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**ARTS AND EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF THE
ARTS ACADEMY ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

by
Nigel Sangster

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
Rowan University
March 2012

Dissertation Chair: James Coaxum, III, Ph.D.

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Dedication

To My Deceased Parents

Harold Sangster

&

Volda Sangster

And My Deceased Surrogate Mother

Nestor Dick

I deeply appreciate the sacrifices that my parents made to get me started on my educational journey. Without their investment in education, and the belief in me, leaving my homeland of Trinidad & Tobago would not have been realized. I dedicate homage to my surrogate mother to whom my parents had passed the torch and who has remained as the beacon that encouraged me to continue chasing after my dreams.

Acknowledgments

This journey coming to an end is like the final act of an opera in which the music and the singers crescendo in contrapuntal harmony bringing the opera to a momentous and glorious finish. I give tribute and homage to both of my deceased parents, Harold and Volda Sangster, whose teachings formed the foundation of my present existence. I thank my daughter Nyeka “Missy” Sangster, who is the “apple of my eyes” for being patient as I shared my time between her and the doctoral program. To my sister Joy, I salute you for doing what big sisters do and that is, give encouragement and support. To my brothers Roger and Leighton, I am gracious to you for being the pillars of support in times of uncertainty.

I will be forever beholden to my very special friends and family, Dr. Deniese Cooper, Dr. Ruthie Cummings Hypolite, Dr. Shelton Nicholls, Dr. Muller St. Pre, M.D., and Gail Blache, who provided words of assurance and wisdom from the nascent stages of my journey to its completion.

I would like to extend sincere gratitude to Dr. James Coaxum, my dissertation Chair, for his insightfulness, expediency, and unwavering support as I navigated my way through this journey. I also acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Robert Campbell and Dr. Mark Raivetz, who provided me with plaudits that undergirded my confidence. I would be remiss without special recognition to Dr. Joanne Manning, who at the interview for acceptance to the doctoral program saw potential in me.

Finally, I would like to thank the teachers, administrators, parents, and students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (pseudonym) who accommodated me and

supported the mission of the research project. A special mention to Debra Boone and James Lemon of the same institution; I am eternally appreciative.

Abstract

Nigel Sangster

ARTS AND EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF THE
ARTS ACADEMY ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

2011/2012

James Coaxum, III, Ph.D.

Doctorate in Educational Leadership

The broad topical area of my research study involved an investigation of the impact of the arts academy on the students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Middle-High School (pseudonym), using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Being a proponent of the arts, one of the premises of my research was to bring about a greater sense of awareness in my school and school district, that the arts were not “frills” in the educational processes of children (Perrin, 1994). Focus was given to various strands of the arts disciplines in my efforts to substantiate the significance of the overarching question of the research project.

My methodological approaches revealed findings that supported the hypothesis. The data collection instruments comprised: survey questionnaire, student interviews, and observations to support the impact of the high school arts academy on the students it served. Triangulation was utilized in an attempt to produce a study that was valid, reliable, and free of biases.

In the findings analysis, a plethora of data from the various sources suggested that there were educational benefits to students being instructed in an arts academy. Moreover, there were data which favorably suggested that participation in a high school

arts academy can influence the attitudes of students relative to their academics and the arts. The findings also suggested that participation in an arts academy engaged students in the arts.

The collected interview data also suggested that students have identified occasions in which the transference of concepts and applications of strategies were possible between the arts and academic disciplines. Research participants demonstrated that their confidence levels and self-discipline improved considerably and will continue to improve as they progressed through their artistic and academic endeavors. The research participants revealed that parental involvement was of great significance for their sustainability in the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. There was the demonstration that student engagement has a powerful influence on their involvement in the arts academy. The high levels of student engagement provided the vehicle for theatre arts students, for example, to tap into their critical thinking skill sets. The findings were authenticated by extant literature that supported the arts academy.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Research Problem

Arts education has become part of the national vision of what all students should know and be capable of doing. For instance, national standards for student achievement have been developed in the arts in a process that was similar to the standards developed for mathematics, language arts, science, history, and other subject areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2008a). According to the United States Department of Education (2008a) the arts are basic because they impart meaning on the world through movement, sound, color, and gesture – nonverbal techniques of communication essential to understanding. The arts are basic in a solely educational sense because they are crucial to education reform since they are used as vehicles for providing meaning to learning. They are an important vehicle for learning the skills so prized by reformers in both education and business communities. These skills include problem solving, higher-order thinking, flexibility, persistence, and cooperation (U. S. Department of Education, 2008a, p. 2). Students throughout their lives will draw from artistic experiences, such as music, dance, theatre, and visual arts to become part of the human heritage of creativity.

Although schools may have been established as performing and fine arts institutions, of which the academic disciplines are of critical importance for students' fulfillment of the requirements for high school graduation, the arts seem trite in the eyes of some skeptics, and in so doing are viewed as fluff (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). The arts provide students with the impetus for exploring, interpreting, and reacting to a world

that can at times appear to be cruel, distant, and complicated (Nathan, 2008).

Additionally, as stated by Nathan, the arts help individuals to create scenarios that go beyond their own realities, providing pathways to unexplored possibilities in their lives.

Undoubtedly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has realized that the arts are often a marginal experience for many students at the elementary and middle school levels and an elective subject for students at the high school level. This disparity of opportunity does not allow the National Assessment of Educational Progress the ability to establish a national assessment that can be used for all students, although there has been the development of national standards (U. S. Department of Education, 2008a). A major threat to America's global competitiveness is the erosion of the arts in our educational system. This had been compounded by federal legislation falling short of living up to its obligation of preparing all young people for success in the 21st century (Lynch, 2008). This gap in educational opportunities for children has the potential to perpetuate students' incapacity to gain skills that are associated with the arts and, as a result, reduce their chances of having the competitive edge in a global economy. For instance, creative thinking, self-discipline, collaboration, and innovation are some of the skills that are in great demand. In our rapidly changing global economy, these skills, which the arts teach, may be essential for everyone's success (Lynch, 2008).

However, arts magnet schools or schools that have elected to use the arts to motivate learning are becoming much more prominent (U. S. Department of Education, 2008b). According to the U. S. Department of Education (2008b), between 1982 and 1991, the number of magnet schools doubled from 1,000 to 2,400. Currently, there are over 5,000 magnet schools serving over 2.5 million children (U.S. Department of

Education, 2008b). Magnet schools came into existence in the 1970s primarily as an aid in preventing, eliminating, or reducing racial isolation in elementary and secondary schools (Halquist, 2003). Although proponents of magnet schools have not renounced the desegregation goal that is the program's beginnings, at present they place almost equal emphasis on magnet schools being instruments of choice for the education of children. A goal of the magnet schools concept was to allow for the integration of schools (Rossell, 2005).

The Importance of Arts Education

Several studies were conducted to support the importance of arts education in schools. Bresler (1995), for instance, has demonstrated the importance of the arts by identifying four approaches to integrate the arts into the day-to-day curriculum in schools; each with its own set of goals, contents, pedagogies, and roles. They are the subservient approach, in which the arts serves to enhance other subjects with activities such as singing songs on themes presented in other disciplines; the co-equal, cognitive integration style, which requires discipline-specific knowledge or skills; the affective style, provides students with opportunities to have their own space where they would not be criticized for not conforming, but appreciated for their uniqueness and capabilities. This is most useful in the primary grades and with special populations. Lastly, is the social integration style, which has the arts making provisions for the social functions of schooling, for instance, Parent Teacher Meetings (PTA), honor roll programs, and cultural events in which the arts play a significant role in making these social events successful. As Bresler states, the integration of these styles is contingent upon the extent to which they necessitate curriculum reform and change in existing practices. Successful

implementation may require the collaborative efforts of arts teachers and academic teachers. As the study was being conducted, attempts were made to discover how some of these elements became fused together with various other strategies in the arts to bring about successful/positive results with students.

The importance of arts education was also considered in a study done by Eidson (1989) in which it was revealed that music is helpful in structuring forms of interaction that extend beyond verbalization. It was discovered that music could be conducive to the stimulation of nonverbal self-expression for young adolescents in group situations. According to Gullatt (2008), John Dewey found that there is a positive correlation between instruction in the arts and cognition which can have an astounding impact on curriculum decisions. Additionally, Winner and Hetland (2008) have discovered through analysis that the arts can teach beneficial habits to students.

In his article, “Creating a Brighter Workforce with the Arts,” Robert Lynch (2008) stressed that a major threat to America’s global competitiveness is the erosion of the arts in our educational system. In order to prevent this erosion, students from pre-K to 12th grade will need to have knowledge and skills in the arts, which can only be provided by specialists in the various disciplines – music, theatre, visual arts, and dance. These specialists would also promote collaboration with classroom teachers to make connections between the arts and other subject areas. Lynch also stated that the arts create a balance within students, giving them those skills that are necessary to become productive citizens in the 21st century, such as having the ability to become abstract thinkers.

Arts classes, according to Grytting (2000), provide opportunities for creativity, in that they foster a joy for learning while they allow students to be creative. Creativity is necessary to generate scientific theories, mathematical models, and new software. Furthermore, in addition to the demands for creativity, there will be a requirement for all people to work with diverse populations. Thus there will be a need to be grounded in values that can support life and maintain the earth (Grytting, 2000, p. 66). Furthermore, the visual arts discipline is an example of an arts field in which the significance of creativity can be illustrated. As discussed by Brommer (2007), students through their visual arts experiences would be able to discover the four components of art: aesthetics - which refers to their personal responses to works of art; art history - which would provide students with the setting and context for the work of art; art production - which is the ability of students to create art; and art criticism - which encompasses the students' capability to analyze art. Additionally, art criticism would foster students' aptitude to examine and respond to a variety of visual art forms with more critical eyes (Brommer, 2007). As a result of this skill, students would find themselves less likely to accept passively the judgments of others (Mittler, 2006). In an effort to promote creativity, the role of arts education needs to be linked to 21st century skills that will be a necessity for students to successfully negotiate the demands that the changing marketplace will impose on them (Choi & Piro, 2009).

Eisner (1998) has identified three tiers or levels into which arts education might be expected to make a contribution. The first of these levels is *Arts-based Outcomes of Art Education*. The author views this tier as holding educators responsible for outcomes that are directly related to the subject matter that an arts education curriculum was

designed to teach. For instance, if the curriculum's aim is to allow students the ability to analyze the content of a piece of music, then an arts-based assessment would demonstrate the degree to which those outcomes were achieved. The next level of which Eisner (1998) spoke is that of *Arts-related Outcomes*. These are outcomes that pertain to the perception and understanding of aesthetic attributes in the general environment. For example, arts courses that allow students to recognize and respond to the aesthetic organization of phenomena, such as throngs of people emerging from an underground subway into the busy streets of down town Manhattan, New York.

The third level into which arts education may make contributions is *Ancillary Outcomes of Arts Education*. This refers to “outcomes that transfer skills employed in the perception, creation, and comprehension of the arts to non-arts tasks” (Eisner, 1998, p. 13). For instance, the kind of qualitative assessments needed in the creation of any of the arts, require judgments that will be made in the absence of rules. These three tiers provide an even deeper demonstration of the significance of the arts in the educational advancement of students at the Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School.

Evidence of these three tiers discussed by Eisner (1998) has informed my study. In the observation of a vocal music class for example, verification of tier one was demonstrated in which the teacher requested that students complete an analysis of a piece of vocal music. Tier two was observed in the visual arts class in which students critiqued the work of their peers. Tier three was highlighted in a focused group interview session in which one group member stated that visual arts had taught him how to break down information to complete an art project. This same approach was used by study participant when in a mathematics testing situation.

Impetus/Purpose of the Study

Despite the increase in the number of arts academies in existence, there appears to be a limited amount of research that pertains to the purpose of the arts (Halquist, 2003). The purpose of this three-phase, sequential mixed method study, was to investigate the impact of the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (pseudonym) on the high school students it served. This impact of the arts academy, for instance, showed changes in high school students' participation levels in the arts. Moreover, it was revealed by some participants in the study that being involved in the arts influenced them to consider careers in the arts. For instance, some students may think about becoming professional dancers or arts educators after completing a course of study. Students also demonstrated that being in the arts had a positive impact on their academic performance. Furthermore, for several participants in the research study, being in the arts academy influenced their attitudes, in that they were able to function in leadership roles, such as being stage managers and assistant stage managers in major theatrical productions at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School and actively engaging in classroom discussions.

In Phase I of the study, a quantitative survey instrument was administered to the high school students at the research site (Appendix A). The data collected in this phase helped to prepare a statistical analysis of the impact of the arts on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Academy. For instance, the collected data revealed the relationship between student involvement in the arts and their overall educational performance; the relationship between participation in the arts and student attitude towards the academics and the arts; the relationship between gender in specific

arts disciplines and student academic performance; the relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts; and the relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts.

The purpose for its administration was to compile information on the students' perception of the impact of the arts academy. The survey comprised 19 questions that focused on various aspects relative to the arts academy. Most of the questions required students to select only one of the possible choices given; with several of the questions being Likert-type items. A Likert-type item is a declarative statement followed by choices that ask for the participants' level of agreement (Patten, 2001). The survey instrument employed in this study consisted of several broad categories: student aspirations; student attitudes; student achievement and the arts; student engagement and the arts; and demographic information. Some of the questions, apart from the Likert-type items, required students, for example, to identify their performing or fine arts discipline, select what they aspire to study at the college level, and state how much time they spent working on aspects of their chosen arts discipline.

Phase II explored further the impact of the arts academy on the students through the collection of qualitative data. This concentrated on focus groups interviews with students who were randomly selected from various arts disciplines. The purpose of the focus groups was to investigate the overarching research question of the impact of the arts academy on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine arts. The qualitative data collected from the research participants revealed the emergence of several themes, which suggested that the arts have positively impacted the high school students. The focus groups comprised five student participants from each of six broad

categories of the performing and fine arts disciplines which include: vocal music, instrumental music, theatre arts, dance, visual arts, and television and film. The questions the participants were asked ascertained information with respect to the impact of the arts academy through a different medium that answered similar types of questions to those asked using the quantitative approach in the first phase. There were 17 questions put to the student respondents, divided into four sections: student achievement, student engagement, student aspirations, and student attitudes (Appendix B). These were open-ended in design and the responses were scripted by the researcher during the interview segment. It was recommended that researchers take notes in the event that the recording device unexpectedly fails (Creswell, 2009).

In Phase III, a more in-depth qualitative study in which student participants were individually interviewed was conducted, in addition to classroom observations. Students were randomly selected from the six broad groups of the arts disciplines, on an individual basis for the interviews so that as the researcher, I could elicit additional rich data on the impact of the arts academy on the high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. The questions asked were very similar to those used in the focus group interview process of Phase II. Additionally, observations took place in four arts disciplines: vocal music, theatre arts, visual arts, and television and film. These arts areas were selected as a means of capturing student engagement in several arts disciplines. These observations were predominantly conducted in classrooms of tenured arts educators who were comfortable and confident with the researcher being present during instructional time. Also in this phase, the researcher collected artifacts and documents that were germane to the research site. These included: student work and mission

statement of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (Appendix C), in addition to student performance of *Guys and Dolls* (Appendix D). The rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative research methods was to obtain a better understanding of the impact of the arts on the high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. This research study will not remedy all the deficiencies of the arts academy, but it will contribute to the scholarly literature of the arts discipline, thus increasing the resources that are available.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions about the impact of the arts academy on the high school students it served.

1. What was the impact of the high school arts academy on the students it served?
2. How did participation in a high school arts academy influence student attitudes towards their academics and the arts?
3. How did an arts academy influence student academic performance?
4. How did participation in an arts academy engage students in the arts?
5. Did participation in the high school arts program influence students to pursue careers in the arts?

Significance of the Study

The individuals for whom the study would be most beneficial are the stakeholders of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. They will discover that the students' contributions are invaluable to this study on the arts academy. Schubert and Melnick (1997) embarked on a study that investigated the effects on individual students of arts

integration within their civics, English, history, and geography curriculums. The authors discovered that in some arts centered settings, improvement was seen in students' problem solving abilities, and written and oral communication when arts education was integrated into the curriculum. Schubert and Melnick (1997) believe that students learn in multiple ways and the designs of the current curriculums deny them the opportunity to be able to draw upon the intelligences that would allow them to maximize their learning potential. The authors made a critical point that schools must approach the learning experiences of students from several vantage points, inclusive of the arts, if successful learning and teaching outcomes are to be realized.

Results of the study done by Schubert and Melnick (1997) showed that students suddenly blossomed when the regular curriculum was integrated with the arts. For instance, one dance student who was introverted became more expressive when he was engaged in dance as they studied social studies. Dance is of great significance because children are the reason dance is so important to education (McCutchen, 2006). Educational dance is a means by which children can reach their full potential. Dance is of great significance because it involves the whole child: the intellectual, artistic, physical, and social child (McCutchen, 2006). Therefore, when dance is taught to students from a student-centered perspective, all four aspects are incorporated in their learning experiences.

Schubert and Melnick (1997) noted that students who did not buy into the concept of arts integration at the beginning of the study became advocates for the integration experience. Educational implications from the study suggested that students are turned on to school where learning is made easier and more meaningful through the understanding

of the importance of the relationship between different subjects, which was made possible through an arts integration program. It would be anticipated that the Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School will produce students who are equipped with skills to successfully compete with their counterparts as they enter the work force or embark on higher education after graduation.

Furthermore, Taylor (2008), in a conducted study between the University Musical Society and the School of Education at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, claimed that the integration of social studies and the performing arts increases the educator's comprehension in both fields. Moreover, the interdisciplinary work by both educators and students will facilitate the expansion of students' knowledge of history and diverse cultures. Added to that, the inclusion of the arts in social studies instruction has the ability to promote pedagogical benefits and ultimately encourage differentiated instruction.

This mixed method research project on the impact of the arts academy on the high school students it serves at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School can be used to inform a variety of audiences. Arts educators will discover how their instructional practices are viewed by the high school population they instruct. The arts practitioners will also be able to determine what strategies are effective teaching tools in the dissemination of vital information; and those that are not very effective. If skeptics of the school's arts academy do exist, they will begin to envision how significant the arts are, not only to the academic lives of these high school students, but also to their professional futures. However, when a team of stakeholders embark on the development and implementation of a program, "there is sufficient vision within a community of change

agents to ensure an acceptable degree of wisdom, insight, freshness, and innovation” (Wilson, 2000, p. 19). Parents and guardians will realize that their roles in the lives of their children are of great importance, and as such, should not be taken lightly. Their continued support is vital to their children’s ultimate success, and evidence of this was ascertained during the interview process with students. Learning in and through the arts is an activity that is closely interwoven with social, academic, and cognitive growth (Mason & Steedly, 2006, p. 42).

The investigation of the impact of the arts academy on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts is worth the investment. The requirements for high school graduation in the State of New Jersey have changed drastically, in that, high school students who cannot pass the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) are being made to take and pass a new version of the Special Review Assessment (SRA), now called Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) in mathematics and language arts, which will be scored by the Department of Education. Prior to this change, students were allowed to complete various components of the SRA with their classroom teachers, who also scored the objectives. This move by the State Department of Education seems to be an initiative to create an elitist type of education in which only the brightest and the best students capture the first-rate educational opportunities. This being said, the more opportunities and strategies that high school students have to improve learning, the greater would be their chances of success. Therefore, the study demonstrated that the high school students who were exposed to the arts rich curricula were able to acquire skills that facilitated learning in academic subject areas.

This study provided the stakeholders of the school with a better understanding that the arts can impact students' learning opportunities. For instance, as the researcher, I discovered that theatre arts study participants used their theatre experiences to enhance learning in English Literature classes. The significance of making theatre part of the integrated curriculum is a way of helping students understand the world around them and their place in it. Students would find the theatrical process of projecting themselves into strange or familiar circumstances immeasurably entertaining and beneficial to their learning experiences (Arnold, 2011, p. 1). The theatre experience is also significant in that it will allow students to become more aware of their senses, observe people and places more closely, and more expressively. Students will have the ability to learn how to use their talents, reinforce their self-confidence, and improve their ability to work collaboratively with others (Prince & Jackson, 2009).

Conclusion

This research study employed the utilization of a sequential mixed method approach embracing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies for the data collection. The quantitative method analyzed the data using statistical approaches, through random samplings. The survey questions, of several types, were developed and distributed to the high school student population. The qualitative method gathered data through interviews with the student participants and observations of arts classrooms. The data collection instrument consisted of interview questions for students covering several components of the arts. Observations of classes were conducted as arts educators instructed their students, while the interviews took place either in the students' classrooms or at alternative locations within the school. The participants were assured

that their anonymity would be protected with the information they shared for this research project.

The broad topical area of my study involved an investigation of the impact of the arts academy on the students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (pseudonym), using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Through the utilization of the quantitative approach, the student survey questionnaire focused on identifying how the arts have impacted the educational experiences of the students. Further investigation of the impact of the arts was explored using qualitative methodologies as the means of additional discovery. It was the ultimate goal of this research to reveal any significant contributions that the arts may play in facilitating the learning of high school students. The study demonstrated that the arts can impact high students on several levels such as: engagement, attitude, academic, behavioral, arts, and their future plans. Focus was given to the various arts disciplines for the discovery of the outcomes.

In closing, it would be appropriate to state that all children in American school systems should be given chances to gain understanding and accumulate wisdom through artistic opportunities. Arts education does not only provide artistic training, but also teaches children creativity, spatial thinking, and abstract reasoning (Lynch, 2008). These are the skills that employers will be focusing on as students prepare themselves for the 21st century competitive global workforce. No longer can schools continue to treat and teach the arts as though it is not integral to the curriculum. The more avenues that students have to gain knowledge, the better equipped they will be for the future.

According to Lynch (2008), the arts are not well understood by much of the general public, and so continue to obtain peripheral attention in our schools. It is critical

that the mindset of those individuals be altered in efforts to dispel the myths, so they can begin to envision the multitude of possibilities that can become available in our schools and our communities for our children. Lynch also discovered in his research that the employment rate appeared higher for those students who had arts experiences over those who did not. Included in the discovery was that for students who left school at the earliest opportunity, employability was generally higher for those who studied the arts.

The impact of the arts can only be effective in the learning processes of students when the presence of the arts in the schools is meaningful. To facilitate this process, arts educators must be present, providing appropriate and comprehensive instruction and learning in all artistic disciplines. Added to that, community arts partnerships must be fostered, sustained, and incorporated into the arts education mission (Lynch, 2008).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Literature centered on the arts provides an essential ingredient to attaining understanding into the significance of the discipline in schools. Trent et al. (1998) stated that the arts connect us with the past, anchor us in the present, and enables us to forge bonds to the future. It is time to stop thinking about the arts as fluff. The reason being, that they make schools better places to learn, and they raise student achievement (Rabkin & Redmond, 2008). In this literature review several topical areas will be discussed with respect to the importance of the arts in the instructional environment of children. The areas of focus include: evolution of arts education; towards national standards for arts education; research conducted in the arts; moving towards arts integration and interdisciplinary approaches; linking the arts to school choice; the framework of arts magnet schools; studies of arts magnet schools; and benefits of collaborative arts magnet experiences.

These topical areas of my literature review will help to paint a picture that expresses the necessity for the arts in the instructional experiences of high school arts academy students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. As a researcher, attempts were made to clarify, define, and summarize the rewards and challenges that may have become evident as students became engaged in the arts magnet school in which the study was conducted. The study concentrated on various components of the performing and fine arts within the arts magnet discipline. It is anticipated that the revelation of significant information will provide readers with added resources that can

give validity to the essential role arts magnet schools play in the educational development of students.

Evolution of Arts Education

According to Heilig, Cole, and Aguilar (2010), arts education has a long and complicated history in the United States. Initially introduced as practical training for industrial employment, the arts entered the classroom in the last quarter of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 1900s, the post-industrialization era, the arts as cultural enrichment became a curriculum goal in schools (Heilig et al., 2010).

At the turn of the century, John Dewey began experimenting with a new approach to education that would become known as progressive education (Goldblatt, 2006). As mentioned by Heilig et al. (2010), Dewey believed that children needed education that was authentic and allows them to grow mentally, physically, and socially by providing them with opportunities to be creative and critical thinkers. For Dewey, the arts function as experience and access to arts education creates processes of inquiry that expand the perception of children and open venues for understanding and action (Goldblatt, 2006). Dewey believed that people learned by putting thought into action, by confronting problems that arise while being engaged in activities that interest them (Olson, 1999). It was during the progressive era that student-centered, studio-based learning was first introduced into U.S. public schools. For instance, when the Gary, Indiana public school system started in 1906, in arts classes, students sang, gave lectures, questioned one another's presentations, put on plays, viewed films, and recited poetry (Hoff, 1999).

Heilig et al. (2010) highlighted the fact that the 20th century was dominated by a less restrictive approach to the arts than had been the norm of the late 19th century.

Berliner (2009) declared that this broad-based approach to the arts in the curriculum demonstrated for the first time that arts education concepts were promoted for their contributions to subject areas; a pairing that would continue to inform discussions for years to come.

At the close of the 1920s into the 1930s, educators began to become confident that the arts had been firmly embedded into the fiber of the curriculum (Efland, 1983). However, this was the period of the Great Depression and the face of America changed with the crash of Wall Street, which wiped out the life savings of many. As a result of limited resources during these times, many schools across the country were forced to close. In many cities and states the length of the school terms were shortened, and the salaries of teachers cut until they reached levels earned by unskilled laborers (Efland, 1983, p. 38). The impact on the arts was tremendous, which resulted in curtailment of arts programs and reductions in time allotments.

In the 1950s, the economy had rebounded which benefited education. Monetary benefits that were previously denied to education systems were now redirected (Ziegfeld, 1951). Funding was now available to fund arts programs. During that time period, as stated by Ziegfeld, arts education in this country had a status that probably surpassed that of other countries. As demonstrated by Heilig et al. (2010), while arts education became more recognized during this time period, it also suffered a devastating blow when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik. This brought on the onset of the government proclaiming an educational crisis, which resulted in greater emphasis being placed on science and mathematics, pushing arts education out of the spotlight.

During the 1960s, the United States Office of Education (USOE) supported research and curriculum projects in the arts. As a result, these programs generated arts education policy concepts and framed the arts as a subject for curriculum-based instruction (Chapman, 2000). In 1965, Congress established the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which became for many the symbolic location for the arts and arts education policymaking in America (Chapman, 2000, p. 27). In arts education, the NEA focused on arts-in-school programs rather than established programs led by specialist teachers. Despite the increased presence of the federal government in the 1960s, arts education still remained within the local control as mandated by the U.S. Constitution and other federal education laws (Heilig et al., 2010). Furthermore, these authors also stated that federal expenditure on arts education has always been tremendously small as compared to the cumulative of local support.

The 1980s set the stage for stronger federal involvement in education in the 1990s. Arts education was included in this plan mainly because national associations of certified arts teachers began demanding a place for the arts in federal lists of basic subjects that were being written into legislation. Highly qualified professionals from the National Art Education Association and its counterparts in music, dance, and theatre wrote standards for the various art forms. Naturally, the standards were based in disciplinary content (Heilig et al., 2010). The K-12 arts teacher associations and other advocates achieved success when Congress signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act into law in 1994 (Earley, 1994). Section 102 of the Act stated that by the year 2000, all students will “demonstrate competency over challenging subject matter including

English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography” (Earley, 1994, p. 4).

When George W. Bush was elected to the presidency in 2000, he drew his ideas for federal education policy from his home state of Texas, where testing in mathematics and language arts were the primary tools for measuring student, school, and district success. This was due to the fact that the Texas approach to education was demonstrating great results as dropout rates plunged and test scores soared (Heilig et al., 2010). McNeil (2005, as cited in Heilig et al., 2010) stated that in 2002, Texas-style high-stakes accountability through testing became the educational policy for the nation with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as No Child Left Behind. Critics condemned the impact of 10 years of Texas-style accountability on arts education. They argued that the state’s focus on high-stakes testing had consequences on arts education in schools (Heilig et al., 2010). Haney (2000) reported that the areas not tested on high-stakes exams in Texas, for example, the arts, were receiving less attention in the curriculum.

Due to the perceived negative impacts of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on arts education, the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) published an analysis of prior research conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Arts Education Partnership (AEP), the National Assembly of State Art Agencies (NASAA), and the Department of Education on the rewards of arts education for student achievement (Ruppert, 2006). The report argues that in the federal NCLB Act, “the arts share equal billing with reading, math, science, and other disciplines as ‘core academic subjects,’ which can contribute to improved student learning outcomes” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 1).

However, Chapman (2007) contends that although the accountability era did not halt nationwide arts education in America, it has become apparent that the focus of NCLB is somewhere other than the arts. The accountability era also symbolizes the movement from arts education that is being driven by local pedagogical and curricular discussion to an environment in which educational standards both at the state and federal levels, impact the presence of the arts in school curriculum (Berliner, 2009). To further strengthen the importance of the arts, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has demonstrated its involvement by cosigning the significance of the arts skills in the educational experiences of children.

Towards National Standards for Arts Education

During the past decade of educational reform, the federal and state governments and the private sector have recommended and adopted policies for the advancement of the visual and performing arts as essential to a comprehensive education. The goals created by the president and the governors of all 50 states for American education now include the arts as integral parts of education (Hatfield, 2007). Hatfield also states that Goals 2000 and other legislation have provided funding for arts education. The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) has adopted a policy to assess the arts in each decade. Underscoring the importance of the arts in schools in 1997, NAEP Arts Education Framework Project developed standards for grades 4, 8, and 12 in which the arts would be assessed (U. S. Department of Education, 2008a). The National Assessment Governing Board, under the guidance of the U.S. Department of Education, was created by Congress to formulate policy for NAEP. The National Assessment of Educational

Progress makes objective information about student performance available to policymakers at the national and state levels (Hatfield, 2007).

Standards for the arts (Hatfield, 2007), which are embraced by NAEP, require that by the completion of high school, students involved in the arts should have a grasp of the following components.

1. They should be communicating at a basic level in the four arts disciplines—dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. Furthermore, they should have knowledge and skills in the use of the basic vocabularies, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of the discipline.
2. They should be communicating proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.
3. They should be developing and presenting basic analyses of works of art from structural, historical, and cultural viewpoints. This will include the ability to understand and evaluate work in the various arts disciplines.
4. They should have an informed familiarity with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods; in addition to a basic understanding of historical development in the arts disciplines across the arts as a whole.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) arts education framework is conceived on a vision which believes that the arts are essential to every child's complete development. Throughout their lives, children will use artistic experiences to bring about understanding to their total existence. The premise is that they will experience enough of the discipline, challenge, and joy of creating in different art

forms to really comprehend the human significance of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts.

The NAEP framework states that the arts are an important vehicle for learning skills that is highly valued by reformers, both in the education and business communities. Examples of these are problem solving, higher-order thinking, flexibility, persistence, and cooperation (U. S. Department of Education, 2008a). It is believed that students who value the discipline of the arts equip themselves for challenges in work and life. Through arts integrated curriculums, students become part of the human heritage of creativity.

The fact that a NAEP assessment is dedicated to the arts is a positive indication that the arts are valued within the context of general education. According to Hatfield (2007), the NAEP arts assessment is instructive to arts educators in at least two ways. First, educational assessment is a central component for responsible arts education. Second, the framework for the 1997 NAEP arts education assessment was developed concurrently with the National Standards for the Arts. Although NAEP cannot determine whether the nation's schools are doing a better or worse job with arts education than 10 or 20 years ago, the fact remains that the new assessment is still important to policymakers.

Moreover, it is the first time that the nation has had an authentic assessment in the arts. The assessment serves to confirm the place of the arts in the regular curriculum. The National Assessment of Educational Progress tests are based on a solid framework for assessment of student learning, developed by arts educators. The release of the NAEP results communicated that there are indeed national arts standards for student learning, and the assessment itself demonstrated that student learning in the arts can be assessed on

a large scale (Hatfield, 2007, p. 10). Furthermore, arts researchers and scholars alike have the ability to produce evidence that promotes student success.

Research Conducted in the Arts

The discussion which follows highlights some of the researchers who have conducted studies in the arts and education. These studies were done in several arts disciplines and have provided support for student involvement and motivation in the arts, in the context of optimizing learning outcomes. These researchers have shown the benefits and rewards that students reap through their exposure to arts education. Included in the discussion is a study which talks about the development of eight models of the arts – arts based model; arts infused model; arts included model; arts expansion model; arts professional model; arts extra model; aesthetic model, and arts cultura model.

Eight models of the arts. Davis (1999) in his studies has discovered that the arts enter the lives of children in a variety of ways. The author has developed eight models, which demonstrate these various ways. First he speaks about the *arts based model* in which the arts are seen as the basis, means, and threshold for student learning. The students study the arts intensively with the premise of learning other subjects. In the arts based paradigm, the arts are the nucleus of the educational setting. Next is the *arts infused model* which is aimed at enriching student learning. For example, music may be played and studied from a particular time period during a history class. With the *arts included model*, the arts are included in the roster of courses offered and are studied independently of other courses. The *arts expansion model* focuses on study outside of the school environment into the larger community; for instance, taking students on trips to museums, performances, and art shows.

The *arts professional model* concentrates on students who are seriously considering careers in the arts. When charted correctly, these aspiring professional artists stand to have great financial gains. The *arts extra model* is found in many schools today, in which students are exposed to the arts through plays, poetry clubs, and piano private lessons. With the *aesthetic model* the students acquire skills of interpretation and become acquainted with a plethora of aesthetic texts across disciplines. According to Davis (1999), this final model of *arts cultura* is his most beloved. The arts connect the cultures of students with the larger cultures of the world. This cultural integration allows students to have a greater appreciation and understanding of a variety of cultural experiences. Davis says children need to be equipped with the vocabularies of the arts so that they may construct their own imprints with the hope of being sensitive to the imprints of others.

Visual arts studies. In studies conducted by Winner and Hetland (2008) with visual arts students at the Boston Arts Academy, a public school, and Walnut Hill School, a private institution, the authors, in the analysis of their findings, identified eight beneficial habits that arts classes taught. These habits included: the persistence of students as they worked on projects; the expressions students used which were rich in emotions, atmosphere, and personal vision; observing; envisioning; innovating through exploration; reflective self-evaluation; visualization; and making connections between schoolwork and the outside world.

As the authors Winner and Hetland (2008) conducted their study, they witnessed high levels of sophistication in the thought processes of students, which were attributed to arts involvement. These children were being trained to observe visual arts through a set of complex lenses for deeper meaning of the art experience. The envisioning thought

patterns of students were also being developed, which resulted in the formulation of mental images that guided actions and solved problems. Winner and Hetland saw that teachers encouraged students to be innovative through exploring, experimenting, and risk taking. Teachers of visual arts were constantly requiring students to engage in self-evaluation, through analysis, judgment, and at times reworking an entire project. The authors, through their studies, set out to demonstrate the valuable contributions of the arts and the need to start using the arts to restore balance and depth to educational systems.

Amidst the pressures of preparing students for standardized tests at Boston Arts Academy, an academic teacher adopted an arts-like approach to educating students. For instance, the students engage in long-term investigations rather than one-shot assignments. Through this process, the students' projects are continuously being evaluated, resulting in their ability to reflect and make improvements (Winner & Hetland, 2008).

Conn (2008), in his studies conducted with visual arts students of the New York City school system, was able to discover their creative abilities. Conn's results were similar to Winner and Hetland (2008), who completed their studies at the Boston Arts Academy and the Walnut Hill School. Like Winner and Hetland, Conn also recognized that students were more fluent in verbal expression. For instance, their critical thinking abilities were developed, they were positive risk-takers, they were self-confident, and they developed their capacities for being persistent with tasks. For the execution of the study, Conn used Rembrandt's works as the artistic demonstrative medium. The author's rationale for using Rembrandt as the basis of a visual stimulus was due to the artist's profound humanity as exhibited by his life and art (Conn, 2008, p. 75). Rembrandt's

paradigm was utilized to teach: critical thinking and aesthetics to the students because of the historical and biblical references; universal appeal; prolific art; innovative and inventive techniques; and life story-for example, he moved from poverty to fame then back to poverty. Conn demonstrated that Rembrandt's life and work have a direct connection to the National Social Studies Standards, which are set forth by the National Council of Social Studies Standards. There are six strands that correlate with many of Rembrandt's works: culture and civilization; people; places and environments; power, authority, and governance; individual development and identity; and time, continuity, and change. Conn's assessment of his paradigm highlights that the success rate of art integration and the curriculum can only be evaluated qualitatively. The author has taken measures to show how the use of art as a teaching medium can have a beneficial impact on the education of students.

Musical studies. Further support of the benefits or the rewards of the arts, can be seen in a study that was conducted with kindergarten students (Colwell, 1994). It was discovered that music seemed to play a vital role in their development. In light of this, music may logically be integrated as a component of the whole language curriculum. Singing, a natural music activity for children, provides opportunities to build language fluency that can transfer across the curriculum. Songs like books, may help children link oral to written language through rhyme, rhythm, and repetition of vocabulary and story structure. Colwell sought to examine the effects of three methods of shared reading paired with music. These were: (a) song rehearsal of text set to music, (b) spoken and song rehearsal of text set to music, and (c) spoken rehearsal only text, on reading accuracy among kindergarten children. The analysis indicated that both song rehearsal of

the text set to music, and spoken and song rehearsal of text set to music, facilitated greater text accuracy than spoken rehearsal only of the text.

In a study done by Gfeller (1986), musical mnemonics and verbalizations were used for the recollection of multiplication facts with learning disabled and regular education students. Musical mnemonics refer to the use of musical aids such as favorite songs or the writing of melodies to assist in recalling and retaining information. Initially, the regular education children showed greater recall than the learning disabled students following one rehearsal. At the conclusion of five rehearsals, both groups using musical rehearsal showed more improvement at recalling multiplications facts than the students who used verbal rehearsal. Many students commented that the facts easily recalled were those rehearsed to songs that were familiar or that they liked.

Music creates a variety of moods in individuals, so too when used with learning disabled children and adolescents, different moods are also created. Music of mostly classical and instrumental genre has been used to provide a background during instructional and independent learning times. With studies done by Applegate and Hamm (1985) they observed that faster paced pieces of music increased the arousal levels of students. Conversely, slower paced music seemed to lower those levels of the students. In these studies, the types of music used were from composers such as Bach and Vivaldi. With these changes in arousal levels, academic gains were obtained, which were evaluated on the Woodcock Psycho-educational Battery, which indicated significant growth in reading and written language.

In a study done by Eidson (1989) it was realized that music may be helpful in structuring forms of interaction that extend beyond verbalization. It was discovered that

music can also be conducive to stimulating nonverbal self-expression for young adolescents in group situations. Students in music classrooms seemed to demonstrate higher levels of on-task behaviors than do students in classrooms without music. Music in group therapy has also been efficacious in developing group cohesion as well as interpersonal skills. Eidson has discerned that those emotionally handicapped children, who were in the group using music therapy, displayed more appropriate types of behaviors, than did those subjects who were part of the control group.

Moving Towards Arts Integration and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Bresler (1995) has identified four integration approaches of the arts into the daily curriculum in schools, each with its own set of goals, contents, pedagogies, and roles. In the subservient approach, the arts serve to enhance other subjects with activities such as singing songs on themes presented in other disciplines. The co-equal, cognitive integration style, requires discipline-specific knowledge or skills. The author studied a social studies teacher in a Chicago school who implemented this approach. The teacher, with a knowledgeable music background, incorporated information about composers and the different stylistic eras in which they worked. The students discussed what the people did during this particular time period in history and through meaningful exploration of the musical compositions, discovered the trends and values of the eras.

With the affective integration style, Bresler (1995) observed that this approach was most useful in the primary grades and with special populations. The students were given opportunities to listen to music during activities mainly for relaxation purposes. Additionally, students were in a structure where they were free of criticisms for not conforming, but appreciated for their unique visions and capabilities. They could

experience and express themselves in a variety of ways, while forming their own decisions on what to do and how it should be done. Lastly, the social integration style has the arts making provisions for the social functions of schooling. Bresler observed that principals placed high value on school and community relations in which the arts played a vital role in PTA meetings, holiday celebrations, honor programs, and ethnic celebrations. In Bresler's view, the integration of these styles is contingent upon the extent to which they necessitate curriculum reform and change in existing practices. Successful implementation may require the collaborative efforts of arts teachers and academic teachers.

In an observation done by McMaster (1998) with elementary school children in Syracuse, New York, drama was used to reinforce learning with third grade students. The children were engaged in learning about Frederick Douglas, but the teacher in ascertaining facts was stunned by the non-responsiveness of the students to the question, "Why do you think slaves were not allowed to learn to read and write?" (McMaster, 1998, p. 574). She then scribbled, "Let's escape tonight," on paper, folded it, and passed it to a student who in turn read it and passed it on to other students. Then a group of students suddenly rose up and followed the teacher out of the classroom. The group reappeared with their teacher who repeated her earlier question. The students were excited and eager to give responses at this juncture. Some of the responses given by the students mentioned that the slaves were unable to escape; and that if the slaves could not read, then they could not learn how to escape. McMaster observed that this mini drama activity created a clear mental representation that the teacher and students were able to draw upon for future classroom discussion.

McMaster (1998) stressed the fact that drama offers students a variety of communication experiences. Children develop oral language skills as they define, articulate, express, and verbalize thoughts in the context of improvised activities. The author also sees drama as an invaluable medium for educators because it is one of the few vehicles of instruction that can support every aspect of literacy development. Drama is an important source of scaffolding for emergent readers by providing them with rich background experiences to draw upon in future reading. McMaster states that drama assists in the development of decoding skills, fluency, vocabulary knowledge, syntactic knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge. The ultimate role of drama, according to McMaster, is its ability to motivate students to read and keep on reading, and thus supports educators in reaching their goal: creating and nurturing life-long learners.

The arts and academic integration. At the Boston Arts Academy, Nathan (2008) discussed the value of incorporating the arts into academics, rather than segregating education into two components of learning. This high school has the dual curriculum of the arts and academics, in which they are integrated into classroom experiences. For example, in Spanish classes, students study Latin American artists and scholars who are enacted by the students. The students are often dressed in full regalia to bring about deeper understanding of the history and background of these individuals. Visual arts students are exposed to Spanish when they are instructed by an artist in residence from Mexico, who communicates predominantly in the language. At Boston Arts Academy, the students are exposed to authentic assessments which concentrate on the process of learning and the ability of the students to describe, define, and reflect on where they are in the learning process and their capabilities to master a set of concepts.

Lynch (2008) stresses that a major threat to America's global competitiveness is the erosion of the arts in our educational system. Students from pre-K to 12th grade would need to have knowledge and skills in the arts which can only be provided by the specialists in the various disciplines – music, theatre, visual arts, and dance. These specialists also promote collaboration with classroom teachers to make connections between the arts and other subject areas.

Smith and Herring (1996) argue that in order to make literature meaningful, students must be given aesthetic opportunities to respond to the printed text. The authors discuss five activities that were created for the purpose of making an active learning environment. First, the students were engaged in expressive writing to facilitate responses to the themes in a novel. Second, the students became involved in creative movement to work through the setting of the story. Third, visual art was utilized to illustrate their feelings or understanding of the book. Fourth, the students employed exploratory music to respond to a portion of the text. The last activity involved the use of informal dramatization.

Rabkin and Redmond (2006) realized that arts integration turns curriculum toward work that does not merely reproduce knowledge, but uses it in authentic intellectual ways. These authors have observed arts integration working effectively with fourth grade students in a low-income inner-city school of Chicago, Illinois. The students were engaged in a lesson on descriptive writing in which they remained focused and excited about learning. Rich writing and art covered the classroom walls, showing evidence of real learning and accomplishment. Successful arts integration programs, as stated by Rabkin and Redmond, draw on the artistic resources of their communities, building

sustained partnerships between schools and arts organizations, and between teachers and artists. It is also important to engage artists, arts specialists, and teachers from all disciplines to the powerful pedagogical and curricular connections between the arts and other subjects. Student achievement and school improvement are pivotal to the success of the entire mission and not only that of arts education.

Approaches to enhancing arts education and successful collaborations.

Professional development is one of the key factors to enhancing arts education in schools (Appel, 2006). According to Appel, several elements should be considered when planning professional development for the arts. These include the following:

- One shot arts engagements are not effective. Professional development in the arts should be on-going.
- Professional development should be provided in partnership with teaching artists/arts providers.
- Practitioners should be given opportunities for follow-up sessions in which outcomes can be shared and feedback given.
- Connections to cross-curricular standards and frameworks must be explicated from the start and built into short and long term lesson projects.
- Professional development should provide teachers with strategies that they can use to reinforce arts learning (Appel, 2006, p. 16).

Appel (2006) highlights the successful professional development collaboration between the Orange County Performing Arts Center (OCPAC) and teachers and administrators in the Southern California area. This week long summer intensive training provided an in-depth review of standards and frameworks across the curriculum in which strategies to

engage students in arts integrated experiences are learned. Participants not only learn what the arts teach, but also participate in a series of projects that can be readily implemented in the classrooms. There is follow-up in the late fall in which the participants who were involved in the summer training shared their experiences about what elements worked well, what did not work well, and what noticeable changes were observed during delivery in the classrooms (Appel, 2006).

Another key element that could enhance the success of arts education is professional collaboration. Williamson and Zimmerman (2009) in their article discussed how an elementary school principal of Old Adobe Union School District in Petaluma, California was instrumental in assuring that all teachers made the fundamental shift from teacher-centric to learner-centric thinking. This change initiative allowed teachers to become experts, bringing their students to higher levels of understanding.

Teachers committed to the integration of visual and performing arts into their curriculum. The principal realized the significance of the arts in his school, that he seized the opportunity and used an arts teacher as a vehicle through which the change initiative should be channeled. A drama teacher facilitated the infusion of the arts into the curriculum and guided fellow teachers through an organized process of making this educational experience their own. It was evident to the teachers that the framework of the performing arts paired with teacher experts was increasing the cognitive intricacy of teacher planning and reflection. Furthermore, professional collaboration woven into the cultural fiber of the school has resulted in teachers planning lessons together, implementing instruction, reflecting on results, and improving instruction. However, to

further reinforce the concept of arts education, arts magnet schools were established to enhance the discipline.

Linking the Arts to School Choice

School choice has played a significant role in the educational experiences of children. Schools for the arts are choice schools and apart from being traditional public schools, they could be established as magnet schools or charter schools. Magnet schools generally speaking, have several appealing characteristics (Halquist, 2003). These include: a specialized core curriculum or pedagogical approaches; the school's focus on a field of study gives students a sense of direction; a sense of shared endeavor and a committed, enthusiastic faculty and student body; a strong commitment to parent involvement; a committed charismatic principal; and an association with reform measures of contextual teaching, cooperative learning, and teacher collegiality (Inger, 1991, as cited in Halquist, 2003). Magnet schools have a single curriculum focus referred to as themes, even though they may teach the basics in all academic areas (Schwartz, 1995).

Schwartz (1995) also declared that magnet schools emphasize a single subject or area of learning, such as science, the humanities, or the arts, and may use examples from the theme subject when teaching other core subjects. Due to the fact that theme schools bring together students who share an interest, they tend to have a school population of students with mixed academic ability, English language skills, and ethnic and social background (Schwartz, 1995, p. 4). As stated by Schwartz, many education experts have the belief the magnet schools that provide the best educational experiences for children are the ones that offer a wide array of courses related to the theme. Furthermore, this will ultimately allow the theme to positively affect all areas of the children's schooling.

Charter schools, in contrast, are public schools that are allowed to operate to varying degrees outside of the normal public school spectrum. The nation's first charter school legislation was enacted into law in Minnesota in 1991 and since then, many states have enacted legislation that provided for charter schools (Hanushek, 2006). These schools can offer competition to regular public schools because of their ability to draw students away from poorly performing regular public schools.

Moreover, as mentioned by Hanushek (2006), charter schools are schools of choice surviving through their ability to attract adequate numbers of students. Additionally, they are schools that are fairly new, but nonetheless, the best evidence available suggests that after a start-up phase, charter schools are as vital as regular public schools in providing instructional programs for children.

As postulated by Hanushek (2006), there are three quality indicators which can be summarized with respect to charter schools. First, charter schools perform very similarly to regular public schools. Second, start-up problems are very realistic, and in so doing, new charters do not perform as well as the more established charters; while on an average, the more established charter schools outperform the regular public schools. Third, there is a tremendous distribution of performance across both regular publics and privates. For instance, the ones that produce benefits are good, while those that are ineffective are truly bad. Charter schools can enhance student learning, however, focus will now revert to arts magnet studies that were conducted as a means of providing evidence of their importance in student instructions.

The Framework of Arts Magnet Schools

From a historical perspective, the arts have been linked to magnet schools. With this premise in mind, the ensuing discussions would focus on the relevance of magnet schools and their connection to the arts. Cichowski (as cited in Halquist, 2003) points to the fact that magnet schools came about in the 1970s as a means of preventing, eliminating, or reducing racial isolation in elementary and secondary schools. Steele and Levine (as cited in Halquist, 2003) defined magnet schools as schools that provide a curriculum or instructional approach, drawing students from outside the neighborhood school concept, and embark on making desegregation an explicit purpose.

One of the greatest challenges of magnet schools is that of state level fiscal constraints. Despite this phenomenon, the number of magnet school has not declined. In light of the fact that desegregation has become a secondary purpose, well funded magnet schools are usually targeted for cuts when resources are limited (Rossell, 2005). The sustainability of magnet schools is due to three significant elements (Rossell, 2005, p. 49). The first is that of the accomplishment of the civil rights movement, which was successful in getting whites to support the principle of racial diversity in the schools. Second is that magnet schools have been included into the school choice movement as a method for improving student achievement. Also, magnet schools have been incorporated into No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as a strategy for increasing the opportunities that are available to children in low performing schools. Third, parents have embraced the idea of magnet schools. Parents see magnet schools, for example, an arts academy, as an occasion for their children to pursue whatever passions they may possess.

The NCLB legislation in its mission has emphasized the importance of high stakes testing in reading and mathematics. This contradictory school of thought works against arts education, but if teachers in other subject areas recognize the great value of artistic opportunity, they can begin to incorporate the arts into classroom learning plans (Diket, 2003). The author further stated that within the realm of education, “the arts communicate ideas, captivate the imagination, contextualize information, provide open frames for viewing the world, and widen perspectives” (Diket, 2003, p. 174). According to Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, and Palmer (2009), the most important indications of merit in arts education is the quality of students’ learning experiences, not the quality of the artworks they create. Given a realistic prospective, the experiences of students are the primary product, and in so doing, teachers need to be mindful that the artwork is evidence of student learning.

Arts education gives students the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways which allow them to understand through exploration, and by the same token, allowing students to recognize ambiguity and subjectivity in learning (Daniel, 2000). Daniel elaborates even further by stating that arts education has the ability to improve learning skills, promote student achievement, enhance social skills, stimulate growth and development, and foster problem solving, high order thinking, communication, collaborative efforts, and creativity.

As discussed by Wilson (2001), arts magnet schools were created as a result of civil right legislation, which mandated that urban districts establish magnets schools as a utilitarian way to attract ethnically and economically diverse student populations. Many of these schools were built around the arts. In the Vancouver school district, an arts

school was born strictly for educational purposes and not as a result of desegregation directive (Wilson, 2001 p. 370). The framework of arts magnet schools formulates the perception which demonstrates that the arts have a link to school choice.

Arts magnet schools. According to Wilson (2001), there are several characteristics that exemplify arts magnet schools. These include the following:

- *Arts magnets are schools that are organized with a purpose.* They attract a variety of students from several socio-economic backgrounds. They provide a mixture of qualities that attract intellectually curious, creative, active, and enthusiastic students, teachers, administrators, and parents (Wilson, 2001, p. 376).
- *The achievements of arts magnet students are assessed by the public.* Student achievements are evaluated through standardized test scores, statistics with respect to the number of students who attend colleges and universities, and the number of college and university scholarship awards. The artworks that students create and perform in magnet schools are done so, for example, in the form of dance recitals, theatrical productions, and exhibitions of paintings. As observed by Wilson (2001), the educational potency of the arts discipline was evident in every classroom involved in the study.
- *Discipline, boundaries, and goals.* The arts magnet schools studied by Wilson (2001) revealed that students willingly discipline themselves, undertake rigorous practice, and spend a vast amount of time at easels and computers to make artworks and to make them better. In efforts to perfect their performances and their creations, students come to discover boundaries in a

world that too many teenagers, appear to be deprived of boundaries. Students learn best when learning is purposeful. Hence, in magnet schools, “students in the arts select or adopt goals willingly because they see them as purposeful and extrinsically rewarding” (Wilson, 2001, p. 378).

- *Active Learning.* Wilson (2001) stated that students in arts magnets spend less time sitting at desks, passively listening, and completing work sheets. Rather students are actively engaged in the learning process.
- *Continuous formative evaluation.* In arts magnets, active learning requires continuous assessment and evaluation, which are immediate and ongoing. In arts magnets, critical thinking is pertinent to the creative and performance processes.
- *Collaboration and playing multiple roles.* According to Wilson (2001), it has been said that employers want to hire individuals who can work together. Arts magnet students see themselves as team members and they unselfishly contribute their efforts for the benefit of a project. Arts magnet teachers are professionals in addition to being mentors. Students constantly emulated the skills of their teachers, learning their teachers’ interpretations, insights, and judgments (Wilson, 2001, p. 380).
- *Community and cohesion.* Wilson (2001) in his study realized that occupants of arts magnets view themselves as members of communities. Arts magnets are able to highlight the fact that the arts encourage students and faculty members to work together creating, performing, and displaying their efforts

together. Wilson eloquently stated that the mission of arts magnets “is inextricably connected to a comprehensive vision of education” (p. 380).

- *The arts and the integration of instruction.* Wilson (2001) discussed two ways in which the curriculum can be structured to maximize student success. One way is to envision each school subject as a separate and individual collection of knowledge best understood and studied within a discipline. The next involves ensuring that every school subject has connections to other subjects, which can be an effective means of students learning through active examination of those relationships, and applying intricate pieces of knowledge, skills, and inquiry. Wilson postulated that learning in arts magnets schools is better integrated, memorable, and effective than traditional schools (Wilson, 2001, p. 381).
- *Permeable school walls: Expansive sites for learning.* Of great significance in the learning process of students is the transpiration of in-school experiences to the outside world. When making the connections between in-school and out-of-school applications, arts magnets appear to have a greater advantage over traditional schools, because the activities are actually preparation for performances and exhibitions that will take place in the world beyond the school setting (Wilson, 2001). Arts magnets as suggested by Wilson, will also make school walls permeable by transferring to the community projects that have originated within the walls of the schools.
- *School Climate.* The climate that is created by the arts can transform schools into places that are “attractive, warm, welcoming, and visually exciting

places” (Wilson, 2001, p. 382). For example, the display of student work that are part of the visual arts programs will convert the walls of arts schools into spaces that have been inoculated with the serum of excitement.

- *The arts students’ attitudes towards school and academic achievement.* In the study, Wilson (2001) realized that students are enthusiastic about participating in the arts at school because of the opportunities of creative expression that the arts provide. Students can put their ideas, feelings, and emotions into artistic forms, which they can then share with others. Students take pride with respect to their creative achievements, and on numerous occasions, have stated that the arts are avenues through which they can have emotional releases.

Studies of Arts Magnet Schools

Jirtle (2000) highlighted the fact that Durham School of the Arts made a successful transformation from one of Durham’s least desirable schools to one that has become the district’s most coveted over a five year period. Fifty years ago, Durham High was predominantly White and noted for its academic and vocational excellence. As the student body of Durham High became less diverse, it also became poorer because the school boards during that time period began assigning an abundance of children from the housing projects to Durham High. Creating a workable educational environment was fruitless and, as a result, the move was made to create a 6-12 magnet school for the visual and performing arts. The areas of concentration were vocal music, instrumental music, theatre, dance, and art.

The school was then called Durham Magnet Center until 1999, when it was changed to Durham School of the Arts (DSA). Students are admitted to DSA through a lottery system and not an audition process. The only criterion for admission is completion and submission of the lottery application. The students who are selected reflect a wide range of educational and economic backgrounds (Jirtle, 2000, p. 695). As indicated by Jirtle (2000), the school is “earning the reputation of being a safe, stimulating environment in which to learn and a collegial environment in which to teach” (p. 694). Expectations for academic achievement are high. Since admission to the school is based on a lottery system, some of the students admitted may have no exposure to training in the arts, while others may have had an abundance of training in specific areas. These differences pose challenges for the arts teachers, who must identify creative ways of engaging the beginners, while finding avenues for advancing the experienced students. The same concept will hold through for teachers in the academic disciplines.

Upon graduation from DSA some of the students will go on to study their areas of arts specialty at reputable colleges and universities. DSA students demonstrate academic growth as measured by state administered tests for grades 6, 7, and 8 and end of course tests for high school students. Jirtle (2000) has also noted that parent involvement at DSA is evident, and one forum that demonstrates this is the high attendance rate of parents and community members at student performances.

In like fashion, Raivetz, Rogers, and Harrison (1980) conducted a study of the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, located in the Philadelphia School District. This magnet school was designed to provide a desegregated experience for students who were interested in the creative and performing arts. A comprehensive

academic program complemented the course work in the performing arts areas. A prescriptive curriculum was offered to students in the areas of art, dance, music, drama, and creative writing.

Raivetz et al. (1980) stated that the Desegregation Evaluation Unit visited the school with the objective of measuring student attitudes and perceptions about the school. The evaluators observed high student engagement in both the performing arts and academic classes. A questionnaire was developed by the evaluators and was designed to measure how students felt about all facets of the school program, themselves, and their relationships with others. The questionnaire concentrated on how students from the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts perceived their school. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items that were relevant to the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts. The results were represented in the form of 15 frequency tables. There was one frequency table for each of the 15 questions and one narrative account for the 15th question. Question 15 solicited from students whether they would have attended High School for the Creative and Performing Arts if they had to repeat the experience. There was an overwhelming 88% favorable student response to the question. The explanation given by students included: good racial mix, the program, the family-like atmosphere, the strong motivation provided by stakeholders, and the opportunity to develop in a performance area which may lead to college or the possibility of career opportunities subsequently.

Halquist (2003), in his efforts to enhance the limited research on arts magnet schools, conducted an exploratory interview study highlighting the strengths, challenges, and limitations found in school settings. The author utilized a series of open-ended

interview questions, telephone interviews with principals of arts magnet schools, as well as via e-mail. Halquist discovered that arts magnet schools are having a positive effect in reducing enrollment decline in school districts. The data reviewed included school records and the surveys administered to students, teachers, and parents. Halquist also recognized that arts magnet schools fostered academic progress. For example, The Davidson Arts Magnet School in Augusta Georgia, a school comprising 500 students in grades 5 to 12, 50% African American and 50% Caucasian, has received the highest test scores in the country over an eight year span. The School for Creative and Performing Arts, a public arts magnet school in Cincinnati, Ohio, for students in grades 4-12, blends academics with the arts to help foster both the artistic and academic potentials of students. The school has seen success at the elementary level, whereby the school ranked first in the district in all areas of the California Achievement Test. At the secondary level, the American College Testing program scores increased steadily over a five year period from 1985-1990 (Halquist, 2003, p. 10).

A further study of arts magnet schools was conducted by Wilson (2001) in which arts magnet schools of eight school districts were studied, but intensive focus was given to only three: Miami-Dade, Milwaukee, and Vancouver, Washington. The creation of these arts magnet schools was the most singular endeavor for the development and maintenance of significant arts programs. The arts magnet schools selected for the study had several common features. For example, the arts schools had established a variety of relationships with the communities, excellent academic programs in which the arts played an instrumental role, and the professionalism of their staff members (Wilson, 2001, p. 371). At the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, the arts and academic

disciplines receive equal attention. The students are not admitted through auditions or portfolios. The school day is organized around two three hour blocks. One of the blocks is devoted to academics, while the other concentrates on artistic study and foreign languages. It should be mentioned that the arts magnet school of the Vancouver school district was not created for the purpose of achieving ethnic and economic diversity, but was founded on the premise that students can have educational experiences that are beneficial.

However, Milwaukee's arts magnets came into existence because of court ordered mandates to achieve ethnic balance. Students are not required to audition or have a portfolio review. For instance, the Lincoln Center Middle School of downtown Milwaukee has a student population of over 700, and included in the faculty of over 50 are artists who are affiliated with arts companies which contribute to the school's arts programs in exchange for space. Positive changes can be witnessed in student behavior which can be attributed to the school's high standards, the integration of the arts with other subjects, the culture and climate that come from the arts, teaching, and learning opportunities for children (Wilson, 2001).

With respect to the Miami-Dade school district, students gain entry to the arts schools through auditions, portfolios, and interviews. The district has over 60 magnet schools, of which 25 are designed around the arts or had an arts magnet component. These include arts magnet schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Wilson, 2001, p. 373). Similar to the Milwaukee school district, artists are also affiliated with many of the arts magnets of the Miami-Dade school district. Success rides high in this school district because of the unique magnet school configuration of one of its arts

magnets. This is the New World School of the Arts, which goes from grade 9 through college. The faculty members are practicing artists who teach both on the high school and tertiary levels (Wilson, 2001, 374). Wilson reported in his study that students who are educated in this setting, spoke of their experiences as being rich and rewarding.

These arts magnet schools suggest that improvements can be seen in the educational experiences of children. As communicated by Coombes (2009), schools that have magnet programs for the arts provide a dynamic model of how to integrate passion into academic excellence. Moreover, collaborative efforts in the arts will allow students to gain, for example, the ability of improving their social skills (Coombes, 2009, p. 41). In the subsequent section, some exemplars will be provided which demonstrate how collaborations within the context of arts magnet schools can further facilitate the learning of students.

Benefits of Collaborative Arts Magnet Experiences

Collaborative interpretations can be identified in a study that was conducted by Talbert (1992) on California's Ibsen School, an arts magnet school. The study emphasized that the interaction of students and teachers sets the stage for success in academic classes, performing arts classes, and out-of-class preparations for performances. Most of the students take at least one performing arts class a day, which includes dance, drama/theatre arts, vocal and instrumental music, visual arts, and television production. There are four musical productions each year, in addition to theatre, dance, and chorus productions. Talbert discovered that the collaboration between students and teachers can be seen most significantly in the performing arts classes. As stated by Talbert, the teacher

is the coach, guide, and giver of harsh feedback on occasions; while the student is seen as the apprentice (p. 8).

Ibsen students are learning much more than how to dance, sing, or act; they are learning the logic of choreography or harmony or theatre. Talbert (1992) observed that the collaborative roles that are evident in the academic classes are largely from the norms established by the performing arts program. These collaborative efforts are extended to contractual agreements that students and teachers must make to accommodate “pull-outs” for rehearsals for major school productions. The large number of high school students who participate in these productions must make arrangements to master course material they have “missed” in class. Academic teachers make efforts to adapt instruction to meet the special talents and interests of their students. The classroom life and its extension into performances and academic tutoring, provide strong evidence to students that their teachers are trustworthy and helpful. There is reciprocity, in that teachers view students as honorable and capable individuals, which is a rarity among teachers in traditional high schools.

There are demands on academic teachers to collaborate with the students in their classes and the arts teachers who pull them out for rehearsals. This arrangement is based on the authority of performing arts in Ibsen and its special professional culture. Teachers who are new to the school have a difficult time adjusting to the disruptions that are caused as a result of performing arts demands, which ultimately can affect instructional success. The key term is “teacher adaptation.” However, the principal provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate on issues that can be seen as impediments to the instructional process. In addition, she will personally aid teachers in their mission to

acquire the balance needed. Talbert (1992) discovered that the personalization norm of Ibsen is rooted in the principle that “everyone counts, everyone is different and special” (p. 15). Diversity among students is celebrated, and peer pressures to conform are discouraged due to the established school-wide culture. Talbert realized that the remedy for solving problems collectively rests with the leadership of the principal. She is of the belief that “if we work together we can solve whatever problems we have” (p. 18). Ibsen is a problem-solving community for students and teachers alike.

Also in support of the collaborative concept is Strand (2006) who conducted a study in which two collaborative arts programs were examined to see what made the partnership work effectively. Program One case study involved a collaboration between a theatre company and an urban elementary school with artist-teachers and teachers who worked with third grade students. Program Two focused on collaboration between pairs of arts and humanities teachers within an intensive summer enrichment program for gifted and talented students. The evaluation of both programs was informally done with no emphasis being placed on a formal type of assessment.

Strand (2006) mentioned that although the programs both celebrated some successes, there were some challenges as well with which to contend. One success was the demonstration of the collaborative efforts on the part of all stakeholders, which allowed the students to reap the benefits of enhancing their creative and critical thinking abilities. However, evaluators of the programs called for more integration of the arts into the humanities experiences of students (Strand, 2006, p. 36). However, other types of magnet schools can contribute effectively to the educational benefits of students.

Conclusion

This literature review touched upon several salient points that are instrumental to the effectiveness of arts education. The historical framework provided an understanding of the path of evolution taken by the arts before inclusion and acceptance as a discipline in the educational settings. For instance, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has endorsed the fact that the arts are essential in the educational experiences of children. The National Assessment of Educational Progress was also influential in the mobilization of the arts by adopting policies that accessed arts standards.

Empirical studies also played a vital role in the promotion of the arts through the demonstration of the works of various researchers and scholars in the arts field. They have shown in their studies, for example, visual arts can facilitate high levels of sophistication in the thought processes of children. Furthermore, visual and performing arts activities, which are incorporated into academic disciplines, can result in an increase in students' motivation and involvement.

The literature review also established that arts integration opportunities are fundamental for the seamless educational experiences of children. For instance, Nathan (2008) discussed the fact that there is great value in incorporating the arts into the learning processes of children. Students who engage in drama are exposed to a variety of ways in which to build their communication skills. They develop oral skills through articulation, expression, and verbalization of thoughts in the framework of activities. Arts integration experiences are likely to enhance curricula content, not merely from a knowledge-base perspective, but from an authentic intellectual standpoint (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006).

Furthermore, arts magnet schools help in constructing schools, which are organized with a specific purpose that attracts students who are intellectually curious and creative. Students involved in arts magnet schools will consciously discipline themselves and undertake rigorous practice, and spend an inordinate amount of time in their preferred arts disciplines (Wilson, 2001). Studies have demonstrated that arts magnet schools are beneficial institutions. For instance in a study conducted by Raivetz et al. (1980), it was discovered that the students who were attracted to the school were pleased with the arts program, enjoyed the family type atmosphere, and saw possible career and college opportunities.

By having well articulated arts programs, as stated by Perrin (1994), students become active learners who are being prepared to become creative thinkers and problem solvers, and are able to work collaboratively and independently. Perrin, like previously mentioned authors, shares the view that through the arts students gain the ability to think creatively, the courage to act on their beliefs, the capacity for discrimination, and the ability to build positive self-esteem.

Chapter 3

Methodological Approach

Introduction

The methodology adopted for this research, which investigated the impact of the arts academy on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (pseudonym), utilized a mixed sequential approach employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase of this approach involved the use of a quantitative analysis based on the analysis of contingency tables and the use of the chi-square statistic to judge the relationship between variables. In this approach, data on the arts were collected from a survey questionnaire administered to the students, which focused on identifying how the arts impacted their educational experiences. The various relationships in these data were analyzed with the help of the SPSS package.

The second phase of the mixed sequential approach employed qualitative methodologies, such as focus group interviews for the purpose of judging how the arts impacted high school students. Moreover, the third phase also employed qualitative methodologies, such as individual interviews and observations, which ascertained how the arts impacted high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. Ultimately the goal of this research was to reveal any significant contributions that the arts might play in facilitating the learning of high school students.

Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School is an urban public school in the state of New Jersey, with a grade span from 6 through 12. As a proponent of the arts, one of the premises of this research was to bring about a greater sense of awareness at the

research study site and the school district, that the arts are not “frills” in the educational processes of children. Clark and Zimmerman (1987), for instance, emphasized that instruction in the arts usually takes a subservient role to instruction in other disciplines. It is anticipated that evidence from the study would help to change the perception of the arts in the minds of many individuals. Focus was therefore given to various strands of the arts academy illustrating their relevance to the successful outcomes of students.

The work of the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) review team also influenced significantly the approach of this study. This team is charged with the responsibility of overseeing improvements of schools that are under the auspices of the New Jersey Department of Education. One key recommendation from CAPA is the need to increase the instructional rigor in the arts discipline so as to improve the overall performance of students.

This recommendation provided the catalyst for this research, which attempted to discover if students educated in an arts-enriched setting have any intrinsic benefits to their learning experiences. The students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts are provided with opportunities for enhancing their performing and fine arts abilities through a multitude of experiences. The main goal of the research study was therefore to identify ways in which the arts impact the learning experiences of high school students in this urban performing and fine arts school. The key research questions pursued in the study were as follows:

1. What was the impact of the high school arts academy on the students it served?

2. How did participation in a high school arts academy influence student attitudes towards the academics and the arts?
3. How did an arts academy influence student academic performance?
4. How did participation in an arts academy engage students in the arts?
5. Did participation in the high school arts program influence students to pursue careers in the arts?

Research Design

The study was conducted utilizing a sequential mixed method approach to investigate the impact of the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Middle-High School on the high school students. A sequential design is typically characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in a first phase of the research, which is then followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in subsequent phases (Creswell, 2009, p. 211). As emphasized by Creswell, the uncomplicated nature of this design is one of its most important strengths. It is easy to implement because the steps fall into clear and distinctive stages, hence facilitating the ease with which the data are described and reported. In the mixed method approach, both quantitative and qualitative of data are collected, which then become integrated at different stages of the inquiry. Moreover, there are both open and closed-ended questions incorporated into the statistical and qualitative analyses (Creswell, 2009).

Mixed method research according to Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Jiao (2007) can be a challenge to integrate. This challenge compels mixed method researchers to ask questions such as:

Is it appropriate to triangulate, expand, compare, or consolidate quantitative data originating from a large, random sample with qualitative data arising from a

small, purposive sample? How much weight should researchers and/or consumers place on qualitative data compared to quantitative data? (Collins et al., 2007, p. 269)

A challenge also exists with mixed method research from the political point of view. This refers to the tension that may surface as a result of combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The challenge of politics is also relevant with respect to the difficulty that may arise in persuading the consumers of mixed methods research, including stakeholders and policy makers, as to the importance of the findings generated from both qualitative and quantitative phases of study (Collins et al., 2007). As mentioned by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004) and Powell, Mihalas, Onwuegbuzie, Suldo, and Daley (2008), mixed methods techniques tend to result in richer data being collected, and others yield a greater understanding of underlying trends compared to their mono-method equivalents.

Quantitative Design – Phase I

Quantitative data. Hinchey (2008) referred to quantitative research as that which “depends upon mathematical analysis and often also referred to as empirical research” (p. 27). The quantitative research method for this study focused on using statistical analyses to interpret the information. In a quantitative study, the data are reduced to numerical indices or quantifiable bits of information, which are then analyzed statistically so that generalizations could be made from the study group to other persons and places.

According to Glesne (2006):

Hypotheses are tested through methods that are designed to be objective, and to keep the researcher removed from subjects to avoid influencing behavior and responses. Data are reduced to numerical indices or quantifiable bits of information, which are analyzed statistically in order to make generalizations from the study group to other persons or places. (p. 4)

A quantitative study observes and measures information numerically with questions that are closed-ended in design. Moreover, in a quantitative research study, variables are connected to answer a research question or to make some sort of calculation about what the researcher anticipates the results to demonstrate (Creswell, 2009).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) mentioned that the sample size for a quantitative research study is usually large with the participants being randomly selected. Quantitative research embarks upon testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. For instance, one of the premises of the quantitative approach is to show the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are those that cause, influence, or affect the outcomes, while the dependent variables are those that depend on the independent variables. Stated another way, the dependent variables are the outcomes or results of the influence of the independent variables. In quantitative research study, variables are related to answer a research question (Creswell, 2009). For example, “How does an arts academy impact the high school students it serves?”

Allen and Silver (1997) have postulated that quantitative techniques create a domain of findings across individuals, followed by the body of research being statistically summarized to obtain an average effect intended to represent all the research. The purpose of such an approach is to establish generalizations for the body of research (Glesne, 2006).

Survey instrument. For the quantitative aspect of the study, a survey instrument was designed and administered to 400 high school students from a wide spectrum of the various arts disciplines within the arts academy. A total of 265 students submitted

responses yielding a response rate of 66%. The survey was directed particularly to high school students from Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School, since it was only this segment of the school's population that tended to be more intensely focused on the various arts disciplines. The following list provides a breakdown of the arts disciplines of high school students.

- Vocal Music 11%
- Instrumental Music 21.6%
- Theatre Arts 32.3%
- Visual Arts 20.8%
- Television & Film 9.3%
- Dance 5%

Among the students surveyed, vocal music had a representation of 86.7%; instrumental music accounted for 60.2%; theatre arts for 61.4%; visual arts was illustrated by 44.7%; television and film had a total of 94.7%; while dance had a 90% student participation.

Survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire instrument was organized into 5 categories (student aspirations; student attitudes; student achievement and the arts; student engagement and the arts; and demographic information). There were 19 questions and most of them required students to select only one out of the possible choices given (Appendix A). A large number of the questions were based on a Likert-type scale, which attempted to solicit information pertinent to the impact of the arts academy at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (Patten, 2001). The choices on the Likert-type scale included: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Students were asked to select only one of the options presented on the scale. The option of

“neutral” was included to gauge those students who were not prepared to reveal their position on a topic or subject that might seem too controversial to them (Patten, 2001, p. 35).

The survey instrument included, for example, some sensitive demographic information, which required the disclosure of the Grade Point Average (GPA) and the levels of education of students’ parents or guardians. For some students this would be an occasion to boast, while for others it could be a moment of disappointment. In light of the aforesaid, students were much more willing to complete them, knowing that the information could not be directly linked back to them. I treaded lightly in ascertaining demographic information from students; hence the limited number of questions asked. Furthermore, it increased the chances of the survey being completed by the participants since the researcher was sensitive to privacy concerns. The surveys were administered to students during their class sessions by the classroom teachers, who facilitated the process. The teachers dedicated some time during their instructional periods for completion of the survey instruments and when completed, they were collected at the end of the class periods and returned to me.

Quantitative Methods

Cross-tabulation analysis. Cross-tabulation is one of the most useful analytical tools and is a mainstay of the market research industry. One estimate is that single variable frequency analysis and cross-tabulation analysis account for more than 90% of all research analyses. Cross-tabulation analysis, also known as contingency table analysis, is most often used to analyze categorical (nominal measurement scale) data (Kemp & Kemp, 2004). A cross-tabulation is a two (or more) dimensional table that

records the number (frequency) of respondents that have the specific characteristics described in the cells of the table. Cross-tabulation tables provide a wealth of information about the relationship between the variables (Kemp & Kemp, 2004). According to Michael (2001), a *cross-tabulation* is a joint frequency distribution of cases based on two or more categorical variables. Displaying a distribution of cases by their values on two or more variables is known as contingency table analysis and is one of the more commonly used analytic methods in the social sciences.

Chi-square statistic. The Chi-square statistic is the primary statistic used for testing the statistical significance of the cross-tabulation table. Chi-square tests whether or not the two variables are independent. If the variables are independent (have no relationship), then the results of the statistical test will be “non-significant” and we “are not able to reject the null hypothesis,” meaning that we believe there is no relationship between the variables. If the variables are related, then the results of the statistical test will be “statistically significant” and we “are able to reject the null hypothesis,” meaning that we can state that there is some relationship between the variables (Kemp & Kemp, 2004).

The chi-square statistic, along with the associated probability of chance observation, may be computed for any table. If the variables are related (i.e. the observed table relationships would occur with very low probability, say only 5%) then we say that the results are “statistically significant” at the “.05 or 5% level” (Janes, 2001). This means that the variables have a low chance of being independent.

Qualitative Design – Phase II

Qualitative data. The qualitative research methods as stated by Glesne (2006) are “used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions” (p. 4). As a means of supporting the qualitative approach, interviews, focus groups, observations, and document review formed the basis of its impetus.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) have postulated that the goal of the qualitative researcher is to get a better grasp on understanding human behavior and experience. These authors further stated that qualitative researchers are concerned with the processes by which people construct meaning and also how to describe what those meanings are. Qualitative research relies on descriptive analyses of information, which may include, for example, personal documents, field-notes, photographs, and official documents and artifacts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 45). In qualitative research, the researcher focuses on learning the meaning that the participants have about the problem or issue at hand, rather than the meaning the researcher may bring to the research. In qualitative research, reporting has multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, while sketching the larger picture that becomes apparent (Creswell, 2009).

In a qualitative study, information is collected by actually talking directly with people and observing their behavior within their context. Data are collected from multiple sources, such as interviews and observations, rather than from one source (Creswell, 2009; Hinchey, 2008). One of the interview strategies is the use of a focus group, in which a selected group of people is interviewed. The focus group facilitator would often

commence with an experiential question that everyone takes turns in answering, which allows everyone to become comfortable in speaking freely (Glesne, 2006). An essential aspect of qualitative research is to attempt to understand the subjective states of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 37).

In qualitative research, a considerable amount of time is spent collecting and reviewing large amounts of data. In so doing, the researcher must continually confront his or her opinions and biases with the data (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). By combining both quantitative and qualitative information, mixed methods are able to not only focus on statistical generalizations, but are able as well to capture the direct views of the participants. The use of both dimensions would be to improve the robustness of the results.

Focus groups. Focus groups are a method of group interviewing in which the interaction between the moderator and the group, as well as the interaction between group members, serves to elicit information and insights in response to carefully designed questions. The dynamic nature of the questions asked by the moderator and the group process produces a level of insight that is rarely derived from “unidirectional” information collection devices such as observation, surveys, and interview techniques. Methods of recording and analyzing information gathered during focus groups, and strategies for collecting unbiased information have helped focus group research to gain credibility as an accurate and useful source of information collection (New York State Teacher Centers, 2012).

Morgan (1993) and Krueger (1994) discuss instances when focus groups are beneficial. As stated by the authors, focus groups, like any other program evaluation

method, are more appropriate for some situations than others. According to Morgan and Krueger, focus groups are appropriate:

- When the security provided by the group allows members who are lower in the “power hierarchy” within an organization to express feelings and experiences that they would not otherwise share.
- When the target audience is so different from decision makers that different terminology and points of view can be illuminated and understood – this information can be useful when constructing questionnaires for those audiences.
- When desired information about behaviors and motivations is more complex than a questionnaire is likely to reveal. Through a series of well designed questions, focus groups can often get at more honest and in depth information.
- When one is interested in finding out the nature of consensus. While several respondents completing a questionnaire may indicate that they “agree” with an item, focus groups may reveal fundamental differences among group members concerning the conditions of that agreement.
- When target audiences may not take questionnaires seriously or answer them honestly. Effective focus groups will communicate a desire to obtain meaningful, honest information. Superficial or patronizing responses as well as critical responses can be challenged and or put into an appropriate context.
- In situations where there is organizational conflict and or alienation, members of focus groups and their constituencies may feel “listened to.” This may result in an honest and meaningful exchange of information.

The focus groups were comprised of five students, who were representative of vocal music, instrumental music, theatre arts, visual arts, television and film, and dance. The student participants of the study were from grades 9- 12. Parental permission was obtained for the participants of the research study project (Appendix E). Student participants for the focused groups were chosen using a random selection method using a computer based random number generator. There were six different focus groups which represented the six main arts disciplines: vocal music, instrumental music, theatre arts, visual arts, television/film, and dance. Each student had an equal probability of being selected from the population (Creswell, 2009; Patten, 2001). There were a total of 30 participants for the focus groups from the six arts disciplines - a representation of five students from each of the arts concentrations.

Focus group interviews. The interview questions were categorized which provided a definite focus and an organized structure for the analytical process. These categories consisted of the following four sections: student achievement; student engagement; student aspirations; and student attitudes. Several of the questions were similar to those of the survey questionnaire instrument. The interview phase can be seen as an expansion of the survey questionnaire phase in which additional data are obtained. There were 17 interview questions to which the students responded (Appendix B). The questions were open-ended and were significant to the arts and education. These interview questions were intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants that were relevant to the impact of the arts academy on their learning experiences (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). The interviews lasted for approximately 80 minutes. Note taking was done by hand during the process. Glesne (2006) stated that when notes are taken by hand the

research is closer to being finished when the interview is over. In Glesne's view, note taking by hand is "less obtrusive and less intimidating to some persons" (p. 89). For the students in the research site, note taking by hand demonstrated to them that almost every word that they spoke was important enough to be written down.

The focus group interviews were conducted with the study participants at the end of the school day, which took place at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. In this way, all the participants were available at the same time to facilitate the process. Moreover, the interviewing of the students did not interfere with their classroom instructions during the school day. Classrooms were used to conduct the interviews with the study participants.

The sample used for conducting the study came from both the performing and fine arts discipline. Through the eyes of the participants involved in the study, was the anticipated outcome of the impact of the arts academy on the high school students revealed. The performing and fine arts classrooms in which observations were conducted included: vocal music, theatre arts, visual arts, and television and film. The teachers of the various arts classes are all certified arts educators who are continuously practicing their craft in other professionally centered venues when not in the school setting. Although the school is under Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) monitoring, the teachers are dedicated to bringing about quality learning opportunities for the students. As McLaren (2007) states:

A pedagogy based on student experiences encourages us to analyze the dominant forms of knowledge that shape student experiences; on the other hand, it attempts to provide students with the means to examine their own particular experiences and subordinate knowledge forms. (p. 241)

The rewards for students come from their ability to use other mediums through which classroom knowledge becomes transformed into something that is tangible to them. The academic instructional classrooms are comprised of both regular education students and inclusion special education students on both the middle and high school levels. So too are the classes devoted to the performing and fine arts experiences. Furthermore, students who are in self-contained special education classes are also given opportunities to participate in the arts experiences, during the regularly scheduled arts periods. In other words, they are not being excluded from the rest of the student population and are not being taught the arts at separate times.

Qualitative Design – Phase III

Individual interviews. In this phase focus was given to more in-depth interviews with a selected cross-section of students, who were selected in the same manner as those participants who were selected for the focus group interviews. The questions were analogous to those in Phase II. The questions for the interview were taken from the already established collection of questions used in Phase II (Appendix B). The in-depth interviews were predominantly one-on-one sessions with the students. The individual interviews consisted of two students from each of the six arts disciplines, which totaled 12 participants. The interviews lasted for a period of 40 minutes per session for each of the study participants. The individual interview sessions were conducted at the Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School after the students' instructional day had ended.

The individual interview is one of the most frequently used techniques to collect qualitative data. The interview is a formal discussion between the interviewer and a person chosen specifically for the discussion. The goal is not to represent the population

as a whole (as it would be with a quantitative investigation), but rather to gather diverse points of view. It takes place as a goal-oriented conversation, not in the form of a questionnaire.

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). For example, we might ask participants associated with a program about their experiences and expectations related to the program, the thoughts they have concerning program operations, processes, and outcomes, and about any changes they perceive in themselves as a result of their involvement in the program. In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors or want to explore new issues in depth. The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys (Boyce & Neale, 2006). They also may provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information - people may feel more comfortable having a conversation with you about their program as opposed to filling out a survey.

Non-participation observations. Also in this phase, some observations of arts classrooms took place. Four arts disciplines were the vehicles through which the orchestration of the observations developed. Those arts branches of learning incorporated: vocal music, theatre arts, visual arts, and television and film. The observations focused on high school students in action as they expanded their learning opportunities through the arts. Observation notes were hand written as the arts teachers were engaged in the lessons. The observations lasted for approximately 40 minutes,

which is essentially the duration of each class period. The lessons in some of the arts classes made links to academic learning experiences, which gave credence to an arts integration methodology. As stated by Le Tendre (2002), many students attending high-poverty schools do not necessarily have the exposure to certain activities that can assist them in the development of imagination, creativity, interaction, discipline, analysis, and expression. Participation, for example, in theatre, instrumental music, vocal music, and visual arts can help in producing these skills (p. 323). For instance, in one of my observations, the vocal music teacher included a writing assignment that required students to give their analysis of a piece of music. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the findings section of the study. As an observer, I consciously needed to observe the setting, the participants, the events, and perhaps the gestures that occurred (Glesne, 2006). I had to consume the environments through broad lenses as a means of encapsulating the various aspects that were important to the study.

Non-participation observation is a research technique whereby the researcher watches the subjects of his or her study, with their knowledge, but without taking an active part in the situation under scrutiny. Barner-Barry (1986) stated that non-participant observational research is primarily useful for descriptive research. It enables the researcher to address the fundamental question: What did the research subject(s) do? This question cannot be thoroughly addressed in quantitative research where the only questions that can be asked are: (1) What does the subject report about his or her behavior? and, (2) What does the subject report about the behavior of others? This approach is sometimes criticized on the grounds that the very fact of their being observed may lead people to behave differently, thus invalidating the data obtained. To overcome

this, researchers normally observe a number of similar situations, over a period of time (Marshall, 1998). Non-participation observation is naturalistic by design. Also referred to as naturalistic observations, the behavior is described as it naturally occurs, paying close attention to the relationship among variables. This type of observation is very useful in establishing the external validity of laboratory research. The biggest advantage of the naturalistic method of research is that researchers view participants in their natural environments (Hale, 2011). Moreover, it is also useful when ethical and moral considerations prevent experimental control. The goals of naturalistic observation or non-participation observation are to:

- Describe setting, events, and persons.
- Analyze the categories that emerge, and ultimately for the research to interpret what occurred.
- Generate hypotheses that can assist in explaining the data.
- Report results that are organized around a structure developed by the researcher.

Artifacts and documents. The collection of artifacts helps to provide proof of some of the elements that are germane to the performing and fine arts study site. These would include student work (Appendices F, G, & H), student performance (Appendix D), and mission statement (Appendix C). “Documents corroborate your observations and interviews and thus make your findings more trustworthy” (Glesne, 2006, p. 65). The authentication of documents relevant to Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School will be a contributing factor to understanding the impact of the arts academy on the student population.

Setting of the Research Vicinage

School community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) in 2006, the urban city in which Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts is located had an estimated population of 67,000. The Census Bureau in 2010 reported an ethnicity breakdown comprising 3.8% White; 89.5% Black; 0.3% American Indian/Alaska Native; 0.4% Asian; 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; and 4.7% Hispanic. There are 15.3% households in which a language other than English is spoken. In this urban city, as reported by the Census Bureau, 28.1% of the households have children under the age of 18, with an average household size of 2.63 persons. Furthermore, the Census Bureau has stated that in 1999, the per capita income for the urban city was \$16,488 with a median household income of \$32,346 and 19.2% of the residents living under the poverty line. The data are significantly worse than those for the State, in which per capita income was \$27,006, median household income was \$55,146, and where only 8.5% of the population was under the poverty line.

School district. The school district is one of an urban setting which was formally an “Abbott” district because of its socio-economic composition. There are 2 early childhood schools, 12 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, 3 high schools, and 1 alternative program. According to SchoolMatters (2010), which is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization provided by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), this urban district has an enrollment of 10,000 students, with a student-to-teacher ratio of 10.6 to 1. In this district, 48.6% of its teachers hold Bachelor’s Degrees; 49.7% obtained Master’s Degrees; while 1.8% earned Doctoral Degrees. The district reported an ethnicity breakdown of: 0.1% White, 95.3% Black, 4.5% Hispanic,

0.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% American Indian/Alaska Native. The district has an economically disadvantaged student population of 58%.

Data compiled by the New Jersey Department of Education (2010) showed that in the school year 2008-2009, the district's sixth graders had a proficiency of 36% on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) language arts literacy test, and 43.5% on the mathematics test. The seventh graders were 40.3% proficient in language arts literacy, and 40% proficient in mathematics. With respect to the eighth graders, 60.9% were proficient in language arts literacy, 44.8% were proficient in mathematics, and 52% attained proficiency in science. On the high school level, 53.1% of the students were proficient in language arts literacy, while 37.7% were proficient in mathematics.

Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School

Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Middle-High School is an institution in its fifteenth year that spans from grades 6 through 12. A newly state funded, state-of-the-arts 197,000 square feet of structure, is the home of this performing and fine arts school. Students throughout the school district audition for acceptance into the school, which are held in the Spring Term of each school year, for the start of the school year in September. Auditions are conducted in instrumental music, vocal music, theatre, public speaking, visual arts, television/film, dance, and musical theatre. For new acceptances to the school, past practice allowed auditions to be conducted in grades 6 through 12, and students currently attending will be required to audition as well for acceptance to the following school year. However, with the current design, only 5th grade students transitioning into 6th grade and 8th grade students to 9th grade are allowed to audition. Current 8th graders at

Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts are the only ones permitted to audition for 9th grade acceptances, along with the rest of the intra-district 8th grade students. This means that current students of Cooper Ruth in the other grades who no longer have a strong desire or passion for the arts (which is less than 1%), must remain in the school, unless they are transferred to the comprehensive high schools by their parents or guardians. To the chagrin of some of the arts teachers, they must find creative ways of engaging those students who fall into this subgroup.

It will be prudent to note that student acceptances to Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School are solely based on artistic abilities and not on academic prowess. Furthermore, students currently enrolled are given first preference to the audition process, before it is opened to the other schools within the district. In this way, the number of students accepted is contingent upon the number of available slots. Although being an urban public performing and fine arts school, the report card narrative submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education (2010) stipulated that the school adheres to the mandates required by the district as well as the state, regarding course requirements, high school credits, and graduation requirements. Cooper Ruth provides the necessary ingredients for igniting the flames of students that embrace academic preparation and artist ability.

At the request of the district's assistant superintendent, the change in the audition process previously discussed was instituted in the 2009-2010 school year. Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts no longer has the opportunity to audition students at all grade levels 6-12. The school is only allowed to audition incoming 6th graders and 9th graders. The assistant superintendent stipulated this procedure to address the concerns of the

principals in other schools within the district, that Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts receives the best academic students in the district. However, the test results on the state's standardized tests do not attest to this premise.

Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts, according to SchoolMatters (2010), has a student enrollment of 686, with 46.1% of the students being economically disadvantaged. The ethnic breakdown consisted of 99% Black, 0.4% Hispanic, and 0.6% American Indian/Alaska Native. At Cooper Ruth, 45.7% of the teachers hold Bachelor's Degrees, 51.4% Master's Degrees, and 2.9% earned Doctoral Degrees. The ethnic breakdown of the instructional faculty consisted of 59% Black, 23% White, 9% Hispanic, 8% African, and 1% Asian. There is an average student to teacher ratio of 11.6 to 1. The New Jersey Department of Education (2010) shows that the school's sixth graders in the 2008-2009 school-year had a proficiency rating of 55.1% on the NJASK language arts literacy test, and 47.4% in the mathematics. Seventh graders were 34.8% proficient in language arts literacy, and 38.3% in mathematics. Eighth graders were 72.1% proficient in language arts literacy, and 48.1% in mathematics.

The overall proficiency average for the middle school in language arts literacy was 54% and in mathematics it was 44.6%. Additionally, in the 2008-2009 school year, Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts was 80.9% proficient in language arts literacy on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), and 45.5% proficient in mathematics. The New Jersey Department of Education also provided the graduation rate for the school, which stood at 92.1% for the 2008-2009 school year. From the Class of 2009, 44.8% of the students were accepted to four year colleges/universities, 44.8% to two year colleges, while 10.3% joined the work force.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the framework of a sequential mixed method approach was identified as the focus for the study. The utilization of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was implemented to investigate the impact of the arts academy on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. The quantitative approach gathered data on the arts using a survey questionnaire; while the qualitative measure collected data from multiple sources such as focus group interviews, individual interviews, and observations.

The study was conducted in three phases. Phase I dealt with the quantitative approach in which data, as previously indicated, were collected by means of a survey questionnaire instrument. The survey instrument, comprised of 19 questions, was completed by 66% of the high school students. The quantitative methods used to conduct the analysis included cross-tabulations and chi-square statistics. Phase II gathered information on the impact of the arts on high school students through focus group interviews. Moreover, in this phase, the focus groups consisted of five students each from each of the six major arts disciplines. Phase III used individual student interviews with the research participants as the measure for obtaining data on the impact of the arts, as well as observations. Furthermore, data from the individual interview analysis were captured through two students each from the six arts disciplines.

The collection of data from several sources provided impetus to the study and ultimately gave the assurance that the project was a trustworthy endeavor. Glesne (2006) suggested that triangulation as a means of increasing the confidence in research findings may involve the incorporation of multiple kinds of data sources such as teachers,

students, and parents (p. 36). With respect to this study, these sources, whether directly or indirectly, played a crucial role in this research.

Data from the survey questionnaire instrument of the quantitative section of the study were analyzed using the SPSS package. The survey questionnaire was completed by 265 students, which generated results that were analyzed using contingency tables. Furthermore, the chi-square statistic was then used to test for the statistical significance of the cross-tabulation tables. In the qualitative portion of the research, data from the focus group interviews and the individual group interviews were categorized into student achievement, student engagement, student aspirations, and student attitudes, which was advantageous to the analysis process. Included in the qualitative analysis were the observations of vocal music, theatre arts, visual arts, and television/film classes of the arts academy.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Demographic Information and Contingency Table Results

Introduction

This chapter undertakes an analysis of the impact of the arts on high school students in Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts drawing primarily from a survey questionnaire administered to high school students at the academy that is analyzed using cross-tabulation analysis and the chi-square statistic. The first section of the chapter discusses demographic information about the sample of students who participated in the study under review, while the statistical analysis is presented in the second section.

In the first section, demographic data on high school students of the Arts Academy are segmented into the two sub-groups: performing arts and fine arts. Within these two sub-groups the demographic information is further broken down by academic performance of the high school students, the ethnic make-up and gender representation of the high school population, educational levels attained by the parents of the students who participated in the research study, and by educational attainment levels and educational performance of the students.

The second section of this chapter focuses on a statistical analysis of the impact of the arts on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Academy. The five key dimensions: relationship between student involvement in the arts and overall educational performance; relationship between participation in the arts and student attitude towards the academics and the arts; relationship between gender in specific arts disciplines and student academic performance; relationship between participation in the

arts and student engagement in the arts; and relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts, were utilized as the vehicles through which the analysis was driven. Statistical analyses were conducted using cross-tabulation contingency table analyses and the chi-square testing methodology. The purpose of the statistical analysis was to determine the relationships among the five instructional dimensions in the research study.

Survey data were analyzed to determine the relationship between student involvement in the arts and their overall educational performance; the relationship between participation in the arts and student attitudes towards the academic and the arts; the relationship between gender in specific arts disciplines and student academic performance; the relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts; and the relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts.

Demographic Analysis

The Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School is comprised of a total student body of 838 students that pursue studies in the arts and various academic disciplines. Out of this school population, 408 (49%) are at the high school level and 430 (51%) at the middle school level. Given the more consistent emphasis on the arts at the high school level by the school's administrative team, the study placed greater emphasis on students at this level. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered to the high school population in all the arts disciplines which included: theatre, animation, art, television and film, instrumental music, vocal music, sound and lighting, costume design, and dance. A sample of 400 students was selected because the high school population

experiences periods of fluctuation due to the transient nature of some students to the school and to the district. This means that questionnaires were distributed to 98% (400 out of 408 students) of the high school population. Of the 400 surveys administered, 265 persons responded to the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 66%.

Table 1 presents the distribution of students by gender and ethnic background. The results of the analysis indicated that a larger overall percentage average of females (66%) compared to males (34%) pursued disciplines in both the performing and fine arts among all the ethnic groups. It is worth noting that a greater percentage of females (83.6%) from the African Caribbean ethnicity were undertaking studies in the arts compared with their male counterparts (16.4%) and this is also the case for students of African American ethnicity, where 54.8% of females were pursuing courses in the performing arts relative to their male counterparts (45.2%).

With regards to other ethnicities, 58.5% of females were pursuing courses in performing and fine arts, compared with their male counterparts of 41.5%. A further analysis of the data indicated of those in the theatre arts discipline across the span of the various ethnicities, 66.7% of the student participants were females, compared with 25% males. This is in part because the theatre arts department is the largest department, not only within the performing arts, but also within the entire arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. In large measure, the performing arts and visual arts disciplines were dominated by females.

Table 1

High School Distribution of Arts Disciplines by Gender and Ethnicity

Arts Disciplines	African American		Total	African Caribbean		Total	Other Ethnicities		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
Performing Arts									
Theatre	10.2%	11.5%	21.7%	7.3%	38.2%	45.5%	7.5%	17%	24.5%
TV/Film	5.1%	9.6%	14.6%	0%	10.9%	10.9%	9.4%	3.8%	13.2%
Instrumental	12.1%	8.3%	20.4%	5.5%	5.5%	10.9%	13.2%	15.1%	28.3%
Vocal	6.4%	11.5%	17.8%	0%	14.5%	14.5%	0%	5.7%	5.7%
Sound/ Lighting	1.3%	0%	1.3%	0%	0%	0%	1.9%	0%	1.9%
Costume Design	.6%	1.9%	2.5%	0%	3.6%	3.6%	0%	0%	0%
Dance	.6%	5.7%	6.4%	0%	3.6%	3.6%	0%	11.3%	11.3%
Fine Arts									
Animation	8.3%	4.5%	12.7%	1.8%	3.6%	5.5%	0%	3.8%	3.8%
Art	.6%	1.9%	2.5%	1.8%	3.6%	5.5%	9.4%	1.9%	11.3%
Total	45.2%	54.8%	100%	6.4%	83.6%	100%	41.5%	58.5%	100%

Table 2 presents the distribution of the survey respondents by type of arts discipline. The data revealed that 85.7% of the respondents that completed the survey questionnaire were from the performing arts area (27.2% in theatre arts, 13.6% television and film, 20% instrumental music, 14.7% vocal music, 1.1% sound and lighting, 2.3% costume design, and 6.8% dance), while 14.3% were from the fine arts area (9.4%

animation and 4.9% art). Thus the majority of respondents were from performing arts in particular from the theatre arts department.

Table 2

High School Distribution of Performing and Fine Arts Disciplines

Arts Disciplines	Frequency	Percent
Performing Arts	227	85.7
Theater	72	27.2
TV/Film	36	13.6
Instrumental	53	20.0
Vocal Performance	39	14.7
Sound/Lighting	3	1.1
Dance	18	6.8
Fine Arts	38	14.3
Animation	25	9.4
Art	13	4.9
Total	265	100.0

Table 3 is a further disaggregation of the numbers in terms of the ethnicity, and revealed that from the 265 participants of the study, 157 (59.2%) of the sample respondents pursuing programs in the performing arts were African-American; 55 (20.8%) were African-Caribbean; and 53 (20%) were other ethnic groups. In terms of the gender distribution, more males, which totaled 71 (26.7%) from an African American

background were engaged in the performing and fine arts; 9 (3.4%) were from an African Caribbean background; and 22 (8.3%) were from the other ethnicities which included Hispanics, Africans, White/Caucasians, and Native Americans.

Table 3

High School Distribution of Arts Disciplines by Gender and Ethnicity

Arts Disciplines	African American		Total	African Caribbean		Total	Other Ethnicities		Total	Grand Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female		
Performing Arts										
Theatre	16	18	34	4	21	25	4	9	13	72
TV/Film	8	15	23	0	6	6	5	2	7	36
Instrumental	19	13	32	3	3	6	7	8	15	53
Vocal	10	18	28	0	8	8	0	3	3	39
Sound/Lighting	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
Costume Design	1	3	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	6
Dance	1	9	10	0	2	2	0	6	6	18
Fine Arts										
Animation	13	7	20	1	2	3	0	2	2	25
Art	1	3	4	1	2	3	5	1	6	13
Total	71	86	157	9	46	55	22	31	53	265

Table 4 presents results on the educational performance of the high school student sample by gender and ethnicity. The data suggested that the highest level of academic performance was achieved by females of African Caribbean ethnicity, although females of other ethnicities also performed well. In statistical terms, 56.4% of African Caribbean females achieved Grade Point Average (GPA) scores of over 2.6 compared with 35.1%

of African American, and 41.5% of other ethnic groups. Across the span of the various ethnicities, 86.6% females achieved Grade Point Average scores between 2.6 – 3.5; while 46.4% of the females achieved Grade Point Average scores between 3.6- 4.0.

Table 4

High School Educational Performance by Ethnicity and Gender

Grade Point Average	African American		Total	African Caribbean		Total	Other Ethnicities		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
Below 1.0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2
Percent	.6%	0%	.6%	0%	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%	3.8%
1.0 – 1.5	4	1	5	0	1	1	0	0	0
Percent	2.5%	.6%	3.2%	0%	1.8%	1.8%	0%	0%	0%
1.6 – 2.5	23	30	53	3	13	16	4	8	12
Percent	14.6%	19.1%	33.8%	5.5%	23.6%	29.1%	7.5%	15.1%	22.6%
2.6 – 3.5	37	40	77	5	17	22	14	16	30
Percent	23.6%	25.5%	49.0%	9.1%	30.9%	40.0%	26.4%	30.2%	56.6%
3.6 – 4.0	6	15	21	1	14	15	3	6	9
Percent	3.8%	9.6%	13.4%	1.8%	25.5%	27.3%	5.7%	11.3%	17%
Total	71	86	157	9	46	55	22	31	53
Percent	45.2%	54.8%	100%	16.4%	83.6%	100%	41.5%	58.5%	100%

Moreover, the quantitative data of Table 4 showed that from the sample size, 59.2% of the respondents were of African American ethnicity, 20.8% were of African Caribbean ethnicity, and 20% represented other ethnicities.

With respect to males, Table 4 revealed that while fewer attained GPA scores of over 2.6, those who did were mainly from the African American ethnicity. The data showed that 27.4% of males with GPA scores of over 2.6 were African American compared with 10.9% of African Caribbean and 32.1% were from other ethnic groups. Across the span of the various ethnicities, 59.1% males received Grade Point Average scores between 2.6- 3.5; while 11.3% of the males received Grade point average scores between 3.6 - 4.0. The lowest educational performance generally occurred in males of African Caribbean ethnicity. The factors affecting educational performance are explored in greater detail in the second section of this chapter.

Table 5 presents information on the educational performance of students and the educational attainment of their parents. The results showed that better educational performance of students was associated with a higher level of educational attainment by their parents. An analysis of the data showed that 68.4% of the cases in which parents had a college education, students attained a grade point average score of 2.6 and above. The fathers represented 29.1% of those with college level education, while 39.3% represented mothers who had college level education of the students who achieved grade point average scores of 2.6 and above.

A further disaggregation of the data revealed that 36.6% of the cases in which the fathers had a high school education, students attained a grade point average score of 2.6 and above, compared with 26.4% for the mothers who had a high school education. Overall, 63% of the parents of students who achieved grade point averages of 2.6 and above received a high school education. The data indicated that the fathers were more diligent about finishing high school than the mothers.

The data of Table 5 also suggested that in 7.2% of the cases in which the fathers had a college education, students attained a grade point average of 1.6 – 2.5, compared to 14.7% of the cases where mothers had a college education. Conversely, the data revealed that 23.3% of the cases in which the fathers had a high school education, students attained a grade point average score of 1.6 – 2.5; with the mothers representing 15.8%. In this instance, the percentage of the mothers who attended college was double that of the fathers.

Table 5

High School Students' Distribution of GPA Scores by Educational Attainment of Parents

Grade Point Average	Fathers				Mothers			
	High School	Percent	College	Percent	High School	Percent	College	Percent
Below 1.0	3	1.1%	1	.4%	4	1.5%	0	0%
1.0 – 1.5	5	1.9%	1	.4%	3	1.1%	3	1.1%
1.6 – 2.5	62	23.3%	19	7.2%	42	15.8%	39	14.7%
2.6 – 3.5	73	27.5%	56	21.1%	53	20%	76	28.7%
3.6 – 4.0	24	9.1%	21	8%	17	6.4%	28	10.6%
Total	167	62.9%	98	37.1%	119	44.8%	146	55.1%

Summary of Data

Data from the demographic section demonstrated that more female students than males were engaged in participating in the high school arts academy. This is an indication

that Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts has a larger high school female student population. The analysis revealed that the study comprised of 66% females who participated in the performing and fine arts; while 34% of those who participated were males. This conclusion held through across the span of the various ethnic groups of which the high school is composed.

Moreover, the performing arts areas have a larger cohort of students who are engaged in arts experiences, as compared with the fine arts areas. For instance, 85.7% of the student respondents were from the performing arts disciplines, while 14.3% were from the fine arts disciplines. Furthermore, 50.2% of the sample respondents pursuing programs in the performing arts were African-American; 18.5% were African-Caribbean; and 17% were of other ethnicities. Conversely, 9% of the sample respondents pursuing programs in the fine arts were African-American; 2.3% were African-Caribbean; and 3% were of other ethnicities.

The data also concluded that African-Caribbean high school female students outperformed other ethnic groups with respect to academic achievement. For example, 56.4% of the African-Caribbean females received Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 and above, while African-American female students had 35.1% and other ethnic groups had 41.5% of the females who obtained Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 and above. On the other hand, 10.9% of the African-Caribbean male students received Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 and above; while African-American male students had 27.4% and other ethnic groups had 32.1% of the male students who got Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 and above.

The study also showed a relationship between the student participants and the educational attainment of their parents. The data revealed that the educational performance of students was linked to the educational attainment levels of their parents. Students whose parents had college level education tended to do better academically than students whose parents only received a high school level of education. This was indicated by 68.4% of the students receiving Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 and above, who had parents with college level education. Conversely, 63% of the students who attained Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 and above, had parents who received only a high school education.

Analysis of Impact of the Arts on High School Students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts

This section of the study undertakes a more in-depth analysis of the impact of the high school arts academy on various diversions of student activity with particular emphasis on *overall educational performance, student attitudes, academic performance, engagement in the arts, and desire to pursue a career in the arts*. This analysis has largely been undertaken by using a cross-tabulating methodology, which is a quantitative statistical research technique for analyzing the relationship between two or more variables. More formally, this method groups the occurrences of the variables and organizes them in a multivariate frequency distribution table known as a contingency table. A chi-square statistic is used to determine the significance of the relationships between the respective variables.

Relationship between student involvement in the arts and overall educational performance. One of the core reasons for the establishment of the Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts was to better integrate the arts into the academic curriculum so as to give students a more rounded and complete educational experience. One of the central research questions in the dissertation is the extent to which student involvement in the Arts improved their overall educational performance. To undertake this investigation, a cross-tabulation was performed on variables measuring student involvement (hours spent on arts-related assignments and projects at school or in the community) and overall educational performance, which was measured by the overall Grade Point Average score.

The results from this cross-tabulation, which are presented in Table 6 indicates the there is a significant relationship between student involvement in arts-related community events and overall educational performance. The data showed that 81 students (30.5%) out of the 265 participants, with Grade Point Average scores of 1.6- 2.5 spent several hours on arts-related community events; 129 students (48.6%) with Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 – 3.5 spent anywhere from 0 to at least 10 hours involved in arts-related community events; and 45 students (16.9%) with Grade Point Average scores of 3.6 – 4.0 spent several hours in arts-related community events. Therefore the assumption can be made to a reasonable degree, that the more students participated in arts related community events, the better their Grade Point Average scores became.

The chi-square statistics (Table 7), which rejected the null hypothesis of independence between the community arts-related events and the GPA score at a 5% level of significance, suggested that there was a statistically significant relationship between these two variables in the contingency table analysis. However, no significant

relationships were identified between arts-related projects or assignments and educational performance at the 5% level.

Table 6

Hours Spent on Arts-related Community Events & GPA

Hours spent on Arts-related Community Events		Current Grade Point Average					Total
		Below 1.0	1.0 – 1.5	1.6 – 2.5	2.6 – 3.5	3.6 - 4.0	
0-3 Hours	Count	4	3	68	86	39	200
4-6 Hours	Count	0	1	8	32	3	44
7-9 Hours	Count	0	1	4	4	2	11
10 or More Hours	Count	0	1	1	7	1	10
Total	Count	4	6	81	129	45	265
	Expected Count	4	6	81	129	45	265

Table 7

Chi-Square Analysis

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.756 ^a	12	.030
Likelihood Ratio	22.499	12	.032
Linear-by-Linear Association	.006	1	.939
N of Valid Cases	265		

The analysis based on the chi-square showed that there was a significant relationship between the two variables in the table. The chi-square analysis revealed a significance level of 3%.

Relationship between participation in the arts and student attitudes towards academics and the arts. The survey questionnaire also supports the investigation on how student overall attitudes towards academic disciplines and the arts were impacted by their participation in the arts. Table 8 presents an analysis of students' opinions on how the arts have impacted their attitudes in various areas. The results from the tabular analysis indicated that more than half of the high school students in the sample felt that the arts had a strong impact on their attitudes towards learning (79.6%); their social behavior (74.7%); their academic progress (77.7%); their attitude towards school (73.2%); their ability to understand information in academic subjects (68.3%); and their choice of arts program (73.6%).

Furthermore, in Table 8 the results from the analysis also indicated the degree to which participants disagreed that participation in the arts impacted their attitudes towards the academics and the arts was not significant.

Table 8

Influences of the Performing and Fine Arts on Students' Attitudes

Items		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. My academic progress.	Frequency	97	109	42	11	5
	Percent	36.6	41.1	15.8	4.2	1.9
b. My social behavior.	Frequency	97	101	55	6	6
	Percent	36.6	38.1	20.8	2.3	2.3
c. My attitude towards learning.	Frequency	104	107	42	8	4
	Percent	39.2	40.4	15.8	3.0	1.5
d. My choice of arts program.	Frequency	106	89	56	9	5
	Percent	40.0	33.6	21.1	3.4	1.9
e. My ability to understand information in academic subjects.	Frequency	81	100	65	11	8
	Percent	30.6	37.7	24.5	4.2	3.0
f. My attitude towards school	Frequency	92	102	55	8	8
	Percent	34.7	38.5	20.8	3.0	3.0

A contingency table analysis was also undertaken to survey the relationship between students' participation in the arts and various attitudinal variables. In Table 9, the data showed that 48.7% of the students who spent up to 3 hours on arts related projects agreed that participation in the arts influenced *academic progress*. The data also suggested that 18.1% of the students who spent 4-6 hours on arts related projects agreed that the arts have some influence on their academic progress; 6.4% of the participants who spent 7-9 hours agreed that the arts impacted their academic progress; and 4.9% of the students who participated in arts related projects for 10 or more hours agreed that the

arts have influenced their academic progress. Overall, 78.1% of the study participants agreed that participation in the arts influenced their academic progress.

Table 9

Hours Spent on Arts Related Projects and Attitudinal Variables

Attitudinal Variables	Hours Spent on Arts Related Assignments	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Academic Progress	0-3	10.9%	1.9%	2.6%	25.7%	23.0%	64.2%
	4-6	3.0%	0%	1.1%	7.9%	10.2%	22.3%
	7-9	1.1%	0%	0%	4.9%	1.5%	7.5%
	10 or More	.8%	0%	.4%	2.6%	2.3%	6.0%
Total		15.8%	1.9%	4.2%	41.1%	37%	100%
Social Behavior	0-3	15.1%	1.5%	1.5%	22.6%	23.4%	64.2%
	4-6	3.0%	.4%	.8%	8.7%	9.4%	22.3%
	7-9	1.9%	0%	0%	3.8%	1.9%	7.5%
	10 or More	.8%	.4%	0%	3.0%	1.9%	6.0%
Total		20.8%	2.3%	2.3%	38.1%	36.6%	100%
Attitude Towards Learning	0-3	9.4%	1.5%	1.5%	27.9%	23.8%	64.2%
	4-6	4.2%	0%	1.5%	6.4%	10.2%	22.3%
	7-9	1.5%	0%	0%	3.0%	3.0%	7.5%
	10 or More	.8%	0%	0%	3.0%	2.3%	6.0%
Total		15.8%	1.5%	3.0%	40.4%	39.3	100%
Understanding Information in Academic Classes	0-3	16.2%	2.6%	2.6%	24.5%	18.1%	64.2%
	4-6	5.7%	0%	1.5%	7.5%	7.5%	22.3%
	7-9	.8%	.4%	0%	4.9%	1.5%	7.5%
	10 or More	1.9%	0%	0%	.8%	3.4%	6.0%
Total		24.5%	3.0%	4.2%	37.7%	30.6%	100%
Attitude Towards School	0-3	13.2%	2.6%	2.3%	26.8%	19.2%	64.2%
	4-6	4.9%	.4%	.4%	6.0%	10.6%	22.3%
	7-9	1.5%	0%	.4%	3.0%	2.6%	7.5%
	10 or More	1.1%	0%	0%	2.6%	2.3%	6.0%
Total		20.8%	3.0%	3.0%	38.5%	34.7%	100%

The results from the tabular analysis also indicated that 46% of the student respondents who spent up to 3 hours on arts related projects agreed that their *social behavior* has been positively influenced by their participation in the arts; 18.1% who spent 4-6 hours agreed that participation in the arts has influenced their social behavior; 5.7% of the students who spent 7-9 hours agreed that the arts has influenced their social behavior; and 4.9% of the students who spent 10 or more hours on arts related projects agreed that the arts has influenced their social behavior. Overall, 74.7% of the students agreed that participation in arts related projects positively impacted their social behavior.

The disaggregation of data showed that 51.7% of the students who spent up to 3 hours on arts related projects agreed that the arts have impacted their *attitude towards learning*; with 16.6% of those who spent 4-6 hours agreeing that participation in arts related projects has impacted their attitude towards learning; and 6% who spent 7-9 hours on arts related projects agreeing that the arts has impacted their attitude towards learning. Overall, 79.7% of the respondents agreed that participation in arts related projects impacted their attitude towards learning.

In Table 9, the relationship between participation in the arts and student attitudes towards the academics and the arts also revealed that 42.6% of the respondents who spent up to 3 hours on arts related projects agreed that the arts have influenced their understanding of information in academic classes. Also, the data indicated that 15% of those who spent 4-6 hours on arts related projects agreed that the arts have influenced their *understanding of information in academic classes*; 6.4% of the participants who spent 7-9 hours on arts related projects agreed that the arts impacted their understanding of information in academic classes; and 4.2% who spent 10 or more hours on arts related

projects agreed that the arts have impacted their understanding of information in academic classes. Overall, 68.3% of the students agreed that participation in arts related projects positively impacted their understanding of information in academic classes.

In Table 9, the data also demonstrated that 46% of the students who spent up to 3 hours on arts related projects agreed that the arts have impacted their *attitude towards school*; 16.6% of the respondents who spent 4-6 hours participating in arts related projects agreed that the arts have impacted their attitude towards school; 5.6% of the students who spent 7-9 hours have agreed that the arts have impacted their attitude towards school; while 4.9% who spent 10 or more hours have agreed that the arts have impacted their attitude towards school. Overall, 73.2% agreed that their participation in arts related projects impacted their attitude towards school.

Relationship between gender in specific arts disciplines and student academic performance. The survey questionnaire also supported the investigation on students' involvement in the arts and improved academic attainment. To undertake this investigation, a cross-tabulation was performed on variables representing the various arts disciplines and students' GPA scores by gender (male and female).

The results from this cross-tabulation which are presented in Table 10 indicate that students' academic performance was best represented from the Grade Point Average score range of 1.6 to 3.5 among individuals from the various arts disciplines. The data reflected that 84.3% of the males in both the performing and fine arts disciplines performed well academically; with 76.1% of the females in both the performing and fine arts disciplines performing well academically.

Table 10

Grade Point Average (GPA) Scores in Arts Disciplines and Gender

Arts Disciplines		GPA Below 1.0		GPA 1.0 – 1.5		GPA 1.6 – 2.5		GPA 2.6 – 3.5		GPA 3.6 – 4.0		Totals	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Performing Arts													
Theatre	n	0	2	1	2	8	21	13	15	2	8	24	48
Percent	%	0	1.2	1.0	1.2	7.8	12.9	12.7	9.2	2.0	4.9	23.5	29.4
TV/Film	n	2	0	1	0	5	4	5	10	0	9	13	23
Percent	%	2	0	1.0	0	4.9	2.5	4.9	6.1	0	5.5	12.7	14.1
Instrumental													
	n	0	0	1	0	6	4	18	16	4	4	29	24
Percent	%	0	0	1.0	0	5.9	2.5	17.6	9.8	3.9	2.5	28.4	14.7
Vocal													
	n	0	0	1	0	3	12	3	10	3	7	10	29
Percent	%	0	0	1.0	0	2.9	7.4	2.9	6.1	2.9	4.3	9.8	17.8
Sound/Lighting													
	n	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0
Percent	%	0	0	0	0	1.0	0	2.0	0	0	0	2.9	0
Costume Design													
	n	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	1	5
Percent	%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0	3.1	0	0	1.0	3.1
Dance													
	n	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	10	0	4	1	17
Percent	%	0	0	0	0	0	1.85	1.0	6.1	0	2.5	1.0	10.4
Fine Arts													
Animation													
	n	0	0	0	0	5	6	9	2	0	3	14	11
Percent	%	0	0	0	0	4.9	3.7	8.8	1.2	0	1.8	13.7	6.7
Art													
	n	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	5	1	0	7	6
Percent	%	0	0	0	0	2.0	.6	3.9	3.1	1.0	0	6.9	3.7
Total													
	n	2	2	4	2	30	51	56	73	10	35	102	163
Percent	%	2	1.2	3.9	1.2	29.4	31.3	54.9	44.8	9.8	21.5	100	100

The data indicated that an analysis of the academic performance of females in both the performing and fine arts disciplines with Grade Point Average scores of 3.6 – 4.0 showed that 21.5% performed well academically; compared with their male counterparts at 9.8%.

A further disaggregation suggested that this represented 19.7% of the females in the performing arts discipline, with 1.8% from the fine arts discipline. For males the representation was 8.8% from the performing arts discipline and 1.0% from the fine arts discipline. The results from this cross-tabulation, which are presented in Table 11, indicate that there was a strong relationship between the Grade Point Average score of females and their academic performance.

Table 11

Chi-Square Tests – What is your gender?

		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Male	Pearson Chi-Square	29.234a	32	.607
	Likelihood Ratio	26.744	32	.730
	Linear-by-Linear Association	1.301	1	.254
	N of Valid Cases	102		
Female	Pearson Chi-Square	40.741b	28	.057
	Likelihood Ratio	43.537	28	.031
	Linear-by-Linear Association	5.968	1	.015
	N of Valid Cases	163		

The chi-square statistic that rejected the null hypothesis of independence between GPA scores and the female gender at a 5% level of significance indicated that there was a relationship between those two variables in the analysis. However, no significant relationships were identified between GPA scores and the males involved in the study.

Relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts. One of the missions of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts is to demonstrate that the participation of students in the arts would promote their engagement in the arts. One of the essential study research questions places emphasis on the extent to which participation in an arts discipline improved the overall involvement of students in the arts. In Table 12, the results showed that 60.4% of the respondents to the survey questionnaire agreed that their arts classes are helping them to participate actively in classroom discussions. A representation of 67.2% of the respondents stated that their arts classes were keeping them committed to attending Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Academy; while the data showed that 52.8% were encouraged to attend regularly.

The results which are presented in the table indicate that 64.2% of the students who participated in the arts realized that their arts classes were stressing the importance of academic subjects; with the data showing that 44.1% of the students stating that their academic classes stressed the importance of arts classes. Moreover, Table 12 signified that 65.2% of the respondents agreed that participation in the activities demanded by their arts classes brought about great rewards. Performing and fine arts specialists visit arts classes as a means of improving the arts skills of students; as a result, 50.6% of the student respondents agreed that participation in these opportunities were helping to improve their arts skills. An aspect of the data revealed that 31.7% of the student

respondents disagreed that their academic classes stressed the importance of the arts classes; while 14.7% of them disagreed that their arts classes stressed the importance of academic subjects.

Table 12

Student Participation and Engagement in the Arts

Items		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. My arts class is helping me to participate actively in classroom discussions.	Frequency	67	93	72	23	10
	Percent	25.3	35.1	27.2	8.7	3.8
b. My arts class is encouraging me to attend school regularly.	Frequency	79	61	91	19	15
	Percent	29.8	23.0	34.3	7.2	5.7
c. My grades in my arts class are keeping me committed to attending this performing and fine arts school.	Frequency	102	76	58	16	13
	Percent	38.5	28.7	21.9	6.0	4.9
d. The activities demanded by my arts class bring about great rewards.	Frequency	78	95	67	14	11
	Percent	29.4	35.8	25.3	5.3	4.2
e. Performing and fine arts specialists visit my arts classes to help improve my arts skills.	Frequency	57	77	84	31	16
	Percent	21.5	29.1	31.7	11.7	6.0
f. My arts classes stress the importance of academic subjects.	Frequency	80	90	56	22	17
	Percent	30.2	34.0	21.1	8.3	6.4
g. My academic classes stress the importance of arts classes.	Frequency	56	61	64	41	43
	Percent	21.1	23.0	24.2	15.5	16.2

Relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts. The focal point here would be on the extent to which students were willing to select a career in the arts as a result of participating in the high school arts program. An analysis presented in Table 13 shows the relationship

between what arts discipline students may pursue as careers and the amount of time spent in an average week on arts related assignments while in high school.

Table 13

Study after Graduation and Hours Spent on Arts Related Assignments

Study after Graduation		Hours spent on arts related assignments				Total
		0-3 Hours	4-6 Hours	7-9 Hours	10 or More Hours	
Arts Education Teacher	Count	10	3	4	3	20
	% of Total	3.8%	1.1%	1.5%	1.1%	7.5%
Professional Actor	Count	18	6	2	4	30
	% of Total	6.8%	2.3%	.8%	1.5%	11.3%
Professional Singer	Count	14	7	0	2	23
	% of Total	5.3%	2.6%	.0%	.8%	8.7%
Professional Dancer	Count	4	2	0	4	10
	% of Total	1.5%	.8%	.0%	1.5%	3.8%
Other	Count	96	21	12	6	135
	% of Total	36.2%	7.9%	4.5%	2.3%	50.9%
Professional Instrumentalist	Count	9	8	2	3	22
	% of Total	3.4%	3.0%	.8%	1.1%	8.3%
Animator	Count	9	2	3	1	15
	% of Total	3.4%	.8%	1.1%	.4%	5.7%
Artist	Count	5	5	0	0	10
	% of Total	1.9%	1.9%	.0%	.0%	3.8%
Total	Count	165	54	23	23	265
	% of Total	62.3%	20.4%	8.7%	8.7%	100.0%

The chi-square statistics, which rejected the null hypothesis of independence between study after graduation and hours spent on arts related assignments at a 5% level of significance, suggested that there was a relationship between these two variables in the contingency analysis (Table 14).

Table 14

Chi-Square Analysis

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	41.646a	21	.005
Likelihood Ratio	38.367	21	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.792	1	.181
N of Valid Cases	265		

Another cross-tabulation analysis was undertaken to examine the relationship between what arts disciplines students may pursue as careers and the amount of time they spent in an average week on arts related community events. The results from this analysis as indicated in Table 15 showed that a total of 75.5% of the students spent up to 3 hours on arts related community events. However, from that amount, 34.7% of the high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts will pursue arts related careers; with 40.8% of the students not pursuing arts related careers. The data also indicated that 16.6% of the students spent 4-6 hours on arts related community events; of which 9.4% would pursue arts careers.

Table 15

Study after Graduation and Hours Spent on Arts Related Community Events

Study After Graduation		Hours spent on arts related community events				Total
		0-3 Hours	4-6 Hours	7-9 Hours	10 or More Hours	
Arts Education Teacher	Count	10	6	3	1	20
	% of Total	3.8%	2.3%	1.1%	.4%	7.5%
Professional Actor	Count	18	8	1	3	30
	% of Total	6.8%	3.0%	.4%	1.1%	11.3%
Professional Singer	Count	19	3	1	0	23
	% of Total	7.2%	1.1%	.4%	.0%	8.7%
Professional Dancer	Count	5	2	3	0	10
	% of Total	1.9%	.8%	1.1%	.0%	3.8%
Other	Count	108	19	3	5	135
	% of Total	40.8%	7.2%	1.1%	1.9%	50.9%
Professional Instrumentalist	Count	17	4	0	1	22
	% of Total	6.4%	1.5%	.0%	.4%	8.3%
Animator	Count	14	1	0	0	15
	% of Total	5.3%	.4%	.0%	.0%	5.7%
Artist	Count	9	1	0	0	10
	% of Total	3.4%	.4%	.0%	.0%	3.8%
Total	Count	200	44	11	10	265
	% of Total	75.5%	16.6%	4.2%	3.8%	100.0%

Discussion Section: Quantitative Findings

In the quantitative data analysis, a plethora of rich findings were revealed which supported the significance of the arts academy in the educational experiences of high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. However, one of the areas of major concern was the extent to which the arts and academic disciplines have come together to provide the high school students with learning opportunities that can ultimately enhance their achievement. An analysis of the data revealed that concerted efforts were made by the teachers of the arts disciplines to ensure that students were given opportunities to connect their learning experiences with the academic disciplines.

The analysis of the survey data provided results that were necessary in the triangulation process of verifying the impact of the high school arts academy on the students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. The rich data illustrated that the attitudes of students towards the academics and the arts can produce positive outcomes. Furthermore, the data also revealed that even though some students were not considering careers in the arts, they considered the experiences and knowledge that they had acquired to be quite valuable. Added to that, their engagement in the arts perpetuated their ability to have rewarding learning experiences.

This quantitative portion of the research study provided evidence that the engagement of students in the arts academy allowed them to become more involved in classroom discussions in both their academic classes as well as their arts classes, which ultimately keeps them committed to attending the school. As depicted in Table 12, 52.8% of the respondents stated that their arts classes provided the encouragement for them to attend school regularly; compared with 12.9% who said that the arts did not.

Furthermore, the data demonstrated that the arts educators made deliberate efforts to integrate their artistic teachings with the academic experiences of the high school students. However, consistent attempts were not employed with teachers of academic subjects to use elements of artistry in their instructional practices. As stated by Eisner (2002), the kinds of minds we develop are absolutely influenced by the opportunities to learn that the school environment has provided. Eisner further postulated that:

The promotion of thinking requires not only a shift in perspective regarding our educational aims; it represents a shift in the kind of tasks we invite students to undertake, the kind of thinking we ask them to do, and the kind of criteria we apply to appraise both their work and ours. (p.14)

Eisner (2002) also emphasized the fact that the type of lessons the arts teaches are not only for students to absorb, but for adults as well. This is a demonstration that there is a need for arts educators as well as academic educators to establish links in the instructional processes of students, which can help to foster their ability to become more successful.

In a further description of the quantitative findings, it was revealed that the participation of students in the high school arts academy influenced their attitudes towards the academics and the arts. Students agreed that their participation in the arts academy certainly influenced their academic progress, their ability to understand information in academic subjects, their attitude towards school, as well as their social behavior. Due to the students' commitment to their artistic abilities, a significant amount of hours were spent on arts related projects, which favorably impacted their attitudes towards the academic and the arts. The study participants who refuted the fact that the arts influenced their attitudes were not significant in number.

The study also revealed that the participation of high school students in the arts academy impacted their ability to pursue careers in the arts. The data demonstrated that some students were confident about making various aspects of the arts their career choices. Students in both the performing and fine arts disciplines spent a considerable amount of time engaged in completing arts related assignments, and being involved in arts related community events. Nonetheless, there were students who would not pursue arts careers, and that was represented by 50.9% (Table 13). An elaboration as to some of those reasons for the pursuit of non-arts careers would be discussed in the qualitative chapter of the study.

Moreover, in an analysis of the data that represented the educational attainment of the parents, it was observed that students whose parents attended college had higher grade point average scores. The higher the educational attainment levels were of the parents, the better the grade point average scores were of the student participants. This argument is also valid with respect to the mothers, for the fact that students who had grade point average scores in the range of 2.6 – 4.0 had more mothers who had some level of college education. The data for the fathers on the other hand, illustrated those students who had grade point average scores within the same range, had fewer fathers who had some level of college education.

As alluded to previously, these findings were an indication that more deliberate efforts must be made on the part of both the academic and arts educators to connect or integrate these two disciplines so that high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts could receive the full benefits of learning opportunities. To ensure the execution of such an endeavor, as the arts instructional leader, I will make provisions for

professional development opportunities as being essential for facilitating integration efforts. Furthermore, curricula must be expanded so that teachers in the arts academy and those in the academic disciplines can foster partnerships whereby unit writing incorporating the two disciplines is embarked upon. The anticipated outcome would be an enhancement of the instructional program, in which a seamless type of educational experience would be provided to the students.

This aggressive response to the instructional shortcoming involving the arts and academic disciplines will bring about two-fold results. The first being that students will begin to witness instructional rigor in the arts and academics; and the second will be the fulfillment of the recommendation made by the CAPA review team for greater integration efforts being made between the arts and academic disciplines.

Conclusion

In the first section of the chapter, attention was given to demographic information that was germane to the students who participated in the study. There were 400 high school students to whom the survey questionnaire was administered, which yielded a response rate of 66% (265 students). Data were represented using tables that analyzed information. For instance, tables represented the distribution of students by gender and ethnic background in addition to the distribution of survey participants by type of arts discipline. Furthermore, tables were utilized to analyze the educational performance of the high school student sample and the educational attainment of their parents.

The second section of the chapter concentrated on the statistical analysis of the study, giving focus to the five key dimensions. The first of these dimensions was the relationship between student involvement in the arts and overall educational

performance. Next was the relationship between participation in the arts and student attitude towards the academics and the arts. This was complemented with the relationship between gender in specific disciplines and student academic performance. Fourthly, was the relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts. Finally, attention was given to the relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts. These two sections generated data that were significant to the study of the impact of the arts academy on the high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Academy.

Chapter 5

Qualitative Findings – Analysis of Interviews and Observations

In Chapter 4, we undertook a quantitative analysis of the impact of the arts academy on various aspects of student life. Chapter 5 goes a bit further and undertakes a more focused qualitative analysis of some of the relationships using a qualitative approach. It should be noted that while the quantitative analysis can yield important insights, not every dimension of student activity could be appropriately measured solely using quantitative tools. As a consequence, this chapter examines important insights that have emerged from focused group interviews, individual interviews, and direct observations of classroom activities and performances of students, on how the arts impact high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Academy.

The qualitative findings of the research project were divided into three sections in which focus group student interviews, individual student interviews, and observations were conducted with high school students. Student selection was based on a random process as described in the methodological chapter (Chapter 3) for both the focus group interviews, individual interviews, and for the classroom observations. This qualitative dimension concentrated on soliciting information from students within the six main disciplines in the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School: vocal music, instrumental music, theatre arts, visual arts, television and film, and dance. The focus groups consisted of five students each from the six disciplines, which totaled 30 students; while the individual interviews were conducted with two students each from the six arts disciplines, totaling 12 students; which resulted in a combined total of 42

students. In the case of the classroom observations, the randomly chosen classes were arranged by arts disciplines.

For the focus group and individual interviews, the interview protocols consisted of 17 open-ended questions pertinent to the arts and education (see Appendix B). The intent was to take a more in-depth observation of key thematic areas explored in the quantitative analysis. These areas relate to:

- i. The relationship between student involvement in the arts and their overall educational and academic performance.
- ii. The relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts.
- iii. The relationship between participation in the arts and student attitudes towards the academic and the arts.
- iv. The relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts.

These interviews were conducted in Spring 2011 of the school year during the after school sessions with students and lasted for an estimated time of 80 minutes for the focus groups and 40 minutes for the individual interviews, for each arts discipline. Classroom observations were conducted in vocal music, theatre arts, visual arts, and television and film. A total of 7 classroom observations were conducted during the Fall of 2010 and the Spring of 2011, each of which lasted for a period of 40 minutes.

Relationship Between Student Involvement in the Arts and Their Overall Educational and Academic Performance

With respect to the theme of the relationship between involvement in the arts and students' overall educational performance, several sub-divisions at the qualitative level were examined with each student. These sub-divisions related to rudiments taught in the arts, arts influences on student academic performance, and critical thinking assessment in the arts. The ensuing discussion describes various responses from the focus group interviews, individual interviews, and classroom observations with the students.

Rudiments taught in the arts and educational development.

Focus group interviews. With respect to the discipline of dance, the students indicated that their love for the arts enabled them to build confidence and humility and transfer several concepts that they learned into real life situations. Among the key educational principles of the discipline that they acquired were humility, grace, determination and self-confidence, independence, passion, and commitment. For example, some thoughts shared by the students about their experiences included the following:

“I love my arts class. It brings great joy and teaches me humbleness, grace, and power to become anything I want to be” (D. H., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“I admire my arts class because the concepts that are taught to me are transferred into real life” (S. M., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“I love my arts class; it provides an enjoyable experience as well as self-confidence” (D. D., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“I love my arts class. It provides exposure to different experiences; for example, summer programs, auditions, and experiences into the real world, and not only dance but each and every performing arts” (L. B., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“I love it because it teaches me to progress as a dancer, and as a young man; and to exceed in the goals I have set as a dancer” (Z. M., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

Love for the arts was also instrumental in revealing additional principles, which allowed the dance study participants to identify those elements that molded them into the individuals they had become. To this end, they shared statements, for example, that talked about humor, collaboration between students and instructors, techniques, and classroom ambience, which promoted an appreciation for an inviting learning environment. The dialogue that follows gives a more accurate account of these thoughts that were revealed by the research participants.

“I like the amount of humor we have during classes with each other. I like the overall hard working, encouraging supportive friends as well as instructors, but especially the humor and techniques” (D. H., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“The things I like most, the teachers having collaborations of ideas and it always turns out to be an amazing dance, even though they may use the creations of students, it always turns out great. I like their choreography” (S. M., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“I like the students, the classes, the different techniques, beautiful dance studios, clean lockers, the location of the classes, and the love and support of instructors” (L. B., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

In the instrumental music department, the impact of the arts academy has created in students, as discerned through the participants, a strong love for the arts discipline.

Instrumental music students of the study recounted the following testimonials:

“I like the way my teacher explains, shows me how to play the music so that I can play it better the next time” (D. H., focus group interview, April 11, 2011).

The way it's set up I like the fact that three days we play and two days straight learning. I like we learn why different genres are played the way they are, where our instruments came from-originated. For example, renaissance talked about how things are religious and music in Latin. (A. A. focus group interview, April 11, 2011)

Student participants of the theatre arts department, like those in the vocal music department, expounded upon the fact that their participation in the arts academy at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School fostered a love for the arts and for learning. Those involved in the interview noted that the arts provided them with a high degree of satisfaction, which made them more expressive, while nurturing their strong desire for the theatre arts experiences. For example, theatre arts participants pointed out that:

“I do love the arts because it helps me express what's in my head. I may have crazy outrageous ideas that are encouraged to flourish and be nurtured” (E. L., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

“I love my arts classes, they help me to be who I am, and I'm allowed to express myself” (S. Y., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

“I love my arts classes - I'm allowed to express myself through acting” (S. S., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

“I like my arts classes because they allow me to use my energy on constructive things at the end of the school day” (M. W., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

“I like the activities; they are fun and interactive, for example improvisational classes” (T. M., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

Individual interviews. At the level of the individual interviews, many of the students reiterated how their deeper involvement with and love for instrumental music helped to improve their own musical prowess and to develop their wider educational abilities. One student instrumentalist shared that his musical preparation and experiences with the arts at the school also helped to better prepare him for college (A.E., personal interview, May 11, 2011). One of the instrumental music participants acknowledged that participating in performances was one occasion in which he could demonstrate the musical skills and other abilities that he acquired. For this student, performances presented opportunities in which he could show off the results of hard work (A.E., personal interview, May 11, 2011). It was also discovered that the significance of love for the arts for the instrumental student participants was expressed in the following statements.

My arts class is challenging for me. The teacher likes to challenge us because he knows what we're capable of doing and also he doesn't treat us like high school students; he tries to treat us like we're on the college level. But also we'll have fun at the same time. (E., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

I like my arts class because I'm open to different music cultures; gives me more discipline and whatever I learn in the arts class I can use it in the real world. For example, discipline and being organized with my college paperwork and other important things in life. (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011)

The participants for the television and film interviews were delighted to impart how their involvement and love for the arts helped to improve their learning capabilities

and to make them better individuals. For instance, one of the students said that her desire for the arts grew because she was interested in learning something other than academics, while learning academics (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011). Moreover, the student wanted to do something with the arts and the opportunity of being part of an arts school presented itself. The other student loves being in the television and film department because of the broadcasting possibilities that were presented as class projects throughout the school year (J. S., personal interview, May 16, 2011). This particular student enjoyed being in front of the camera conducting interviews with peers, which were broadcast on a channel dedicated to the school's broadcasting network.

Another aspect that was loved by one of the television and film student participants was that students worked much more independently. As elaborated by the student, "We have to do the projects and if you don't the teacher will not 'baby' you" (J. S., personal interview, May 16, 2011). Essentially the students were responsible for getting the projects done in a timely fashion, and following the timelines established by the teacher. Another student discussed how involvement in the arts helped him to learn to become independent.

I like my arts classes because they are something that I'm interested in. I'm engaged in my class and I enjoy what I'm doing. I like the different challenges because they are engaging; for example, making music videos and it is challenging when the teacher does stuff like that because you have to come out of your comfort zone and try harder, and try new things. I like editing my films and seeing them come to life in the way I want them to. For example, I edited a film called "Dream Girls" for one of my friends and I did the sound. So as I watched it without music, the music came to me in my head. I made it come alive with the music I edited into it. (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011)

Influence of the arts on student academic performance.

Focus group interviews. The vocal music students demonstrated that the amount of time vested in studying the intricacies of vocal music determined their levels of success. For instance, in an effort for students to achieve success, they were forced “to go the extra mile,” as stated by a vocal music student. To illustrate the influence of the arts on the academic performance of high school students, one of the vocal music participants recounted:

I like the way tests are made. I do pretty well on tests. I’m used to paper/pencil test, but in vocal music class I may have to stand in front of class and perform and peers judge you, in a sense. In performing arts, I incorporate my body and mind as I perform the teacher’s test because it allows me to concentrate on different levels instead of just paper and pencil. With academic tests, you learn and give examples- study and know. (D. E., focus group interview, April 5, 2011)

Achievement was measurable for the vocal music students. They received grades that were satisfactory and one study participant recalled that academic achievement was important because, “if students can’t speak well and write well, they will be viewed as the saying goes, dumb as a door knob” (J. F., focus group interview, April 5, 2011). It was evident that the student participants valued success and would take the necessary steps to achieve and maintain high levels of achievement. Furthermore one of the vocal music participants of the study commented that:

The arts program help me in formula problems that breakdown math formulas the same way as I learn the music. For example, say there is a song to sight read, I take few bar lines at a time, how many beats in the measure, and eventually put it all together. (J. F., focus group interview, April 5, 2011)

Instrumental student participants believed that the arts influenced their academic performance. There were several instances in which this theme surfaced to support the arts. For example, one student who was interviewed stated that attending Cooper Ruth

Performing and Fine Arts School provided her with the knowledge that she now possesses. Two other students imparted reasons for their desires to attend the school.

“I wanted to become a better musician and get a better understanding of how to play my instrument” (D. H., focus group interview, April 11, 2011).

“I believe it sharpened my musicianship and it is the best school in the district. When older, I want to be an inventor or musician” (A. A., focus group interview, April 11, 2011).

Another instrumental music student recalled that, “Doing good work in performing arts makes me want to do well in academics. If performing arts is as easy as academics it will be easy for me to pass” (D. H., focus group interview, April 11, 2011).

One student shared, “The harp program influences my academics by giving me more knowledge on Black History musicians” (J. D., focus group interview, April 11, 2011).

With respect to the impact of the arts on HSPA performance (Appendix B), yet another participant noted, “the arts program influenced my performance on the HSPA because it improved my reading skills” (J. D., focus group interview, April 11, 2011);

Students in the focus group session felt proud that they had been performing well on tests and quizzes, which improved their confidence and was reflected in their musical performances. One participant in the focus group session commented, “with tests and quizzes I believe I do well. When I practice it makes it easier to play my instrument and memorize intervals, triads, and scales learned in music theory” (D. H., focus group interview, April 11, 2011), while another revealed that, “I do well on tests and quizzes, the way how the teacher explains it’s hard not to remember” (A. A., focus group interview, April 11, 2011).

The visual arts participants expressed the view that they were making strides in the way in which the arts academy influenced their academic performance in rewarding ways. Several of these were discussed by the study participants with statements such as:

Arts help me think outside the box. For example, in my English literature class, in reading the story *Beer Wolf* (a concept introduced by Martin Luther), I was asked to use art to explain; so I drew a gladiator ready to go into battle. (H. L., focus group interview, March 25, 2011)

I use my art skills, for example in my math class when working on angles- showing different degree angles. It is much easier for me to understand because I relate it to art which uses angles in painting and drawing. Art also relates to my other subjects as well. (M. J., focus group interview, March 25, 2011)

Well, my performing arts are more about thinking and expressing in a bunch of different ways. The arts help to be more creative, and to explain how things work together. In academics, I'm taught one set of steps. If you are not taught to think, you can't apply as it relates to academics. (N. S., focus group interview, March 25, 2011)

Moreover, the arts do impact the academic performance of the students in ways that result in satisfactory performance on tests and quizzes. In describing their performance on tests and quizzes, some of the art student participants shared that:

"I do fine on tests. The way art is taught, it does not teach by the book. We have to memorize vocabulary terms and get tested on them" (H. L., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

"I do well. Every test is a challenge and I have to pick up information; once said by the teacher, you must pick up on it. The teachers do not teach you to draw; they help you bring it out" (D. R., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

Dance students involved in the study were able to highlight aspects that influenced their academic performance. For instance, one of the students said that their teachers have encouraged and forced the importance of the academics, showing that not

only dance was important, but also education as well (D. H., focus group interview, March 23, 2011). Another group participant declared that:

My dance instructors - they have opened my eyes for me to realize that to make it as a dancer, I would also have to be able to be educated- that the essence of education would always be my primary force. (S. M., focus group interview, March 23, 2011)

Comments from other participants of the study project also focused on the influence of the arts academy with statements such as:

“The arts have made a tremendous impact on my academic classes, because my dance instructors motivated me to do well in all classes besides dance” (D. D., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“Well, I feel that it encourages me because to perform, you have to do well; being on stage is a reward, so I have to do well academically” (L. B., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“To be a dancer you have to have discipline, patience, and other qualities also incorporated with the academics; applying work to a test, as dance steps to a stage” (Z. B., focus group interview, March, 23, 2011).

Individual interviews. In the vocal music department, the students who were individually interviewed mentioned that the arts academy contributed significantly to their academic performance. For instance, one of the students highlighted that in vocal music class, some emphasis was placed on the history of music. The student went on to state that things which were learned in the music class, for example, references to history, became essential when in the academic history class because the information was already part of her information bank (S. M., personal interview, May 16, 2011). Connections

such as the aforementioned provided opportunities that allowed her to do well on quizzes and tests.

Another vocal music student indicated that the academics in her performing arts class were even more rigorous than in her general education classes. The student described it thus:

The academic work in my performing arts class is harder than I thought it would be. We study music history, vocabulary, and music theory. We are expected to write research papers and complete sight reading projects. The general education classes are tough being that they are college prep but the work in music is on a high level. (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011)

One of the salient points that surfaced in the individual interviews with students as well as with the focus groups was that their involvement in and enthusiasm for the performing arts motivated them to do well in their academic subjects. For instance, one of the vocal music students interviewed noted that to remain in the vocal music program, one had to maintain a minimum Grade Point Average of 2.0. The interviewed vocal music student declared that the teacher drilled into them that only those students who were performing well academically would be given the opportunities to perform on stage and go out on singing tours (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011).

A student in the instrumental music program in the one-on-one session felt that the work that he had undertaken in his arts class was close to the entry-level college standard. The reason was that certain elements of the instrumental music learning process involved extra work outside of that stipulated in the curriculum which had to be completed by independent study (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011). Another student mentioned that in the arts academy, academic achievement was not only judged by “classwork” and homework, but as well by musical performances. The students

indicated that they came to the realization that academic competences mattered and actually helped them to improve their musical performances. For instance, one student revealed that, “If you’re not up to par with your academics, you will not be able to perform well in the arts. You must have a certain GPA of 2.0 to perform well” (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011).

More importantly, one of the instrumental music participants indicated that being more disciplined, keeping focused and paying attention, were beneficial to his academic performance. Another student noted that because of his ability to memorize things in the arts, he could more readily memorize information for tests in his academic subjects. One of the two students interviewed stated that:

The arts program helps me to think outside the box, being that we’re open to so many different experiences and different processes, which make performance levels on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) greater because you’re using your experiences in different situations. For example, when you don’t understand something, you don’t just stay stuck, you move on and come back to it. (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011)

For these students, performing well on arts assessments tools was valuable. For example, they were able to make academic strides because of repeated practice of performance tasks. The need to thoroughly know and understand their 12 musical scales, musical dynamics such as allegro, piano, and forte in a musical selection and to demonstrate their familiarity, interpretation, and understanding of the musical piece in front of a teacher helped them to better prepare for their tests (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011).

Students in the visual arts contributed information that helped to show the importance of academic performance relative to the arts. One student who was interviewed stressed that the performing arts allowed for greater self-expression. Apart from being a better artist, he was more focused on his academic work. The visual arts

also contributed to an improvement in his organizational skills and facilitated better outcomes on his required tests.

Another visual arts student noted that his improved academic performance had been driven by a desire to uphold a certain GPA so that he could continue to participate in arts-related events that showcase his work. This enthusiasm to do well had become the driving force that propelled him to perform well on tests and quizzes. The student stated that tests were mainly about what had been learned so that close attention had to be paid to information discussed by the teacher, since there was a great chance that it would be included on tests (H. H., personal interview, May 12, 2011).

The television and film students also confirmed the influence of the performing arts in their academic endeavors. As one student mentioned:

The arts help me to be more creative and it helps me to think outside the box in most of the academic classes that I take. For example, in our writing class, we were working on poetry and novels so when I have to write a story I can use my script making technique from television and film to help make my story in English class. (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011)

Another television and film student communicated that the performing arts classes provided for more hands-on and specific learning opportunities, while in academic education classes, there was more sitting down and general learning. While both were engaging, they differed in the degree of engagement (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011). This student emphasized that he came to the realization that if he worked hard in both his academic and performing arts classes, he stood a better chance of accomplishing his career goal of being in the broadcasting business (J. S., personal interview, May 16, 2011).

Both television and film student participants shared that the arts academy influenced their academic performance in a positive light because the arts permitted them to achieve success on their quizzes and tests. The two students, who were interviewed at different times, pointed out that the tests focused on information that was learned in the class. Nonetheless, because they learned how to cope with stress in the performing arts, they were better able to translate this experience into helping them cope with the stress of writing academic tests. For instance, one of the television and film students talked about the fact that:

In television and film you have to learn to take stress because we had deadlines for projects so you have to learn to manage your time and that helps because in HSPA, you have to learn to manage your time. (A.G., personal interview, May 17, 2011)

Students of dance who participated in the interviews realized that the arts academy had favorably influenced their academic performances. For instance, one of the study participants stated that the arts program had provided him with the motivation to do well in classes, as well as the ability to be disciplined (S. B., personal interview, May 20, 2011). The other student indicated that, “Dance is like finding a way to relate to real life. It taught me a better way to understand my school work by applying the work of real life” (D. H., personal interview, May 19, 2011). Echoing the sentiments of her peer, this student believed that she performed well academically because the arts program provided the discipline and the focus necessary to achieve success.

The individual theatre arts students interviewed also reiterated that the arts academy had a positive impact on their academic performance. One interviewee expressed the view that:

The arts helped a lot with the High School Proficiency Assessment because the stories we had to choose from were plays we read in the class and even performed; so you get a deeper understanding and it helped in writing the essays. I passed the HSPA the first time, while some students had to repeat it if not successful the first time. (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

Another student declared that tests were avenues in which the expression of self and growth could be depicted through such channels as monologues, directing plays, scenes, and things of that nature (T. G., personal interview, May 12, 2011). A final statement from one of the students in an individual session gives a rather profound appreciation for the significance of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School's arts academy.

The academic side of performing arts class is more challenging for theatre; we have to write a lot. I have written more essays in that class than any of my other classes, for example, English class. There was a time we were writing 10 page essays for theatre and a lot of stuff we learned in theatre ties into academic classes. For example, for history class we got to see what was going on in history that reflected the arts. (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

Classroom observation. To further judge and corroborate the statements made by the students in their focus group and individual interview sessions, an attempt was also made to observe students' involvement and participation in the classrooms in various performance art subjects. As a non-participant observer of the vocal music program, I noticed that substantial effort was devoted to ensure that students improved their writing skills through a number of journal assignments. One of the vocal music classes began with the students completing 5 minutes of journal writing about their involvement in some type of musical experience during the course of the school (classroom observation, February 24, 2011). In reviewing the journal entries, I was fascinated by some of the essays that were completed by the students. Quite a few of these were centered on students' involvement in a Black Entertainment Television (BET) Special during the

2010-2011 year to honor a prominent personality of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (BET, 2011) as well as an award ceremony in Washington, DC.

With regard to the award ceremony, the students of the vocal program, who formed part of the school's choir, were requested to sing background vocals for a well-known and respected gospel singer. The students documented their excitement, elation, and privilege to be part of that historical event. One student's documented recollection of the event began with, "What an experience!" This student went on to describe her experience of this 3-day event from beginning to end (Appendix F). This journal entry particularly struck me because of its detailed nature and the techniques used to captivate the reader. This was definitely an example of the transference of skills learned in language arts into the realm of the student's art form; and also confirmation of the connection between academic achievement and the performing arts.

Influence of the Arts on Critical Thinking Skills

In assessing the influence of the arts on the educational and academic performance of students, it was felt that an emphasis on the non-participatory observation approach would give the researcher a direct feel of how involvement of the arts was being translated into critical thinking and the overall educational experience of students. As a consequence this sub-section of the chapter is based exclusively on the non-participant observatory approach.

In the case of the vocal music class, the students were asked to analyze the Black National Anthem, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* (Appendix H) by John Rosamond Johnson and to submit written responses to question asked about what they had learned in their

vocal classes (classroom observation, October 12, 2010). The following questions were given by the teacher:

1. In your own words and for all three verses, write your interpretation of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*.
2. Name, explain, and write about five (5) things that you have learnt about in this vocal music class.

Students were given directions from their music teacher on how the assignment should be completed. The teacher read through Question 1 and made it clear that an interpretation did not mean writing the words of the song as the answer, but giving an opinion in their own words of what the official Black National Anthem meant to them. Some students worked independently, while others worked in small groups on the task at hand. This activity lasted for approximately 20 minutes in duration with students communicating quietly as they worked.

At the conclusion of the exercise, the students placed their crafted answers to the two questions on the piano as the teacher had instructed. It was observed that while the responses of students varied in length and content, students felt comfortable sharing their opinion on what the song meant to them. A few of the students were then asked to share their reactions with the class. For instance, one student's response to a verse of the Black National Anthem was, "They are talking about the past and what black people had to go through; slaves had been crying, slaughtered, and now they are happy that they overcame that" (classroom observation, October 12, 2010). Praise and feedback were provided to this particular youngster and others who took up the challenge to communicate their written work with classmates. Students also imparted encouraging words to their peers.

In another critical thinking assessment case, I observed theatre arts students engaged in responding to a question posed by the teacher, during a 40 minute lesson, on the classic American play: *A Raisin in the Sun*. The question posed by the teacher was whether a play had to be old to be deemed an American Classic? One student's response was that, "it did not have to be very old, but it must had to covey some experience that one could identify with." Another's response was that, "it did not have to be old, but had to have a strong theme/message and had to be able to influence people; and if it touches people, it can be considered to be a classic" (classroom observation, October 13, 2010). For clarity, the teacher restated the students' concepts by elaborating on the fact that "a person does not have to be old to write a classic. Hansberry was 30 when she wrote the play; and people are writing plays now that have the potential to become American Classics" (classroom observation, October 13, 2010). The teacher further stated that the students had the ability to write American Classics and that they would be getting the opportunity to do so later in the school year. The teacher commended the class for the great conversation on the topic, and redirected their attention to the presenter for closing feedback.

Another classroom session involved observing the visual arts students critiquing the work of their peers. Students placed their paintings or drawings on an easel in the front of the class, gave a brief description of the work and then their classmates were able to give feedback on the works of art. Several students discussed their work with the class during the 40-minute time period. For instance, one student placed a painting on the easel in which he used a 'dot and dip' technique (classroom observation, March 16, 2011). This is a technique that he had developed on his own (Appendix I). The student did share

that he was unwilling to part with how the technique worked because he did not want his fellow classmates adopting it. His statement was, “Can’t share the process of the technique.” Essentially this was a painting which consisted of bright colors such as red, green, yellow, blue, and white, with blobs of paint strategically placed in certain areas of the painting, which represented stones to give the effect needed, hence the name of the technique. His painting was more abstract in design so the teacher commented that, “The painting is not realistic, so we have to rely on form.” The teacher provided feedback to the students as well, which consisted of encouraging words about the work or what elements could be changed to make the work more appealing.

Another visual arts student discussed his painting, which was the representation of a still life painting. One of the student’s classmates commented that, “It has a mood; it makes me comfortable because of lots of blues, yellows, and browns. The colors set the mood; blue and brown make me feel good” (classroom observation, March 16, 2011). One more student displayed a painting, which depicted a country scene in which there was a house and a person standing on a grassy area. As students critiqued the painting, one of the elements that was of concern was the fact that the person standing in the grassy area was taller than the house, to which one student commented, “Why is the man taller than the house.” Subsequently, the teacher responded to the question by saying, “For a realistic feel, the man should be half the size of the house.”

The students also viewed some paintings of Sir Peter Paul Rubens and during the discussions with the teacher, one of the students asked, “Why do the paintings look so different?” The difference of which the student spoke was that the paintings were dark compared to the type of color seen in the modern and post-modern eras. It was

fascinating to discover that the same student after thoughtful reflection was able to answer the question. The answer given by the student focused on the fact that during the 17th century paintings were done under lamp light because electricity was not yet invented (classroom observation, February 23, 2011). Due to limited lighting, the paintings had reddish tones. The teacher provided praise to the student for such a profound answer. After which the teacher interjected that skin pigmentation was more natural which also contributed to the reddish earth tones.

As the lesson moved on to the 1900s, the post-impressionist period, the teacher shared that this period was highlighted by the emergence of the camera and photography. One student put forth a question to the teacher, “Did they have cameras during the 1900s?” The teacher’s response was, “Yes they did, but improvements were made as time progressed” (classroom observation, February 23, 2011). The teacher also provided some background of this 1900s time period. He gave focus to Vincent van Gogh who was a post-impressionist painter, whose work reached far into the 20th century because of its vivid colors and emotional impact. Vincent van Gogh was not really appreciated during his lifetime, but his fame grew after his death. He is regarded as one of history’s greatest painters although he started painting when he was in his twenties. Van Gogh died when he was in his late thirties due to ill health.

The classroom session on vocal theory and music involved observing students’ understanding of and ability to perform the piece, *Climb Every Mountain* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Before the class began singing the selection, the teacher first asked, “What does *Climb Every Mountain* mean?” Responses from students included, “you should always reach for your dream” and “reach for the stars and don’t let anybody tell you that

you can't" (classroom observation, November 9, 2010). Next, the focus was on the interpretation of the words. The teacher read the first verse with passion using voice inflections. She then read the same verse another time, but without feelings and very dull. The question was then put forward to the students soliciting their interpretation of the ways in which the words were read. The teacher received responses from students stating that the first time the piece of music was done with meaning and on the second occasion it was done without feeling.

Next began the singing activity. Before the teacher began playing, she reminded the students that the song, *Climb Every Mountain*, was their poem and that they needed to tell a story. The students responded with vocal richness in all four parts- soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Trios were done of the song with students holding firm to their parts, with positive affirmations being given by the teacher. One of the trios was stopped by the music teacher due to the lack of passion from the bass singer. He then reacted to the request by producing the rich vocal quality that was needed. At the winding up of the trio segment, the entire class then took the song from the beginning, singing through it once. When finished, praise and constructive feedback were provided to the students. For instance, the teacher shared with the students the great job that was done in the execution of the piece; and more attention was given specifically to a new student, who was doing well in remembering her vocal part, and the mechanics of vocal production.

Another vocal musical piece observed was the rendition of the Negro Spiritual *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*. Students were requested to name and explain five techniques that they had previously learnt in the vocal music class (Appendix G). The first technique

mentioned by the students involved singing with an “open throat” (classroom observation, October 12, 2010). One student commented that,

I have learned that when singing and you have an open throat, the note comes out with a warm, smooth sound. If you have an open throat when singing *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, all the notes have a warm, smooth sound.

The second technique described by the students was clavicular breathing. The explanation given was: “I have learned that we do not use clavicular breathing, which is breathing using your shoulder. We should use diaphragmatic breathing.” The third technique mentioned by the students was tonal quality particularly. One student noted, “We should always have good tonal quality like in the operatic voice when singing. This makes the sound in your voice warm and helps your notes to come out smooth and clear.” The fourth technique explored by the students involved being attentive to the directions given by the conductor/director. One student stated:

I have learned that you should always follow the director because you never know what she is telling you to do. She could be telling you to stop singing and you can mess up the song if you did not follow instructions.

The students rounded off their session with a discussion on the importance of vocal exercises. The student’s explanation was: “You should always warm-up your vocal chords so that you won’t be singing flat” [in the pitch/key that was written by a composer] (classroom observation, October 12, 2010).

Relationship Between Participation in the Arts and Student Engagement in the Arts

The theme of the relationship between participation in the arts and engagement in the arts generated two sub-divisions at the qualitative level relating to high levels of engagement opportunities in the arts; and the promoting of learning in the arts classroom environment. The discussion that follows describes several responses from the focus group interviews, individual interviews, and classroom observations with the participants. The following sections will provide some insight to these aspects.

High levels of student engagement opportunities in the arts.

Focus group interviews. As regards the vocal music department, students noted that they remained highly engaged and diligent in their vocal music activities. They noted that they were exposed not only to learning and singing music, but to many other related facets and educational experiences. For instance, the vocal music students were engaged in writing exercises in which they expressed their thoughts and feeling about issues whether personal or otherwise. One of the participants exclaimed that in the vocal music classes, students were always writing about their lives. This writing platform gave them an opportunity to tell their story and talk about things that they would not otherwise feel comfortable discussing (J. B., focus group interview, April 15, 2011).

An illustration of some of the benefits that can be realized as a result of the impact of the arts academy on the high school students was revealed by way of the interview data. For example, the student participants in the vocal music department shared that positive peer pressure was a force that had produced high student engagement. One of the vocal music participants acknowledged that:

In arts education, there is the discovery of new ways of learning, for example, journal writing that is read aloud in class to your classmates. You see others

reading their journal entries sharing personal things, so this makes you want to share your story. (O. M., focus group interview, April 5, 2011)

One of the vocal music participants who was greatly moved during the interview, elaborated on the fact that the internal structure of vocal arts classes promoted high levels of student engagement. Student participants shared that the arts education program allowed for self-expression. For instance, as one student recalled, “We have to show emotions through what we sing and when everyone shows emotions they become more relatable. This enables us to feel comfortable around each other to express ourselves more” (E.V., focus interview, April 15, 2011). Another member of the vocal music focus group mentioned, “We have to interact with peers and can step out of comfort zone and be you in performing arts classes; and possibly show someone else it’s okay to be themselves” (D. E., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). The experiences of these students indicated that while the music setting served a therapeutic role for many students, its instructional rigor also helped to advance self-expression in students as the music was being taught.

The efforts of the students also promoted a certain degree of seriousness for the vocal art form. For example, as stated by one of the study participants, “The arts teach more than just the arts. It is making me a well- rounded person and teaching me life skills” (O. M., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). Another vocal music participant, while being interviewed, demonstrated that the element of self-discovery was much more constant in the arts than in the academic disciplines. The student was eager to say that, “I do better in performing arts class than in academic classes, because I have been doing vocal music longer, so there is more consistency than in my academics which changes in

the things to be learned” (J. B., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). Another participant elaborated that:

I am more serious towards my performing arts, and know what is expected. I take performing arts seriously because I have been doing it longer; with academics there are different things to be learned in each class. (D.E., focus group interview, April 5, 2011)

The interview process with the music students in the instrumental program revealed that participation in the arts academy tended to deepen students’ engagements with the arts. While the degree of engagement varied among the participants, they nonetheless produced positive outcomes. Through being engaged in the arts experience, one of the students demonstrated that she learned more about the music of the “old ages” as she performed it. For some participants, being surrounded by students who wanted to learn had increased their motivation and engagement. Two students participating in the focus group session underscored the fact that their engagement in the instrumental department was helping to preparing them for the future. They said that, “I like arts classes; it helps me to learn more, to prepare me for the future. It helps in being able to get scholarship after graduation” (D. H., focus group interview, April 11, 2011); and “I like arts classes because it helps with career future and gives me something to fall back on. At least I will be a professional artiste” (A. A., focus group interview, April 11, 2011). These are some of the motivational elements that were the driving forces behind high student engagement in the instrumental music department of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. This high level of student engagement brings to the forefront increased class participation for some of the participants. For instance, one student said that, “Well, when we have theory, we answer questions more than anything else, so it prepares us and motivates us to want to answer questions in academic classes”

(A. A., focus group interview, April 11, 2011). Another student shared that his involvement in the arts has increased his participation in the classroom because it has resulted in better understanding of music theory.

As depicted by the visual arts participants of the study, the arts academy does promote high student engagement in the arts. The students' quest for knowledge became the driving force for the visual arts engagement level. They embraced the seriousness of the craft while being able to express themselves through a medium that allowed for unconventional thinking. For example, one student noted that, "Because of the different vibes it gives, you think outside the box. It is serious, you learn something about life. The teachers are more interactive; they care about your life" (H. L., focus group interview, March 18, 2011). One other comment that was generated by the visual arts research study group member illustrated how engaged he became in the experience: "Because it's calming, not too noisy and it's fun. I am shown something new - someone is always bringing something new to the table. It's never the same all the time" (M. J., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

Individual interviews. The individual interviews conducted also reinforced the findings of the focus group sessions. One vocal music student indicated that the arts education program had brought her "out of her shell." She went on to state that the confidence that she had acquired brought about the high level of engagement in the vocal music classes and in making contributions to the school as a whole. The student concluded by articulating that, "The arts have shown me that I have value and that my thoughts are important" (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011). It was essential to note

that for the vocal music students, many indicated that the confidence that they gained through performances deepened their engagement levels in the discipline.

In the case of the students involved in the instrumental music program, they noted that the intensity of their classroom dialogue and participation helped to strengthen their engagement with their discipline and with the arts in general. Students pointed out that many of their sessions revolved around how certain chords and music should be played and their debates about these aspects led to more open mindedness and deeper engagement with their peers about various genres of instrumental music (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011). One student mentioned that after the class played a piece of music, they would engage in some discussion about the merits of their interpretation of the piece, as well as the parts that may need fixing musically (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011).

One of the instrumental students alluded to the fact that his engagement in the arts was enhanced because of the genuine concern which the teacher had for students as he monitored not only their musical capabilities, but also their academic progress. With respect to the teacher's concern for the students, the interviewee acknowledged that, "He (the teacher) will not lie to us; he will tell us the truth about the problem (music related) and what we have to do to fix it" (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011). The other student participant highlighted a situation in which there was extreme engagement including peer tutoring experiences in their instrumental music classroom sessions. The student elaborated on this aspect with great enthusiasm, which is demonstrated in the following account.

We have an each-one-teach-one where not just the teacher teaches; where students use what they learned in the past years to help others. For example, I play

trumpet and French horn and I learned that all brass instruments are family, so I'm able to help other students on their instruments by playing their instruments. (L.T., personal interview, May 18, 2011)

Students involved in the theatre arts discipline also indicated how the participatory approach adopted by their teachers helped to improve their engagement in the discipline. They noted that even the stern approach taken by their teachers provided further motivation for deeper engagement with theatre arts. One student commented that:

With our teacher being hard on us, I think it molds us into individuals that are very authentic. When academic teachers seem to be lenient, he is very stern or strict, and it's good. It teaches us how to be independent and focused. (T. G., personal interview, May 12, 2011)

As regards the dance discipline, students noted that the time set aside to review and discuss dance films allowed greater classroom participation, understanding, and involvement with various forms of dance. These opportunities, as stated by one participant, resulted in students "not being afraid to get up in front of the classroom and speak or ask questions" (S. B., personal interview, May 20, 2011). The other student also contributed that engagement in dance "improved self-confidence so that, in class discussions, I never need encouragement to give my point of view" (D. H., personal interview, May 19, 2011).

Classroom observations. To further substantiate the views and opinions expressed by the students in their focus group and individual interview sessions, the researcher observed in a non-participatory manner, a 40-minute vocal music class in which students got into sight reading exercises on a musical excerpt using the musical syllables (do, re, mi, so, etc.) (Classroom observation, February 25, 2010). Students performed the sight reading exercise individually in front of their classmates. After completing the sight-reading aspect, the students were asked to sing the words of the musical excerpt. The

level of mastery displayed by the students was varied. Some students were able to execute the task with ease, while others experienced some difficulty and needed prompting and assistance from the vocal music teacher. The teacher extended help and encouragement, advised some students to count the beats of the music and assisted them with singing in the correct pitches. The duration of each student's performance was approximately 2 minutes.

Another vocal music and theory session that was observed related to the learning of the value of musical notes. The teacher made mention that the lesson on the values of musical notes had a relationship to mathematics. The music teacher stressed the importance of understanding note values and being able to read music, which would enhance their overall proficiency and aptitude in the execution of written musical and vocal works. She was emphatic in stating to students that the precision required for music was similar to that needed for mathematics and that music had rules just as mathematics had theorems. An identification of the notes to be studied for the class session was drawn on the board along with the identification of their values. The teacher stated that the whole note in music gets four beats; the half note gets two beats; the quarter note gets one beat; the eighth note gets half a beat; the sixteenth note gets quarter beat; and the thirty-second note gets an eighth beat. Students were asked to discuss the relationships between the values of notes in a way that was similar to mathematical calculations. For instance, many students recognized that a whole note was really the sum of two half notes. She closed the session by telling students that "Remember that Music is like mathematics and requires practice and precision" (Classroom observation, November 9, 2010).

In the theatre arts classroom session, high levels of student engagement were observed in the “Play Analysis Class” in which the students had to defend a position for or against Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*, as a classic piece (classroom observation, October 13, 2010). Three students made presentations to their classmates who were asked to provide critiques or feedback on the presentations by the teacher. Students commented on several aspects of the presentations including aspects of cultural assimilation, power, wealth, occupation, and prestige. The students noted that the analysis of the play gave them a better appreciation of their own experiences and further piqued their interest in evaluating other plays.

The observation session for the television and film students, which lasted for 40 minutes, involved a talk show segment on fashion in New York and New Jersey. This class was intended to teach television and film students the basic instructions on how to organize, plan, network, and delegate a production in a highly direct and professional manner. The students were responsible for all areas of the process. During the process, I was able to observe that each student took ownership of his or her assigned position and executed it with a high degree of professionalism (classroom observation, March 15, 2011). For instance, students in the control booth gave cues to the camera crew in the studio when to zoom in or out on the hosts of the talk show. A detailed account of student engagement and responsibility is discussed in the following.

- Students who were on the cameras ensured that the two anchors/hosts were always in focus as they conducted their discussion on fashion in New York and New Jersey.

- The floor director controlled the operations that were occurring in the television studio of the taping of the fashion segment. For instance, the student floor director ensured that the cameras were in the correct positions, the set was ready for the hosts, and that the crew was in position.
- The control room director communicated with the camera crew on when to zoom in, focus on the hosts, and zoom out when necessary.
- The student who was the soundboard/mixer controlled the music, mikes, and what was played in the classroom from the taped show.
- The character generator of the show was responsible for guaranteeing that the credits to the various individuals were provided in the beginning and ending of the production. The character generator was also responsible for providing the background needed for the set in the studio and for the scheduling of shows.
- The switchboard operator was responsible for controlling the cameras, fadeouts, and for the sections of the production that would be aired and the sections that would not be aired on the schools' television network.
- The teleprompter/writer controlled the scrolling of what was being read by the hosts. For instance, the hosts read the teleprompter for the script that was to be said at the beginning of the show, introducing the topic and at the end, to thank the audience for viewing. At one point, the teleprompter made minor adjustments to the words that were being read by the hosts, when there was a break in the taping session.

- The anchors or hosts were the two students who held the discussion on the fashion trends of New York and New Jersey. One of the hosts was the producer of the segment, as he engaged in a chat with the other host of the show.

The exercise demonstrated that students participated effectively in the exercise and got a deep appreciation of what was required to produce a talk show for television. The professionalism demonstrated by the students reinforced many of the statements that made in their focus group sessions about the how effective participation reinforced their engagement in their own discipline.

Classroom environment promoting learning.

Focus group interviews. As regards the theatre arts department, students noted that their engagement in the arts was supported by the environment of the theatre arts classrooms. For instance, some students got their motivation to learn by what surrounded them in the classroom, others by whom they were surrounded. For example, one of the research participants stated that, “The costume room in which my theatre classes are held, tells my mind that I can go further than I can ever imagine” (E. L., focus group interview, March 15, 2011). The costume room, as you will imagine, had on display several costumes from various school productions, some of which were designed and made by the theatre arts students. To further promote engagement, there were displays of classroom rituals and expectations on the walls. Another theatre arts student mentioned that the classroom environment was motivating because, “There are tools to do things to the best of your ability; for example, when shows are coming up, there is printing of

scripts and programs, and also getting the supplies needed” (T. W., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

Visual arts students stated that their engagement in the arts was also encouraged by the environment that was created within the classroom. The teacher’s style and instructional pedagogy was the flame that ignited the passion of the students for the visual arts experiences. Some of the visual arts participants mentioned that the classroom environment created by the teacher was instrumental in their learning. Comments for students included:

“The teacher does not write on blackboard so I must be quick. I go home and research and find out more about what was told to me” (D. R., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

Mr. White (pseudonym) teaches us to look for different things; you have to learn a lot about other subjects. He motivates you to connect art to other subjects. For example, there is history in science, math in art, science in art. Art is a form of expression that can be applied to all other academic areas. (N. S., focus group interview, March 25, 2011)

Students in the dance department shared that the visual images of outstanding dancers on the classroom walls influenced their learning. One student mentioned that the environment was motivating her to learn because: “It is the love, care, and encouragement with fine display of examples to use as a role model” (L. B., focus group interview, March 23, 2011); while another stated: “It is all of the exposure when you’re around good people, you do good things; you get encouragement from peers” (Z. B., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

The visual arts student participants of the research project also demonstrated that being involved in discussions stimulated the expressive element that they have within.

For example, visual arts students communicated that participating in classroom discussions can take on several forms. One student shared that participation in group discussions meant that he was allowed to express what's on his mind (M. J., focus group interview, March 18, 2011). Another student stated that:

“Arts classes help me relax even though I'm thinking; it is not stressful. At the end of the day it is a release. It allows for a lot of expression; being able to express self in art assignments” (N. S., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

Visual arts research participants have discovered, like their peers in other arts disciplines, that the arts education program is of importance in their educational learning. Through the arts, for example, they have said that they were encouraged to express feelings and they were able to be uplifted when emotionally challenged. The various responses from the students provided a rich set of qualitative data that supported the influences of the high school arts academy in promoting strong student participation and engagement.

Individual interviews. In the individual interview sessions, visual arts students also shared information on the degree of their involvement and engagement in arts activities at the Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. For one student, his engagement ability was motivated by the classroom environment whereby he observed the works of his classmates being displayed on the walls of the art studio, and as a result, embarked on a mission to produce work that was much more outstanding than his peers. Student engagement was driven by the competitiveness of this particular student.

The other visual arts student affirmed that, “The arts forces you to step out of your box because of the simple fact that the teachers make you want to participate and make

you want to learn” (H. H., personal interview, May 12, 2011). As was gathered from the one-on-one interview sessions with the visual arts students, their motivation was also propelled by their engagement. It would appear that they relied on one another as a means of achieving success. For example, one participant stated that, “Once you see that other students are picking up the technique, it pushes you to improve on whatever you are doing; whether it’s the same thing or not, you want to try to do better and improve your skills” (H. H., personal interview, May 12, 2011).

For the participants in television and film, engagement for one of them came as a result of witnessing the hard work of his peers on their projects and seeing the quality of the end product. Additionally, another student stated that he became more engaged because of the constant challenges and encouragement meted out by his peers, which forced him to become more focused in his art projects (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011).

In the vocal music department, one participant remarked that the arts motivated her to learn more in a group setting. She stated, “In seeing that we all sing together and learn together, I was motivated to do more group work in the general education classes” (S. M., personal interview, May 16, 2011). For the other vocal music student interviewed, the arts classes also motivated her to learn because with each new piece of music that was learned, the student gained the confidence and power to positively affect her life. The interviewee went on to stress, “If I can learn new music, then I can learn that math equation too” (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011).

The interviewees from the instrumental music program noted that participation in the arts provided students with the ability for greater self-awareness, discovery, and a

deeper interest in music and other arts disciplines. One student shared that the arts program was important to him because through the years of high school it helped him to discover who he was and his purpose in the program (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011). In addition to being in the arts academy's orchestra, this student was also a member of the marching band, which was involved in many of football performances as well as city parades and events.

The next instrumental music interviewee pointed out that the arts program created a greater sense of unity. For this student, the arts program was not just important from the point of view of learning music, it was also important for establishing meaningful peer and teacher relationships. For instance, the student stated that, "The arts program is like a second family to me because the teacher doesn't only care about the performance in class; he also cares about what's going on with students outside of the class" (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011). The statement is a true reflection of how important the arts experiences were to this student and many others.

One of the theatre arts students realized that being engaged in the arts provided one of the ingredients that permitted him to be very vocal in class discussions, where his opinions were valued by classmates. Being in friendly competition was another element that one of the students shared that created extensive levels of engagement. This competitive spirit was seen as an indicator for students wanting to do better in class participation. Moreover, it was established by one of my theatre participants that engagement in the arts has never been problematic for him. The student expounded upon this thought when he said, "I never had trouble speaking in class discussions. I like

debating and arguing people down. I can see how it can help other people who are shy come out of their shell” (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011).

Another theatre arts student who was interviewed made a profound declaration that truly exemplified the significance of the arts education program of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School.

The arts program is important to me because a lot of inner city kids don’t always get to see this aspect of learning. They don’t get the chance to express themselves through the arts, so I’m very fortunate to go to a school that has a good arts program and facilities. (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

Relationship Between Participation in the Arts and Student Attitudes Towards

Academics and the Arts

This section of the chapter focuses on a qualitative analysis of the impact of the arts on student attitudes and behavior. The ensuing discussion describes several responses from the focus group interviews and individual interviews.

Impact of the arts on student attitudes and behavior.

Focus group interviews. In the focus group discussion relating to the impact of the arts on student attitudes and behavior towards academic and arts disciplines, the high school vocal music students attested to the beneficial and positive impact that the arts had on their attitude towards school and life in general. One of the participants argued, “The arts give me a reason to come to school. I want to be involved in the arts, so I keep my academic courses in order to maintain a good GPA” (E. V., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). Additionally, another vocal music participant indicated that the arts allowed him to be more tolerant and tempered. The range of some of the other responses from the research study group members included:

“Music is expressive and it allows me to be more understanding as a peer and to understand the teacher” (D. E., focus group interview, April 15, 2011).

The experiences of the impact of the arts on the attitudes of students from the theatre arts discipline were quite similar to those from the vocal music program. For instance, one participant communicated, “The arts program has driven me to come here everyday. The more I can receive in my arts and academic classes, the better artist I can be” (E. L., focus group interview, March 15, 2011). Some thoughts of other theatre arts participants included:

“The arts impacts in a good way. If I was not in the theatre, I would not have met so many people. I’m excited about classes and I am positive about life” (S. Y., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

“The arts have a positive impact. I have accomplished a lot. For example, the process for a show may be complex, but it’s really worth the time invested” (T. M., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

Students who participated in the study project from the television and film department also confirmed how participation in the high school arts academy had greatly impacted their attitudes towards the academics and the arts. These students emphasized that participation in the arts help them to develop independence, confidence, responsibility, and commitment. Evidence of these elements can be recognized in the direct quotes that students made.

“I see the arts program as it’s very much in your hands. If you don’t do anything, don’t expect anything. What’s in your film is your idea” (T. T., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“TV/film makes students very independent; teacher tells you what you need to do, and if you don’t do any work you get the grade you deserve” (C. P., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“The arts help you with responsibility” (T. W., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“It makes me more confident - believe in self. In the arts you want to have the best work when you do something with confidence all the time” (R. R., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

Further statements that support the premise that students in the television and film program became more disciplined, mature, and engaged and that the arts promote more positive behaviors within the group are as follows:

“The arts give me something to do when bored; keeps me out of trouble” (T. W., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“It makes me more mature, more professional. You may have to work with someone you don’t like but you must be professional” (C. P., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“I’m more disciplined and take more pride in self. I represent film department - when I do something I represent film department and school” (R. R., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“You get to express yourself – a different style of communication” (C. P., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“If I make it in the arts field I will come back and support my people. I’m first grandchild; my dad dropped out of school in 8th grade so I want to show my cousins that I can do it” (T. W., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“This program is unique; most schools don’t have it. If you are good, it opens lots of doors for you, and you meet famous people, for example, Cheryl White (pseudonym) from Fox 5” (R. R., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

The dance students who were part of the research project articulated that the arts were important because they enabled them to set expectations, provided encouragement, and focus, all of which were all fundamental for success. These essentials were shared by students during the interview process. They included:

“This arts program is important because it keeps me focus on what I want to do with my life. It gives support and encouragement to keep moving forward; it’s like a push of love- *PLOVE*” (D. H., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“The arts education program has a substantial amount of importance personally because as a pre-professional dancer, it gives me a glimpse of what to expect” (S. M., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“It is important because it gives the fundamentals to pursue a career in dance; such as training and history. It puts me a step forward in front of my competition” (L. B., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

Individual interviews. In the individual sessions, theatre arts students stated that the arts program has creatively influenced their attitudes. One of the participants admitted that the arts allowed him to view education differently. Furthermore, the student recognized that, “No one likes coming to school everyday, but it’s something you have to

do. But the arts make you realize the importance of school” (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011). This student, like many others in the arts academy, has embraced the arts as a vital component in the development of an attitude that is productive.

Another theatre arts student mentioned that the arts program has unquestionably influenced his attitude. The student indicated that, “The arts program helped me to grow internally and externally; for example, before the arts program I was introverted, but because of the arts, I have been molded me into an authentic extravert” (T. G., personal interview, May 12, 2011). The arts academy also produced students who were assertive and took their experiences seriously. One of my research participants expressed the following with respect to the arts.

I think the arts made me more uppity. It makes you look at other students’ behavior in a different way; and it really helps you see through other people’s personalities and the fronts that they put up. I always find myself doing a character analysis of my peers. (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

Participants commented that their arts experiences have positively influenced their attitudes. These students indicated that they became more responsible and dealt with demands at school with greater maturity. One vocal music student participant of the study stated that the arts program had positively impacted her attitude, because she looked forward to being in school. She also noted that she had become more receptive to different ways of learning (S. M., personal interview, May 16, 2011). Another student noted that:

I was never a student that really liked coming to school. But when I got to this school, that changed because I know I will be able to sing everyday; I do not struggle with coming anymore. It changed me as a student to place more value on my education. I can say that I like coming and being part of an arts school. (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011)

Students in the instrumental music department mentioned that their involvement in the arts impact their attitudes in a positive manner. One instrumental music student shared that the arts program encouraged him to come to school more regularly. He further elaborated that not every child was made to like school, but when there was something at school that they liked, their attitude would change, thus promoting better attendance (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011). Other interviewees stated that:

“The arts program keeps me on point with my school work and my behavior in classrooms because my teacher will talk to me and tell me to straighten up” (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011).

The arts changed my behavior as a student because in my middle school years I will play around and get in trouble just to fit in, but when I found what I’m good at and to be accepted at what I’m good at, I try my best and work hard and changed for the best. (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011)

Visual arts participants in the individual interview process expressed the view that positive changes could be identified in their attitudes because of their involvement in the arts. One participant revealed that the arts program had given him a more positive disposition and that he became less angry and aggressive when handling stressful matters (R. H., personal interview, May 11, 2011).

Individual students who were interviewed from the television and film program pointed out that one of the important attitudinal changes that they developed was an enhanced eagerness to learn, which came as a result of being more excited about attending school (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011). Another revealed that the arts program made him a more responsible individual and helped in his character development. This student noted that: “The arts provided me with an experience that I could take onto college or anywhere I go” (J. S., personal interview, May 16, 2011).

Incidentally, this statement was made by a student who has chosen the military as a career path. So it can be inferred from the testimonial that the arts experiences and skills have made an indelible impression that will hopefully embellish his career and personal life.

The arts program also produced positive attitudes in students involved in the dance program. One student remarked, “The arts has taught me humbleness, self-discipline, and also not be repulsive” (D. H., personal interview, May 19, 2011). Another student interviewed, expressed the view that, “The arts program has impacted my attitude towards school by giving me the motivation to want to wake up in the morning and be excited about coming to school every day” (S. B., personal interview, May 20, 2011). Both of these dance students, who were interviewed on separate occasions, confirmed that the arts program had fundamentally altered their attitude, making them more disciplined and more focused in pursuing and accomplishing their planned goals in the high school arts academy.

The visual arts students that were interviewed identified the creation of a disciplined structure and emotional expression as important benefits that they gained from the arts program. The students spent numerous hours working on projects and as one of the students commented, “The arts program helps me express my emotions through my paint brush and is a form of therapy” (R. H., personal interview, May 11, 2011). Another arts student contended that:

“The arts program is important because it forces you to discipline yourself and also it’s important because some students don’t know how to express themselves

verbally, so using their art, they can express whatever feelings they have” (H. H., personal interview, May 12, 2011).

Relationship Between Participation in High School Arts Program and Student Pursuit of Careers in the Arts

In this section, the theme of the relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts, the qualitative analysis examined the impact of the arts on future aspirations of students. In the following discussion, various responses were presented by the participants from focus group interviews and individual interviews.

Impact of arts on future aspirations.

Focus group interviews. In the focus group discussion relating to the impact of the arts on the future aspirations of students one of the vocal music participants who was ultra-passionate about the arts, stated in the interview that, “Career wise, I’m interested in several arts careers; acting on Broadway, acting in movies, and professional singer/song writer” (J. F., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). This particular student has been exposed to many facets of the arts world at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School, which were outside the gamut of his vocal music realm. For example, he secured leading roles in major school productions such as, *Guys and Dolls* (Appendix D) written by Frank Loesser and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, written by Oscar Wilde.

As the researcher, I discovered that participants who were interviewed from the instrumental music department had aspirations to make the arts career choices. They were excited to share the information and as they reported on it, flashes of contagious smiles illuminated the room. For instance, one student on his aspirations of an arts career related

that, “I do believe it will. I learn more than I did in my original school. I’m learning hard music, so when I get to college I can learn harder music than I’m learning now” (D. H., focus group interview, April 11, 2011). Other instrumental music students mentioned:

“My arts program gives me the knowledge so if I do want to go into that field I already have some kind of knowledge” (J. D., focus group interview, April 11, 2011).

I want to pursue career in the arts as a performer. Since I’m here I can learn things at an early age. I can start performing at an early age, so when out of college I will be professional and it will be easy to perform. (A. A., focus group interview, April, 11, 2011)

There was one theatre arts research participant who wanted to make the arts a career choice. He stated: “I do see myself as an arts teacher, not an academic teacher; for example, vocal, theatre, and dance. I feel the knowledge I have, I must pass it on” (E. L., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

Students in the television and film department were giving serious consideration to making the arts a career option, either on a full time basis or on a part-time basis. One of the participants, a graduating senior, was serious about making television and film a full time career. He spent countless hours working on projects after school, and on weekends, in addition to the regular class time. Other participants communicated interest but with some limitations. The testimonials that ensue represent what television and film participants communicated as to the pursuit of careers in the arts.

“The arts let you be creative and I may want to become a photographer or a fashion designer” (T. W., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“For me it will either be journalism or fashion. I really want to work in fashion – fashion editor of a magazine or maybe a stylist” (C. P., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“It will inspire me to have my own talk show. I want to do television and radio in college” (R. R., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

Many of the dance participants in the research study have aspirations to become professional dancers. They were excited to share that being a part of the arts academy had influenced them to consider professions in the arts. For example, one student stated that, “I would become involved in the arts field because I want to share my experiences with others as a dancer because it is my passion and inspiring” (S. M., focus group interview, March 23, 2011); while another revealed, “Definitely, after my career as a ballerina, I will be a ballet teacher to educate my younger ballerinas” (L. B., focus group interview, March 23, 2011). One of the students who participated in the study imparted that she would not want to become an arts educator, however, she will consider having a profession in the arts field (D. H., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

Individual interviews. In the individual interview sessions, one of my vocal music participants expressed without uncertainty that the arts education program at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School would inspire her to pursue a career in the arts. The vocal music student commented that:

My goal is to pursue a music career. I will be auditioning for music programs in various colleges. I would like to become a professional singer. Whatever I end up doing career wise I want it to somehow include the arts. (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011)

An instrumental music study participant being interviewed had passion for the arts and would strongly consider a career in the arts. For instance, his rationale was that there were teachers to whom students looked up because those teachers have done great things in the lives of the students to facilitate the learning of the craft. In addition, as stated by the student, the music teachers have taught them to appreciate the arts, love the

arts, and even succeed like those teachers have in the arts (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011). These factors produced the motivation that propelled my research participant into embarking on a career as a music educator.

Theatre arts student participants shared mixed perceptions on the arts as careers. However, the positions taken by both interviewees present the arts in a positive light. For example, one theatre arts student regarded a career in the arts as imminent. He aspired to pursue a career of being a director of theatre and/or film.

One of the visual arts participants who was interviewed, undeniably would pursue the arts as a career. He was a student who had great potential and had produced works that were on display in the hallways of the arts academy and in the school district's conference room. His passion for his craft ran deep and some of it could be captured in the following statement.

I will pursue a career in the arts because seeing my growth from when I first started pushes me to seek more, to learn more, and to master my art. I am actually going to college for graphic arts, minor in business, but still do my art on the side. (H. H., personal interview, May 12, 2011)

Another participant being interviewed intended to use the skills learned in television and film to catapult her into a career of broadcasting, journalism, and film making (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011). This student was a broadcasting anchor in the television and film department and was instrumental in broadcasting the arts academy's morning announcements to the school community; such as upcoming events at the high school, giving recognition to students for things accomplished, and providing weather reports. This was transmitted on the school's television network or the public address system during the time period dedicated for homeroom attendance.

The dance students interviewed were unequivocal about pursuing dance as their career option. They participated in all the major works that the arts academy had, such as dance recitals and the major theatrical productions of the school. During the interviews, which took place at different times, I was captivated by the passion and the high level of satisfaction which these students enjoy as dancers of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. One dancer's testimonial stated:

Dance will inspire me to go into the dance world as a profession because in dance my teachers taught me what it takes to be a real dancer and the different aspects that go into being a dancer. I feel that is a journey that I will like to embark on when I get older. (D.H., personal interview, May 19, 2011)

Non-arts careers inspired by the arts.

Focus group interviews. For some of the vocal music participants of the study, the arts were what they intend to pursue as career choices, and for others, it is just an experience they will cherish because of the fond memories they would have created. Careers in the arts, as shared by participants, bring on the feeling of uncertainty because although they love the arts, they do not see themselves as being very talented, whereby their art form will be permitted to sustain them as career options. As the researcher I was encouraged to see that participants had a realistic view of the situation, and also being honest with themselves, not creating any conditions that would present a sense of false hope relative to arts careers. Some of the non-arts career choices revealed by the participants included: forensic sciences, lawyers, sports management, and law enforcement.

However, although arts careers were not possibilities for some, they believed that the arts had instilled in them skills for success. Some participants shared reasons for their

unwillingness to pursue the arts as possible career choices. For instance, one participant divulged that at one point, a career in the arts was an option, but she stated that, “The real world deterred me, but the arts instills success in me” (O. M., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). Furthermore, another vocal music student disclosed that a career in the arts was not being considered because, “I feel like God gave me this gift for myself. I feel like there are too many singers and artists, and to me, singing is like the air that I breathe and I need to cherish it for myself” (E. V., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). A statement of this magnitude stunned me, adding a dimension that I never considered as a performing artist myself.

Several of the theatre arts students who were interviewed, mentioned that they would not have careers in the arts. Some of the reasons expressed included the following:

“Being involved in the arts inspires me a lot, but not an arts teacher. It’s not for everyone” (S. Y., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

“I’m not inspired to become an arts teacher. I’m going into law enforcement” (T. W., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

“It inspires, but not to become an arts teacher; I don’t want to become a teacher” (S. S., focus group interview, March 15, 2011).

Being in an arts education program for some of the visual arts participants who were interviewed, would be remembered only as an experience they would cherish deeply. Participants of the research painted an unadulterated view of what their thoughts and feelings were relative to the arts as career possibilities. For instance, one visual arts participant stated that the arts did not really provide the inspiration to pursue as a career; however, it provided the inspiration to stay in the arts while attending Cooper Ruth

Performing and Fine Arts School. Several other visual arts participants indicated the following with respect to embracing the arts as a career option.

“Art will always be in my background. So if I have nothing else, I can always use art to express myself” (D. R., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

“I’m not inspired to be an arts teacher. I’m good at art so I’m going to do something along that line in college; for example, graphic design” (M. J., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

Individual interviews. One of the vocal music students who was interviewed declared that the arts would not motivate her to consider a career in the arts. However, the arts experiences expanded her love for the arts. She further expressed that her desire was to pursue a career in the medical field, such as becoming a doctor of internal medicine (S. B., personal interview, May 16, 2011).

An instrumental music student being interviewed stated that a career in the arts was not an option. The student had other interests but was an excellent clarinetist in the school’s orchestra. The student conveyed that:

It’s not that I don’t like music it’s just that I’m interested in other things. I want to be a game designer because I enjoy playing games. I like creating new ideas about games. I can’t see myself as a music teacher. (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

One of the theatre arts participants valued the experience at the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts, but would not venture into the arts as a career. The statement below captures the viewpoint expressed by the student as to a career in the arts.

I would not necessarily pursue a career in the arts because it’s not what I plan to do in the future. However, it has broadened my horizon and that is a blessing. I like the arts but it’s not what I intend to do. Elements from the arts I will apply to

my daily life and career in journalism and communications. (T. G., personal interview May 12, 2011)

The future aspirations of the visual arts students interviewed for the research study did include the arts, but in different intensity levels. For instance, one of the students affirmed that the arts education program at the high school did not inspire him to pursue a career in the arts. However, he did state that art will be his minor in college, because the monetary rewards for art are not as lucrative today as in the past, unless you are an art educator (R. H., personal interview, May 11, 2011). This art student was very ingenious and I observed this ingenuity in artworks that were created using his original technique called the “Dot and Dip” technique.

The television and film students interviewed shared similar thoughts that pertained to pursuing possible careers in the arts. One of the television and film interviewees articulated that he did not intend to pursue a career in the arts and will be joining a branch of the military upon graduation from high school (J. S., personal interview, May 16, 2011). Nonetheless, the student mentioned that being exposed to the arts in high school was rewarding and exciting and that he enjoyed his broadcasting experiences.

Relationship Between Parent Involvement in the Arts and Student Educational Performance

With respect to the theme, the qualitative analysis examined the relationship between parent involvement in the arts and student educational experiences. The following discussion describes several responses from the focus group interviews and individual interviews that were conducted with the participants involved in the study.

Parents' influence on their children's educational performance.

Focus group interviews. With regards to the vocal music department, students realized that parental involvement played a critical role in their participation in the arts academy as it related to their attitudes towards the academics and the arts. This element of parent involvement in the education of children helped to influence, in a positive way, the children's academic performance. One of the participants commented that being from the Caribbean, education was the only thing known. The participant also stated that students of an American system were fortunate, in that they have not experienced an education system in which only a select group does well. Due to this fact, the participant declared that taking advantage of the American educational system was the weapon being used to prevent return to the Caribbean. Furthermore, the student contributed, "In the Caribbean no government takes care of you, so you float on your education alone" (O. M., focus group interview, April 15, 2011).

Another one of the vocal music focus group's participants affirmed, "Well, my mother has high expectations of me and to her getting anything less than a 'C' is unacceptable. My mother knows I could achieve excellence and her constant support inspires me to do better" (J. B., focus group interview, April 15, 2011). To further highlight a demonstration of the involvement of parents with respect to the importance of their children's education at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School, another vocal music participant provided the following profound statement in response to their parents' influences.

My parents always use their lives as an example. They tell me that they never had anything because they didn't continue their education, so I have to break the cycle. It's stressful but when I see how comfortable they could be living, I push myself most of the time for them. (E. V., focus group interview, April 5, 2011)

Theatre participants were delighted to reveal that their parents or guardians were very instrumental to their academic success. The parents or guardians provided encouragement to their children, highlighting the importance of an education. The students could not overemphasize enough the thought that their parents or guardians stressed the significance of an education. One student said that his parents stressed the importance of an education because, “They did not attend college, and they want the best for me. Parents support you; they should always support you even if you have ‘Fs’ on your report card” (S. Y., focus group interview, March 15, 2011). Another student stated that her parents stressed having a good education is a must, using their experiences as a guide. She concluded by saying that, “They stress having a degree is a must to making money” (S. S., focus group interview, March 15, 2011). The ensuing statement made by a participant is a further indication of the positive influence of the arts and the supportive element of parents. The student revealed that:

My parents support me to the fullest. I have been in an arts school since elementary and it is part of my life. Parents support because it’s positive and I’m not doing idle things. Both parents are college graduates and they say that without a degree, I will not make money. Having a higher education opens up more doors, and they stress the fact that being of African descent, our opportunities are less, so they push me. (M. W., focus group interview, March 15, 2011)

Evidence has also been provided by the instrumental music students who were interviewed, that their parents and guardians play vital roles in their educational success. The parents and guardians are the pillars who support their children as they progress through their high school arts experiences. For instance, one student described it by saying, “One way my parents stress the importance of an education is: if I’m doing well and one day start missing assignments, they will get on my case to get grades up so that I will not miss out on good things” (D. H., focus group interview, April 11, 2011). One

instrumental music student narrated what was told to her with respect to her education: “If you don’t finish high school, you won’t be able to succeed in life” (J. D., focus group interview, April 11, 2011). Another reported that:

My parents help stress the importance of education; if doing something wrong, they will tell me down falls if I keep going in that direction. They make sure I’m doing well in my arts program. For example, they will provide my drum sticks, and they also support by putting me in program outside of school so whatever I don’t learn here, I can learn out there. (A. A., focus group interview, April 11, 2011)

Furthermore, parents and guardians of visual arts participants demonstrated support for their children in other ways. For instance, a student shared that his parents love the fact that he is part of the arts program at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. They attended shows at the school in which he was involved. Two other visual arts research participants communicated: “My parents ask me about my art work everyday. It keeps getting better because of the opportunities that may come my way later in life” (M. J., focus group interview, March 18, 2011); and “My father drew and my grandfather an engineer, had skills in art. It runs in the family who are supportive of the arts” (N. S., focus group interview, March 18, 2011).

Parents also support their children’s artistic endeavors by giving the nod of approval on various levels. For example, in one of the television and film participants’ home, the family spent a considerable amount of time viewing movies. As a result, his mother will engage him in film discussions, while at the same time giving him ideas for projects at school; for instance, pointers on a horror film class project. Furthermore, the parental involvement was very different for other participants. This is illustrated by some of the responses made by students as they were being interviewed.

“My mother’s so supportive of me. She lets me come to school on weekends to complete projects because it’s important to me” (C. P., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

“They check up on my work; they don’t make me get an ego; I’m still learning” (R. R., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

Moreover, the parents and guardians of these students were very supportive of their children being part of the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. As shared by the dance participants, their parents were involved on several levels, such as helping with fundraisers, supporting their dreams, and just making sacrifices for their children. For instance, some of the commentaries of the students were:

“With doing fundraisers, my parents are one of the main/biggest supporters in giving donations towards my passion for dance and towards the arts program” (D. H., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

“My mother will support any dream I have that is positive. She is willing to put aside any conflicts and will do her best to get where I want to be” (S. M., focus group interview, March 23, 2011).

Individual interviews. In the individual interview sessions, vocal music students also shared information on the significance of parent involvement. For one student interviewed, the parents very often stressed the importance of education. Her parents constantly inquired how classes were progressing and offered to assist with homework. The parents of this particular student would provide anecdotes from their lives as a means of motivating their child to do well. For instance, the student stated that her parents have said that they wished finishing their college education was something they had done (S.

M., personal interview, May 16, 2011). Although these parents' dreams were not fulfilled, they provided support to their child, for instance, by attending any kind of function in which she was involved, and offering constructive criticism in the process.

For the other vocal music student who participated in the study, parent involvement certainly has a beneficial impact on her being at the arts academy. This student's parents felt very strongly about education. As the student had communicated in the interview, "My parents know that education levels the playing field and that I will have more opportunities if I do well. School comes first and I am expected to do well in high school and go to college" (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011). This student further stated that:

My parents support me as much as they can. I think they will rather me become a doctor or a lawyer instead of a professional singer. But they know how much I love to sing. They feel as long as I keep up with my academics I can participate in the music activities. Sometimes it is a lot with rehearsals and shows but it is worth it. The school has done a lot to put my parents at ease about the traveling. They were nervous at first but now trust my teacher and the other staff. (M. I., personal interview, May 20, 2011)

My next interviewee, who originates from the Caribbean like several of my research participants, affirmed that his parents emphasized the role of education as the key ingredient in his plight for success. The parents of this particular visual arts student, as previously inferred, were from a developing nation like I am, and understand like I do, that as immigrants, education is not taken for granted because of the elitist status to which it is held in the Caribbean. Only those who are diligent, thirsty for knowledge, and academically bright will receive the opportunities leading to a tertiary education. The student further shared that his parents supplied the financial resources for the purchase of

art supplies that were needed for the creation of visual arts products (H. H., personal interview, May 12, 2011).

The involvement of parents was a phenomenon to which the television and film students attested. One of my study participants recalled that his parents constantly reminded him of how essential a high school diploma is on the road to success in life. Added to that, a further demonstration of parental support was evident in the statement made by the student: “My parents will not have me going here if they did not support me. They always ask me what I’m working on and when can they see it” (J. S., personal interview, May 16, 2011).

The other television and film participant had Caribbean parents who were very involved in her educational performance. These parents believed that education was necessary for the establishment of a firm foundation. Due to the philosophy of her parents, the student was able to communicate the following testimonial: “My parents stress the importance of education a lot because they are from the Caribbean, so they will check up on me all the time. They put me in educational programs to help me learn” (A. G., personal interview, May 17, 2011). The parent involvement of this student extended to the point where they would assist in buying equipment for their child’s projects in television and film, as well as being in attendance at her presentations, shows, and provided verbal words of encouragement.

With the instrumental music students who were interviewed, there was a demonstration that the parents were an integral part of their arts academy encounters. One of the students mentioned that he was the first member of his family to attend college and because of his talent as an instrumentalist, will be receiving scholarship funds

for college attendance, starting in the fall of 2011. Of great worth, was that the mother of this student was wholeheartedly supportive of her child's arts experiences. For example, the interviewee declared that, "My mom supports me by being in the program as a band parent. She helps with what she can and is always at every performance" (L. T., personal interview, May 18, 2011). This was a clear indication that the mother of this student saw the rewarding impact of the arts academy on her child. The other student interviewed also affirmed that his parents push the education platform very strongly. The following statement paints a picture of how intense his mother is with respect to education.

My mom, she is on me a lot about my work. She will give all my teachers her number and email address; like she'll drop by the school without telling anybody- she will surprise me. She pushes me to do my work and strive harder. (A. E., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

The theatre arts department, which is the largest discipline within the arts academy, saw parent involvement as a necessity. One of the students who were interviewed expressed that his parents stressed the value of education on a repetitive basis. He also said that his parents saw education as a necessity and demanded that he attended school consistently (T. G., personal interview, May 12, 2011). For the other student research participant, his parents embrace the arts but have some reservations as to the direction their child should embark on his path to career building. Although his arts centered focus may not be in agreement with the wishes of his parents, they still provide the support as they continue to stress their belief about education. This student most eloquently stated the following:

This is the kicker. My parents, they both support me, however, my mother would prefer me going a different route with my education. She stresses that I should go for a degree that she feels would get me a job, but I've done the research and most common degrees such as business, have the same likelihood of you not getting a job, so why not go for what you want to do. But most of those career paths, the

education you'll have to get at least three years into your study and what you've learned would be outdated, so I think that arts stands the test of time. (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011)

The parents of these theatre arts students also demonstrate their continued support for the arts by attending the various productions in which their children were involved. For instance, one of the student participants interviewed mentioned that, "My parents attend my shows; they are my biggest fans and they are my number one supporter. They encourage me" (T. G., personal interview, May 12, 2011). The other student shared similar sentiments with this statement: "My mom comes to all my shows; sometimes she comes in to help with costumes or sets so she's pretty supportive of me being in the theatre program" (J. L., personal interview, May 11, 2011).

For a dance participant interviewed, parent involvement was manifested in the discussions with their child about his grades and in which the value of education was stressed as they embark on ascertaining what his future aspirations could entail as a dancer. The parents are involved in the development of the dance skills of their child to the point where he attends a school of dance in the evenings and weekends. As the student participant stated, "My mom supports me being in the arts program by coming to every single one of my shows and also giving me the opportunity to take an active part in what I love doing" (S. B., personal interview, May 20, 2011).

With respect to the other dance participant, she also indicated that parental involvement was very valuable to her educational performance. Parental involvement was like the beacon of hope that motivated her as a dancer to reach her fullest potentials. For instance the student stated:

My mom always told me that you cannot be a dumb dancer so you have to get your education even though you have talent. My mom always taught me dance

could sometimes be a competitive sport and you always have to remember that you are dancing for you and no one else, so be the best you can be. (D. H., personal interview, May 19, 2011)

Discussion Section: Qualitative Findings

It was evident from the interview sessions of the various arts disciplines of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School that credence was given to the overarching question of the research project, which was, the arts having an impact on the high school students it serves. For instance, there was the element of an earnest desire of students to develop their vocal capabilities, and this could have been inferred from the rich data that was provided by the participants. These students were inspired by their wishes to study the arts, and in so doing, the opportunity to be a part of the vocal music department was vital to their educational experiences. There were elements that supported the positive influence the arts academy had on the academic performance of students.

Moreover, there were data that favorably suggested that participation in a high school arts academy influenced the attitude of students relative to their academics and the arts. The findings also suggested that participation in an arts academy engaged students in the arts. For instance, in an observation of a vocal music sight reading class, students demonstrated seriousness with the exercise, which was an indication that the pedagogical requirements affiliated with arts magnet schools, do have an impact on students' learning. The students were in pursuit of excellence as they strived to master the artistic skills associated with sight reading music (Wilson, 2001). Furthermore, in order for the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts to attain this, the serious minded attitude needed for the arts discipline was evident. Although students' mastery

levels varied from beginners to advance, the essential emphasis here was that the seriousness of the exercise was significantly prominent. The assumption could be made that students have a genuine love for their art form, despite the difficulty some of them might have experienced while engaged in the performance task.

Clearly, arts classes made a vital contribution to the efforts to foster in students a joy of learning, which enhances their creativeness (Grytting, 2000). Furthermore, Grytting stated that these classes support the desire to “inspire intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual growth” (p. 66). According to Seidel et al. (2009), a major sign of high quality arts learning in any program is that “learning experiences are rich and complex for all learners, engaging them on many levels and helping them learn and grow in a variety of ways” (p. 47).

The television and film students who were part of the study also witnessed that engagement in the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School produced rewards. For example, one participant realized that the arts classroom promoted diligence. The level of engagement for students also came from competition. One of the students revealed that, “Competition is created from seeing movies made by other schools, and it makes you want to outdo them. It makes you competitive” (T. W., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

The engagement levels of the television and film students also produced their desire to recreate. Students have a yearning to recreate good movies that they have seen. The engagement in the arts is fostering the students’ ability to actively participate in class discussions. With respect to class participation, one student commented: “It helps

communication. I'm more active and more sociable in classroom when discussing stuff" (G. T., focus group interview, April 14, 2011).

Added to that, the data from the interview sessions did point to the fact that many students may not pursue the arts as the career choice. Nevertheless, what was gathered from research participants was that even though the arts may not be career choices, the experiences and the wealth of knowledge gained would remain with them. As suggested by Grytting (2000), it is hoped that students will be successful in their chosen fields, and no matter what this field may be, the important aspect is that creativity is among the tools they possess, which is a requirement for success. Globalization is integrating the world. Producing students who are equipped with creative skills, which are being taught in arts education, will allow them to successfully negotiate the demands of an evolving market place (Choi & Piro, 2009).

Some study participants have shared that their overall development as individuals was impacted positively due to their arts engagement opportunities at the school. Student engagement can be attributed to the concept, as mentioned by Wilson (2001), that students learn best when learning is structured around a purpose. Students in the arts select or willingly adopt goals that they view as having a purpose and extrinsic benefits. The engagement of the vocal music students allowed for the growth of their emotional awareness. Grytting (2000) revealed that arts classes support emotional growth by allowing students to explore and express emotions. Wilson (2001) attested to this fact in a study he conducted which demonstrated that students in the arts mentioned that the arts provide an emotional release. This aspect was revealed and discussed by the participants involved in the study at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. The fact that

vocal music students were engaging in journal writing showed that the vocal arts teacher was incorporating aspects of an arts integration methodology. Mason and Connolly (2009) purported that journals give some insight into how well students were learning skills that are not easily measured by test or even performances. The pedagogical lens focuses on how the teacher conceives and practices her craft; how she conceptualizes the teacher-student relationship, and how she designs and implements instruction (Seidel et al., 2009).

The collected interview data also suggested that students have identified occasions in which the transference of concepts and applications of strategies are possible between the arts and academic disciplines. The transference of skills between the two disciplines could facilitate and improve the achievement levels of the students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. Wilson (2001) mentions that the arts provide for the expansion of students' cognitive orientations. These cognitive ability connections were significant experiences for the student participants. Some of the experiences of the students in the arts classes were harbingers to their experiences in the academic classes. These factors were propitious because the students were able to draw upon prior encounters that facilitated success in the academic process. For example, the research participant who studied Meisner in theatre was able to make connections as he studied the same aspect in English class. Hence this was one of the reasons for his success on the English test. Sanford Meisner developed an acting technique that was based on the premise that acting found its most profound expression in specific behaviors that were generated out of the actor's real human response to circumstances and other people (Brestoff, 1995).

Arts academies undoubtedly foster academic progress (Halquist, 2003). The influence of the arts on student achievement can be realized, for example, when they are allowed to attain understanding by doing and becoming more involved in the learning process (Gullatt, 2008). Seidel et al. (2009) have purported that the learning lens through which students are viewed focuses on what students are actually doing in the class rooms, such as the kinds of projects and tasks in which they are involved and the character of their engagement.

The arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts has also impacted the self-discipline and confidence of the students. Research participants demonstrated that their confidence levels and self-discipline have improved considerably and will continue to improve as they became more mature. As discovered by Wilson (2001), students in their disciplined efforts to perfect their performance as well as their creations, may come to identify boundaries in a world that to teenagers may appear to be devoid of boundaries. Coombes (2009) articulated that learning to be self-disciplined is important to students' successes. They are motivated by their peers and instructors to be more than mediocre in their academics as well as their arts. Nonetheless, even when the students do not perform at the levels expected, they work hard so that improvement can be attained. The attribute of being confident is materialized after students are equipped with the technical resource skills needed. As discussed by Coombes (2009), "when students gain self-confidence in their art, and the more self-confidence they gain in their art; the more they have in other courses" (p. 42). Moreover, students will not only feel confident in themselves, but also in the knowledge they gain from their instructors.

Without the parental emotional, financial, as well as educational support, the realization of the dreams of students will be thwarted. The research participants revealed that this entity was of great significance for their sustainability in the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. Moreover, some of the participants shared that their parents were pushing the education platform because of the experiences which might have deferred their dreams and aspirations. Ouimette, Feldman, and Tung, (2004) postulated that parents' attitudes towards school and their roles are formulated by many factors, such as their previous experiences, and their available time.

The findings that pertain to the four arts discipline that were observed provided some credibility to the significance of the art academy at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. As the researcher, I witnessed some evidence that supported the research questions. For instance, there was the demonstration that student engagement has a powerful influence on involvement in the arts academy. The high levels of student engagement provided the vehicle for these theatre arts students, for example, to tap into their critical thinking skill sets.

Moreover, as the researcher, I saw within the students a passion for the discipline as they sought knowledge and shared their knowledge about art history during a 40-minute class period observation of a visual arts class. Several components of Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy were recognizable as I interpreted the critical thinking exchanges of students. For instance, the students obtained knowledge and provided knowledge about the paintings of the two artists, Rubens and van Gogh; comprehension of aspects that surrounded the painters was achieved through discussion, and students were able to complete an analysis of works of these two painters. Some individuals may have the

misconception that students are not required to think while in art classes, but instead take a break from thinking (Winner & Hetland, 2008). Suffice it to say that this misconception was refuted by what I witnessed in this particular visual arts class. As Winner and Hetland have further stated, “art-making is nonverbal thinking, and verbal thinking” (p. 31).

According to Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (2000) the arts promote critical thinking in students (as cited in Gullatt, 2007). For instance, in the observation of a theatre arts lesson, students asked pointed questions to student presenters who were equipped with appropriate responses in support of their rationale. Furthermore, the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts recognized that qualitative critical thinking was absolutely necessary to the creative and performance processes (Wilson, 2001). Swick (1999) argued that student ownership of drama/theatrical works can foster a matchless level of commitment and collaboration.

Furthermore, there were the display of skills by the students in the various disciplines that unquestionably influenced their attitudes towards the academic and the arts. The skills displayed by the students in the vocal music department, for example, were an indication that the presence of trained arts specialists did not only guarantee sustained and quality student engagement, but also promoted collaboration with classroom teachers to draw connections between the arts and other disciplines (Lynch, 2008). The in-depth responses to the questions, and in addition, the ability of the vocal music students to think critically as they completed journal writings, was a demonstration that the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School was providing an

invigorating mixture of artistic and expressive qualities and cognitive challenges that were attracting intellectually curious, creative, and enthusiastic students (Wilson, 2001).

According to Perrin (1994), research has stated that one of the most crucial reasons that Japanese education produces skilled workers was not due to the many classroom hours of “rote learning” or the longer school days, but because students were taught how to work well together. Research is also showing that, “employers say that they want to hire individuals who are able to work together, who see themselves as team members, and who unselfishly contribute their individual efforts for the benefit of a project” (Wilson, 2001, p. 379). The exposure and experience that the students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts received, both artistically and academically, were truly testimonials of this fact.

Conclusion

The first section of this qualitative analysis concentrated on the relationship between involvement in the arts and students’ overall educational and academic performance. Focus group interviews, individual interviews, and classroom observations were the vehicles through which the qualitative analysis was completed. Participants in focus group interview sessions stated that their involvement in the arts taught them rudiments that could be transferred into real life situations, which would help to build self-confidence and establish humility. Moreover, students mentioned that involvement in the arts molded them into individuals who were progressive. The focus group interviews also revealed that involvement in the arts impacted the academic performance of students. Participants stated that the arts have influenced their academic performance in rewarding ways. For example, one participant mentioned that his knowledge of angles

from visual arts classes was applied to understanding angles in mathematics classes. Furthermore, involvement in the arts allowed students to make connections of the arts to the academics. During a focus group interview session, some participants said that the arts enhanced their performance on tests and quizzes in academic classes, while for others, the creation of songs helped in memorizing formulas.

In individual interviews, students stated that their involvement in the arts provided them with rudiments that allowed them to express their love for the arts. As expressed by an instrumental student, his love for the arts deepened because of the ability to learn about different musical cultures. Another participant from television and film stated that her love for the arts increased because of the opportunity given to learn the craft of television and film. Students in individual interviews also mentioned that involvement in the arts influenced their academic performance as well. For instance, one participant stated that the stories from which he had to choose on the High School Proficiency Assessment, were from a collection that were required readings in his theatre arts classes. This gave the student an advantage and allowed him to perform well on the examination because the information was already known.

In this qualitative analysis, individual interviews demonstrated the involvement in the arts facilitated connections of the arts to the academics. This was evident as students indicated that the arts provided them with the ability to transfer skills learned into the academic disciplines. For example, one participant from theatre arts stated that the arts helped tremendously with the High School Proficiency Assessment because the stories from which students had to choose, were plays that were read and performed in theatre classes. Additionally, involvement in the arts was recognized in classroom observations,

in which students exhibited their critical thinking assessment abilities as they responded to a question posed by the theatre arts teacher to solicit information on the attributes that constituted a play as an American Classic.

In the qualitative analysis of section two, focus was given to the relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts. Focus group interviews and individual interviews solicited information for the analysis. Students involved in focus group interviews expressed that their participation in the arts allowed for high levels of engagement opportunities in the arts. For example, students in vocal music classes mentioned that they engaged in writing exercises as part of their class experiences. Moreover, students also discussed that participation in the arts created classroom environments, which promoted learning. For instance, students in theatre arts commented that being in an arts classroom that is adorned with costumes from various school productions, provided the catalyst for promoting learning.

Furthermore, students who participated in individual interviews recalled that their participation in the arts also produced high levels of engagement opportunities. One student disclosed that as an instrumentalist, there were opportunities presented by the teacher in which debates about how chords should be played are conducted. The qualitative analysis also focused on classroom observations, which promoted participation in the arts and student engagement. This was evident in a theatre class in which the students were highly engaged in discussions that critiqued the presentations of their peers.

The third section of this qualitative analysis concentrated on the relationship between participation in the arts and student attitudes towards the academic and the arts.

Focus group interviews and individual interviews provided the backdrop for the discussion on the impact of the arts on student attitudes and behavior. Study participants in focus group interviews articulated that the arts had beneficial influences on their attitudes. Some participants realized that the arts had resulted in them being more understanding of their peers. The beneficial influences of the arts allowed participants to be more regular in school attendance. Students through their arts experiences had developed attitudes that encouraged independence, confidence, and responsibility. Additionally, for some students, the arts have positively impacted their behavior, making them model students.

With respect to individual interviews, one student stated that participation in the arts has enabled him to use the arts experiences as a form of therapy, while another expressed that the arts facilitated appropriate expressions of feelings. Moreover, participants also expressed that the arts fostered within them the positive perception of education. Students articulated that involvement in the arts promoted the relevance of school, and as such created attitudes within them that were positive.

In the fourth section, focus was given to the relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts. A qualitative analysis was conducted using data from focus group interviews and individual interviews. Some of the study participants were able to confidently state that the arts would be their choice as careers. In focus interview sessions participants shared that they would strongly consider the arts as career choices. For instance, one vocal music participant had aspirations to become a professional performer, while others expressed the desire to become arts educators. With regards to individual interviews, students discussed that

their involvement in the arts had also given them the motivation to consider the arts as career choices. A committed arts program provided the gel that was needed for them to give serious consideration to the arts as career choices.

Although some students through their involvement in the arts did not have the conviction to consider the arts as career choices, they undeniably expressed that those experiences in the arts were meaningful. Focus group interviews of this qualitative analysis demonstrated that participants expressed the uncertain nature of the arts discipline. One of the reasons given by participants was the uncertain nature of the discipline, whereby consistent employment opportunities might not be an option. Some of the career choices that were being considered by these participants included law enforcement and the medical field.

In the fifth and final section, the qualitative analysis indicated that parent involvement played a significant role in the educational performance of students. Focus group interview sessions demonstrated that parental involvement provided the impetus that positively influenced the academic and artistic abilities of their children. Moreover, participants shared that constant support and encouragement from parents became the catalyst for excelling in their educational performance.

As regards the individual interview sessions of this qualitative analysis, there was also an indication that parents were instrumental in the educational success of their children. Participants articulated that their parents had the conviction that education was a necessity and as such, should be viewed as the vehicle that promoted opportunities. Furthermore, the individual interviews also revealed that the parents supported both the academic and artistic endeavors of their children.

Chapter 6

Summary, Reflection, and Conclusion

Implications for the Research

It is evident from the present research that the arts have a positive impact on the high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts Academy. This section embarked on demonstrating that the quantitative and qualitative analyses provided credence to the research project. Four of the research questions are focused upon for the purposes of this discussion. The first research question in the discussion focuses on the impact of the high school arts academy on the students it served. The analysis of the quantitative data that supported this research question showed the relationship between student involvement in the arts and their overall educational and academic performance. To highlight the impact of the arts, cross-tabulations were conducted on variables measuring student involvement and their overall educational and academic performance. The results indicated that a significant relationship existed between these two variables. For instance, the data demonstrated that 30.5% of the students with Grade Point Average scores of 1.6 – 2.5 spent several hours on arts-related community events, while 48.6% of the students with Grade Point Average scores of 2.6 – 3.5 spent at least 10 hours on art-related community events. The Grade Point Average score range of 1.6 – 3.5 indicated that 84.3% of the male participants in both the performing and fine arts disciplines performed well academically; with 76.1% of the females in both the performing and fine arts performing well academically.

From the perspective of the qualitative data, evidence was also provided that supports the first research question, which focuses on the relationship between student

involvement in the arts and overall educational and academic performance. In this analysis, focus group interviews and individual interviews provided the catalyst for the identification of information. For instance, it was revealed that rudiments taught in the arts impacted students in a positive manner. The participants' love for the arts allowed them to be passionate about the arts, in addition to being expressive through their arts experiences. Furthermore, the rudiments taught in the arts were significant, because as stated by students, they were taught humility, grace, and self-confidence.

Moreover, classroom observations demonstrated that students' participation in the arts helped to develop their critical thinking abilities in their overall educational experiences. For example, this was captured in a vocal music lesson in which students were required to complete a written analysis of a vocal music excerpt, in addition to identifying and describing elements that were learned in vocal music classes.

The second research question in the discussion concentrates on how participation in a high school arts academy influenced student attitudes towards the academics and the arts. The quantitative data that supported this research question highlighted the relationship between participation in the arts and student attitudes towards the academics and the arts. An analysis of survey questionnaire data showed that more than half of the sample of high school students believed that the arts had a strong impact on their attitudes towards learning (79.6%); their social behavior (74.7%); their academic progress (77.7%); their attitude towards school (73.2%); their ability to understand information in academic subjects (68.3%); and their choice of arts program (73.6%).

Data from the qualitative analysis supported the quantitative findings that discussed students' relationship between participation in the arts and their attitudes

towards academics and the arts. In focus group interviews, participants noted that the arts influenced their attitude towards school in a beneficial way. Due to participation in the arts, students were able to show noticeable improvement in their behavior, in addition to becoming more tolerant, good natured, and regular in school attendance. Also in the qualitative analysis, participants stated that the arts have instilled in them the ability to be more responsible high school students who deal with the rigor of school with greater maturity.

With respect to the third research question in the discussion, focus was given to how participation in an arts academy engaged students in the arts. The quantitative analysis that strengthened the research question showed the relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts. The data indicated that 60.4% of the respondents to the survey questionnaire agreed that their arts classes were helping them to participate enthusiastically in class discussions, while 67.2% of the respondents mentioned that their arts classes were keeping them committed to attending Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. Moreover, 65.2% of the students agreed that participation in the activities of their arts classes brought about great rewards.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of this research question also demonstrated the relationship between student participation in the arts and their engagement in the arts. This was illuminated by participants in focus group interviews who mentioned that positive peer pressure encouraged high student engagement. For instance, students were motivated to engage in class presentations only when they witnessed classmates contributing. With respect to individual interviews, students discussed that their high levels of engagement came about as a result of the confidence that their arts experiences

had encouraged. Another instance in which engagement was prominent involved classroom observations. As an example, in the observation of a television and film class, students were assigned various responsibilities for the taping of a talk show segment. The students took these assignments seriously and as such, executed them in a very professional manner.

An analysis of the fourth research question in the discussion involved whether participation in the high school arts program influenced students to pursue careers in the arts. The quantitative data demonstrated that the relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts, suggested that 49.1% of the respondents who spent up to 10 hours or more on arts related assignments would pursue careers in the arts after high school graduation. For instance, some aspired to be arts educators, while others aspired to be professional performers. On the other hand, the quantitative data also suggested that 50.9% of the respondents would not pursue careers in the arts after high school graduation.

Qualitative data that supported this research question also showed the relationship between participation in high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts. Participants revealed in focus group interview sessions that the arts had an impact on their future aspirations. One student mentioned his desire to become a professional singer/song writer, while another stated that her passion for the arts would motivate her to become an arts teacher. In individual interview sessions students also shared that their heavy involvement in arts focused activities had undoubtedly driven them to seriously consider careers in the arts. Students expressed that they would consider careers as professional singers, theatre and film directors, broadcasters, and journalists.

As was demonstrated in the quantitative analysis, some participants had no desire to consider careers in the arts. This was also confirmed in the qualitative analysis. However, although students were not considering careers in the arts, some expressed in focus group interview sessions that the arts provided them with meaningful life-long experiences and skills for success. In individual interview sessions, students also indicated that although the arts would not be career choices, their horizons have been broadened and their love for the arts intensified. Some of the non-arts careers that students would consider included lawyers, sports management, and law enforcement.

Implication for Future Research

The study highlighted the impact of the arts academy on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. Further study can be embarked upon in which focus would be given to the impact of the arts academy on middle school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts, using the same type of quantitative and qualitative mixed method approach. In theory, the utilization of various types of approaches will help to establish whether the arts play a meaningful role in the educational experiences of middle school students, as it did with the high school students. Qualitatively, the current study concentrated on student focused group interviews as well as individual student interviews. For instance, future study can incorporate focused group interviews with teachers from the arts and academic disciplines. This will be an additional source that can attest to the premise that the arts are not frills and should not be treated as such in the instruction of students (Perrin, 1998). Furthermore, the future study should also give attention to classroom observations and student artistic performances.

Given the importance of the arts, it would be beneficial to conduct future research that is similar to this study that has a different geographical location. This may produce evidence that may be very different from the data collected for the current study. The context of the future study may comprise of a different configuration of its arts academy, in that, fewer or greater amounts of arts choices may be available to students; and the research site may be in a rural region instead of an urban area, as was the location of the present study. Essentially, the goal is to show that once students are given the opportunities to be engaged in the arts effectively, there will be notable results; no matter the circumstances.

Further research could also facilitate building on the results of this study. Research should be conducted that would simultaneously consider both the impact of the arts academy on the middle and high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. This approach would allow for greater understanding of the arts' impact on the educational opportunities of children through wider lenses. Additionally, this can help to further reduce or dispel the negative views of critics as to the relevance of the arts in the education mainstream of middle and high school students. Moreover, to demonstrate the significance of the arts in the learning experiences of students, a much larger study that incorporates multiple schools could be conducted from which evidence could be obtained, giving more credence to the arts' importance.

Apart from the fact that the current study demonstrated that the arts produce results that can benefit high school students, there would be elements that can be identified as limitations to the research. These aspects by no means will invalidate the significance of the study, but would help to provide objectivity. Being objective, as stated

by Eisner (1992), involves diminishing or eliminating bias. The author further postulates that to be objective, or to do a study that is objective, is to be or do something that is not principally about us, but about the world. He went on to say that objectivity in some contexts means being fair, open to all sides of the argument. In other contexts, objectivity involves using a method or procedure through which we acquire information; for example, an objective theatre arts test. Eisner mentioned that, “In common discourse, to be objective or to have an objective view is to see things the way they are” (Eisner, 1992, p. 9).

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the present study that was conducted. The demographic variables of the research participants did not provide much ethnic variation. The ethnic composition of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts has been consistent over the years because of its urban location in New Jersey. The data from the current study showed that 59.2% of the sample respondents who participated in the survey questionnaire were African-Americans; with 20.8% being Afro-Caribbean; and 20% were of other ethnic groups. Given the overwhelming proportion of African-Americans who participated in the study, future studies may embark on investigating the impact of the arts, for example, on Hispanic children who also live in an urban environment. Additionally, it would be interesting to discover for instance, what the educational attainment levels are of parents who are of Hispanic ethnicity, as a means of making a comparative study with those of the current research project.

Another limitation would be sampling considerations. The present study concentrated on the impact of the arts on high school students. However, subsequent

studies can be more inclusive and incorporate the middle school students as well in the research project. Incorporating this student population would have added to the richness of the current study. The premise is that the arts experiences of the middle school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts are as vital to their educational learning as compared with the high school students. More importantly, students on the middle school level also completed an audition process for acceptance to the school.

Based on the findings of the study, it is critical that greater emphasis be placed on the integration of the arts and academic disciplines. Student participants revealed that the arts teachers provide occasions for the integration of the arts and academic subjects, however, a comparable level of engagement is not evident in which the academic teachers incorporate aspects of the arts in their instructional programs. Therefore, it will be prudent for the two disciplines to foster the establishment of collaborative learning experiences, whereby students can begin to see a seamless connection between the two areas of study. Furthermore, the CAPA team of the State Department of Education has recommended that the school begin to move in the direction of greater collaborative efforts between the two disciplines.

Nathan (2008) acknowledged that it is important to build a dual curriculum into a district's adopted curriculum. Emotional connections to the arts would be very different from engagement in the process of solving mathematical equations and analyzing literary works. However, one is not better than the other, just different (p. 181). The recognition of the value of a dual curriculum must be a more deliberate course of action at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School if consistent student achievement is to be realized.

One of the key components that will facilitate this endeavor is professional development opportunities for educators in both the arts and academic disciplines.

Although Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School has a wide array of arts disciplines, the fine arts disciplines are very limited compared with the performing arts disciplines. More fine arts areas of concentration, for example, graphic arts and sculpture would have added another dimension, which would have provided more student participants to the study and ultimately, the anticipation of more valuable data. Despite the limitations of the study, several strengths have been identified that celebrate the significance of the arts within the educational framework of the high school students. Some of these elements will be expounded upon in the section that discusses the strengths of the study.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

The qualitative and quantitative data that were collected for the study must essentially be accurate. These two methods of data collection must be pointing in the same direction, so that greater reliability would be given to the study. The utilization of member checking and peer debriefing helped to authenticate the research project. Member checking and peer debriefing both enhance and strengthen the trustworthiness of a study (Hinchey, 2008, p. 99). Creswell (2009) has also suggested that member checking and peer debriefing can help to determine the accuracy of the qualitative portion of the research study. Feedback from colleagues, advisors, and even participants helped to maintain objectivity.

Furthermore, the repetition of data collection was necessary to confirm the reliability and validity of the instruments involved in the study. For instance, interviews

occurred in both Phases II and III for the purpose of strengthening the study. This triangulating approach helped to build a coherent justification for the various themes that emerged (Creswell, 2009). The triangulation of the data from the participants and the various sources resulted in the birth of validity being added to the study. Therefore, the collection of new qualitative data during different phases of the research project helped to establish reliability and validity.

Subjectivity and Generalizability

While the results of the study hold for Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts, they are not necessarily generalizable across the entire educational district. A more expanded survey of several schools would be needed to generalize the results for the district as a whole. The study was conducted in the only performing and fine arts high school in the district, which diminishes the extent to which the outcomes can be generalized. However, efforts were made to minimize the effects of subjectivity by being prudent in the selection process of my research participants.

Glesne (2006) affirmed that, “You learn that your subjectivity is the basis for the story that you are able to tell; it is the strength on which you build” (p. 123). Therefore, research information cannot be generalized casually about students in the high school of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts who did not participate in the study. Nevertheless, the responses of study participants demonstrated substantial uniformity, providing credence to the results (Richards, Gipe, & Duffy, 1993, p. 11). Furthermore, this research project lends itself to the investigation of further studies being done.

Strengths of the Study

In reflective contemplation, I am of the belief that this study identified several strengths. One of the greatest assets to the research project was the study participants. They were instrumental in bringing to life elements of the study that demonstrated in a positive framework, the impact of the arts academy on the high school students. Their eagerness and willingness to be a part of the study and share information as to how the arts affect their educational experiences were extraordinary; and as a result, produced results that were substantive.

The study participants were dedicated to being involved in the research. There was a sense of comradeship that was easily identified among students as I conducted the focused group interviews. They were very respectful of their peers as they responded to the questions that were put forth. Participants were uninhibited to divulge information about their arts experiences, even though it may have presented the arts in an unfavorable light. They were able to communicate their thoughts succinctly and forthrightly. I believe an aspect that contributed to the openness of the students was that I am an integral part of the school's culture, where mutual respect is the norm between the student participants and me. As a result of the established relationship, the participants enjoyed the research experience as they shared information relative to the arts.

Another strength of this research was the strong and committed love for the arts, as expressed by the participants. Some have stated it is this unconditional love for the arts that has become the driving force that has motivated them to be regular in school attendance. The vocal music participants spoke of their love for singing, while the instrumental music and visual arts students declared that their love for the arts is

demonstrated through the opportunities for collaboration that are established with teachers and peers. Theatre arts participants illustrated that their love for the arts have allowed them to make self discoveries and express themselves in ways that are constructive.

Student participants from the television and film department declared that the love for the arts is manifested in their ability to be creative. This creativity, for example, is demonstrated in the students' capacity to make short films as class projects. Love for dance as articulated by student participants calls for the assimilation of the discipline through performances. The love for the arts promoted the ability of students to be highly engaged, stimulated, and resulted in thoughtful encounters with the arts. Additionally, students initiated and sustained interest in the arts as a mode of personal expression and an enduring venue for creativity (Diket, 2003).

The research study provided evidence that the student participants value achievement and will take the essential steps to achieve and maintain high levels of success. The arts academy program encourages students to do well in academic subjects. Teachers in the arts academy prepare students to be successful on tests. The ability of students to think outside the box helps to facilitate academic success through the use of their artistic capabilities. The arts academy influences the academic performance of students by allowing them to be creative, while engaging them in identifying strategies for transferring skills. The study also confirmed that the arts have made a tremendous impact on the academic classes of students through the motivation provided by teachers. Work in the arts is cultivated through the modes of thinking and feeling, and students cannot succeed in the arts without such cognitive abilities (Eisner, 2002).

The research study revealed that a high level of student engagement promoted instructional rigor, which helped to foster self-expression. Engagement is the key that results in student success. All successful educational experiences end up engaging the hearts and minds of students (Fullan, 2007, p. 171). Participants of the study stated that being surrounded by peers who want to learn have generated the motivation necessary for high engagement. Through the study it was discovered that the environment of the classrooms is pivotal to high student engagement. Students are allowed to become engaged in student centered classroom discussions that can be profitable. The students' quest for knowledge has become the fundamental component that has produced engagement levels, which benefited, for example, the visual arts students.

The research data also affirmed that engagement in the arts classroom generated competition. Students realized that viewing the products of their peers created an atmosphere in which they became motivated, and thus more engaged in the arts experiences. Some participants have shared that as they became engaged in the arts, their confidence levels increased. Engagement in the arts help in building the critical thinking skills of students as was expressed by the students in a theatre arts play analysis class. Different from the curricula in which correct answers and rules dominate, judgment counts in the arts. The arts provide another language in which disparate individuals communicate, creating experiences that will be appreciated by others. The arts make available the safe space and structured time to be passionate, completely engaged, and taken seriously by students' peers and adults (Nathan, 2008).

It was discovered in the research study that parents of high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School are very involved in the education of their

children. They are the pillars that support their children as they progress through their high school experiences. Parents stress the importance of education; this was illustrated by participants whose parents are from developing Caribbean countries. These parents are motivated to ensure that their children do well because they are products of elitist Caribbean educational systems where only the academically brilliant students get the most benefit from the systems. A demonstration of parent involvement was observed in a study conducted by Ouimette et al. (2004), which found that high parent involvement played a momentous role in the success of their children. Parents are as important as staff members in ensuring that children succeed.

The study highlighted that parents have high expectations for their children and will facilitate the process by inspiring them to perform at their best all the time. Rossell (2005) suggests that parents enroll their children in arts based schools because they want their children to pursue or ignite a passion that they may possess. Additionally, parents use the weapon of their personal educational experiences in which they may not have accomplished their goals because of circumstances, as an example of opportunities missed. The parents show their involvement by attending the various performances and exhibitions by their children throughout the school year, from the very small intimate events to the large-scale, school-wide major productions. The closer the parents are to the education of their children, the greater the impact on their children's development and educational achievement (Fullan, 2007).

The research study revealed that the arts academy has impacted the attitudes of students in a beneficial way. For instance, some study participants have shared that the rigor of the arts has assisted in the production of extensive essays for academic subjects.

Students have declared in the interviews that the arts are the motivation for them attending school on a regular basis; and that they are more enthusiastic and disciplined about school. The arts have also helped students build meaningful peer relationships because of the many occasions in which collaborative group projects are inevitable in many of the arts disciplines.

The study pointed out that the arts have promoted the transformation of melancholy attitudes to ones that are productive. One visual arts student commented that when he is depressed, going into the art studio and producing artworks bring great satisfaction. Students' attitudes are impacted by the arts in that they are better able to communicate ideas and think through challenging situations before reacting. High school students of the arts academy have developed attitudes that foster independence, confidence, responsibility, and commitment. These values were similarly confirmed by Coombes (2009), who stated that students involved in the arts develop confidence, learn to collaborate, communicate, gain self-discipline, and enhance their ability to think creatively. As with the student participants, being an instructional leader, I too must be creative in my ability to build collaborative opportunities with faculty and staff members, as well as students. In the present study, my leadership platform was an instrumental factor that was used to capture elements that propelled the project.

Reflection of Leadership

My personal subjectivity played a double role in that it was both a strength and limitation of the research project. My identity had been shaped by aspects of my leadership platform, which was the driving force behind the research discourse, from designing the study to analyzing the data, and finally presenting the findings. Being a

practicing artist provided the connection to the student participants and this contributed to building a relationship of trust and comfort. As the study evolved, several aspects within the realm of my leadership capabilities provided the compass.

Leadership, as defined by Burns (2003), involves the leader's self-actualizing qualities turned outward. The leader understands the wants of followers and responds to them as legitimate needs, articulating them as values. With the assistance of the leader, followers are able to transform these values into hopes and aspirations, and then into more purposeful expectations, and finally into demands. Another closely related definition of leadership states that it is one in which the leader transforms the followers, creating visions of the goals that may be achieved, and articulating for the followers the ways to attain the goals (Wren, 1995). It was my intention as a leader to discover aspects of the arts through the eyes of the student participants utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches.

One of the theories that drive my practice and help to enhance my leadership capabilities is that of being a charismatic leader (Wren, 1995). Working in the capacity as an educational leader, on numerous occasions this style has become and continues to become very instrumental in handling matters for the overall smooth functioning of the school. One of the traits of this theory is the leader's ability to mobilize and sustain activities within the institution or organization, driven by certain personal characteristics (Wren, 1995, p. 108). A leader of this caliber also has a vision, and high expectations are set and the leader is constantly demonstrating the behaviors that are required. As a charismatic leader, I was able to energize my student participants of the study so that they shared in the vision of the school. It was my hope that this enthusiasm would be

infectious, providing motivation to not only some of the participants, but to all. Being this type of leader, allowed me the opportunity to gather rich data from the study participants, using multiple approaches. Being a charismatic leader I was empathetic as I learned some of the concerns and challenges facing high school students at Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School. For instance, study participants stated that while the arts teachers incorporate components from the academic discipline into their instructional program, the academic disciplines would not readily incorporate elements from the arts disciplines into their pedagogical rituals.

Furthermore, charismatic leadership also encompasses both leader personality and ability to communicate his or her vision (Serafin, 1992). The author further mentioned that charisma is equated with human expressiveness. These would include nonverbal movement, gestures, physical attraction, and vocal inflections, which seem to be some of the traits that are associated with charismatic leaders, as they lead, inspire, influence, or captivate followers. In Burns' (2003) book, *Transforming Leadership*, mention is made of the fact that followers are inspired to raise to great heights, bringing about a greater sense of self-awareness, thereby creating positive changes in the school. As a result of this study, it is my intention to institute changes to the instructional programs in both the academic and arts disciplines that will benefit the high school students; for example, conducting professional development sessions that are geared towards integrating the two disciplines in a purposeful manner.

Included in my leadership platform, would be my ability to empower individuals. This is a trait of transformational leadership (Wren, 1995). One of the attributes of transformational leaders is that they focus on developing culture within the organization

(Chirichello, 1999). Transformational leadership, according to Chirichello, involves the fostering of a relationship between inspired, energetic leaders and their followers who are committed to a mission that embraces a belief in empowering the members of the organization to achieve sustainable change. It would be my responsibility as an educational leader to mobilize the faculty and staff in the school setting so that lasting change could be obtainable. One way in which this could be achieved would be in an environment that is permeated by trust. Lencioni (2002) states that the idiosyncratic behaviors of individuals can incapacitate the success of a team. To dispel such behaviors and establish an environment of trust would be beneficial to all stakeholders in the school. It is crucial to the cohesiveness of the school to maintain an atmosphere in which the team works collaboratively. Stowell and Mead (2007) suggest that team building is a necessary element in an organization. As a leader, I strive to establish and maintain a sense of teamwork within the school; not only with faculty and staff members, but with the student body as well. Moreover, this ability to mobilize individuals was evident in the student research participants as I engaged them in meaningful discourse during the interview process.

Transformational leadership, as discussed by Leithwood (1992), is comprised of three fundamental goals. One of these goals is the fact that transformational leaders recognize the need for helping staff members develop and sustain a collaborative, professional school culture (p. 9). As a leader, I have come to the realization that the establishment of collaboration is one of the key ingredients necessary for a healthy school culture. The collaborative efforts of faculty, staff, and students enabled me to successfully complete my research study. Completing some areas of the study were

demanding, such as collecting data for the quantitative portion, but the utilization of my transformational leadership qualities served as assets for sparking enthusiasm and motivation of both participants and non-participants. Furthermore, the collaborative spirit fostered made it possible for the students to complete the survey questionnaires in record time.

Next is the goal of fostering teacher development (Leithwood, 1992, p. 9). The ability of teachers to develop and grow as educators is paramount to their sustainability as practitioners. The more instructional strategies and resources that teachers put into their pedagogical survival kits, the greater would be their chances of having longevity as educators. This will allow students to benefit from the professional development instructional enhancement opportunities of their teachers.

Leithwood's (1992) third goal of transformational leadership is helping faculty and staff members solve problems more effectively. In my transformational leadership capacity, it is sometimes essential for me to serve as the voice of reason when confronted with issues that have the potential to become disastrous between teachers and parents. The main thrust of such encounters would be to ensure that both parties come away with their dignities intact. Parents are advocates for their children, while teachers are committed to their craft and student expectations. For instance, rather frequently, I am placed in circumstances in which parents are ignorant about handling the educational affairs of their children, and as such the parents are placed in defenseless positions. I can empower these parents, for example, through the recommendation that they spend part of a day in the classrooms with their children and have teachers send home regular progress

reports. A teacher on the other hand, who may have a false sense of power, gets it replaced with compassion and concern for fellow human beings.

It has been recognized that having a vision is the primary responsibility for today's leaders. It takes into consideration the best in "forward-thinking, innovative planning and community involvement" (Powe, 1992, p. 1). Being a leader without vision would be problematic. This is an educational leadership quality that is needed to make an institution move forward and be very successful. For instance, as stated in Goleman (2002), visionary leaders are able to articulate in which direction the group is going. Individuals are given a certain degree of latitude to make it work by the leader. Visionary leaders move their followers towards shared dreams. Visionary leadership, as outlined by Powe (1992), encompasses several attributes. For instance, it involves making a critical evaluation of past and present plans, achievements, and the need for a reassessment of already established goals. Being a visionary leader also requires the individual to identify trends while giving attention to emerging concerns that may impact policies and programs. As the instructional leader with the direct responsibility of the arts academy of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts I must have the foresight to handle the issue of budget reductions, which may result in some arts disciplines being trimmed for the 2011-2012 School Year. For instance, my hands are being forced to reduce the strings department by one teacher. However if the change that is being proposed becomes imminent, the harp teacher may also have to teach violin, viola, and cello. Fortunately, all these instruments belong to the string family of instruments, but the demands on the teacher may be counter-productive to the mission of building a quality program. This dilemma has been supported by substantial evidence gathered from the research project to

demonstrate that the arts do impact the education of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts' students in positive ways.

Powe (1992) has envisioned being committed to the vision as a quality that engulfs the visionary leader. Powe further illustrates that no one has succeeded in leading a mission to which he or she was not committed. It is this drive to being committed to a cause that has provided the fuel to impel my study because of the anticipated outcomes that can help to create more instructional definition to the arts academy. This drive has manifested itself into me having the capacity to take action. As hypothesized by Giuliani (2002), an individual who must take action means that there should never be any inkling in which he or she feels that principles are sacrificed. That powerful statement has reinforced within me, that as a leader, I am not willing to sacrifice my principles or integrity for the purposes of being popular. Giuliani stated, "Sometimes standing up for what you believe is the only option" (Giuliani, 2002, p. 184).

In the plight to illuminate the characteristics of the visionary leader, Powe (1992) suggests that the involvement of others in the development of the vision is crucial. For the vision to have a life of its own, where it can be sustained in the school will require buy-in from stakeholders. Lipsky and Gartner (1998) articulate that visionary leadership can come from a variety of sources. However, the authors suggest that whatever the impulsion for educational programs, "all stakeholders must ultimately take responsibility for the outcome" (p. 80). This buy-in can, for example, only materialize if the constituents are motivated and empowered (Powe, 1992). The same school of thought was propitiously utilized as my study unfolded. The participants in the research were placed in a position of being empowered. They understood that their contributions were

of great significance, and they were in a manner of speaking, “in the driver’s seat,” moving the project forward.

Finally, the visionary leader should have a willingness to make changes, which may be necessary to experience successful gains (Powe, 1992, p. 1). Hopefully the rich, thick data that were gathered during the research project will be sufficient to provide non-believers of arts education of the positive impact on students. The anticipated change in the perception of the arts could bring with it less resistance from central office leaders and the endorsement of instructional changes that can benefit not only the arts academy, but also the academic disciplines.

Conclusion

The study authenticated that the high school arts academy illustrates the importance of the arts. The arts have increased the learning capacity of students through rigorous instructional engagement. The research student participants shared that the arts are important to their educational progress. The arts are essential because they allow students to build on talents that they possess, while encouraging self-expression and communicative skills. The arts, as acknowledged by some participants, provide a glimpse of what the professional environment is expected to look like when students are ready for real life experiences.

Students highlighted that the experiences in the arts have facilitated the intrinsic value of the disciplines. Participants indicated that the arts teach more than just the arts. Students are fashioned into well-rounded individuals as they develop life skills. To many study participants, the arts are important because of the consistency that is established. The arts are also significant because they establish some connections to the academic

disciplines. For instance, there is the transference of organizational skills to the academic disciplines, which can help students to attain greater success with tasks. To further improve on the ability of students to transfer skills from the arts to content subject areas, Aprill (2001) suggests that it is crucial that arts teachers and content area teachers be given ample time to plan together to guarantee that the integration of the arts into the classroom is a triumphant and rewarding experience for students (as cited in Gullatt, 2008).

This study identified essential components of the impact of the arts on the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts. Overall, the results of the study suggest that the arts do have a positive impact on the education of high school students. This was demonstrated in the quantitative analysis, in which several themes were explored that showed the relationship between student involvement in the arts and overall educational performance; the relationship between participation in the arts and student attitudes towards the academics and the arts; the relationship between gender in specific arts disciplines and student academic performance; the relationship between participation in the arts and student engagement in the arts; and the relationship between participation in the high school arts program and student pursuit of careers in the arts. Similar themes were generated in the qualitative analysis that added credibility to the research project. In some instances, sub-themes were identified which gave added dimensions to the qualitative analysis.

Moreover, implications for the research discussed the relevance of the quantitative and qualitative analyses in relation to the research questions. Implications for future research on the impact of the arts were discussed, the study's validity, in addition

to identifying the limitations and strengths of the present research study. In retrospect, my leadership capacity gave credence to the study in that I was able to keep my student participants motivated and eager to participate in the research project.

If the high school students of Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School are to achieve success, the arts academy must play a meaningful role in their educational progress. When school districts are faced with budget constraints, the arts are one of the first disciplines to which cuts are made. However, Eisner (2002) states that the arts were relied on when there was no science to provide guidance. The arts and artistry as sources of improved educational practice are considered at best, fallback positions. Educational planners must be cognizant to consistently plan for the arts as an avenue to enhance teaching and learning (Gullatt, 2008). The study confirmed that the overarching research question of the impact of the high school arts academy is important in the development of students.

As educators, we hold the key that can cause the greatest impact on the lives of children. Educators shape the minds of children as they progress through the different stages of their educational experiences. Therefore, we must ensure that these educational opportunities positively influence the attitudes of students. It is my intention that this study will significantly add to the growing body of research involving the impact of the arts academy on the educational experiences of students. More studies surrounding this topic will help to refute some of the opinions that the arts are not just “frills” (Perrin, 1998) but are necessities in the curricula. The arts will help to foster the dimensional perspectives of corroboration as its potency permeates schools across this country.

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Appendix A

Student Survey Questionnaire

Please respond to each of the following questions. Return the completed questionnaire to your classroom teacher. While you are not required to participate in the survey, none of the information would be personally identifiable.

Aspirations

1. Identify your performing or fine arts area. (*check only one*)

Theatre Instrumental
 Animation Vocal Performance
 Art Sound/Lighting
 TV/Film Costume Design
 Set Design Dance
 Public Speaking

2. How were you selected to attend this performing and fine arts school? (*check all that apply*)

Audition process
 Portfolios
 Teacher Recommendations
 No selection process

3. Please indicate how much your performing or fine arts class influences your aspirations in the following. (*circle one answer for each item*)

Items	Very Much	Much	Some	None
a. The course content of my performing or fine arts class encourages me to do well.	4	3	2	1
b. I believe that the skills acquired in the arts will help me even though I may not pursue an arts career.	4	3	2	1
c. I would encourage students in non-arts schools to study arts as a discipline.	4	3	2	1
d. I am inspired by performing and fine arts professionals to consider the arts as a career.	4	3	2	1
e. I am encouraged by my parents/guardians to pursue the arts as a career option.	4	3	2	1
f. I am motivated to study my performing or fine arts privately.	4	3	2	1
g. My arts teacher provides the motivation required to develop the passion for the arts	4	3	2	1

4. Which of the following would you aspire to study in college after graduating this performing and fine arts school? (*check only one*)

Arts Education Teacher Professional Instrumentalist
 Professional Actor Animator
 Professional Singer Artist
 Professional Dancer
 Other (*specify*) _____

Attitudes

5. Please indicate the level of agreement that your performing or fine arts class influences your attitude in the following areas. (*circle one answer for each item*)

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. My academic progress.	4	3	0	2	1
b. My social behavior.	4	3	0	2	1
c. My attitude towards learning.	4	3	0	2	1
d. My choice of arts program.	4	3	0	2	1
e. My ability to understand information in academic subjects.	4	3	0	2	1
f. My attitude towards school	4	3	0	2	1
g. My willingness to spend long hours working on artistic skills to make them better.	4	3	0	2	1
h. My ability to work together in a group.	4	3	0	2	1
i. My ability to learn skills on how to work well with my peers on projects.	4	3	0	2	1
j. My ability to get excited about participating in the arts because it allows for the growth of my creative expression.	4	3	0	2	1
k. My creative achievement in the arts provides me with a great sense of satisfaction.	4	3	0	2	1

Achievement & the Arts

6. Which of the following forms of evaluation are used to assess your progress in your performing or fine arts class? (*check all that apply*)

Paper and pencil tests
 Performances
 Projects
 Portfolios

- _____ Other (explain) _____
7. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.
(circle one answer for each item)

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. My arts class is helping me retain information taught in academic classes.	4	3	0	2	1
b. My arts class is helping me understand skills taught in my academic subjects.	4	3	0	2	1
c. My arts class is helping me to perform better on tests.	4	3	0	2	1
d. My arts class is improving my writing ability.	4	3	0	2	1
e. My arts class is improving my math skills.	4	3	0	2	1

Engagement & the Arts

8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.
(circle one answer for each item)

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. My arts class is helping me to participate actively in classroom discussions.	4	3	0	2	1
b. My grades in arts classes are higher than academic classes.	4	3	0	2	1
c. My arts class is encouraging me to attend school regularly.	4	3	0	2	1
d. My grades in my arts class are keeping me committed to attending this performing and fine arts school.	4	3	0	2	1
e. The activities demanded by my arts class bring about great rewards.	4	3	0	2	1
f. The discipline required for the mastery within the arts is transferred to the study of my academic subjects.	4	3	0	2	1
g. Performing and fine arts specialists visit my arts classes to help improve my arts skills.	4	3	0	2	1

h. My arts classes stress the importance of academic subjects.	4	3	0	2	1
i. My academic classes stress the importance of arts classes.	4	3	0	2	1

9. During an average week, how many hours do you spend working on arts related assignments? (*check only one*)

_____ 0 - 3 hours _____ 7 - 9 hours
 _____ 4 - 6 hours _____ 10 or more hours

10. During an average week, how many hours do you spend working on arts related community events? (*check only one*)

_____ 0 - 3 hours _____ 7 - 9 hours
 _____ 4 - 6 hours _____ 10 or more hours

11. During an average week, how many hours do you spend working on arts related projects? (*check only one*)

_____ 0 - 3 hours _____ 7 - 9 hours
 _____ 4 - 6 hours _____ 10 or more hours

Demographic Information

12. Please indicate your present grade level. (*check only one*)

_____ Grade 9 _____ Grade 11
 _____ Grade 10 _____ Grade 12

13. In which grade level did you begin participating in an arts education program? (*check only one*)

_____ Kindergarten Level
 _____ Elementary Level
 _____ Middle School Level
 _____ High School Level

14. What is your gender?

_____ Male _____ Female

15. Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background? (*check only one*)

_____ Black/African American _____ White/Caucasian
 _____ African Caribbean _____ Native American
 _____ Hispanic _____ Asian
 _____ African
 _____ Other (*Please specify*) _____

16. What is your current Grade Point Average (GPA)? (*check only one*)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Below 1.0 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2.6 – 3.5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1.0 – 1.5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3.6 – 4.0 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1.6 – 2.5 | | |

17. The highest level of education of your mother. (*check only one*)

- Some high school (1 to 3 years)
- High school graduate (4 years)
- Some college (1 to 3 years)
- College graduate (4 or more years)

18. The highest level of education of your father. (*check only one*)

- Some high school (1 to 3 years)
- High school graduate (4 years)
- Some college (1 to 3 years)
- College graduate (4 or more years)

19. The highest level of education of your guardians/other. (*check only one*)

- Some high school (1 to 3 years)
- High school graduate (4 years)
- Some college (1 to 3 years)
- College graduate (4 or more years)

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B

Student Interview Questionnaire

Student Achievement

1. Why were you interested in attending this arts school?
2. How were you selected for your performing or fine arts program?
3. Is there a difference between academics in your performing arts class and academics in your general education classes? If so, please explain.
4. In what way does the arts program influence your academics?
5. How do you believe that the arts program impacts your performance on HSPA?
6. Describe your performance on teacher made tests and quizzes in your performing or fine arts class.

Student Engagement

7. Please explain why you do like your arts classes.
8. Identify one way in which your arts classroom environment is motivating you to learn.
9. In what ways is this arts education program helping you to actively participate in classroom discussions?

Student Aspirations

10. Discuss ways in which your parents or guardians stress the importance of an education?
11. Do you think that being involved in this arts education program will inspire you to pursue a career in the arts? If so, which career?
12. Why is the arts education program important to you?
13. How do your parents/guardians support you being in the arts program?

Student Attitudes

14. How has the arts program impacted your attitude towards school?
15. How has the arts program changed your behavior as a student?
16. What do you like most about your arts classes?
17. What do you like least about your arts classes?

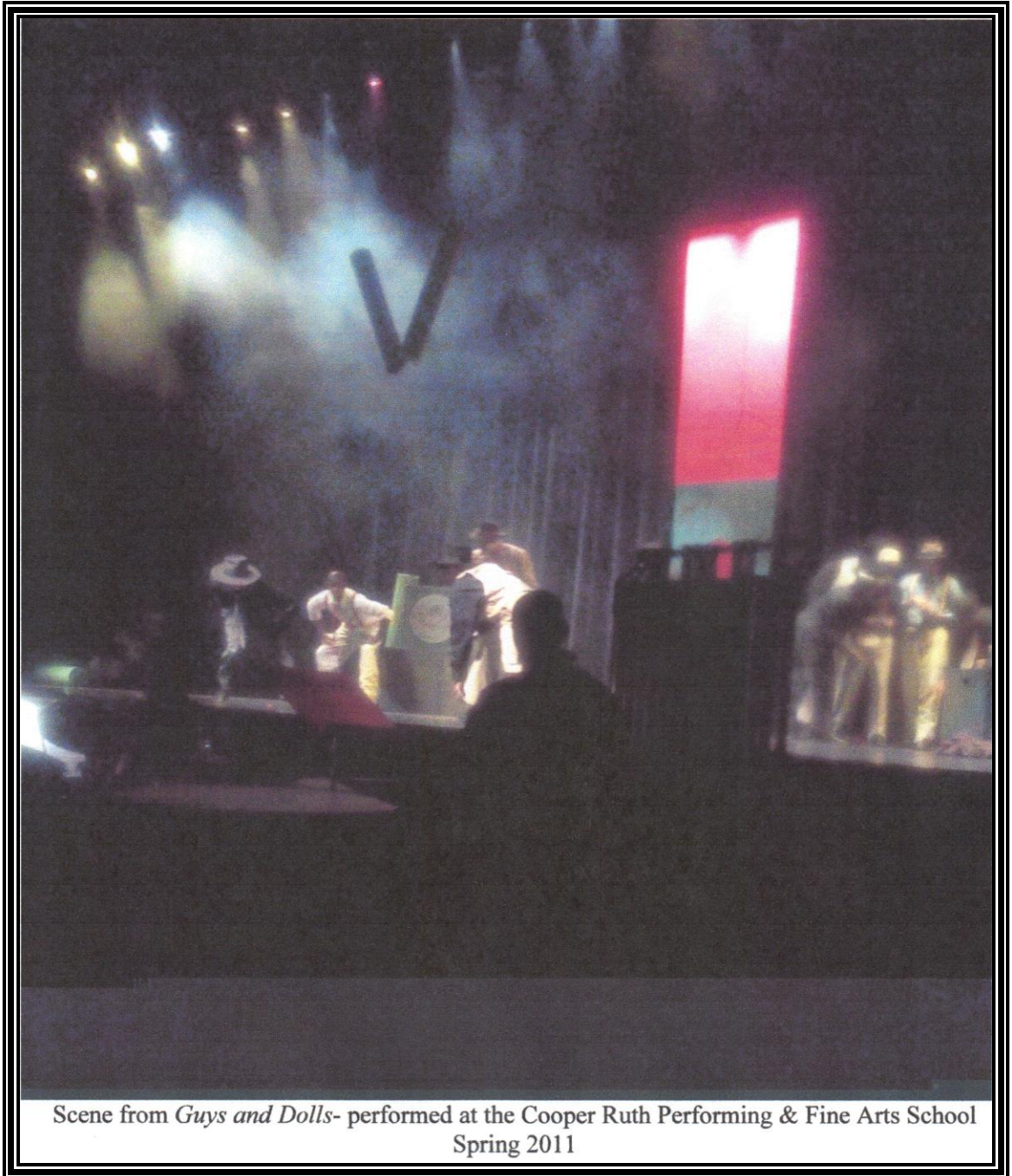
Appendix C

Mission Statement

The Cooper Ruth Performing and Fine Arts School (pseudonym) is a community based school whose specific purpose is to improve the quality of life in this urban city. Such will be revealed by the creation of programs and initiatives that support community growth and development. The mission will address educational, cultural, and social needs by cultivating partnerships and implementing arts and community collaborations. The arts medium will be used as a vehicle to bring about social improvements that complement and strengthen this urban New Jersey Cultural Community.

Appendix D

Scene from *Guy and Dolls*



Appendix E

Participants are Minors

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the Education Leadership Department at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Robert Campbell, my advisor, as part of my doctoral dissertation concerning an investigation into the benefits of the arts and education with middle and high school students. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this research. The goal of the study is to determine how the integration of the arts and education can bring about greater success with children.

Each child will be invited to complete a student survey and be interviewed on how the integration of the arts and education can be beneficial. The survey and interview will be conducted outside of the child's Instructional periods, either in my office or the conference room. Any child who expresses a desire not to participate can withdraw at any time. Each child will be asked a series of questions and the responses written down. I will retain the information at the conclusion of the study. To preserve each child's confidentiality no names will be used to identify individuals. All data will be reported in terms of group results; individual results will not be reported.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his/her class. At the conclusion of the study a summary of the group results will be made available to all interested parents.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 732.213.5772 or gelsang12@gmail.com. My faculty advisor, Dr. Robert Campbell, can be contacted at 856.256.5150 or at Campbell@rowan.edu.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nigel Sangster

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to me.

I grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

I do not grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

(Parent/Guardian signature)

(Date)

Appendix F

Student Writing Sample

What an experience! (Performing for BET)

How to describe such a wonderful experience as extravagant as performing on stage and having that performance aired on national television? When you view a performance on television one never seems to lend a thought to any of the behind the scenes or backstage work put into the performance. It is often believed that the celebrities, being the "perfect" beings they are, simply step on stage and give a blinding performance. This previous weekend I was able to see for myself how incorrect this belief really was.

Appendix G

Student Writing Sample

Music

#2 Name, explain, and write about 5 things you have learned about in this vocal music class.

1) open throat - I have learned that when singing and you have a open throat the note comes out with a warm, smooth sound. Like "Swing low Sweet Chariot" if you have a open throat all the notes have a warm, smooth sound.

2) clavicular breathing - I have learned that we do not use clavicular breathing which is breathing using ~~the~~ your shoulders. We should use diaphragmatic breathing

3) operatic voices - We should always have an operatic voice when singing which is having a warm sound in your voice. This helps your notes come out more smooth and clear

4) Following directions - I have learned that you should always follow the director because you never know what she is telling you to do. ~~She~~ could be telling you to stop singing and you mess up the song

5) Vocal Exercises - You should always warm up your vocal cords so that you won't be flat singing. You shouldn't warm

Appendix H

Student Writing Sample

Lift Every Voice and Sing

The first paragraph of lift every voice and sing means to me is that people are happy and they want their voices to be heard that they are happy, to be free and sent to heaven.

The second paragraph of lift Ev'ry voice and sings means to me that they are talking about the past of what black people had to go through. slaves had been crying, slaughtered and now they're happy they came over that.

The last paragraph of lift Ev'ry voice and sing to me means that it is a prayer. And they are praying to god to keep them in the right path. And to give them strenght and they are blessed he helped them go through slavery.

Appendix I

Art Technique: *Dot and Dip*

