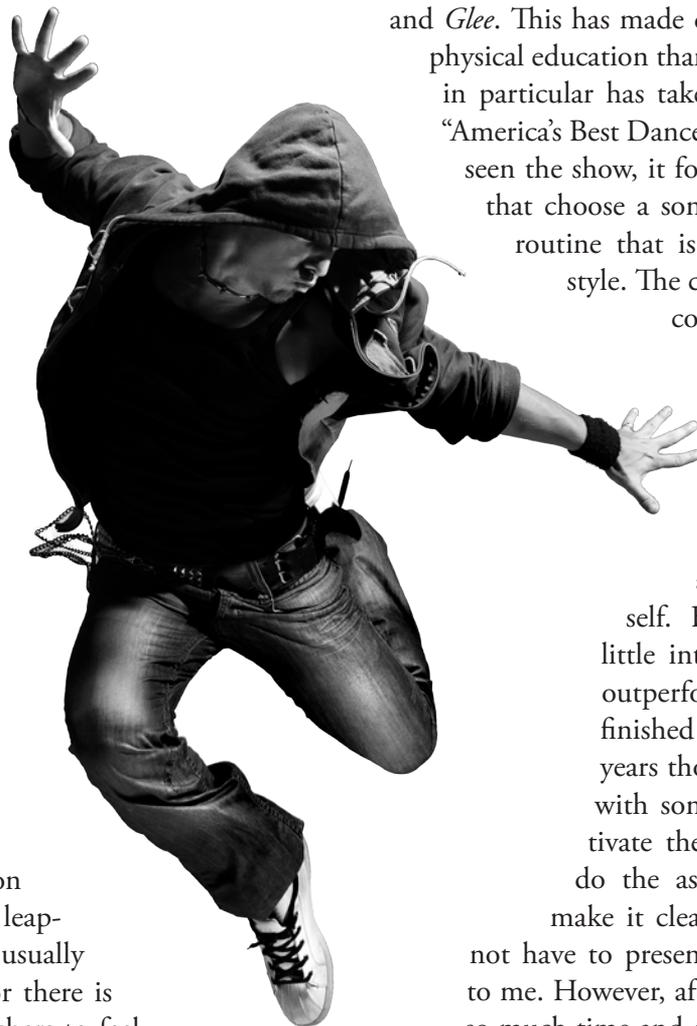
Dance is not a direct outcome in Physical Education 10, but it does satisfy the requirements for fitness and group leadership outcomes which is a necessity. I am especially interested and intrigued in what can be called “serendipitous outcomes.”

Dance is often ignored or avoided for a lot of reasons. Many male physical education teachers do not feel comfortable leaping into this world. Students usually have a negative view of dance or there is just not enough training for teachers to feel comfortable doing the unit. I have taken a different approach, with some exciting and satisfying results. I have noticed over time that the best dancers are usually the best athletes, and these athletes have seen the same traditional team sport units over and over again. It was time to see something different.

I started doing this unit in 1999 when dance was really not in the limelight at all. More recently though, we have numerous dance TV shows like, *So You Think You Can Dance*, *America’s Best Dance Crew*, *Step It Up and Dance*, *Dancing With the Stars*, *Live to Dance* and *Glee*. This has made dance not as taboo in physical education than in the past. My class in particular has taken on the persona of “America’s Best Dance Crew.” If you haven’t seen the show, it focuses on dance teams that choose a song and choreograph a routine that is in sync, “boy band” style. The class gets two weeks to

come up with a routine and present it to the school twice a year.

Getting the class to do it can really be a challenge, and is an essay in itself. Boys especially, have little interest but in the end outperform the girls in the finished product. Over the years though, I have come up with some novel ways to motivate the students to actually do the assignment. At first, I make it clear that the groups do not have to present to the school, only to me. However, after they have invested so much time and effort into it and it actually turns out great, they change their minds and they really want to present their dance. We videotape the dances so they can see themselves which is valuable in itself. Self-esteem is one benefit and another is it provides a teaching tool for me. They actually want to put the



Other staff members in the school have called the Phys Ed dances a “rite of passage.”

dances on YouTube if I let them! I can then show the videos to next year’s classes where they can see their older siblings and friends doing it and having a great time. This way, they see that everyone else has lived through it and it’s not a big deal.

The Serendipity of it all

I knew the dance unit would be great meeting fitness and leadership outcomes, but there were many other surprising outcomes that made mixing fine arts into physical education even more worth the time. Grade tens can have a lot of walls built around them. Dance breaks down these barriers of “I’m too cool for school,” and allows for a larger comfort zone in doing other related activities.

A similar example of this comes from my twelve-year-old daughter’s elementary school drama club. Each member of the club had to stand up while all the others clapped for them. Seems relatively simple, but this helped her in other situations. On the weekend following, she won a basketball MVP trophy at a tournament. She had to walk out in front of many people and loud applause. Her drama club experience prepared her for the focused attention and social awkwardness of the basketball award.

The Physical Education dances have had similar effects on my students. I notice the experience helps them “get over themselves” and try other risky activities. Other staff members in the school have called the dances a “rite of passage” through our school from Grade 10 to the higher grades.

Another benefit I have witnessed is in school climate and culture. Our school does not seem to have too many unique traditions that create a real buzz around the school. Each year, I am often approached by staff and students who ask when we are doing our dances. It is definitely something many look forward to seeing. Former students especially like to compare

in a friendly and competitive sort of way. I often hear them teasing each other with “ours was better than yours” or successive classes try to “one-up” the year before. At school dances, when “their song” gets played, they often grab their group members and perform their dance once again. Whenever I hear a song that was done by a group, my visions turn to their dance whether it was a dance from last year or ten years ago. When the students graduate and move on what will their memories of high school be? You can be sure whenever they hear “their song,” it will be difficult not to think back and remember their dance group.

A third serendipitous outcome would be a more serious and perhaps important one of deconstructing masculinity (Gard 2003). Using dance as a facilitating tool for gender relations is a key ally in physical education. When first tackling dance, I had heard a lot of comments about dance only being for girls. Over the years though, I am hearing less and less of that especially with all the TV shows depicting strong athletic males dancing along with the sheer competition of trying to out-perform their older brothers’ dances from the year before. The more males doing dance, the more normal it seems. Ultimately, breaking down the masculine mindset is healthy. Each year the “dance” element models very successful risk-taking in a safe environment. All too often students take the wrong risks. By giving a new face to dance, doors are opened to new opportunities to build self-esteem, and reinforce a positive school environment.

What’s Next in the Evolution

Most young people perceive the arts as irrelevant, according to Harland et al. (1995), and these negative attitudes could be due to inadequate opportunities offered in schools for arts experiences within the curriculum. This finding, however, also raises further ques-

I knew the dance unit would be great meeting fitness and leadership outcomes, but there were many surprising outcomes that made mixing fine arts into physical education worth the time.

tions surrounding concepts of “the arts” that may be held by young people. What started relatively small in our school has grown into a curriculum night of sorts. Fine art subjects of art, drama, music and dance have joined with physical education and film and video to coordinate a “Spring Showcase.” This night in mid-spring allows the students to celebrate their achievements and get their moment of applause as my daughter did in her drama club. These nights are particularly valuable when there are many cuts to education as it

demonstrates some of the added values of these subjects. The teachers involved in this night all hope to get more classes to join in the experience as a participant or as an observer. Who knows what outcomes we will satisfy!

Jim Bryan is a teacher and athletic director at Avon View High School, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.

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Hands-On Experience With Arts and Technology

Deborah McVeigh

Applied Arts at NSCC encompasses many program offerings such as Recording Arts, Photography and Graphic Design. In this column, Ian MacLeod (Acting Dean for School of Applied Arts and New Media), describes the entrance requirements, admission process and provides information to those who wish to explore Applied Arts at NSCC.



Photo © James Ingram, JIVE Photographic

When did the NSCC become involved in Applied Arts?

NSCC Ian: Since the inception of NSCC as a College on April 1, 1996 we have been offering Applied Arts programming.

What programs does the NSCC offer in Applied Arts?

NSCC Ian: The following Applied Arts programs are currently offered at NSCC:

- Applied Media & Communication Arts – a one year exploratory certificate program;
- Graphic Design – two-year diploma;
- Photography – two-year diploma;
- Screen Arts – two-year diploma;
- Radio and Television Arts – two-year diploma;
- Graphic and Print Production – two-year diploma;
- Recording Arts – one-year certificate;
- Deaf Studies – one-year certificate;
- Digital Animation – two-year diploma;
- Interactive and Motion Graphics – two-year diploma;
- Music Business – one-year certificate;
- Music Arts – two-year diploma;
- American Sign Language/English Interpretation – two-year diploma.

Are these programs unique to Nova Scotia?

NSCC Ian: Many of our programs are unique to NSCC, but similar programs are offered by other public and private institutions in the province.

What type of student is drawn to Applied Arts?

NSCC Ian: I think that the typical student drawn to any of our Applied Arts programs has a passion for the program they are applying to and an arts background. For those students who think they might want to go

into the Applied Arts area but are not sure, the **Applied Media & Communication Arts (AMCA)** program is a one-year exploratory program that exposes learners to all areas of Applied Arts allowing them to decide which area they might want to pursue.

How much “hands-on experience” is involved in these programs?

NSCC Ian: All of the programs are applied, hands-on experience. Students are doing and applying their knowledge throughout their program which enables them to thoroughly enjoy their learning.

Do students have to audition to gain entry into these programs?

NSCC Ian: There are some audition requirements for some programs – details are on the website.¹ Links for each program are provided on this page and on the program page it will be listed if an audition is required.

What are the requirements for entry into Graphic Design, Music Arts, etc.?

NSCC Ian: Each program has specific entrance requirements but all programs require a high school graduation diploma or equivalent. For example, Graphic Design requires a portfolio submission and Music Arts requires a letter of intent and an audition. More details regarding the entrance requirements and audition requirements for each of the Applied Arts programs can be found on our website.²

What is an entrance portfolio that is required in some programs?

NSCC Ian: An entrance portfolio is a series of requirements we ask prospective students to complete to demonstrate an aptitude for the program in which they are applying. Specific details for each program requiring an entrance portfolio are listed on the NSCC Web site. An example of entrance portfolio requirements can be viewed on the web site.³

¹ http://www.nsc.ca/Learning_Programs/Programs/ProgramListing.aspx?list=category&cat=D10

² http://www.nsc.ca/learning_programs/programs/ProgramListing.aspx?camp=&cat=D10&grp=&k=

³ http://www.nsc.ca/docs/GraphicDesign_PortfolioRequirements.pdf

The typical student drawn to any of our Applied Arts programs has a passion for the program they are applying to and an arts background.

Are work terms part of the programs? Is it a co-operative education work term?

NSCC Ian: Yes, all of the Applied Arts programs have an applied learning focus and component or work term. Students in a two-year diploma program could be eligible for co-op opportunities (which are a paid opportunity).

The college has courses such as accounting, communications, marketing etc. as part of the program. What does this add to the skill set of the graduating student?

NSCC Ian: These courses provide the skills and knowledge that students need to support their technical learning and be successful in their chosen fields.

Is there any overlap among programs?

NSCC Ian: There are synergies among the courses – for example, Recording Arts students may record a performance by Music Arts Students or Graphic Design students may get their work produced by Graphic and Print production students and so on.

Where would the students find employment?

NSCC Ian: Depending on their program, students would find work in their respective industries, and many start their careers as freelancers.

Pedagiggle *Richard Bennett*



All of the programs are applied, hands-on experience. Students are doing and applying their knowledge throughout their program which enables them to thoroughly enjoy their learning.

Are there any articulation agreements with universities for degree granting status?

NSCC Ian: Graduates with a Diploma in *American Sign Language, Radio & Television Arts* or *Screen Arts* may apply for admission with advanced standing in some university degree programs.

For more information about articulation agreements can be found on the NSCC web site.⁴

Other universities may accept NSCC credits on a case-by-case basis.

Students must meet the requirements for admission for transfer students described in the university's calendar.

How can an interested individual find out more about the Applied Arts programs at NSCC?

NSCC Ian: An interested individual can contact Admissions for information, get information from our print or Web calendar or sign up for an information session or test drive at the Waterfront campus (all programs except Digital Animation and Interactive Motions Graphics), the Truro campus (Digital Animation and Interactive Motions Graphics), the AVC campus (Applied Media & Communication Arts) or the Marconi campus (Graphic Design and AMCA).

Deborah McVeigh is a Faculty member at Marconi Campus, Nova Scotia Community College.

⁴ http://www.nsc.ca/admissions/articulation_agreements.asp
http://www.nsc.ca/docs/NSCC_Articulation_Guide.pdf

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Picture This:

Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board Celebrates Student Artists

Diane Lewis

*“Every child is an artist.
The problem is how to remain an artist
once we grow up.”*

Pablo Picasso



The finished product is nothing short of spectacular
Imagine Art Exhibition
Cape Breton University – 2006

For as long as anyone can remember the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board has been organizing board-wide art exhibitions. Cape Breton is fortunate to have a wide range of high-quality arts programs in the schools. Students learn to explore and express themselves through dance, music, drama and visual art from elementary school until high school. The annual art show has a long history in the community and showcases work from Grades 4 -12. Through this show the viewer can

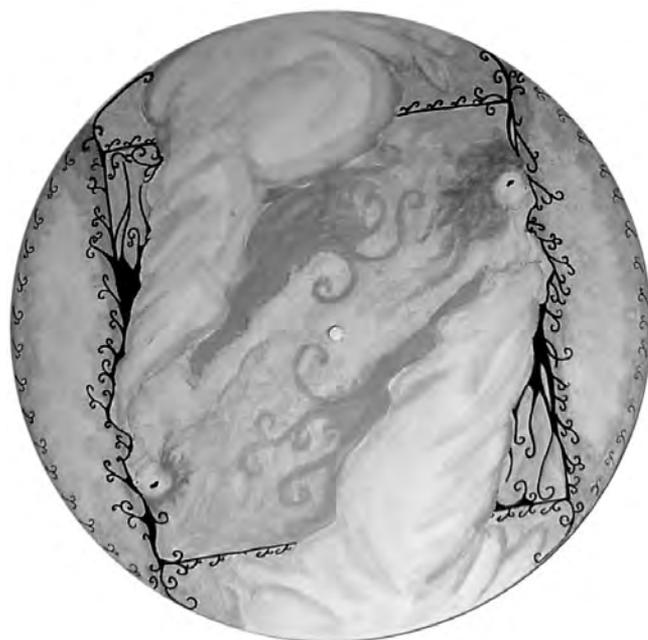
see the artistic development of a child in clay, paint, fabric, charcoal, coloured pencil and other unique materials.

In our early years, our first galleries were probably refrigerators that displayed finger paintings and heart-felt special-occasion poems. It is important to display art no matter how humble the background whether it be on store windows, the sides of buildings (with permission); even school bulletin boards work just fine. But there is no substitute for the professional gallery

experience. Matted, framed, signed, sealed and delivered, the pride on the parents' faces is worth the reams of black construction paper and miles of plastic tape it takes to display the art.

The shows have changed locations and formats over the years. They have been held in high school gymnasiums, the Cape Breton University Art Gallery and are now returning to the shopping mall. The shows used to be judged, with first, second and third place ribbons handed out. Judges even gave out scholarships to summer Art Camp at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick. There are no longer prizes assigned to works and now nothing is judged once it has been submitted. Currently, it is an exhibition of art chosen by the students' art teachers.

Throughout the school year, art teachers from Grades 4 -12 keep an eye out for pieces that should be in the show. We use a formula to determine the number of pieces a teacher should submit. The show opens in April, stays up during Education Week and through to the end of May. A gala opening is prepared with



High school student mandala painted on an old vinyl record

music from school bands, an artist guest speaker and refreshments. It is standing room only as hundreds of young people and their proud families filter past their works, with flashbulbs blazing!

The last few years, Art Gallery 101 at Cape Breton University has been hosting Senior High Advanced Art Exhibitions. The students involved in the show work with the gallery to come up with a theme and learn the entire behind-the-scenes process to produce the show.

The 2011 theme is "It's Natural." It is described as exploring the relationship between culture and nature, since our relationship with the environment has become increasingly important due to climate change.

Laura Schneider, the Curator of the Art Gallery hosts a Curating 101 workshop. It helps the students understand what an exhibition is, how it is organized, and how to write effective artists' statements. A gallery assistant gives the students a tutorial on how to prepare artwork for presentation. Finally, a catalogue is produced and an opening night is organized. The students are involved from inception to the final results. It is an invaluable experience for the budding artist.

Making art, researching the piece, writing artists' statement, working with galleries and artists helps students to hit the outcomes laid out in the Nova Scotia government Fine Art curriculum documents. It com-

ARTMAZING
2011
CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
STUDENT ART SHOW
AT THE
Mayflower Mall
TUESDAY APRIL 12TH - SATURDAY MAY 7TH
Student Artwork from Grades 4 - 12
Opening Night
7PM
Tuesday, April 12th
with guest speaker Onni Nordman
CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
MAYFLOWER MALL
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SEE Advanced Art Students Show at **CBU ART GALLERY**

Designed by Art Teacher Jeff Wilson
-Breton Education Centre

Through this show the viewer can see the artistic development of a child in clay, paint, fabric, charcoal, coloured pencil and other unique materials.

plements the Advanced Art courses offered to Nova Scotia High school students.

Jessica Hoffman Davis, in her 2008 book, “Why our Schools Need the Arts” builds a very compelling case for teaching the arts:

- It is specifically directed towards expressing and sharing human emotions;
- It makes children aware of, interested in and respectful of different ways of making sense of the world;
- It teaches students to answer questions making use information but also going beyond right and wrong answers;
- It develops skills of on-going self reflection and assessment;
- It involves students in metacognition-thinking about thinking;
- It connects human beings across time and space.

Aside from all of the reasons that educators infuse arts into their curriculum, she further states, the arts in education excite and engage students, awakening attitudes to learning that include passion and joy, and the discovery that “I care.”

The annual student art show is not the only art show in the community. Throughout the year, teachers organize in-school shows for events like Parent/Teacher Night, Education Week, African Heritage month, Mi’kmaq Heritage month, Remembrance Day and a wide range of other special events.

When we want to demonstrate what students are learn-

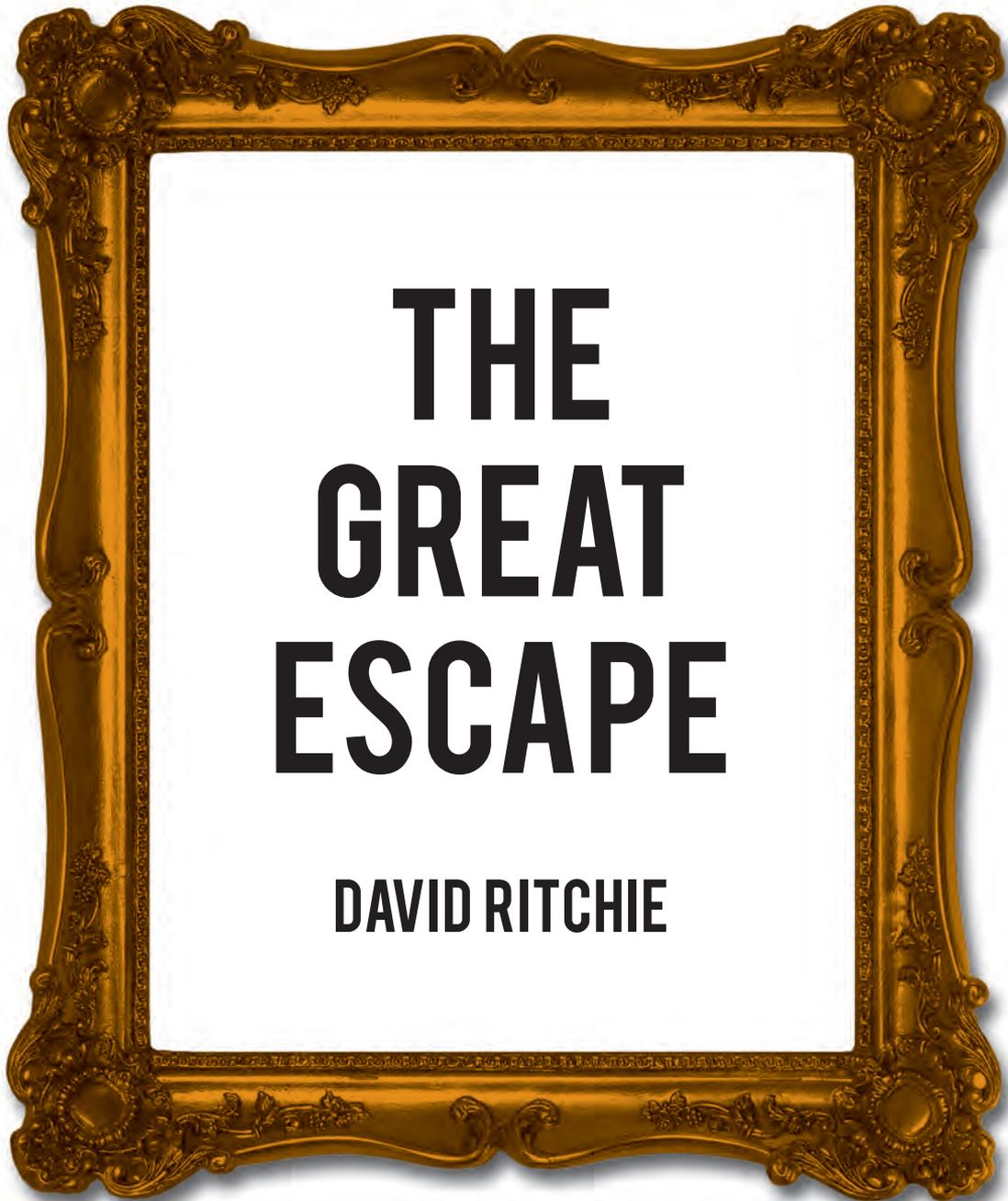
ing, classroom teachers often embrace the art-making experience. Preparing to publicly show their work creates a lot of excitement for the students. It is also a great opportunity to get them to put their best foot forward, slow down, be reflective, refine their work until it is the best it can be. It helps students to bump up their game.

If you are wondering if these things really have an impact on a child’s self esteem, I can only speak from personal experience. Here is my Grade Primary winning entry that has been framed and proudly displayed in my home for decades. Would I still be making and teaching art today if I didn’t have the recognition for my artistic abilities at a young age? All I know is I probably would not have kept this picture all these years unless it meant something to me.

Diane Lewis is a visual arts teacher at Greenfield Elementary School, Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board.



Diane Lewis – Grade Primary – Wee Willie Winky



THE ARTS

With the exercise of art comes a safe opportunity to take risks against the background of an intense emotional fire.

Imagine a waterfall deep in a shadowy sacred woods serenaded by a breeze high in the pine trees among the sparkling sunlit chatter of squirrels scored on sheets of music...

Imagine a recess rattle of colourful childhood marbles clattering and bumping each other around a scratched circle in the school yard captured in the choreographer's transcription...

Imagine a luminous riot of colours, lines, patterns, values and textures energizing actual forms and shapes synchronized on a canvas...

These are the kinds of great escapes into imagination that the arts can unlock. Each of these is a created joy. Each of these can become a participatory delight.

These are escapes from the everyday clatter and blather of living in an increasingly complex world. When we imagine or dream we are frequently transported to a quieter, gentler and more restorative comfortable place. Anyone who has experienced the recuperative Zen of creating in the arts knows that of which I speak. For those of you who do not make art yet, multiply the escape of a good book or a great movie by ten.

We have all watched children intuitively do this before they could read or write. They construct fantastic make-believe stories in unencumbered and unorganized fun. They totally lose themselves in magical unreserved enchanting wonders rendered in undisciplined line and colour on a receptive, forgiving and uncritical piece of paper. If we are lucky we can recall some of those marvellous moments from our own childhood when trees were dragons to ride, piles of leaves were castles to defend, and sunlight, bees and breeze were sounds shaping a tune for an uninhibited, primitive dance.

People at their best create. When we get to create we get to play. Some play so well they create breathtaking works of art that can be experienced by the musician, the actor, the dancer or the visually acute. All can be in-

spired either as the creator, the performer, the audience or the neophyte.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, I was extremely lucky growing up in a community and family that valued enthusiastic participation in the arts. While the arts did not play as significant a part of the curriculum as they do today, we had numerous key peripheral opportunities to sing, play instruments, draw, paint, sculpt, tromp the boards, speak, recite, and learn to dance both square and round. The extra and co-curricular opportunities were amazing when I look back. The community also promoted active participation and society lacked the ubiquitous triple time thieves of television, personal computers and mobile communication devices we have today. Back then they were merely delicious science fiction. Today they provide an addictive distraction of lonely, passive participation that sidelines us as weary, inactive and uninvolved watchers.

Our creative baby teeth were sharpened on the all-inclusive seasonally significant religious, cultural, community and school-inspired concerts that stretched our skills, reinforced our learning and softly tossed us into the thrilling world of public make-believe and applause. Some of us were lucky enough to have recitals and exhibitions that rewarded our efforts and reinforced the remarkable worth of dedication, practice and striving to achieve. While we did not recognize it at the time, we were building a whole treasury of personal skills, traits, temperaments and strengths.

These same personal skills, traits, temperaments and strengths become the foundations for the future art that is created. Also they allow a very sophisticated interpretation for the musicians, dancers or actors that perform the art. Interpretations of the arts can permit the participants, and often their audiences, to be transported to exceptional emotional, intellectual, and spiritual places inside the creation. Once inside the arts we can sometimes experience a magical truth that enlarges, clarifies and strengthens life. With the exercise

Once inside the arts we can sometimes experience a magical truth that enlarges, clarifies and strengthens life.

of art comes a safe opportunity to take risks against the background of an intense emotional fire. In the creation of art, the art maker can experiment, break all the rules, and take enormous risks without significant negative results.

Some believe that the cathartic properties of the freedoms, and paradoxically the structures, of the arts are absolutely necessary for many people to be able to deal with their particular circumstances and demons. There is no question that there is much impressive therapy being administered by trained professionals in those fields. For many of us whose personal circumstances and demons are much less significant in scale, the immediate escape into the arts can be a constructive cathartic experience. Beneficial emotional experiences within, by and through the arts can produce a feeling of being renewed emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. Thus the art's value or the sum is increased.

It is said in many situations that the sum of the parts can be greater than the whole. We can easily apply this concept to the fundamental qualities that participation in the arts provides in constructing the much better whole. It would be totally wrong to isolate the benefits of solid artistic participation to just the production, performance and enjoyment of the many diverse forms of art. The very elements that generate the foundation for artists are many of the self-same ones that translate into continued success in many unrelated life undertakings. The poise, confidence, positive self-image and flexibility translate into a job, relationships, parenting, mentoring and a desire for continuous education.

In schools we are wise enough to recognize that the opportunity to escape into the arts and develop a whole and balanced person is paramount to our success.

I was always surprised with the change in my Grade 10 developmental drama class after a few weeks. Through a series of well-constructed drama games and trust activities, the "click" would happen and the class

of ordinary high school students became a self-supporting group. The qualities that emerged were central to a well-balanced, unprejudiced caring and supportive community. As an actor and director I have seen that magic happen in the theatre, but I was always unprepared for it to happen in the classroom. Parallel experiences happen in stage bands, dance ensembles, choirs and integrated activities in the visual arts.

While undoubtedly careers in the arts may be consequences of early exposure to the arts, our primary goal is not to create professional musicians, dancers, visual artists and actors. Rather it is to give individuals the where-with-all to play, to learn and to grow with the arts as a safe and reasonable escape into the wonderful imaginary worlds that make life's bumpy and totally unpredictable roads just a little bit smoother and much more enjoyable. By developing confidence in and through the arts we also expand life choices for challenging hobbies, pastimes and enjoyments. Often we can explore without limitation.

I am able to sing with the Nova Scotia Symphony Chorus because of the wonderful education and training I received from choral and band music in school; from my years of piano lessons; from music with community choirs and church choirs; from music education at choir camps sponsored by the Nova Scotia Choral Federation; and from singing whenever I get the chance. I sometimes catch myself in a quiet moment of a challenging musical experience totally amazed and thankful that I have the opportunity to perform as an amateur at such a challenging level with such very talented professionals. It is not an overstatement to say I am who I am as a musician in part because of the exceptional opportunities choral singing has provided for me.

As a teacher I also recognize that participation both as creators or performers allow a whole spectrum of self-examination and development. We can vicariously experience a complete range of human existence.

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In schools we are wise enough to recognize that the opportunity to escape into the arts and develop a whole and balanced person is paramount to our success.

I recall hearing about many elementary, middle and senior high teachers who have successfully developed role-playing and classroom activities that incorporate research and drama to teach students to walk in someone else's shoes in a different time, place and culture. The transformation of self into created character and researched setting can truly develop a lasting compassion and understanding for history, culture and other points of view. I have seen this dramatic art concept used extremely effectively to solve individual conflicts at the personal school yard level.

A young bully and her victim were asked in a safe and controlled setting to reverse roles and try to replicate the harassment incident. Not surprisingly as the role playing unfolded, the bully as the recipient of the distress was the first to "get it." In the debriefing, both individuals learned how to possibly avoid further conflict and in the process acquire a modicum of empathy perhaps. I saw a similar moment of enlightenment when a senior high drama club created a performance work on the topic of teenage relationships and abusive behaviour. As a result of the honesty, first-hand knowledge and sensitivity, it met with an amazingly receptive response from both the peer and parent audience. We know that small children learn through play and we also can extrapolate that as we grow older, we continue to be profoundly affected by play; both as a relief in escaping and in the joy of learning. Play partnered with knowledge, growth and personal development is particularly powerful.

I remember the enjoyment in participating in teacher-lead in-services by fellow visual art and drama teachers. When we as adults learned to play, we learned. In play we gained knowledge to look more closely at ourselves and others than we might have without the freedom of the play.

I have tested this concept of self-examination in the classroom and have found that as a teacher I can often be far more effective pedagogically by putting myself on

the other side of the equation. From there, I can take the fresh view and manage to improve as a result. The process allows us to examine ourselves and make meaning that is personal, social, responsible and restorative. We aim for the very same outcomes in our art work.

As an art teacher I had a career-changing experience through an amazing supportive art leadership model developed in the Annapolis Valley under the auspices of Nancy Pinch-Worthylake. The team planned and organized all the different arts in-services in the district. It was a fantastic undertaking while it lasted. As a result of this visual arts leadership a district-wide Art Fair was developed which moved to a different school in a different part of the district each year. The Art Fair changed art and teachers at all levels through simple, dynamic and dramatic exposure to more than 2000 pieces of individual art each year. Teachers and students do make the best teachers for teachers.

My fellow art teachers at the time, Martha Wheaton and Bonnie Price from the Academy in Annapolis Royal continue that tradition. Even though they have retired, I still benefit from their expertise, experience and excitement about art when we escape for our annual watercolour painting adventure.

So chart a getaway or help your students get ready for their great escape by making opportunities for the arts to flourish and increase both inside and outside of schools. Art does not need to be restricted to the studio, the shop or the stage. It can be effectively experienced in every classroom, backyard and mind. I can only hope we all continue to work to establish and reinforce the foundations in the arts from which I and many others have profited. Have a "right some good" time celebrating the arts with and for our students. The key concealed in the cake is to make art education and art opportunity available to everyone.

David Ritchie is a visual arts teacher at Avon View School, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.

Berwick Choir Camp

An Annapolis Valley Musical Interlude Under the Hemlocks

Lois McVannel

On a hot afternoon in the Annapolis Valley, I walk back to my cabin after rehearsal and hear children laughing further on up the hill.

As I pass the pavilion where the youth choir is making beautiful music, the late afternoon sun is filtering through the tall hemlock forest. The young voices drift through the air. It is a perfect moment at Choir Camp.

This is not a dream; it's a happy memory from a real place. Berwick United Church Campground (a short drive from Wolfville) is an oasis of old Nova Scotia where congregations have gathered every summer for over 130 years. When church camp ends, the Nova Scotia Choral Federation moves in and fills the air with music. There are choir camps for children, teenagers and adults. Each group has a conductor and accompanist who rehearse with them morning, afternoon and evening for the duration of the camp. At the end of the week, there's a performance for family, friends and the general public.



The camp is the brainchild of the Nova Scotia Choral Federation and many volunteers. It has been hugely successful and of very high musical standards for over 25 years. Only the finest choral conductors from across Canada are invited to Berwick. And they rehearse intensely. Yes, intensely is the only word I can use to describe this process. Let me take you through a typical day in the junior Choir Camp.

Wake up is 7:15. At 8:00 it's morning warm-up and exercise with teacher/actor/talented musician Josh Noiles. Josh usually shows up in an outrageous costume to run the children through the paces. Then it's time for breakfast in the dining hall featuring fresh fruit, cereal, porridge, eggs and sausages. Camp Director Troy Nixon takes the opportunity to make announcements and today he tells us he'll be inspecting cabins and is accepting bribes (particularly chocolate). Then everyone heads back to the cabins to get ready for the morning.

Rehearsal begins at 9:00 and the music is glorious. The repertoire includes standard choral music by Bach, Beethoven and Schubert along with music by contemporary Canadian composers such as Stephen Hatfield, Lydia Adams, Mark Sirrett, Gary Ewer and Erica Phare. There are Nova Scotia folk songs, fast, rhythmic African songs, French lullabies, sea shanties, Korean folk melodies and even modern soundscapes requiring hissing, popping and thumping. There are many worlds visited at each rehearsal. Choristers learn how to pronounce lyrics in different languages. They learn proper breathing and singing techniques. They learn about history and music-lore from stories told by the conductor. They learn folk tales and cultural norms. They learn to share a deep experience and tread this holy musical ground together with peers they would never otherwise have connected with except through this blessed medium: choral music.

Rehearsals are held in the outdoor pavilion under a roof and on a floor but there are no walls and all-weather breezes and birdsong float through. There's no greater combination than music and fresh air.

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It is idyllic. It is magical. Choir camp is nourishing and enriching in an atmosphere of singing and fun that includes complete acceptance.

After 90 minutes of rehearsal there is a break for snack. After that, choristers reconvene in smaller groups for rehearsal, or to participate in craft and drama classes. After this engaging and absorbing work, everyone is hungry. At noon it's a short walk through the hemlock grove back to the dining hall for sandwiches, make-your-own salad and hot soup. Everyone sings at their table and then sits down together. After lunch it's more announcements from Troy. Sam's cabin gets extra points from his inspection because there were no clothes left on the floor and the cabin was decorated with streamers.

After a short rest, afternoon rehearsal begins at 1:30. Once that's over there's more fun. Wednesday is swimming afternoon and everyone gathers for the 20-minute bus ride to the lake. They work up a big appetite and they need it for a traditional outdoor camp supper of hotdogs and a corn roast.

None of these events would be possible without the camp "gofers" – hard-working teenagers who set and wait on tables, clean up, wash dishes, scrub toilets, mop floors, sing and perform for campers and, in general, hold the place together. Let me digress to introduce these intrepid, integral staff members. Gofers are usually former campers and often go on to become counselors. These young people are there for the summer job, of course, but mainly they are there because they love singing and camp and music. Frequently they continue into musical careers.

The gofers really come into their own during the evening activity, especially when it is Mystery Night – always a much-anticipated event. Somehow during their busy days, gofers, counsellors and any willing staff (Camp Nurse Camille, Camp Director Troy, Drama Man Josh) get together to stage an incident; a mystery for the campers to solve. Each cabin group of children has to ask questions, follow the trail and solve the mystery. On this night, Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep and doesn't know where to find them. The children find clumps of wool on a trail and follow the clues but it leads to a dead-end where nurse Camille tells them her

dilemma of the missing band-aids. It's very suspicious. Could there be a connection to the missing sheep?

By the end of the evening the mystery is solved. Everyone meets for snack and then it's bedtime. Inevitably on the first night of camp there are varied reactions from the children – excitedness, homesickness, laughter, trepidation and wide-eyed wonder at the newness of it all. But by the second night of camp, after five hours of rehearsal, fresh air and engaging activities, everyone is so exhausted that sleep arrives the moment their heads hit the pillow.

Children, youth and adults all experience the magic on their own terms. Adults will perhaps be surprised by the "rustic" quality of the village of multicoloured cottages in which they are housed. This is no five-star hotel. The food is hot and nourishing but not gourmet. The accommodations are bare board cabins. There is, however, hot water and electricity and because it can be wiltingly hot and humid in the Annapolis Valley in August, people often bring fans. Likewise, knowing that August nights sometime foretell the coming autumn, choristers are known to bring hot water bottles, feather duvets and beanbags to heat before bed. All are appropriate. The same goes for clothes. One needs to dress for hot or cold or wet. A good book for a read in the late afternoon heat under a tree with the birds and chipmunks and a cool breeze is bliss.

It is idyllic. It is magical. Choir camp is nourishing and enriching in an atmosphere of singing and fun that includes complete acceptance. Choir camp touches the hearts of everyone who participates or visits. There are many elements: the outdoors and fresh air, the sports, the physicality of singing, the camaraderie of working together, the making of new friends – and music is at the core. There is excellence in standards delivered by talented, energetic and devoted music staff. This is Berwick Choir Camp.

Lois McVannel is a teacher at LeMarchant-St. Thomas School, Halifax Regional School Board.

You Never Know Where Your Music Will Take You

Dayna Enguehard

A young girl travels 30 miles by tram to her violin lesson each Saturday morning. The cost of the lesson is one dollar which is a lot of money when you consider the family weekly income is only six dollars. Each night while she practises classical music on her violin, her father, a kitchen fiddler, places a Scottish piece of music on her stand. He plays it slowly and gets his little girl to join him. They play together until she gets the right rhythm. She then practices to perfect the piece while her father works in the coal mine.

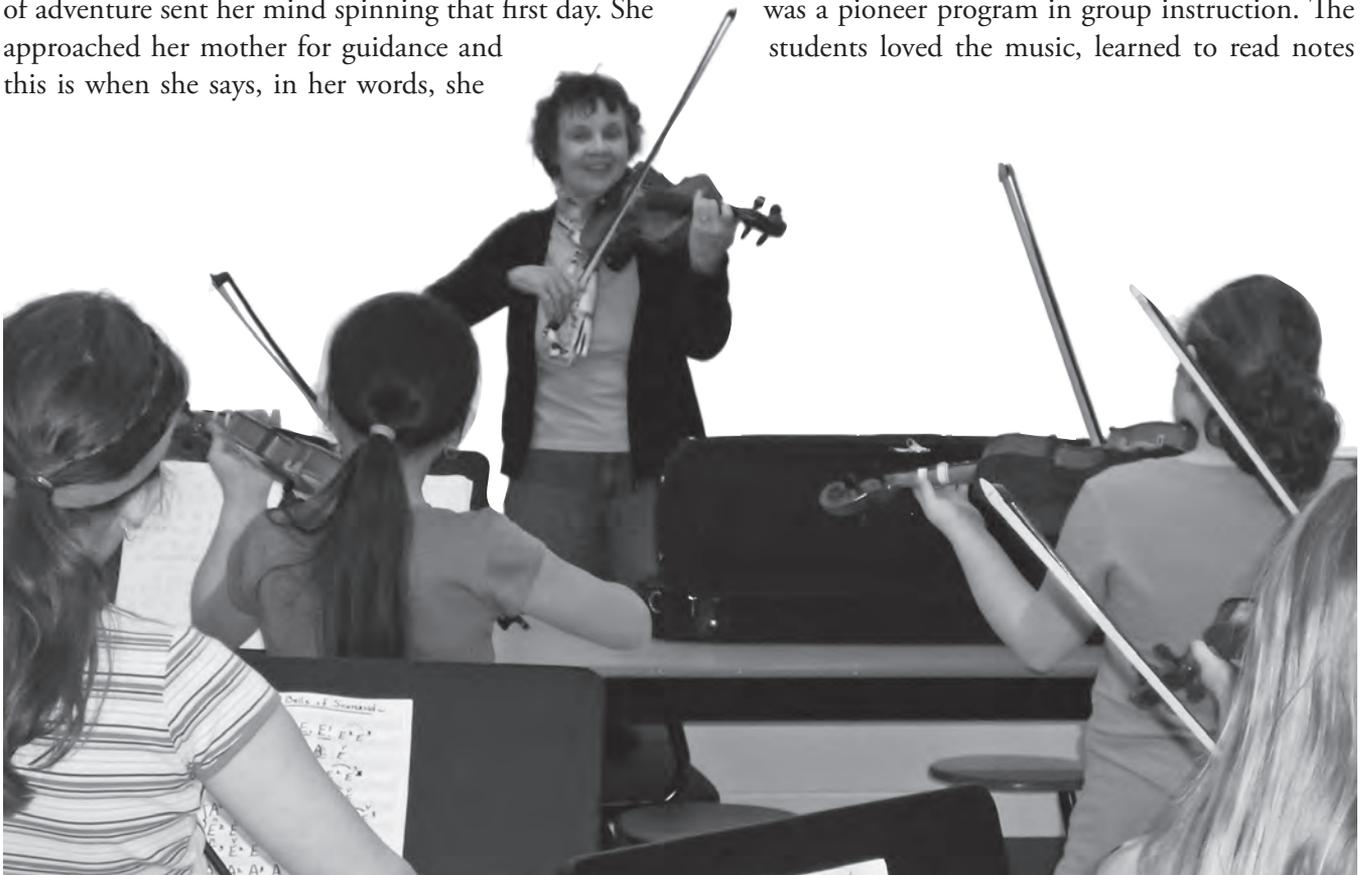
This is how one of Cape Breton's most respected fiddlers, Winnie Chafe, got her musical start.

Following in her mother's footsteps, Winnie became a school teacher at the age of 18. Her first class consisted of 50 Grade 1 boys whose energy and sense of adventure sent her mind spinning that first day. She approached her mother for guidance and this is when she says, in her words, she

"began to learn the ways of teaching." The violin made many appearances in the classroom to the joy of the students.

Winnie married and moved many times with her banker husband. Music continued to be a priority in this educator's life. She was a member of the Ventura Symphony in California and was named the International Fiddling Champion Fiddler in 1964. Winnie was the first woman to win this award. As a result of this accomplishment, she was asked to appear as a guest on *To Tell the Truth* in New York City in 1965.

She then returned home with her husband and three daughters. Back in Cape Breton, Winnie began teaching violin in groups. She taught some children in the evening but most were adults in groups. This was a pioneer program in group instruction. The students loved the music, learned to read notes



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Teaching all these years has given Winnie a great feeling of joy. This is especially evident when she witnesses the expressions of the parents and grandparents every June on concert night, when they hear the beauty of their child's violin.

and performed concerts every June to show off their skills in both classical and Scottish music.

To promote tourism, Winnie was asked to present summer concerts with her students. Her teenagers were now performing solo and the “wee ones” were part of Christmas programs. The adults were available to perform but had now joined the “Mira Fiddlers” and were performing in Louisbourg and other venues.

Music sent Winnie on many adventures. In 1975, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau invited her to play in Edinburgh Castle. This was an historic moment as it was the first Ceilidh in the castle. In 1985, a delegation of young fiddlers, pipers, dancers, vocalists and pianists attended the International Youth Festival of Music and Dance in Inverness, Scotland under the direction of Winnie Chafe. She was also the Canadian Representative at the International Fiddling Festival in London, England in 1983.

In Nova Scotia over the past 35 years, Winnie has had a very prolific career and is a well-respected violin teacher, lecturer, contest judge, orchestra member, recording artist, and performer. She can now even add “doctor” to that list after receiving two honorary doctorates from education institutions recognizing her musical contributions.

Winnie has been teaching an after-school program with the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board for eight years. Groups of students come one hour per week to learn the violin. She has a different lesson plan for each group. They learn the basics as well as classical music from as far back as the 1700s. When they read music very well, she teaches the students Cape Breton Scottish music. They are taught the rhythm, the key structure, waltzes, marches and every other kind of fiddle music.

For the last seven years she taught two days a week; one program in Sydney and one in Sydney Mines. Unfortunately, the Sydney Mines program was not continued this year. This was very disappointing for the

students who had been studying the violin with Winnie for many years.

Teaching all these years has given Winnie a great feeling of joy. This is especially evident when she witnesses the expressions of the parents and grandparents every June on concert night, when they hear the beauty of their child's violin.

With the school year over Winnie does not sit back and relax. Each summer, she holds a camp for fiddle students. Participants come from across the province. The children have lessons in the morning and the teenagers and adults in the afternoon. At the end of the week there is a concert to finish off the week in style. Winnie herself performs concerts in Louisbourg in the summer and Celtic Colours in the fall.

Did you know that Cape Breton has an orchestra? The Cape Breton Chamber Orchestra consists of 36 musicians. They perform every Sunday and do Broadway musicals. Winnie Chafe is the lead in the second violin section. It is hoped that children and their parents will be able to come to the performances as many children have never seen a live orchestra perform.

Winnie beams with pride as she tells me of the honour that was bestowed upon her in 1996. She is the Sponsor of the Canadian Naval Vessel HMCS Glace Bay. Each year she tours the vessel and meets the recruits. She feels like she is their mother while they are away from home.

“Music keeps you young,” explains Winnie.

I can certainly see why Winnie Chafe believes this adage. She has accomplished so much throughout her lifetime and shows no sign of slowing down. She continues to teach, perform with her daughter, and lead a full life as a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Dayna Enguehard is a teacher at Shipyard Elementary School, Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board.

Reflections of a Canadian Music Teacher in Kenya

Donalda Westcott



“Education is the light of a nation”
— Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.

As a Canadian educator I have been privileged to travel and experience many different teaching systems within our country, but nothing compared to the experience I had in Kenya for seven weeks in spring 2010. Kenya is roughly the size of Alberta and has a population of 40 million. In this East African country only one-tenth the size of Canada, students learn in a British-influenced system, as Kenya only became independent from Britain after 1967. The education system is divided into various types of schools including local, national and international, and it was not until 2003 that elementary or primary school was made free to all Kenyans. In that year alone, 3 million students entered the education system. This taxed it to an astounding 60:1 student-to-teacher ratio. Students from 42 separate ethnic tribes speak the national language of Kiswahili as well as English and their own mother tongues which differ greatly from region to region.

While in Kenya, I was privileged to teach at Nairobi School, a Kenyan National All Boys School which

is home to the “top boy” in all of Kenya for 2009. This boarding school is located in the heart of Kenya’s capital city, and is home to 1100 students aged 12 to 30. These young men, in Grades 9-12, engage in diverse areas of study from advanced sciences and literature to computer science and physical education. As a music teacher, the opportunities for me to both learn and teach were overwhelming. I had the great fortune of teaching alongside Andrew Oroo Obaga who is a wonderful composer and arranger for the school’s band program. We had, over the course of my stay, many conversations about western music and its place within African culture. I was honoured to teach the young men using an inclusive view of music education which integrated both rhythm and form studies into a group activity based model.

At first the young men were very quiet and reserved, unsure of what to expect from this hand-talking Canadian, but before long they were smiling, laughing and enjoying the learning experience. Many of the young men expressed their happiness and enjoyment

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of the lessons and were eager to be creative and express their ideas in a musical manner. They were also curious about the political and educational system in Canada and perceptions of how they differed.

Many of their questions were thought provoking for me as an educator. I had expected questions like what do students do for fun in Canada, and what kinds of food you eat, but ironically they came from the Kenyan teachers rather than the students. The boys were concerned with the political system and the education system as well as with our major exports and the way marriage was viewed in Canada.

Each grade or form has a comprehensive syllabus that addresses the following concepts in Music: Basic Skills (rhythm, pitch, melody, harmony); Aurals (rhythm, melody, intervals); History and Analysis of both African Music and Western Music and Practicals (projects). The boys work very hard and practice relentlessly to achieve levels of greatness that I have rarely seen within our music system. They play recorder, flute, saxophone, trombone, trumpet and clarinet as well as a wide variety of percussion. Many students have also taken on the piano as an instrument of choice, and because of the unavailability of a piano teacher they have learned to play on their own merely by reading the text and literally figuring it out for themselves. Their ability to read and make sense of the subject matter speaks volumes about their comprehension skills. While reflecting upon this I can honestly say that I would never have become a piano player if I had only been given a book rather than direct instruction. Yet these students excel at the instrument.

Home is of great importance in Kenya, just as it is in Canada. It is the tie that binds and the uniting factor. These boys have forged a family within their houses and teams at Nairobi School which encourages them in their studies and athletic endeavours. It is these family members who can also see them through emotional times because of a shared sense of understanding. I was able to witness this sense of community through the Wednesday morning assemblies. Students stood together in solidarity to proudly sing the Kenyan national anthem. This was perhaps one of the most moving sights that I witnessed during my teaching journey in Kenya. The sight and sound of 1100 young men and their teachers

raising their voices was emotional to say the least. Our patriotism in Canada seems most evident at the beginning of hockey games and Monday to Friday mornings in elementary schools. Our voices do not seem to carry the importance and the weight of those who were singing the Kenyan anthem that day. It made me wonder if patriotism is experienced more when you are away from home, and taken for granted when you are not.

I was encouraged to teach the music students the Canadian national anthem as part of their aurals class. We used the text and music as a sight reading piece. I stood proudly at the front of the room and was joined by an entire chorus of tenor and baritone voices in singing *O Canada*. The hair was standing up on my arms as the last note drifted away. The sound that swelled in the room as we were singing was exquisite. Using words to describe what I felt and heard diminishes it somehow as there really are no words, so I will only say, Hakuna Manano (no words). It was deep and booming, strong and forceful, yet happy and reverent.

Dedication and commitment are two words that come to mind when I think of “my” students at Nairobi School. They came from across the country to this school to learn all that they could and achieve greatness. I believe I have walked amongst giants, the next generation of Kenyan and world leaders who have the power, influence and education to make great differences in our world. My eyes have been opened to the differences that exist between Canadian teenagers and those in Kenya, and it truly does come down to the ideas of commitment and dedication.

My ultimate reason for going to Kenya was a selfish one. I went to take things back to Canada and improve my understanding of African folk music, instruments and dance, but even more than that I have brought home a greater love and understanding for my own home and native land. It is my sincere hope that through the little bit of work I have done with the students from Nairobi School that I have left a little piece of myself and Canada behind for them to share and remember.

Donalda Westcott is a music teacher at Shipyard Elementary and Mira Road Elementary Schools, Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board.



Real Students, Reel History

Andrew Stickings

My personal philosophy of teaching social studies centres around inspiring my students to become excited about learning about the past. My goal is to use filmmaking to unleash the student's creativity, enthusiasm and eagerness for learning. I believe that students learn through getting involved and that learning increases when students are engaged in meaningful activities. I also believe in the importance of going beyond the classroom and into the community. Through the use of filmmaking in my classroom, my students have been able to get one step closer to experiencing history.

In June 2007, a retired principal, who is now the President of the Rockingham Heritage Society, came to speak to my class about the rich history and heritage of our community. My students were fascinated by what had occurred only yards from their school and homes and they wanted to find out more. The "Reel History" project idea took root and since then, my Grade 5 class has been partnering with the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and Pier 21 to produce several short films on Canadian heritage and history.

I begin each school year by telling my students that we are going to make a documentary film. Past films have included *Look What's in Our Backyard*, based on Prince Edward's stay in Halifax; *Titanic Halifax* about the Titanic and its relationship to Halifax; *Pier 21: Gateway of Hope*, about immigration to Canada yesterday and today, and *Black Snow*, about the Halifax Explosion.

The students get so excited about this type of learning that they show up the next day with books, websites they have visited and stories from home. Many students even make their own trips to the museums and landmarks to get a firsthand look at the subject matter of the documentary.

Student directors and producers are selected to oversee the project's pre-production stages. We then begin

extensive research into the subject area using available resources, such as the Pier 21 Museum and Research Centre as well as the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, CSS Acadia, HMCS Sackville and guest speakers.

After extensive research students have to sort through all their information to come up with a script for their documentary. Students work in groups on specific events surrounding certain topics. They write brief historical summaries about what they have uncovered and biographies of people they have studied. I then have them use index cards to write a news report on the information they have gathered. I send them home to watch the History Channel to see how a documentary is produced.

When researching *Pier 21: Gateway of Hope*, Marianne Ferguson came to speak to the class about her journey to Canada. She had arrived as a child at Pier 21 and my students fell in love with both her and her story. Mrs. Ferguson is now a guide and volunteer at Pier 21 and still corresponds with the class on a regular basis. When researching the Halifax Explosion, author Janet Kitz visited us a few times to share her books and stories about the explosion.

With their research in hand the students begin rehearsing the segments and move on to storyboarding the films. These specific segments of the story are then pinned up on a bulletin board. The students are able to step back and absorb their visions of the documentary.

The next step is to bring this vision to life on camera and this is when it really becomes exciting for the students. There is only one word that comes to mind when watching them put this project together and that is "teamwork." They take ownership of the project from the beginning to end and it certainly shows at all times during the filming. Casting is completed and a production crew formed, with every student assigned a job on the set. We even have a student checking the weather

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each day if we are planning to film outside. My students are just amazing to watch in action. It takes them several months to get every shot on camera and then it all has to be edited. The editing takes several weeks during lunch hour and after school to be completed.

For our immigration documentary, I made initial contact with Pier 21 and The Maritime Museum of the Atlantic to lay the groundwork. The research librarian provided the class with copies of stories about children that came to Canada in the 1950s. She also provided us with photographs of children, ships and immigration documents which we used for classroom discussions, activities and, of course, our film. Pier 21's education coordinator organized a class visit to scout our locations and provided an extensive on site orientation. She gave us access to film over numerous days in order to get the shots we wanted for our film. Pier 21 also provided us with costumes and period luggage for the film project. I was in constant communication with the Pier 21 team throughout the project – we must have exchanged over 100 emails over the course of the project! Halifax Port Authority also granted us access to the actual pier for filming and to view present-day cruise ship operations.

The Canadian Navy took us out into Halifax Harbour to film the harbour approaches to Pier 21 and to give the students the feeling of arriving in Halifax by ship. It was truly an awesome experience for all. A local tugboat company took students out to the harbour entrance to retrace the route great ships took when arriving at Pier 21. The Canadian Navy once again helped for *Black Snow* taking the students out to get the shots they needed for that film.

When dealing with a topic such as Pier 21 you can't help but think of transatlantic voyages and great ocean liners of the past. I approached the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic who I had partnered with before for

our *Titanic Halifax* production. Once again they were happy to be aboard for our project. We needed a ship for our films and they had one, the CSS Acadia. Once again we were in constant communication over a period of five months to iron out all the details and to secure the ship for filming. We managed to get on board one October morning and get all our scenes filmed only weeks before she went into dry-dock in Halifax. The ship-keeper provided us with a wealth of information about life on board a ship in 1917 and in the 1950s and even provided costumes for the film. It was a great experience; one my students will never forget!

The comments we have received on our documentaries from parents, teachers and the local community have been overwhelmingly positive. In addition, the films have received numerous national and international awards. We have been chosen as a finalist five times at the ViewFinders: International Film Festival for Youth and this year we finally won! *Black Snow* won a \$500 ViewFinders Film Challenge Award for the best youth made film in the Live Action category. In its tenth year, ViewFinders is a five-day celebration of film, video and media geared towards youth ages 3-18.

I can truly say the Reel History Project is one of the most successful Social Studies projects that I have ever undertaken and I have been able to cover a multitude of curriculum outcomes in all subject areas during the process. I am extremely proud of my class's accomplishments and my students are very proud of their documentaries.

To view one of the films go to <http://panasonic.net/kwn/cgi-bin/kwn/vlibrary/show.cgi?no=114>

Andrew Stickings is a teacher at Grosvenor Wentworth Park Elementary School, Halifax Regional School Board.



Where Does Art Education End and Art Therapy Begin?

Terri Vernon

The fact that art is therapeutic cannot be denied. When I tell people I'm an artist they often share stories of their own experiences with drawing, painting, or arts and crafts. Frequently they describe the enjoyment and relaxation they derive from these activities. Engaging with art materials leads you into the present moment, into your body and into your senses. This is part of the reason why creating art feels so great.

Even looking at art and talking about art is therapeutic and healing. A wonderful 2009 documentary film entitled *I Remember Better When I Paint* shows patients with late stage Alzheimer's disease visiting an art gallery and conversing with each other animatedly about the art. The film makes the point that while certain brain functions deteriorate early in the disease, the ability to appreciate and talk about color, shape, texture and emotion is often retained intact until the end.

But is art therapeutic and relaxing for everybody, all the time? In my 30 year career as a visual artist, I have found the process of art making to be exhilarating, challenging and sometimes grueling hard work. Creating art as an aesthetic activity requires analysis, risk taking, dedication and constant practice, not unlike the process musicians follow when they want to achieve mastery with a musical instrument.

I had been making and teaching art for many years when I was asked to deliver a brief art workshop at a weekend retreat for participants of a 12 step recovery program. I had never done art therapy with a group but I had plenty of experience teaching art so I agreed to do

the workshop. I gathered a wide selection of photos of animals, birds, fish and insects and I spread these out on a table. When the participants entered the room I asked them to choose a photo of a creature with which they felt a connection. I put paper and painting supplies in front of each person and I asked them to paint their animal.

Even though everyone completed a painting, one of the things I remember is the anxiety of some of the participants at being asked to do art. They said things like, "I can't do art" and "I can't draw a stick man." Although some of the group entered into the experience

happily, others were vocal about their lack of art ability. I kept encouraging them but I wasn't sure what to do as I don't often encounter that degree of resistance when I teach art to young people.

In most of my art classes with young people I find that students usually jump right in, experimenting with materials, making mistakes and exploring freely. I find it interesting that while art making, singing and purposeful movement are natural human forms of expression, many adults feel uncomfortable drawing something, singing a song or dancing in public. At the same time however we all willingly and freely use verbal expression without shame or hesitation. I wonder if this is because our educational system values left brain verbal, linear thinking over right brain archetypal imagery and healthy body awareness. I firmly believe that even though we are not all master artists and seasoned performers everyone can derive significant benefits from participating in the creative arts.



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After the art activity was over that day we had a group discussion that was a continuation of the spontaneous conversations that had happened around the table during the exercise. I remember feeling unsure of what to say to wrap-up the activity. Lacking knowledge of art therapy, I had brought my “art teacher” sensibilities into a situation in which “art therapist” skills were needed.

That was my first experience with art therapy and knowing what I know now, I would do things differently. I would pay special attention to the therapeutic relationship and make everyone feel safe and comfortable. I would still spread the images out and suggest that each person take one or a few images to which they felt a strong connection. I would have art supplies ready and this time I would ask participants to close their eyes, take a few relaxing breaths, and imagine that the animal has a very important message for them. I would ask them to make a painting about the creature and what it is trying to say to them. I would ask them to add a date and title to their painting. I would prepare for self-criticism by encouraging the participants to enter into the spirit of the activity in a positive way. Finally, I would handle the group discussion at the end by being prepared with open-ended questions to encourage the group members to share their thoughts and feelings about the experience, as well as anything they wanted to say about their artwork. Attending to the meaning or story that the person derives from the art experience is an important aspect of art therapy.

In an article entitled “Art Therapy and Art Education: Towards a Reconciliation” Michael Edwards discusses the uneasy relationship and blurred boundaries between art and art therapy. He admits that while “art educators normally anticipate, or at least hope for, products which can somehow be regarded within an art context; art therapists have frequently asserted that

aesthetic criteria have no place in clinical settings.” This is a polite way of suggesting that the artistic quality of the resulting art is of little concern to the art therapist.

Not everyone agrees that a therapeutic approach results in poor quality art. Phyllis Kornfeld has been teaching art to prisoners for more than 25 years. I recently attended a public lecture she gave at Acadia University in conjunction with a travelling show of artwork done by inmates. Although she is an art teacher, she has abandoned teaching formal art principles in favour of acting as a facilitator for each inmate’s own unique creativity. She says, “I try not to get in the way of the inmate’s natural expression... So many of the prisoners are overtaken with creative force as soon as they get their hands on the materials, and all I have to do is get out of the way.” Although the making of art has a profound healing and therapeutic effect on the inmates with whom she works, the actual art they produce is of an extremely high quality.



It seems to me that where art education ends and art therapy begins has a great deal to do with the intention and theoretical orientation of the group leader. One often focuses on technical studio skills and aesthetic issues while the other places emphasis on creating a warm, relational space in which the participant feel safe to explore and share their feelings using art as a medium for personal creativity. If

there is a clear dividing line between the two, it has not yet been discovered. What John Ruskin said about art being “that in which the hand, the head, and the heart of man go together” applied equally well to both art education and art therapy and I am left with the impression that each is powerful and healing in their own way.

Terri Vernon is a Faculty member at the Annapolis Campus (Middleton), Nova Scotia Community College.

Bienvenue à Café Paris!

Yvette d'Entremont

Un charmant bistrot, une petite table ronde et deux chaises trônant sous l'auvent rouge et blanc à l'entrée...

la tour Eiffel illuminée... des serveurs français... des gens habillés en tenue de soirée... une orchestre jouant les plus beaux airs parisiens... les chanteurs et danseurs interprétant les chansons d'Édith Piaf, Charles Aznavour, Yves Duteil, George Ulmer, Notre-Dame de Paris, le Cancan... vous vous imaginez peut-être à Paris? Oui, vous l'êtes, mais vous n'avez pas eu besoin de quitter la province. Tel était l'accueil et l'ambiance parisiens créés à l'École secondaire de Par-en-Bas, à Tusket, pour deux spectacles exceptionnels, le 26 et 27 mars dernier.

Pendant deux heures, les spectateurs furent divertis par les élèves (ainsi que quelques enseignants et membres de la communauté) qui ont chanté, dansé et joué sur scène, nous interprétant la plus belle musique française de l'époque et du présent, avec un orchestre et l'éloquence d'un music-hall digne d'un vrai cabaret parisien comme les Folies Bergères. On aurait cru que ces élèves étaient tous des musiciens et danseurs chevronnés, de vraies vedettes de la chanson française. Les éloges après le spectacle étaient nombreux : tous les gens étaient impressionnés de la qualité des prestations, du talent des élèves, mais surtout de la fierté, de la joie et du plaisir qu'ils avaient en interprétant cette musique française. « *Comment as-tu*

One would think that these students were all experienced musicians and dancers; real stars of French music.



On aurait cru que ces élèves étaient tous des musiciens et danseurs chevronnés, de vraies vedettes de la chanson française.

A charming bistro, a small round table and two chairs under the red and white awning at the entrance... an illuminated Eiffel tower...

French servers... everyone in evening wear... an orchestra playing the best tunes... Parisian singers and dancers performing the songs of Edith Piaf, Charles Aznavour, Yves Duteil, George Ulmer... you might imagine you're in Paris? Yes, you are, but in this case you didn't have to leave the province. This warm and exotic Parisian atmosphere was created in Tusket at the École secondaire de Par-en-Bas for two outstanding performances, March 26 and 27.

For two hours, the spectators were entertained by students (and some teachers and community members) who sang, danced and performed on stage, interpreting the most beautiful French music of the past and the present. They were accompanied by an orchestra and the elegant atmosphere of a music hall similar to the true original Parisian cabaret where the Folies Bergere performed. One would think that these students were all experienced musicians and dancers; real stars of French music. The praise after the show was unanimous; everyone was impressed with the quality of the talented students, but the audience also described the pride, joy and pleasure they had in interpreting the French music.

"How did you manage to motivate students, to persuade them to sing in French, interpret ballroom dancing, and perform at

réussi à inciter les élèves, à les convaincre de chanter en français, à interpréter des danses de salon, et ce, pendant deux heures ? » m'a-t-on demandé à plusieurs reprises. « Comment rassembler une équipe d'appui pour monter une production d'une telle envergure? »

Tout d'abord, j'ai conçu cette show musical du genre « café-cabaret » avec l'intention de rendre vivante la langue française pour les élèves, de les sensibiliser auprès de la belle musique française, d'inciter un sens d'appréciation, et leur montrer que le français (théâtre, chant et danse) est toujours d'actualité et vaut la peine d'être célébré. Nous savons tous que la musique d'Édith Piaf, de Charles Aznavour, d'Yves Duteil, des comédies musicales telles que *Les Misérables*, *Roméo et Juliette* et *Notre-Dame de Paris* ne fait pas nécessairement partie du répertoire des jeunes; cependant, si on rend vivant cette musique, elle devient partie de leur vécu, partie d'eux. Tout simplement, ma passion devient leur passion. Autrement dit, la relève du défi et la récolte du succès qui suit, dépend entièrement des élèves; de la confiance qu'on leur met et du respect qu'on leur donne.

Je leur ai lancé l'idée après avoir étudié avec mes élèves de Français littéraire 10, la vie et la musique d'Édith Piaf, ainsi que d'autres « monstres sacrés » de la chanson française. J'ai ressenti un grand intérêt de leur part et une grande motivation. Le concept fut proposé en début janvier; ce fut alors relativement facile de trouver des élèves qui s'y intéressaient, grâce à l'amour pour la scène et la musique que les élèves avaient déjà vécu dans notre école, notamment les productions en art dramatique et la comédie musicale de *Roméo et Juliette*, présentée en mai 2009. Connaissant déjà bien le talent et le dévouement de certains individus, j'ai ras-

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this caliber for two hours?" I was repeatedly asked. "How did I assemble a support team to mount a production of this magnitude?"

First, I created this musical show to be like a "café-cabaret" to bring the French language alive for pupils, to raise awareness for beautiful French music, to encourage a sense of appreciation and show them that French drama, singing and dancing is still valid and worth celebrating. We all know that the music of Edith Piaf, Charles Aznavour, Yves Duteil, musicals such as *Les Misérables*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Notre Dame de Paris* are not necessarily part of the repertoire of young people, but if we make this music live, it becomes part of their lives. Quite simply, my passion becomes their passion.

I would have floated the idea after studying the life and music of Edith Piaf and other "superstars" of the French chanson with my students of French Literature 10. I felt a great interest on their part and knew they were highly motivated. The concept was proposed in early January and then it was relatively easy to find students who were interested. Many of them had already taken part in earlier performances including drama productions and the musical *Romeo and Juliet*, presented in May 2009. Knowing well the talent and dedication of certain individuals, I gathered singers, dancers, actors and a young choreographer in Grade 11. I engaged musicians from the community (including myself) and we started rehearsals at recess, after school and on weekends.

semblé chanteurs, danseurs, comédiens, une jeune chorégraphe de la 11^e année, des musiciens de la communauté (inclus moi-même) et nous avons commencé les répétitions, pendant toutes les récréations, après l'école et même les weekends chez les musiciens.

La chorégraphe a conçu toutes les danses interprétatives et moi-même j'ai chorégraphié le foxtrot et la danse viennoise. Enseignants, costumières, régisseuses, dessinateurs/concepteurs de scène, techniciens, serveurs, et cuisinières se sont tous engagés à faire de cet événement, un immense succès, deux soirées de grande classe.

Le résultat fut spectaculaire : non seulement les élèves ont-ils fait des prestations exceptionnelles, mais ils s'amusaient tellement, pendant toute la soirée. La joie était évidente sur leurs visages. Les spectateurs furent impressionnés par tout le décor, l'ambiance parisienne, mais surtout par l'assurance, la confiance, la marque de professionnalisme, le dévouement, la créativité et le talent démontrés par les élèves. Pour plusieurs dans la foule, c'était un rêve devenu réalité : de témoigner des jeunes adultes fiers de chanter en français, et fiers d'être francophone. Pour moi, les émotions étaient au comble; grâce aux élèves, j'ai pu vivre par procuration, ma passion pour le français et la musique... que je suis fière du succès de Café Paris!! C'était pour moi, et pour eux, deux soirées magiques!



The choreographer designed all the interpretive dance and I choreographed the foxtrot and Viennese waltz. Teachers, costume designers, stage manager, designers / scene developers, technicians, waiters and cooks were all committed to making this event a huge success for both nights of the performance.

The result was spectacular. Not only did students make outstanding achievements, but they had an incredible amount of fun throughout the evening. The joy was evident on their faces. The spectators were impressed by the decor, the ambiance of Paris, but mostly by the confidence, trust, profes-

sionalism, dedication, creativity and talent demonstrated by the students.

For many in the crowd, it was a dream come true – my students and young adults were proudly singing in French, and proud to be French. For me, the emotions were at their height, thanks to students, I could live vicariously, my passion for French and music... I'm proud of the success of Café Paris! It was for me and for them, two magical evenings!



Yvette d'Entremont est une enseignante à l'École secondaire de Par-en-Bas, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

Yvette d'Entremont is a teacher at École secondaire de Par-en-Bas, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

Making *realfriends* ✚

Dr. Steven Van Zoost

So there I was, making *realfriends*. Yes, English teachers everywhere—one word, all lower case. My students insisted. It began last October when a Grade 12 student asked if I was on Facebook. I replied with my standard, flippant response, “No, I have real friends.” Apparently, that struck a chord. I didn’t hear it at the time but a few days later, I felt the reverberations.

One student, Mitch Redden, came back to me and explained, “I was interested when you said that you have ‘real friends.’ I have more than 500 friends on Facebook, but if I had a problem, I wouldn’t discuss it with any of them... I am surrounded by people my own age here at school, and yet, it’s hard to meet new people because everyone is in their own social clique.”

“What do you want to do about it?” I asked. And that’s how it all began.

“*realfriends*” is a social action project that was created by Grade 12 students in my English class. We followed the directions of the *Imagineaction* program offered by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation. One student convinced his class, who in turn involved 240 students at our school as well as an unknown number of people beyond our school who became interested in this social action initiative. The purpose of *realfriends* was to create a face-to-face social network that would help change the school climate into a more social space. Quickly, the students acknowledged that social action projects have the potential to expand and that *realfriends* could influence people (or other communities) beyond our school.

Interest in socializing is nothing new for teenagers, but these students articulated a worry that people their age may be losing their social skills due to technologically assisted communication. For my generation, technology is understood to be a tool—something that you pick up and hold in your hand when it is useful. From my point of view, young people use technology in specific ways: to send text messages, Google, listen to music, or update their social network sites. On the other hand, perhaps my lens is outdated and technol-

ogy permeates the classroom in less visible ways. For my students’ generation, technology might be compared to an appendage, an environment, or a way of thinking. It is no longer something that is exclusively exterior to the body, but something that has invaded mental and social processes. For example, a common concern that emerged from the students was that the use of text messages and social networking sites may be deteriorating young peoples’ confidence in social settings. This worry is represented in the students’ motto for *realfriends*: stop cliquing, start connecting.

realfriends started as a series of socializing activities. Students planned four activities (or steps), expecting that the number of participants would double with each step. It began with 30 students who were identified by staff to represent a broad range of students in our school. At lunch, the English class facilitated the 30 participants in the first activity—“blindfolded speed-friending.” At the end of the session, people left without knowing who else had participated. They were given a plastic bracelet embossed with “*realfriends* ✚” and encouraged to look for who else in the school had one of the 30 bracelets. When they saw someone wearing a bracelet, they would know that they could safely initiate a conversation. In fact, they may have already spoken with them during the blindfolded speed-friending. Participants were invited to attend the second step and to bring a friend.

The students chose the jigsaw puzzle piece to represent the idea of “connecting” to create a network. They recreated the logo on a large bulletin board that we used to show the growing connections among participants in *realfriends*. We used the puzzle piece as an icon so that people would recognize a *realfriends* initiative.

The activity in the second step was “speed-gaming.” The 60 participants were randomly organized into small groups based on the colour of their *realfriends* bracelet. The groups moved to various spaces in the school where my students facilitated “ice-breaker” games so that the participants would get to know each other. The

third step, with 120 participants, was designed to bring people together through a common cause. The English class chose to endorse the Children's Wish Foundation and they met with the participants at lunch to educate them about this charity. The fourth step, involving roughly 240 participants, was a laughing flashmob that was used to get the attention of the school and to bring awareness to the school community about the Children's Wish Foundation.

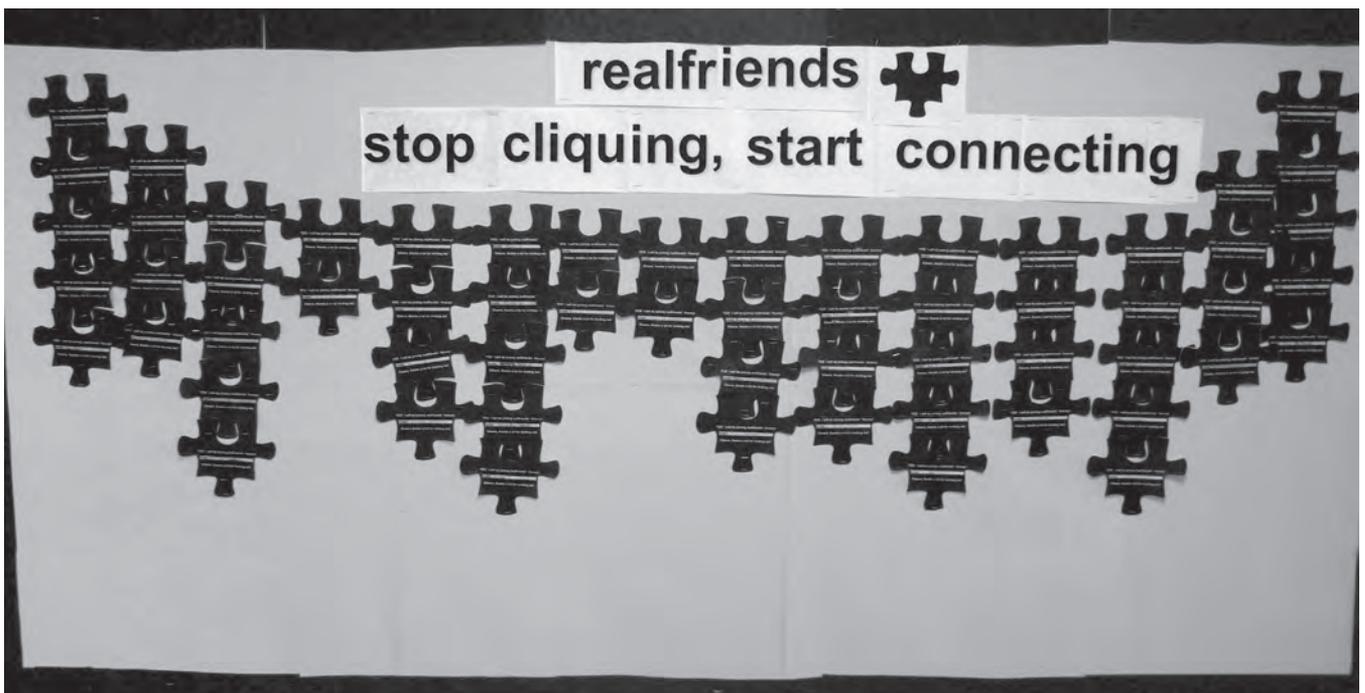
Following these four steps, the English students published a book entitled "*realfriends: stop cliquing, start connecting*" and their story was followed in a two-part documentary. These resources are available online. You can watch the students in action by enrolling in the *Imagineaction* website: www.imagine-action.ca. You can also read how previous students of mine have been watching *realfriends* closely—some closing their Facebook accounts, some visiting my current class to make a pitch for *realfriends* to expand into post-secondary institutions. There was great encouragement from the participants as well as observers (inside and beyond the school) to continue expanding the face-to-face social network of *realfriends*. As I write this, I wonder who else will take up the work of these students and continue expanding *realfriends*.

There is something disquieting about students overtly wanting to talk about how to socialize. Media

often taints the reputation of teenage socialization with impressions of strange subcultures, rebellious activity, suspicious behaviour, and secretive peer communication. In contrast, it has been my experience that young people show willingness, openness, and readiness for teachers to help them develop problem-solving and social skills. Perhaps more than ever before, teachers need to model and facilitate face-to-face communication in classrooms. Perhaps because of a heavy reliance on technology to communicate, teaching, speaking and listening should not be taken lightly in our classrooms.

Throughout this experience, I have witnessed how a student-driven social action project can transform our classroom and our school. More importantly, I have witnessed how *realfriends* transformed my students. Social action projects can help students' sense of efficacy and teach students that they can solve problems, contribute to positive change, and respond to societal needs. My students have left me thinking about my own face-to-face network and the value of my real friends. More importantly, they have left me thinking about my role, and teachers' roles in general, in promoting and participating in social action.

Dr. Steven Van Zoost is a teacher at Avon View High School, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.



Respect for Fine Arts

Greg O'Keefe

As the population struggles to adjust to this, the “age of the budget,” governments at all levels bow down to the deity of these times – the almighty dollar. It reminds me of the old adage, “some people know the cost of everything and the value of nothing!”

Parents and teachers know from past experience that in this time of deficit adjustments across the province, certain program offerings, especially Fine Arts, are always first on the target list. Its range of offerings covers the whole spectrum of the students’ real life experiences.

Dr. Sister Rita Clare directed the choir when I taught at Holy Angels High. In my Chemistry and Physics classes, I couldn’t understand why students couldn’t remember the symbols for Zinc and Potassium were Zn and K. Being much younger, I assumed the fault was with the students; no doubt some type of learning difficulty in remembering. My theory was quickly blown out of the water as I attended a concert featuring the very same students singing from memory, without the aid of any pages, some ten songs, two of which were in Latin. Sr. Rita had them fully involved using their talents for over 30 minutes.

She spent her lifetime doing something very right. The students knew that Sr. Rita knew what she was doing, and she got the best out of them. I learned as much from her as they did! I am sure as you read this you think of other talented music teachers in schools where you were a student and a fellow staff member.

School band programs not only help students develop individual skills, they also learn the importance of working, or should I say, playing together. At school concerts each year, parents and community members can see and hear the improvements. Once again it’s time to acknowledge this didn’t happen by accident. It started with the support and encouragement of the students’ families. This combined with the leadership, knowledge and ability of a wonderful group of teachers, leads to the success of these students.

As a vice-principal at the high school level, my visits to various classrooms were always eye-openers for me as I had opportunities to see the whole range of curriculum offerings, as well as many different successful teaching methods. The one I had the least exposure to was Drama class, taught by one of the best in our system Gary Walsh. He told me I was welcome at any time, any class on one condition. I was not to form any opinions until I had attended at least three classes! If any of you know Gary then you understand he knew what he was doing. If I’d been allowed to form an opinion after my first visit probably, it would have been “ridiculous.” However after my third visit, the opinion changed to “sublime.” At first glance, Drama class seemed to be only a mixture of noise, motion and disorder. But eventually I was wise enough to see the “noise” was actually voices being shared; the “disorder” was actually creative order. It was clearly a wonderful class as I saw students learning how to express their ideas in voice and/or gesture, involving others. Gary, like so many drama teachers, continues to make a real-life change in many students’ futures.

Teachers at all grade levels help their students put on performances from one-act plays to full-scale Broadway musicals involving hundreds. Others share their love of dance from ballet to those that keep cultural traditions alive. The list goes on but all have one overall common trait –

Respect:

Respect – for the activity, solo or group;

Respect – for the students giving so much of themselves;

Respect – for all these Fine Arts teachers.

Respect, Respect, Respect – it’s everywhere in Fine Arts. These courses deserve and have earned a place of honour in our educational system. They are to be celebrated.

Greg O'Keefe is a retired teacher and former President of the NSTU.

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