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Creative Collaborations: Lessons from Arts-in-Learning Partnerships

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Report Authors:

Dr. Ann Patteson, Director of Research, The Royal Conservatory

Steven Campbell, Arts Consultant

Mindy Alexander, Research Associate, The Royal Conservatory

“Working solo may be easier for a soloist, but it may also mean that the soloist has only one concert, or, at the very least, a limited audience.”

Fineberg, C. (1994). Collaborations and the conundrums they breed: Introduction to the Symposium on Community Resources. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 95 (5), 9-11

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Canadian Network for Arts and Learning/ le reseau canadien des arts et de l'apprentissage (CNAL/RCAA) is a new national association of artists, arts organizations, educators, policy-makers, researchers, and other advocates for arts-in-learning led by the UNESCO Chair in Arts and Learning, Professor Larry O'Farrell, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

In March, 2011, CNAL/RCAA received a grant from The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). There were two main purposes of the grant: 1) to increase organizational capacity and 2) to produce research and disseminate best practices.

The research recounted in this report fulfills the latter of the deliverables: it explores and disseminates information about the nature, benefits, and challenges of two kinds of arts-in-learning partnership models as embodied by *ArtsSmarts* and *Learning Through the Arts (LTTA)*.

Other components of the report are a review of the literature about arts-in-learning partnerships and a review of case study methodology. The literature review was conducted in order to inform the research.

Literature Review

Our literature review revealed that partnerships in the arts-in-learning sector most frequently occur in order to secure the following benefits:

- Sharing of expertise and skills
- Obtaining funding
- Increasing sector knowledge
- Expanding programming reach
- Communicating about the benefits of the arts
- Providing leadership in the field
- Enhancing partners' profiles

Each of these avenues for collaboration in arts-in-learning is discussed in this report.

The literature also offers the following guidelines for promoting the establishment and fruitful survival of arts-in-learning partnerships:

- Determine internal and shared goals
- Provide partnership leadership
- Define partnership roles
- Commit to evaluation and documentation
- Make plans for surviving setbacks

- Do the paper work
- Enter partnerships with open eyes, hearts, and minds.

These guidelines for creating arts-in-learning partnerships are discussed in this report.

Case Study Methodology

In this research, we conducted case studies of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*. Nested within these two case studies were other cases studies of the two programs as they were implemented locally in different regions of Ontario.

Case study methodology was chosen for this research because it brings intense, in-depth exploration of phenomena in their natural settings to reveal real-life complexities.

In these case studies, we gathered data from a large number of individuals fulfilling different roles in each of the two organizations. We also analysed existing program documents and observed each program in action. This multi-faceted approach to data-gathering provided a range of perspectives, or research lenses, with which to view each of the two organizations.

We leave it to our readers to consult the report proper for our review of the main features of case study methodology.

The Research Findings

ArtsSmarts and *LTTA* were both established in the 1990s in response to challenging social, political, and educational changes that included diminishing support for the arts in education.

ArtsSmarts

ArtsSmarts originated as a program of the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation. Since its inception, the organization has adhered to a model of *distributed leadership*, with a head office guiding operations and local partners running their regional programs with a large degree of autonomy. A *creative inquiry* model, involving the formulation of an overarching question that guides project design, artistic expression, and reflection for learners, has remained constant throughout the evolution of the *ArtsSmarts* program.

ArtsSmarts is currently moving away from its emphasis primarily on the arts and school curriculum connections to what it has identified as the development of the “21st century competencies” of *creativity, collaboration, inclusiveness, inquisitiveness, expressiveness, and engagement*. As part of this transition, *ArtsSmarts*’ primary role has changed from being the sole funder of programs. Programming partners have been encouraged and supported through the process of pursuing their own funding sources. This shift has underscored the importance to *ArtsSmarts* of advancing regional resiliency and self-sufficiencies. However, *ArtsSmarts* continues to support its partners and the arts-in-learning sector as a whole with numerous initiatives which are referred to within this report.

Our nested case studies of *ArtsSmarts* in the Kitchener-Waterloo region and the Durham region present two ways of organizing a program through distributed leadership. In the former case, a

partnership committee composed of representatives from local arts and service organizations oversees and deals with the practicalities of program delivery. In the latter case, *ArtsSmarts* partners with the Durham District School Board to deliver its program. In the report, we delineate benefits and challenges of both approaches.

LTTA

LTTA is a program of The Royal Conservatory (RCM), Toronto. In *LTTA*, teachers and *LTTA* artists design arts-based lessons that incorporate teaching of both an art form and non-arts curriculum content in school settings. A program named *Living Through the Arts (LivTTA)* brings arts-embedded life-learning to clients at social service organizations.

LTTA is centrally-organized, with the head office located at The RCM, Toronto. An Executive Manager oversees all activities. However, since its national reach is broad, each region within which *LTTA* works has its own regional manager who in turn has in-office support that reflects the extent of regional programming. There is regular contact between regional managers and head office.

The *LTTA* head office staff manages all programming funds, funding applications, and payment of salaries, including those for program artists. It also designs artist and teacher professional development opportunities, delineates program goals, and makes pivotal decisions about program development in new sectors, research agendas, and other issues that reverberate throughout the national and international work of *LTTA*.

As with *ArtsSmarts*, our nested case studies of *LTTA* in the Kitchener-Waterloo and Windsor regions provided valuable lessons in the strengths and challenges of the program. In contrast to our study of *ArtsSmarts*, where there was a distributed leadership model, examination of *LTTA* provided lessons in a centralized program model.

Researcher Comments within the Report

As we present the case studies in this report, we offer our comments on issues that we feel are particularly pertinent to the arts-in-learning sector as a whole. In the final section of the report, we make comments on the following issues that are relevant to CNAL/RCAA in its efforts to determine the most important roles it can play in the Canadian arts-in-learning context:

- Capacity building and sustainability
- Artist compensation
- Career balance for program artists
- Public profile and advocacy
- Networks
- Research
- Artist and teacher training

We hope that our discussion of these topics will also be useful to the arts-in-learning sector as a whole.

ArtsSmarts and *LTTA* are both programs driven by individuals at every level of operations who are passionate about the arts and about arts-in-learning. The two organizations provide leadership and lessons for other such programs, nationally and internationally.

We thank personnel involved in both of the programs for their openness and generosity in sharing information and for their parts in promoting an ethos of collaboration in the arts-in-learning sector.

We are also very grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for providing us with the opportunity to conduct this research.

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Introduction to the Report

Individual arts-in-learning organizations and programs have conducted internal evaluations and reports for their own use, for funders, and/or for academic audiences. However, there have been few opportunities to collate findings from examinations of separate organizations and programs in order to inform the larger field and to build a body of shared information, to contribute to a “big picture” view of activity in the field. That is the purpose of this report, with its focus on the benefits, challenges, and exploration of two partnership models.

For the current study, we have defined partnership not as a one-time provider-client relationship, but, rather, as a collaborative relationship where, over an extended time period, organizations partner to design, implement, and assess joint ventures.

This research uncovered a wealth of information and insight about partnerships gained from almost two decades of work in arts-in-learning by two significant Canadian arts-in-learning organizations, *ArtsSmarts* and *Learning Through the Arts (LTTA)*.

Context for the Research

This research was conducted for the Canadian Network for Arts and Learning/ le réseau canadien des arts et de l'apprentissage (CNAL/RCAA) as part of grant deliverables to The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

About the CNAL/RCAA

CNAL/RCAA is a national association of artists, arts organizations, educators, policy-makers, researchers, and other advocates for arts and learning, led by the UNESCO Chair in Arts and Learning, Professor Larry O'Farrell, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. CNAL/RCAA believes that engagement with creative activity through involvement with the arts is fundamental to the education of the fully-realized individual. The organization maintains close links with the international movement for arts-in-learning.

CNAL/RCAA envisions a world in which the arts and creative activity are recognized as being integral to the learning process, not only at school, but also throughout life. Members are dedicated to the construction of a new world in which knowledge, wisdom, and imagination are fostered in a climate of generosity and collaboration through arts-in-learning. At the core of the organization's vision is a belief in the value of arts and learning

- 1) as an intrinsic component of human culture that deserves formal recognition in schools;
- 2) as an instrument for achieving a wide range of essential learning goals, in both formal and informal settings, throughout life; and
- 3) as a means to resolving the social and cultural challenges facing the world today by building peace, cultural diversity, and intercultural understanding.

This vision of the future is shared by a growing worldwide movement that is calling for a transformation in education, a transformation that will realize the full potential of high-quality

arts education, by using exemplary pedagogical programs to renew educational systems, to achieve crucial social and cultural objectives, and ultimately to benefit children, youth, and life-long learners of all ages.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant

In March, 2011, CNAL/RCAA received a grant from The Ontario Trillium Foundation, (OTF). There were two main purposes of the grant: to increase CNAL/RCAA's organizational capacity and to enhance capacity to produce research and disseminate best practices.

The second of the grant deliverables, *to enhance capacity to produce research and disseminate best practices*, was executed in two phases. Phase I involved gathering information from the leaders of eight Toronto area arts organizations. The study examined how to develop a community of supporters, how to establish trust and rapport with that community, and how to network and collaborate effectively. The researchers submitted the results of that investigation in report form to The OTF on March 1, 2011.

This current report represents Phase II of efforts to produce research and to disseminate best practices in arts-in-learning organizations, through study of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*.

Other components of the present research, as requested by The OTF, are a review of the literature about arts-in-learning partnerships, and a recounting of the most salient features of the case study methodology used in this research. These two deliverables are conveyed in our report: the literature review is immediately below, and the case study information is included in the *Methodology* section.

Literature Review

This section of the report contains a review of the literature about organizational partnering in arts-in-learning.

This literature review was essential to the research reported herein for the following reasons:

- 1) There is a pressing need to articulate the benefits of and guidelines for successful arts-in-learning partnerships in order to maximize resources and program impacts in an era of austerity and continuing threats to the presence of the arts in our education systems.
- 2) A review of the literature allowed us to conduct the case studies of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* from an informed stance. In addition, CNAL/RCAA is a partnering and networking organization and can benefit from the knowledge garnered from this literature review.

The content of our literature review originated mainly in articles and research papers about specific partnerships between arts-in-learning organizations and schools. A small amount of information was drawn from the business literature on partnerships. Although there are many sources in the literature that identify the components of good partnerships between arts-in-learning organizations and schools, there are few that offer guidelines for partnerships among

arts-in-learning organizations themselves. We have undertaken to compile those guidelines as part of our literature review.

In our account of the literature, we have created an overview of principles and practices that may be applied at any level of partnership. We acknowledge that, given the scope of this research project, our report on the partnering literature is limited. A literature review of much greater scale and duration would be worthwhile.

Our literature review first offers insights into the benefits of partnerships for arts-in-learning organizations. This is followed by some of the guidelines for making partnerships sustainable and effective.

Benefits of Partnering

A meta-review of the business literature on inter-organizational partnerships conducted by Parmigiani and Rivera-Stamos (2011) revealed two primary benefits of partnering: 1) sharing of existing resources and 2) exploring new fields of knowledge and opportunities.

Through our literature review, we have determined that these are also the major reasons for partnerships in the arts-in-learning sector.

Sharing Existing Resources

It is often far less expensive, more efficient, and more productive to go outside an organization to obtain services, skills, expertise, and knowledge than it is to develop them internally (Parmigiani & Rivera-Stamos, 2011).

The literature shows that sharing in the arts-in-learning world most frequently occurs for the following reasons:

- To share expertise and skills
- To obtain funding
- To increase sector knowledge
- To expand programming reach
- To communicate about the benefits of the arts
- To provide leadership in the field
- To enhance partners' profiles

Each of these reasons for partnering is discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

Sharing Expertise and Skills

Arts-in-learning organizations usually form partnerships in order to share expertise that one partner has and the other lacks. For instance, arts-in-learning organizations often partner with schools and/or school boards in order to provide arts programming for students and/or arts training for teachers when there are few or no arts specialists in the school system. The literature abounds with examples of such partnerships and their effects (e.g., Colley, 2008; Strand, 2006; Hanley, 2003; DeMoss & Morris, 2002; Haroutounian, 1998; Patteson, 2010; Ofsted, 2006).

An under-studied type of partnership is that between arts-in-learning organizations themselves, where one organization provides resources to another or an exchange of resources takes place. Referring to such partnerships between and among arts-in-education organizations, Gee (1997) has described an “entrenched survival mentality and a high degree of individualism” that has characterized the world of contemporary arts-in-learning organizations through decades of meagre philosophical and financial support (p. 12).

The conditions that spawned this entrenchment and individualism still prevail and, in many ways, have worsened. In the environment of the economic and social crises of the early 21st century, support for the arts remains fragile. As will be seen in this report, that fragility is also prompting recognition that the needs of individual arts-in-learning organizations might be better met by the judicious partnering of arts-in-learning organizations.

Obtaining Funding

The literature identifies several funding advantages to be derived from partnering. These advantages apply to both arts-in-learning partnerships with educational organizations and with other arts-in-learning organizations:

- Given the current dearth of available funding for the development and expansion of program infrastructure, there is often a need to share resources that already exist within the separate organizations (Gee, 1997).
- Partnering can make applications for funding stronger for all those involved because organizations often compete for support from the same funding sources. For instance, Gee (1997) has described the case of three arts organizations in Columbus, Ohio that have partnered to form a consortium of arts organizations, public schools, and a university to avoid competing for the same grants.
- Funders are increasingly more likely to award funding if they know it will be combined with funding from other sources so that the impacts of their financial contributions are maximized (Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Fineberg, 1994). Without partnering, each organization may have funding that covers only part of the cost of their program deliverables. In such situations, combining funding by partnering may enable each of the partners to fulfill their separate and/or shared mandates more successfully.

We found a cautionary note in the literature: when partnering organizations each have one or more funders of their own for specific deliverables, each partnering organization must perform the sometimes tricky task of balancing those specific deliverables with shared deliverables. For example, in the 1980s and ‘90s in the United States, public funding for the arts declined. The role of foundations became greater, and studies showed that the mandates of organizations became distorted as they endeavored to get funding by shifting and twisting themselves to meet their funders’ objectives. Campbell has referred to this distortion as *mission drift* (Campbell, 2006).

Expanding Programming Reach

Partnering often facilitates an expanded reach for arts-in-learning programming (Campbell, 2006; Carlisle, 2011; Gee, 1997). When organizations share their knowledge, membership base, funds, and expertise, there are possibilities for expanding program offerings that might not exist for each of the separate partners. In the case of school and arts-in-learning partnerships, the advantages are obvious: children and youth receive arts experiences they might not have had otherwise. Teachers develop skills for delivering arts-based lessons, artists acquire gainful employment, and support for the arts is fostered.

Increasing Knowledge of Sectors Served

Partnering, where each party has had discrete realms of expertise and activity, can result in wider learning and greater knowledge of the sectors being served (Fineberg, 1994; Gee, 1997). The partnering organizations providing the services are made more effective and responsive, individually and as a group, when it comes to attempting to meet sector needs.

Increasing Knowledge about the Benefits of the Arts

Partnered organizations are often able to combine their advocacy and their public information efforts to help strengthen support for the arts-in-learning. Stankiewicz (2001) has described a collaboration that developed in Sarasota County, California, in response to the elimination of fine arts coordinators and music specialists in schools. Arts educators, community arts organizations, teachers, and community volunteers all worked together to design resources for principals about the value of arts education, expectations for arts programs, and guidelines for evaluation in arts learning. Those collaborators now have a long-range plan for arts education that has been approved by the school board: the plan includes re-instatement of specialist arts positions and the development of new arts programs.

Enhancing Partner's Profiles

Partnering organizations can often benefit from the status of their partners. For example, CNAL/RCAA benefits from its association with UNESCO in terms of credibility. At the same time, UNESCO's mandate to raise the profile of arts in learning is served in the Canadian context in part by CNAL/RCAA.

Partnering for New Exploration

Along with the possibilities of sharing resources as the impetus for partnering, the ability to explore new endeavours was cited in the literature as a main motivator to forming arts-in-education partnerships. New ideas for programming may be developed, as a cross-fertilization of ideas often occurs when different arts-in-learning organizations come together around the table to discuss programming possibilities. As well, funding, broadcasting program plans, researching, implementing change in the education system, and other key activities may be developed from the multiple views, commitments, and resources expressed in partnerships (Nelson, 2008; Remer, 1996; Fineberg, 1994).

For example, researchers within the divisions of research at the Rotman Institute, Baycrest Centre, and The Royal Conservatory, with funding from The OTF, have recently partnered to conduct research into the effects of art-making on the cognitive and social-psychological health of senior adults. Although it might have been possible for the individual organizations to conduct this research, it is strengthened by using the combined expertise that the parties to the partnership bring in the fields of geriatric care, brain development and health, and arts and learning. This investigation into the arts and wellbeing for seniors is a clear example of a partnership that enhanced research into improvement of the health of seniors.

Guidelines for Effective Partnerships

Although partnerships may improve the quantity and quality of programming, collaborations can be difficult and untidy, and can often miss their intended marks (Bumgarner, 1997; Fineberg, 1994; Stankiewicz, 2001). The literature offers guidelines for promoting the establishment and fruitful survival of partnerships. These guidelines, listed below, are discussed in ensuing paragraphs:

- Determine internal and shared goals

- Provide partnership leadership
- Define roles
- Commit to evaluation and documentation
- Make plans for surviving setbacks
- Do the paper work
- Enter with an open eyes, heart, and mind

Determine Internal and Shared Goals

The literature suggests that there are three essential processes to ensure clarity in the formation of partnership goals:

- 1) Organizations should proceed into partnerships only after each has internally established clearly-defined goals and guiding principles, as well as an understanding of what compromises are tenable and those that are not (Gee, 1997).
- 2) Potential partners need to acknowledge amongst themselves the organizational culture, operating principles, and goals *within* each of the organizations entering the partnership, as well as make a commitment to help each partner organization safeguard and promote their needs (Arts Education Partnership, 2000; Gee, 1997).
- 3) A partnership is most likely to work well when there are convergences in goals and visions (Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Gee, 1997; Hill Strategies, 2003; Learning Partnerships, 1999).
- 4) A clear definition of the overall partnership goals and principles that meet the shared and individual organizational needs must be established so that there is clarity about why the partnership exists (Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Fineberg, 1994; For the Greater Good, 2003; Rowe, Casteneda, Kaganoff, & Robyn, 2004).

While time-consuming, the establishment of clear goals and visions is a solid investment in the future success of a partnership (Fineberg 1994; Robinson, 1998).

Provide Partnership Leadership

The desire to partner organizations often originates in the minds and hearts of a small number of individuals who attempt to lead and persuade the rest of their organization through the careful introduction of the notion of and benefits of partnering. There are indications in the literature that promoting widespread support for the partnership within each of the partnering organizations promotes success of the partnering venture (Arts Education Partnership, 1999).

Within partnerships, organizations may divide up leadership over a number of operational and program components (Gee, 1997). Some arts-in-learning partnerships hire an outside leader who is accountable to all partnering organizations, whether it be the heads of each organization or to a committee or board of directors that has been set up specifically for the purposes of the partnership. It is important to have some mechanism in place that allows partnership leaders to make decisions quickly when circumstances demand it (Gee, 1997).

Change is an element in the life of partnerships. It must also be noted that leadership personnel, visions and goals in the partnership, as well as within the partnering organizations,

may change over time in response to political, economic, or other pressures (Hill Strategies, 2003). Most aspects of a partnership plan cannot be set in stone.

Define Roles

It is important to define the roles of each member of a partnership and timelines for tasks, so that there is clear understanding of the division and nature of responsibilities. Clarity in roles and responsibilities prevents confusion and errors, leads to smoother operations, and forestalls resentments among partners (Gee, 1997).

Arts-in-learning organizations typically operate with very limited budgets. Therefore it is important to define and assign partnership roles wisely so that tasks and duties of the partnership are not replicated among its members, with unnecessary expenses incurred.

Often, when new partnerships are formed, there is a need for time to deliver training in the skills needed to carry on the collaboration; consequently, time, and expenditures necessary for training should be realistically appraised (Arts Education Partnership, 2000; Gee, 1997).

Provide for Evaluation and Documentation

Effective partnerships measure the success of their shared endeavors because “documented results . . . help sustain partner efforts, account to funders and secure additional support, and communicate successful strategies” (Learning Partnerships, p. 12). As a result, research into and evaluation of partnership projects should be part of a partnership plan (Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Colley, 2008; Gee, 1997).

Communicate

It is essential to keep constituents informed of the reasons for and the effects of partnerships, including research results: information usually generates understanding and devotion to program ends (Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Gee, 1997).

It is important with multileveled partnerships, where each partner has its own pre-established network of partners, to provide opportunities for constituencies (individuals and groups) to contribute ideas and information within those pre-established partnership constellations. However, there should also be some means of conveying concerns to the new and larger partnership of arts-in-learning organizations (Chicago Arts Partnership).

Make Plans for Surviving Setbacks

“Collaboration is a learned skill and complicated enough to predict some frustrating problems” (Arts Education Partnership, 1999). Because of the potential for complications, things work best when partners establish guidelines and mechanisms for handling misunderstandings and disputes. It is important to keep focused on the goals of the partnership in order to inspire compromise and enthusiasm.

Do the Paper Work

Written agreements such as descriptions of individual and group responsibilities and contractual letters of agreement among partnering organizations can forestall possible misunderstandings and missteps when it comes to meeting partnership obligations (Gee, 1997).

Enter with Open Eyes, Heart, and Mind

The literature identifies attitudinal qualities that promote good partnerships. Among these qualities are

- compassionate attempts to understand the needs and concerns of one another’s

organizational cultures and work (Cortines, 1994; Nowell, 2009; Stankiewicz, 2001);

- acknowledgement that partnering organizations need not be similar on all fronts and that differences may bring the benefits of expanded opportunities, vision, and creativity (Gee, 1997);
- acceptance that mutual trust between and among partners is essential, but may not be immediate and takes effort and patience (Arts Partnerships, 1999; De Weaver, Marten, & Vandenbempt, 2005; Stankiewicz, 2001); and
- recognition that partnering requires flexibility, time, commitment, and, quite likely, dedicated development funding (Gee, 1997)

Partnerships have many shapes/configurations and permutations, and we have just begun here to delineate some of the reasons, benefits, and structures of partnership among arts-in-learning organizations.

We now turn to a presentation of our research, informed by the literature in the field.

Research Objectives

Four overarching objectives were identified for this research:

- 1) To be of relevance to CNAL/RCAA by providing lessons in organizational structure; networking; collaborations; sharing knowledge about best practices for artist training, teacher development, and research; and identifying some of the other key trends and issues of interest to the sector as a whole
- 2) To identify the best practices of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* so that other arts-in-learning organizations might benefit from their examples and maximize their own impacts
- 3) To allow *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* to benefit from outside perspectives on their current practices
- 4) To provide information that would allow *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* to identify opportunities for collaborations with one another so that their individual and joint effectiveness might be enhanced and act as an example of fruitful partnerships that bring the arts to education

We include observations and comments throughout the report body and in the discussion section in particular.

Methodology

A multiple case study methodology was adopted for this research. In this section of the report we discuss the purpose and procedures for conducting case studies, and how they were applied in this research.

What a Case Study Does

Case studies are grounded in the *real*, rather than the *theoretical*, although their findings have implications for the formation of theories in a given field (Eisenhart, 1989; Patton, 2002; Vissak, 2010; Yin, 1999).

Case study methodology brings intense, in-depth exploration of phenomena in their real-life settings to reveal the complexities of the unit of study, that is, *the case* (Gerring, 2004; Crowe et al, 2011; Patton, 2002; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1999). The case may be an organization, a person, a political party, a country, or some other phenomenon. The important thing about a case is that it is discernible as an entity.

Case studies typically involve a purposeful, rather than random, selection of cases that permit the exploration of a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). A single research project may involve single or multiple case studies, and one case study may have nested within it other case studies (Patton, 2002).

The research recounted in this report involved two cases purposefully chosen by the OTF for this exploration of arts-in-learning organizations: *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*. Nested within these two case studies were other cases studies that added to the picture of how the two arts-in-learning organizations created a successful flow of information and services: Kitchener-Waterloo region (nested case studies of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*), the Durham Region (nested case study of *ArtsSmarts*), and in the Windsor region (nested case study of *LTTA*).

Kinds of Case Studies

Yin (1993) has delineated three kinds of case studies: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. However, case studies are often a hybrid of these types. In the case of this research, we rely heavily on description and explore the implications of our findings for the arts-in-learning sector.

Data-Gathering in Case Studies

Case studies typically involve access to a number of personnel and document sources for data, thus allowing the case to be studied using a range of perspectives, or research lenses (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991, Patton, 2002, Yin, 1994). Numerous perspectives allow “multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood” (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 1999). Thus, results can be *triangulated*:

Triangulation in case study research is similar to the navigation methods used by travellers, but instead of using multiple reference points to establish position, the researcher is using multiple data points to establish and verify meaning. In this way the researcher actively seeks different perspectives on the case study topic in order to check interpretation and to reveal alternative meanings. (Greenaway, 2011)

Triangulation of data helps provide a way of ensuring the validity of a case study (Johansson, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

With an eye to creating a comprehensive understanding of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* and to triangulating the data, we used the following data sources:

- Interviews with multiple personnel within each of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*
- Document analysis
- Observation

Case studies can seem to the researcher to be unwieldy, messy, and time-consuming, but they ultimately lead to insights that most likely cannot otherwise be generated. It is the job of the researcher to sift through information to present concise and compelling pictures of the cases

studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The following paragraphs explain how we used the data-gathering methods in this research.

Interviews

Rather than quantifying phenomena (quantitative data), qualitative data can provide information about how phenomena came to be, how they continue to function, and/or what value and effects they have in the lives of stakeholders. In other words, “qualitative data tell a story” (Patton, 2002).

In order for the case study stories recounted in this report to be compelling and comprehensive, qualitative data were collected from program administrators, teachers, program artists, and head office personnel for both *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*. This approach to data-gathering required that separate interview scripts be designed for each participant group. For example, the program artists interviewed for both *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* were asked the same questions. The Directors for each of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* were asked different questions from those posed to the artists, but the same questions as those posed to their counterparts at the other organization.

All of the study questionnaires were semi-constructed; that is, there were core questions asked in each case, but the interview script allowed for dialogue and open-ended exploration of issues that arose during interviews.

In total, 25 interviews were conducted in this study, each lasting from one half hour to an hour and a half.

We interviewed more *ArtsSmarts* (16) than *LTTA* (9) personnel simply because the former organization operates differently from region to region, and a larger number of interviews were needed to understand variations in regional programs. *LTTA* is run on a centralized model, with greater consistencies across the regions in which it operates. Therefore, fewer interviews were needed to create a picture of how *LTTA* functions.

Document Analysis

In addition to conducting interviews, the researchers studied program documents available from the *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* websites, and those supplied to the researchers by the Directors of each organization.

Observation

In order to see the *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* programs in action, a member of the research team visited four classrooms (two for *ArtsSmarts* and two *LTTA*) where the programs were being implemented. We provide accounts of classroom programming for each of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* later in this report.

Approach to Analysis

We referred to *data triangulation* earlier. *Analytic triangulation* is also a feature of many case studies. In analytic triangulation, multiple researchers approach the data separately, compare results, and reach a negotiated consensus about the findings (Patton, 2002). We used analytic triangulation, as well as data triangulation in this study.

Approximately half way through the data-gathering process, the three members of the research team each performed a first round of analysis of the interviews gathered up to that point in order to begin determining the kinds of information that were emerging and to identify gaps in the data. The researchers then met to compare their findings. There was general agreement among the three researchers about the themes and patterns they were seeing in the data and the gaps that needed to be filled by additional interviews.

When the interview process had been completed, the researchers again analysed the interviews independently and met to compare their findings. Again there was general agreement about the themes and patterns emerging in the findings. The discussion by the researchers also included recognition of the implications of the findings for both CNAL/RCAA and the sector.

Review by an External Expert

When the first draft of the report had been completed, it was submitted to an external expert, Dr. Lee Willingham, who is knowledgeable about both the world of arts education and research protocols. We felt it important to determine if an objective, informed individual would support our belief that we had conducted thorough research and had provided evidence for our conclusions and recommendations. Dr. Willingham's comments were extremely positive.

We provide one extract from Dr. Willingham's report here because it provides important information about the contemporary scene of arts-in-learning;

An old saying goes like this: "As the watering hole shrinks, the animals look at each other differently." We live in an age of shrinking resources, fiscal austerity, and administrative efficiencies. When it comes to arts resources, the "watering hole" is shrinking, if not drying up.

A collaborative study such as this one shows imaginative initiative in seeking common goals and practices, discovering duplication, finding particular differences, exploring shared resources, and informing the processes that take arts-in-learning programs to next steps, both short term and long range.

We would like to note that Dr. Willingham rightly expressed some concern about the optics involved in having two people closely connected to *LTTA* on the research team. It may be reassuring to the reader to know that, once the report was completed, it was read by the Executive Director of *ArtsSmarts*, Mr. Jason van Eyk, who suggested changes to the text to adjust our interpretations of the data so that we more accurately conveyed the nature and processes of *ArtsSmarts*. We are immensely grateful to both Dr. Willingham and Mr. van Eyk.

Layout of the Remainder of the Report

The remainder of this report contains the following components for each of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*:

- A brief picture of the context in which *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* emerged
- The case studies for each organization, including nested case studies
- A closing discussion

As we present the case studies, we offer our comments on issues that we feel are particularly pertinent to the arts-in-learning sector as a whole. We do not repeat our comments when the same issue appears in subsequent parts of the report.

In our final discussion section of the report we use broader strokes to convey the most salient findings from this research.

The Case Studies

We now begin our report of our findings from the case studies we conducted in this research. Rather than indicating the sources of information as being from specific interviews, data examination, or observations—an approach that we had judged might be tedious for the reader—we have combined information from many sources to create our portrayals of *ArtsSmarts* and *Learning Through the Arts*.

The Context for the Emergence of the ArtsSmarts and LTTA Programs

The 1990s were a time of social and political change in Canada and beyond. The face of Canadian society was changing with an influx of immigrants, many from countries that were in economic, social, and/or political turmoil (Elster, 2001).

In Canadian education, there was a *back to basics* movement in which Mathematics, Literacy, and the Sciences were valued and funded above other subjects. The repercussions for arts-in-learning were devastating. In many provinces including Ontario, arts specialists were eliminated from elementary schools. Many arts organizations had their funding reduced as a result of cuts to public funding for the arts.

Paradoxically, at the same time as these threats to access to the arts arose, a robust body of research and theory was emerging attesting to the positive impacts of arts experiences on the academic and psycho-social well-being of learners (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Dissanayake, 1995; Eisner, 1994; Fowler, 1996; Gardner, 1999; Greene, 1995; Howard, 1992; Pitman, 1998). There were also an increasing number of individual artists and professional arts organizations committed to arts-in-education despite funding cuts.

It was during and largely in response to these troubling times that both *ArtsSmarts* (1996/1997) and *LTTA* (1994) were founded.

Findings for *ArtsSmarts*

The information for our over-view of *ArtsSmarts* was derived from program documents and interviews with the following individuals:

- The current Executive Director of *ArtsSmarts*
- The past Executive Director of *ArtsSmarts*

- An external consultant to *ArtsSmarts*
- The Community Engagement Manager for *ArtsSmarts*

Origins of the Organization

ArtsSmarts originated as a program of the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation (the Foundation). In the 1990s the Foundation, partly in response to applications for funding for arts programming, identified a need to take a proactive approach to arts-in-learning by determining where to place its financial support.

There were numerous discussions at the Board level of the Foundation and with leaders in the field in order to determine what kind of arts programming should be put in place. Steven Campbell was commissioned to conduct a national study of arts and learning practices in Canada and to make recommendations on a program model for the Foundation and potential program sites (Campbell, 1996).

Campbell's recommendations contributed to the Foundation's decision to partner with existing organizations already providing arts-in-learning programming, to support the activity of those organizations through grants, to develop a framework to evaluate requests for financial support, to link arts learning to school curricula and to skill development, and to provide professional development for program artists.

Campbell also recommended that the administration of the program be kept out of the office of the Foundation, with a third party overseeing the management, delivery, national coordination, evaluation of the program, and work with the local partners. He suggested that existing arts education organizations should be the local partners (Campbell, 1996).

Subsequently, *ArtsSmarts* was established by the Foundation. The central administration was provided initially by the *Canadian Conference for the Arts*, with local partners running their regional programs. The local partners had a large degree of autonomy in their program delivery.

This model of distributed leadership of *ArtsSmarts* continues to the present time. The Foundation made a very substantial financial contribution to the program during its years of development and beyond.

After three years of programming, Annalee Adair was brought in as the new Executive Director with the mandate to find ways to make *ArtsSmarts* sustainable, bring other funders to the table, and to expand the number of program partners.

Under the leadership of Adair, *ArtsSmarts* transitioned to an autonomous organization, separate from the Foundation, with its own charitable status. As part of this transition, *ArtsSmarts'* primary role changed from being sole funder of programs: programming partners were encouraged and supported through a process of pursuing their own funding sources. This shift underscored the importance *ArtsSmarts* gave to advancing regional resiliency and self-sufficiencies, in part by leveraging cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, strategic alliances that access multiple sources of support from local and regional sources. In transitioning to this new program and partnership model, *ArtsSmarts* shifted to becoming funder-catalyst and eventually to a network service/support organization, further facilitating the evolution of regional partners into their roles as program and network developers. However, *ArtsSmarts*

continues to offer some seed funding for new programs and projects.

This organizational direction prevailed until quite recently, when another round of transitions began to take place: there have been changes in leadership, an augmentation to the program focus, and a review of the relationship with partners. To put it briefly, there is currently a move in *ArtsSmarts* away from being strictly a program-based organization to being the leader in a network of partners dedicated to arts-in-learning.

However, that is not to say that *ArtsSmarts* does not still initiate activities that enhance the work of its partners and contribute to the arts-in-learning sector as a whole. Recent examples of such initiatives are its *Arts, Science and the Brain* conference (October 31 to November 1, 2011), which is only one edition of its annual *Knowledge Exchange* conference; the establishment of its *National Youth Advisory Council* and its *21st Century Youth Creativity Challenge*, and the pending publishing of both its first toolkit and a new online, open-source and interactive learning platform, *ArtsSmarts Open*. The latter will enable communities to self-organize around their own *ArtsSmarts* programs and projects. (Information about these activities may be obtained from the *ArtsSmarts* website: <http://www.artssmarts.ca/en/about-us/our-guiding-principles.aspx>).

Guiding Principles and Program Goals

In its early days, *ArtsSmarts* provided an artist-in-residence type program. Some of the programs it promoted made links to the school curriculum, and some focused primarily on the creative process. Gradually, the former took precedence, with cross-curricular connections and student engagement in learning being primary foci.

A *creative inquiry* process was and continues to be central to *ArtsSmarts* programming. The creative inquiry approach involves the formulation of an overarching question that guides project design, artistic expression, and reflection. Ideally, students, artists, and teachers together shape the inquiry question.

Currently, there is yet another shift underway, with *ArtsSmarts'* new focus augmenting its work in improving student learning engagement, satisfaction and achievement through the creative inquiry approach and forming cross-curricular connections to include student acquisition of 21st century competencies. *ArtsSmarts* has delineated the 21st century competencies it is seeking to stimulate as being *creativity, collaboration, inclusiveness, inquisitiveness, expressiveness, and engagement*. (Information about these competencies may be obtained from the *ArtsSmarts* website: <http://www.artssmarts.ca/en/about-us/our-guiding-principles.aspx>). The emphasis on collaborative, creative inquiry among students, artists, and teachers remains.

Organizational Structure

As mentioned earlier, from its inception, *ArtsSmarts* has adhered to a model of distributed leadership. As mentioned above, *ArtsSmarts* has recently evolved to become a registered charity, with a Board of Directors to whom the Executive Director reports. In the head office there are four full time employees who support the work of partnership organizations, as well as designing, managing and implementing the above-mentioned national initiatives, with one of those individuals responsible for maintaining close and supportive relationships with regional partners.

In 2012, *ArtsSmarts* had an arts-in-learning network comprised of 16 *ArtsSmarts* lead partners across nine provinces that engage up to 90 other arts, education, and community organizations. Examples of current primary partners are arts councils, government ministries,

community arts and arts education organizations, and art galleries. The largest number of partnerships is in Ontario.

The primary partnership organizations have a number of other partners of their own with whom they work in various ways to provide local *ArtsSmarts* programming.

Research

ArtsSmarts has always requested that its program partners send in reports about the nature, extent, and effects of their *ArtsSmarts* program and projects. These partner reports have provided material for the organization's annual reports and have highlighted exemplary projects. Examples of *ArtsSmarts* projects and reports may be seen at <http://www.artssmarts.ca/en/research--reports/research-at-artssmarts-and-our-research-agenda.aspx>

By far the largest research initiative of *ArtsSmarts* is now taking place, with an exploration of the program's effects on student engagement in their arts-based learning. The research study is being conducted with support of an outside consultant and continues to be refined and implemented.

Researchers' Comments

Changing the Organizational Structure

We observed internal discussion within *ArtsSmarts* about which services would be provided for free and which would be offered on a fee-for-service basis as the organization shifts its focus. This is a timely discussion, not only for *ArtsSmarts* and *CNAL/RCAA*, but for the sector as a whole because it articulates the issue of how the arts-in-learning sector best organizes itself, especially in a climate that requires a culture of shared resources.

Distributed Leadership

The model of distributed leadership used by *ArtsSmarts* means that there is a range of regional *ArtsSmarts* structures depending on the mandates and priorities of regional partner organizations and the needs of the communities in which they function. We surmised that the different shapes of the regional partnerships most likely have both a cause and an effect relationship to program objectives and delivery. This assumption was borne out in our nested case studies discussed below. It is an important strength of the *ArtsSmarts* program that it encourages and supports its partners in designing programming that meet local needs.

Research

Earlier work by Canadian researchers (Patteson, Upitis, & Smithrim, 2004; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003) identified increased student engagement in learning as one of the most important effects of arts-in-learning programs. Those researchers called for further study of the issue of engagement in relation to arts-based learning, and it is to the benefit of the whole sector that *ArtsSmarts* has undertaken this work in its most recent research.

Nested Case Study of *ArtsSmarts* in the Kitchener-Waterloo Region

As part of our data-gathering for the nested study of *ArtsSmarts* in the Kitchener-Waterloo, we conducted interviews with the following individuals:

- The regional manager for *ArtsSmarts*
- Two representatives from the partnership committee that oversees programming in the region
- Three program artists
- Two teachers participating in the program

Organizational Structure

The *ArtsSmarts* program in the Kitchener-Waterloo region is now in its fourth year. The program is structured on a non-incorporated, collaborative partnership model of governance, in which a committee is comprised of representatives of various regional organizations who volunteer their services, with the recognition that their own stakeholders will benefit directly or indirectly from the arts programming.

Committee members include individuals from both regional school boards, the University of Waterloo, the Centre of Knowledge Integration, government, business, the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Association, and Cambridge Galleries. Committee members were chosen for their discrete areas of expertise, for example, budgeting or educational knowledge. *ArtsSmarts* has very positive relationships with the school boards with which it works. In fact, the school boards provide funding to cover release time for teachers and artists to meet to plan their programs.

The Kitchener-Waterloo region is one of the largest centres for immigration in Canada, resulting in a very diverse population. *Equity* and *inclusion* are theme words for the Waterloo region and are reflected in the partnership committee structure and in the projects chosen for regional *ArtsSmarts* programming.

Program Oversight

In the Kitchener-Waterloo region, the partnership committee plays a key role in decision-making. The committee develops policy, procures funding, selects the arts projects it will support, and monitors the implementation of the program.

The *ArtsSmarts* regional manager acts as a bridge between the *ArtsSmarts* head office and the steering committee, and between the artists and the schools. She has a very hands-on approach: she goes into the schools and consults with the teacher-artist teams to guide their funding application processes and help them shape the best questions they can to guide the inquiry-based classroom arts projects. The teacher-artist teams have responsibility for planning the project budget, project design, schedules, and reporting back to the manager who then reports to the steering committee.

The manager has a relationship with each of the committee members such that she can phone them for advice on urgent matters, thus ensuring that she be flexible and “nimble” in her responses.

Funding

The partnership committee in the Kitchener-Waterloo region is not an incorporated charity. Rather, it has to apply for and administer its funding through one of the partner organizations on the steering committee that does have the CRA status. That status allows it to receive funding from public funders and foundations.

This arrangement means that there exists the danger that the partnership committee might apply for funds from the same source as the organization through which their funds flow. However, in this case, the problem is minimized because the arts program is of mutual benefit for both the partnership committee and the partner organization, whichever procures the funding.

Research and Evaluation

In the Kitchener-Waterloo region, the steering committee has adhered to *ArtsSmarts* research mandates. It has asked teachers and artists to work together to collect the following kinds of data:

- Attendance records
- Measures of student engagement (surveys)
- Measures of student behaviours (checklist chart)

The application of these measures has proven time-consuming and the partnership committee, as well as *ArtsSmarts* as an organization, are examining ways to contribute to *ArtsSmarts* research while not burdening teachers and artists. We were informed that the steering committee in the Kitchener-Waterloo region would also introduce its own research agenda and protocols for the 2012-2013 school year.

Concerns about the research were voiced by steering committee members in our interviews. One individual pointed out that the results of arts programming cannot be measured quantitatively, but that quantifiable results that *ArtsSmarts* collects are important for funders and for school board partners. The shared stories of successful *ArtsSmarts* projects are also essential.

Another interviewee said that it is possible to move beyond anecdotal evidence through well-constructed qualitative studies, but that there are few people who appreciate the power of qualitative research and who know how to conduct it well.

In fact, information supplied to us from *ArtsSmarts* head office in Toronto revealed that the organization is committed to gathering high-quality data of both the quantitative and the qualitative sort, has done so in the past, and will continue the practice in the future.

Professional Development

We heard concern about artist training from some members of the steering committee. One individual offered the following words:

The gap between what the teachers and artists knows--that either gets bridged once they meet and work together and they work it out together or do we bridge that gap . . . Artists could do a lot more if they knew more.

Currently the *ArtsSmarts* Kitchener-Waterloo partnership committee is considering ways to provide artist PD. The regional manager informed us that the organization last year took advantage of a recently-instigated *OAC-LTTA* artist training for some of their program artists. (This program will be described later in our *LTTA* case studies). She indicated that the partnership committee is considering offering artist support groups and special artist training especially for those individuals working in classrooms where immigrant children are often found to be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Again, information supplied by the Executive Director of *ArtsSmarts* informed us that the organization is addressing this need for artist training, in part through the new toolkit and the *ArtsSmarts* Open website. Phase II includes webinars that will address topics specific to teacher and artist training in the *ArtsSmarts* approach, as well as related skills development. It should be noted that, based on the model of distributed leadership, there are models of artist-teacher training that *ArtsSmarts* Waterloo Region can emulate by downloading this information from the *ArtsSmarts* National Partner Network.

Insights from Teachers and Artists

We interviewed two teachers and three artists participating in *ArtsSmarts* programming in the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

Teachers

Both teachers expressed appreciation for the program and identified student engagement and student empowerment as important results of the *ArtsSmarts*' inquiry-based approach. The following are two quotes, one from each of the teachers interviewed:

Teacher 1:

I'm all about engaging kids. To make them think, act, want to come to school, for things to be fun, but challenging. You can't take those experiences away. It also gets them excited for learning in the future The more ownership they can have, the more responsive they are. It lets them feel independent and valued.

Teacher 2:

Students that really struggled in my class were all of a sudden the artist's best students, and that happens a lot.

Artists

Program Effects for Students

All three program artists expressed great enthusiasm for the *ArtsSmarts* program. Of the program effects on students, one artist said that he believed that the arts "provide the students with a different way of learning" and that the inquiry-based approach to the *ArtsSmarts* projects, which allows students a major role in defining the learning question and the arts project, was very successful: "*The students are engaged and driven because the learning is on their terms.*"

The same artist also identified other programming benefits to students: the development of self-control and self-confidence, the ability to express themselves, and the formation of meaningful connections with the curriculum. He added that teachers are often surprised at the depth of learning and expression that they see in students.

Professional Development

One of the ArtsSmarts artists was adamant about the need for artists' professional development:

Currently, the education system is very complex. I may go into a classroom with any number of challenges. The last project I did had autistic kids, major biochemical challenges, you name it. The dynamics are complex. Artists need to have training. It's not a simple matter of going into the school and teaching what you like to teach. There are lockdowns. They need to be aware of safety issues. They also need to understand how to work in partnership with the teacher, how to communicate with the school administration.

As we mentioned earlier in this report, the ArtsSmarts head office is taking action to remedy the lack of PD for its artists.

Income from Program Participation

The program artists informed us that only small part of their yearly income is derived from their work with ArtsSmarts. The artists also indicated that they felt that they were not adequately compensated for the work they do in the program, but this did not appear to diminish their enthusiasm for the program or their belief in its importance.

When reviewing our study findings, the Executive Director of ArtsSmarts, Toronto, informed us that ArtsSmarts sets a national minimum standard rate for artists based on CARFAC rates, but partners are welcome to adjust these as suits their regional needs. In the end, flexibility, adaptability, community-responsiveness, and community capacity are touchstones for determining artists' fees.

Observations of an ArtsSmarts Class

It was not the focus of this research to offer a detailed description of what happens in an ArtsSmarts class. However, we thought it crucial that we see the program in action, and we offer the following brief observations that one of the researchers made of the program in an alternative high school for students who have experienced difficulty in the regular school system.

The researcher observed that, prior to the commencement of the class, the teacher and artists took time to review how the previous class had gone and to discuss ways to create a positive atmosphere and to engage students.

As students straggled in, the artist joined some of them at the piano for a spontaneous jam session. When all were assembled, the teacher introduced the poetry-writing activity by first showing a film about an experiment that illustrated how positive or negative thought processes of people sitting nearby influenced how ice crystals were formed.

Following the film, the artist took centre stage and began the group poetry-writing activity by inviting students to call out sentences that expressed life lessons they had learned. The group then worked all of the statements into a poem:

Life Lessons

*Everything happens for a reason
Every bird learns to fly
Don't lose yourself to treason*

Don't break down and cry

*Live life to the fullest
And everyday like your last
Don't be afraid to take a bullet
Don't live life in the past*

*When you've been betrayed
And all your trust is gone
You may feel helpless
Like you knew it all along*

*But forget your dismay
Everything is okay
Keep your head up high
Live it day by day
Keep a smile on your face
You'll always get through
You're not a disgrace
I'm here for you*

*I've got your back
Through thick and thin
You can touch the sky
If you find it within*

*Life is never ending
Always happy when I'm spending
Time with the ones I love
No more pretending
You make your own happy ending*

The teacher praised the students saying, *“Even if you didn't contribute, no one tried to throw us off track and if you believe in the water molecules, you contributed to the vibe.”* The artist agreed, *“There is a lot of happy water in the room!”*

Students were then provided with a reflection exercise to help them contemplate their own life lessons in greater depth.

Program Sustainability

The *ArtsSmarts* partnership committee members we interviewed in the Kitchener-Waterloo region identified the following activities as crucial to ensure that the *ArtsSmarts* program secures a firm footing in the Kitchener-Waterloo region:

- Research that shows the positive impacts of *ArtsSmarts*
- A higher regional profile and more projects
- Sustained funding
- PD for program artists

We witnessed a high level of enthusiasm in the partner committee members and the program

participants in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. There also appeared to be a commitment to flexibility and self-examination in response to the emerging needs of the region. As the regional manager said to us,

We consider ourselves a learning organization. So we'll never stop program development, and we'll never say, ok, we've got it right. . . because the needs of classrooms continually change, and the needs of the artists and of the teachers continually change.

The manager also emphasized the importance of building positive, trusting relationships with all partners, program participants, and funders so that the needs of all may be taken into account when decisions are made.

Researchers' Comments

Charitable Status

The issue of charitable status faced in the Kitchener-Waterloo region is far from unique. Many arts-in-learning organizations steer away from acquiring charitable status due to the expense and rigors of the application process and the need for audited financial statements. In this case, a balance of organizations' interests has been achieved; however, it is wise for parties to enter into this sort of relationship with an eye to potential conflicts of interest.

Funded Release Time

Providing release time for teachers to plan programming is not universal among school boards. Where the practice does exist, funded release time insures adequate planning time for programming. We speculate that knowing that the school board values the program enough to cover planning time costs sends a signal to teachers that the program is worthy of commitment of time, energy, and resources.

Research

The difficulties that the Kitchener-Waterloo *ArtsSmarts* program has had in collecting research data are not unusual among arts-in-learning organizations. Conducting research is expensive and time-consuming. Arts-in-learning organizations more often than not must enlist the help of teachers and/or artists to gather data. Given the already busy professional lives of most teachers and artists, research tasks add a burden that can lead to fatigue and/or resentment in individuals who have already committed to the arts programming that asks them to step out of their usual classroom and artistic practices.

An added constraint in doing research into the effects of arts-in-learning programs is that teachers and artists do not always see an immediate connection between the research and what is done in the classroom or appreciate the impact that research can have on organizational policy and practices. There appears to be a need for organization- and sector-wide education about the purposes of program research in order to increase willing participation.

Program Observation

For the researcher, the *ArtsSmarts* class she observed was a powerful example of how experiences in the arts, facilitated by a skilled and compassionate artist-teacher team, can call out to and engage reluctant learners. The poetry class described and the poem the students created also showed how troubling life experiences can be transmuted through art into something positive for participants.

Nested Case Study of *ArtsSmarts* in the Durham District School Board

As part of our data-gathering for the nested study of *ArtsSmarts* in the Durham District, we conducted interviews with the following individuals:

- The school board's Arts Programming Facilitator
- The school board's Director of Community Partnerships
- Two program artists

Program Structure

The *ArtsSmarts* program in the Durham region is run by the Durham District School Board (DDSB) and has a designated facilitator within the Board. The Board also has a Director of Community Partnerships. The DDSB's Accountability and Assessment Office has been involved in measuring program impacts. The DDSB identifies curriculum priorities for its *ArtsSmarts* programming; selects the artists, partners teachers and artists; and determines foci for evaluation and research.

At the same time, The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) has provided funding to establish an on-going year-long artist-in-residence program within the DDSB. There is some overlap between the two programs in terms of the types of activities, the evaluations, and the teachers and artists. Both the *ArtsSmarts* and the OAC program exist under the umbrella of DDSB's internal title of "Arts Infused Learning."

An *Arts-Infused Advisory Committee* has been established which consists of a Dean from the University Of Ontario Institute Of Technology; the Education Coordinators of two local art galleries; artists, teacher, principals; and the Board's arts facilitator.

Program Oversight

In the DDSB there is a coordinated approach to program supervision: what happens in an individual classroom does not constitute an isolated activity. Each program is managed by Board personnel and is informed by board-conducted research and evaluation.

Research and Evaluation

One of the strengths that the DDSB brought to its partnership with *ArtsSmarts* was its commitment to research and evaluation. The board contributed to *ArtsSmarts*' development of student pre- and post-programming tests of engagement, as well as creating their own measures of student attendance, knowledge, and academic achievement.

While the research into the effects of *ArtsSmarts* in the Durham Board has been rigorous, especially in the past two years, the focus of the board's research efforts has now switched to other programs and education issues. As one of the interviewees stated, the board knows that the program has positive impacts in the areas they have evaluated. Therefore, the school board's research activities need to be reprioritized.

Teacher-Artist Partnerships

Teachers and artists apply to participate in the *ArtsSmarts* program in the DDSB. Subsequently both groups are invited to attend an evening during which teachers meet briefly with each artist who explains his or her work and comfort zone in terms of student ages and curriculum areas. The teachers then pick the artists with whom they would like to work.

Next, teacher and artist meet for planning sessions. The board pays for teacher release time costs so that participating teachers can take time away from the classroom, usually half a day. The funding of teacher planning time is a significant board contribution to the programming, as it recognises the need for planning and formation of the artist-teacher partnership and does not encroach upon a teacher's private time.

Teacher and artists are guided through their program planning and implementation by board guidelines for both processes.

Insights from Artists

Two artists engaged in the *ArtsSmarts* program in the DDSB were interviewed for this research. No teachers were available for interviews.

Program Effects for Students

Both of the artists spoke of the positive effects of the program on student participation, citing examples where classroom teachers were made aware of previously unrecognized abilities of individual students:

Artist 1:

It seems that a lot of the students who are participating don't normally participate; they never raise their hand. Sometimes the teachers are caught off guard by seeing this.

Artist 2:

These sorts of projects get students talking together. They are often put into groups, not chosen on their own, but they interact with each other (new faces) in a new way. Whenever groups work, a leader is determined, and quite often the teachers tells me that they are surprised by which students take on the leadership role.

One of the artists also said that she had noted increased attendance rates in high school classes and greater retention of learning among elementary students as a result of *ArtsSmarts* programming.

Program Effects for Teachers

About the effects of the program on participating teachers, the artists offered the following:

Artist 1:

At first they are very hesitant; they are scared. "I can't dance, I don't know anything about it." But by end they are involved, doing it with the kids, being critical of the choreography, helping the kids make good decisions.

Artist 2:

I think it's just refreshing for them to teach in a different way. Other teachers I know have been teachers for 20 years, and have taught the same curriculum year after year. It brings it to life again, and even for them, it's more fun and inspiring not like 'here we go back to blah, blah, blah'. . . It will snowball and inspire them to teach from a new angle and apply it in a different way. They always have great experiences.

Professional Development

Both of the artists reported that they had not received any professional development through *ArtsSmarts* and provided examples of areas where they would benefit from training:

Artist 1:

Understanding the different grades and how they need to learn. Like maybe the Grade 7s need something more visual, like to write it down or draw, whereas the Grade 12s will be OK with just having the instructions given verbally.

Artist 2:

People could be trained in how to teach a bit more. To be an artist is different than to be a teacher. You can be a performer or present your art in a gallery, but it's completely different.

Income from Program Participation

Both of the *ArtsSmarts* artists indicated that they made between 5% and 10% of their annual income from their program work.

Researchers' Comments

Program Identification

In relation to the simultaneous running of the *ArtsSmarts* and the OAC programs, we noted that there was occasionally a lack of clarity among program participants about which program they are receiving. This issue is one of the characteristics of this model of distributed leadership. While the distinction between programs is probably not important at the practitioner or program recipient levels, it can become a point of sensitivity for funders who require recognition.

Research

This nested case study illustrates both the benefits and challenges of partnering in research with school boards. It is immensely beneficial to have school boards involved in measuring the effects of arts-in-learning programs. Most large school boards have professional researchers who can bring their expertise to the research agenda, as is the case with the DDSB. School board researchers also have access to confidential student information that cannot be accessed by external researchers. While they cannot share such personal information, school board researchers can share the results of analyses using that information. So, for example, a school board researcher can determine if a program has had the desired effects for student grades or attendance and then share those results with external researchers where appropriate.

This nested case study also identified a pressure present in many school boards about the challenges of sustaining long-term research into the benefits of arts-in-learning programs. In some cases, once the school board has determined that the p the desired outcomes, it is obliged to move on to research into other of its programs. From a research perspective this often leaves unexplored many areas of importance for judging program effects and processes.

Findings for *Learning Through the Arts*

The information for our overview of *LTTA* was derived from program documents and interviews with the following individuals:

- The Managing Director of *Learning Through the Arts*
- The Director of Research for The Royal Conservatory

Origins of the Organization

LTTA is a program of The Royal Conservatory (RCM), Toronto. As with *ArtsSmarts*, *LTTA* was founded in response to the economic, philosophical, and educational crises of the 1990s. Also as with *ArtsSmarts*, a study was commissioned to verify the dimensions of that crisis within the education system with particular reference to the presence of the arts in education and to offer

guidelines as to what sorts of arts programming would be best (Korn, 1994).

The study confirmed a crisis in the education sector and suggested that the arts organizations and artists were valuable, but under-used resources for education. The report recommended “the implementation of a comprehensive approach to arts in education that uses the arts not only as a discipline, but also as a means for teaching across the curriculum” (Elster, 2001).

The *LTTA* program was born out of the RCM’s commitment to *develop human potential through leadership in music and arts education*, and the program was conceived as a new way to approach education through the marriage of arts experiences with the teaching of non-arts curriculum subjects.

Beginning with a program offered in partnership with the then North York Board of Education, *LTTA* was piloted in nine schools in the mid to late nineties. Since that time, *LTTA*’s reach has expanded to include schools in all provinces and two territories in Canada and in several countries around the world.

While in-school programs continues to be a primary focus of *LTTA*, in 2005 there was a broadening of the program’s direction to include community social service organizations, in which the program focus was determined by the needs of clients. An Ontario-based program called *Living Through the Arts (LivTTA)* was developed in response to an OTF-funded study that showed the need and desire for arts programming in social service organizations (Patteson, 2007).

As of early winter 2012, *LTTA* has a presence in 709 Canadian classrooms and *LivTTA* is active in 49 Ontario social service organizations (in Toronto, Windsor, Niagara, Sudbury, North Bay, and Thunder Bay). *LTTA* also has had an extensive international presence with programming and artist and/or teacher professional development in arts-based teaching in 12 countries.

Guiding Principles and Program Goals

The mission of The RCM and *LTTA* is *to develop human potential through music and the arts*. Program goals for *LTTA* are as follows:

- To enrich and deepen learning in school subjects through the arts
- To increase student engagement in their learning
- To help teachers develop the skills, knowledge, and desire they need to make the arts-based teaching integral to their classroom practices
- To promote the development of life-skills, self-esteem, self-expression, and self-efficacy for learners of all ages and needs through art making
- To promote a love of the arts through art-making
- To promote the inclusion of professional artists in all facets of society

Together, teachers and *LTTA* artists design arts-based lessons that incorporate teaching about both an art form and the non-arts curriculum content. For example, students might learn Mathematics concepts through Dance, Social Studies through Drama, or Literacy through song writing.

In the *LivTTA* Program, the arts are typically used to promote learning that is integral to success in both art and life: planning and goal-setting, perseverance, problem-solving, skills acquisition, reflection, and feelings of self-efficacy.

Organizational Structure

LTTA is centrally organized, with the head office located at The RCM, Toronto. An Executive Manager oversees all activities. However, since its national reach is broad, each region within which *LTTA* works has its own regional manager who in turn has in office support that reflects the extent of regional programming. Each regional manager provides a weekly or bi-weekly report about activities to the *LTTA* Managing Director.

Program Oversight

In *LTTA* and in *LivTTA*, a head office staff of seven to ten people manages all programming funds, funding applications, and payment of salaries, including those for program artists. It also designs artist and teacher professional development opportunities, delineates program goals and makes pivotal decisions about program development in new sectors, research agendas, and other issues that reverberate throughout the national organization. Among the head office staff, there is a manager for the *LivTTA* program

The *LTTA* regional managers are responsible for program delivery in their regions, recruiting new schools and other organizations to the program, providing the approved artist professional development programs, discerning regional needs that might differ from other regions in Canada

and, in consultation with head office, making program delivery changes in order to best meet regional needs.

The *LTTA* regional managers are the direct point of contact for program artists, teachers, school boards, and administrators from various organizations. They have their fingers on the pulse of their region and play a pivotal role in program success. An important goal of *LTTA* is to insure an unimpeded flow of information from Head Office to the program recipients and vice versa.

Funding

Funding for *LTTA* programming is gathered from various sources including government ministries, school boards, foundations, business, private donors, participating schools, and teacher and artist professional development programs.

Funding for all programs of *LTTA* is handled by head office, although regional managers play a role in identifying potential program and funding partners in their regions. As part of The RCM, the *LTTA* program has charitable status and, therefore, is not required to channel its grant applications and funding through an outside party.

Research and Evaluation

Since its inception, *LTTA* has designated resources for evaluation and research into all programs in order to provide feedback about programming structure and effects.

Initially, research and evaluation were contracted out to external researchers at various universities. In 2006, a formal Division of Academic Research was introduced into the *LTTA* structure and a Director of Research appointed, with that division expanding to serve all of The Royal Conservatory in 2010. The new research division continued to work in partnership with

researchers at other institutions in order to promote knowledge about the effects of arts-based learning and expansion to diverse populations and contexts.

To date, the research division has partnered with researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto; the Faculty of Education, Queen's University; Faculty of Music, University of Toronto; The Centre for Brain Fitness, The Rotman Institute; the Department of Social Paediatrics, the Hospital for Sick Kids; the Department of Anaesthesiology at the University of Toronto Medical School, and Baycrest Centre. The research division also acts as the external research consultant to the National Arts Centre/Centre national des arts.

From 1995 to 2012, the Division of Academic Research has conducted approximately 65 separate studies focussing on one or many of the program participants: students and community participants, teachers, program artists, principals, and parents. The results of these studies have acted as one input to evolving program design, pay structures, and professional development practices within *LTTA*, as well as contributing to sector knowledge about the effects of arts-based learning. The research results have provided information used extensively in funding applications.

The *LTTA* research is designed with an awareness of the demanding professional lives of both teachers and artists. Regional managers or their assistants typically disseminate and collect research questionnaires. Interviews and focus groups are conducted at the convenience of teachers and schools. All of the research instruments are kept brief, but designed to draw out the information most vital to the research projects.

Artist Professional Development

LTTA has always provided professional development to its artists, whether they work in schools or in community settings. The organization has developed a three-level artist training course. Each level contains several learning modules. For example, among other things, Level One of the artist training provides new program artists with knowledge about lesson plan writing, school culture and the demands on teachers' time, how to form effective partnerships with teachers, the ages and stages of development of children and youth, and how to make authentic connections between an art form and non-arts curriculum. Program artists are required to devote several days per year to professional development courses.

After completing all three levels of artist training, the *LTTA* artist receives certification as an Artist-Educator from The RCM, the only certificate of its kind in Canada. Certified artist-educators take a lead role in the organization in the training and mentoring of less experienced *LTTA* artists.

LTTA also provides additional artist professional development when its artists deliver programming to individuals who have special needs. For example, *LivTTA* artists receive training that helps them to understand the life challenges of their program participants, as do artists working in a school-based program for helping youth-at-risk of leaving school.

In 2008, *LTTA* partnered with the Ontario Arts Council to provide artist training for professional artists in order to prepare them to work effectively in community and school situations. The OAC provides the bulk of the program funding, and *LTTA* provides the program content. Course participants pay a nominal fee. The artist training is offered in several communities across Ontario to allow greater access to the training.

It is usual for an *LTTA* artist to earn the major proportion of his/her yearly income through work

with the organization.

Teacher Professional Development

LTTA offers teacher professional development in arts-based teaching through regularly scheduled training at Teacher Institutes across Canada and internationally.

Researchers' Comments

Centralized Leadership

Unlike *ArtsSmarts*, *LTTA* is centrally organized. The potential for head office to become distanced from the concerns and operations of the program across the province and country is greatly mitigated by regional managers who act as conduits for artist, teacher, and school board concerns and who have regular access to the ear of the Managing Director.

Research

LTTA has an impressive record of program evaluation and research. Through the various interviews we did for this research, we realized that, as yet, that body of research is a largely untapped resource for the sector as a whole. This lack of awareness about *LTTA's* research begs the question of how many other arts-in-learning organizations have conducted research and evaluation studies that could be of use to the sector, yet remain relatively unknown. There is an apparent need for a gathering place for such work.

We were impressed by the fact that *LTTA's* research division has matured to the point that it can partner with other organizations and researchers to explore the impacts of innovative arts-in-learning programming.

Artist Training

It is fair to say that *LTTA* has the most well-developed artist training program for arts-in-learning in Canada. The training is comprehensive, rigorous, and well-monitored. The partnership between The OAC and *LTTA* is an example of sharing of resources in the sector. It occurred to us that the expertise *LTTA* possesses in this area could be more broadly shared.

Nested Case Study of *LTTA* in the Kitchener-Waterloo Region

For the nested study of *LTTA* in the Kitchener-Waterloo region, we conducted interviews with the following individuals:

- The *LTTA* regional manager for South Central Ontario
- One teacher participating in the *LTTA* program
- Two *LTTA* artists

Program Structure

In South Central Ontario, *LTTA* works with the Niagara Catholic School Board, The Hamilton Public School Board, and the Kitchener-Waterloo Catholic School Board. The 2011-2012 academic year has engaged 52 classrooms in Hamilton, six in Kitchener, and eight in Niagara. In addition, the regional manager is responsible for *LivTTA* programming in seven social service

organizations in Niagara.

Program Oversight

The program in Kitchener-Waterloo region is overseen by the *LTTA* regional manager for South Central Ontario and her part-time administrative assistant. The program manager herself is a RCM certified Artist-Educator who has worked extensively as a program artist in the schools.

The *LTTA* regional manager reports directly to head office, maintaining weekly contact with the Managing Director, as well as with individuals who are in charge of such things as drawing up letters of agreement with partnering school boards and organizations, artist contracts, artist pay, etc.

The regional manager continues to work in the classroom, while also assisting with the delivery of the OAC funded artists training course and regional *LTTA* artist and teacher professional development, and travelling internationally to deliver *LTTA* teacher and artist professional development. She is also responsible for identifying suitable artists for hire, matching artists with teachers or social service personnel, and monitoring all *LTTA* and *LivTTA* programs.

Program Evaluation and Research

Program evaluation has been conducted through gathering teacher feedback by the regional manager via *SurveyMonkey* and through speaking with teachers individually about the program sessions. The regional manager also conducts classroom observations.

Schools in the region have participated in research into teacher, artist, and student program experiences, conducted by the Division of Academic Research of The RCM. The regional manager and her assistant help with the research by disseminating and collecting program questionnaires and by acting as liaisons between the research office and individual schools, principals, and teachers.

Artist Training

LTTA artists in the South Central Region of Ontario are offered at least six days of professional development a year. The team's senior artists also act as mentors to the newer artists, observing their classroom work and providing positive guidance about how to further develop their skills. The regional manager noted that, of the learning tasks involve in the artist training, the participants find writing lesson plans the most difficult. However, she noted that the benefits of the learning are great:

The paper work is one of the curses, but artists open themselves up because they do learn to create lesson plans that are exemplary. It opens them up to a whole new world by having to do the step by step. It gives them skill sets that they didn't have before. Artists begin to understand their own process, so they have to think of a final product or place where they need students to be and then go step by step and articulate what needs to happen to have it happen. It strengthens their own understanding as well.

In South Central Ontario, the regional manager attempts to create a team spirit among the program artists by organizing social events such as potluck dinners, coffee gatherings, and days when all the artists gather to make art at someone's home.

The *LTTA* artists whom we interviewed attested to the fact that they received a substantial amount of training for their *LTTA* work and that it had provided them with very useful skills and

knowledge.

Teacher-Artist Partnerships

The South Central Ontario regional manager told us that there are several factors that she considers when pairing artists and teachers:

- The art forms requested by the school and/or teacher
- Artist availability
- The training level of the artist
- The age group that the artist works with most comfortably and effectively
- The less concrete factors such as the ‘feel’ of a school and/or a classroom and a sense of whether the artist would fit into that ethos.

Teachers and artists arrange to plan lessons during teachers’ scheduled planning time or after school hours.

Insights from Teacher and Artists

We interviewed one teacher and two artists participating in the *LTTA* program in the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

Teacher

Program Effects for Teachers

The teacher spoke of her own learning within the *LTTA* program, providing the following example:

I’ve been teaching for 26 years, and I still pick up ideas [from the LTTA artists]. When the artist was talking about music, she explained the bars and had the kids get up and become the bars. I still use that.

Program Effects for Students

The teacher also commented on students’ experiences in the program:

They get excited. With this last artist, it was such a great experience. You could see it in their body language before, during, and after. When I see that kind of motivation-that says everything to me.

Artists

Program Effects for Students

Of the effects of the *LTTA* classes on students, one artist commented on how the program boosts students’ sense of self-efficacy:

They come up with something unbelievable and something so amazing. I don’t want them to ever feel “this is something I can’t do, I can’t tackle it”. . . . The program changes their minds. It makes them realize that they are capable of doing something they never thought they were capable of.

Program Effects for Teachers

One of the artists we interviewed spoke of the careful approach she takes to introducing teachers to arts-based teaching methodologies. Her sensitivity to the issue of *teacher fear*

reflects that of the *ArtsSmarts* artist who spoke earlier in this report about the bravery needed on the part of teachers to use the arts in teaching:

We introduce everything in a safe way; we scaffold; we build up, so that no feels scared. That's the saddest when you see the fear in people's eyes when they are doing something. This program brings them to their own awareness of their abilities.

The other *LTTA* artist spoke of the fact that *LTTA* was meeting its goal of providing teachers with on-the-job training in arts-based teaching:

I've seen a huge change in the teachers. I go back to their classrooms, and they are repeating a project I did with them five years ago. So it is really sustained in the classroom with many teachers.

Income from Program Participation

One of the *LTTA* artists we interviewed derived all of his income for his work in the programs, while the other derived a substantial portion.

One artist said that she was not truly compensated for the time she spent on her *LTTA* work, seeing similarities and differences between her situation and that of teachers: *"I know teachers experience the same thing, but they have benefits and they have a salary."*

The Standardized Model of Delivery

The regional manager told us that she approved of the efforts of head office to standardize the processes of program delivery, saying that she felt it supported the professionalism of the program. However, she emphasized the importance of not overly standardizing program delivery when it came to the classroom level, saying the program should continue to remain responsive to the needs of students and teachers within their own learning and life contexts.

Researchers' Comments

Sensitivity to Teachers' Needs

We have heard from both *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* artists that teachers find their first forays into arts-based teaching challenging and sometimes intimidating. In fact, there is a small body of research literature echoes the artists' observations and that recommends that teachers be considered learners themselves when participating in arts-in-learning programs and be offered a the sort of scaffolded approach to their own learning that *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* artists appear to be providing (Oreck, 2002; Patteson, 2004; Uptis, Smithrim, & Soren, 1999).

Program Oversight

A happy balance of regional and head office management appears to have been achieved by *LTTA*.

It was apparent to us that much of *LTTA*'s success has to do with well-chosen regional managers who work hard at establishing trusting relationships with the program artists, teachers, and school boards.

Building a Career

As this nested case study showed, it is possible for artists to make a living while working in the *LTTA* program. In contrast, work for *ArtsSmarts* artist appears to be more sporadic. There are benefits and challenges to both arrangements. The benefits of working many hours within a program are that an artist is able to earn a living sharing his/her passion and expertise in the arts, thus removing the financial strain felt by many artists in our society. However, even if an artist does not work full time in a program, working many hours may leave few hours, little energy, and limited mental/emotional space for one's own art work. Obviously, an appropriate balance of activities must be found by each individual.

Nested Case Study of *LTTA* in the Windsor Region

For the nested study of *LTTA* in the Waterloo Region, we conducted interviews with the following individuals:

- The *LTTA* regional manager for South Central Ontario
- Two *LTTA* artists

Because *LTTA* is centrally operated, there are many similarities between how the program plays out in the Kitchener-Waterloo region and in the Windsor region. For this reason, the recounting of this nested case study will be brief.

Program Structure

In the Windsor region, *LTTA* works in 65 classrooms that receive the core programming, and in 10 classrooms that receive the Youth Empowerment Program. In addition, eight *LivTTA* programs are delivered in community organizations.

In its school programming, *LTTA* partners with the Greater Essex County School Board which pays the program costs for participating schools.

Program Oversight

As in the case of the Kitchener-Waterloo regional manager, the Windsor manager oversees all aspects of programming: maintaining weekly contact with *LTTA*'s Managing Director, recruiting artists and organizing their training, pairing teachers and artists, monitoring the program, recruiting new schools, communicating with the school board, instigating program evaluation measures, and assisting with *LTTA* research. The regional manager is herself a musician and works in some classes as an *LTTA* artist.

Artist Professional Development

The Windsor regional manager spoke of the importance of the artist training for both skill development and creating a supportive community for the artists:

*Our site has 6 artists who are kept very hopping busy in the core *LTTA* program. The majority have been with the program for over 10 years because we continue to learn and grow with an emphasis on professional development.*

Learning comes with teaching, but also the PD days where we come together as a

community, support each other and bounce idea around. We are often isolated in practice (aside from teachers and students). It has fed and sustained us—and is a way to hone our skills. Mentor artists (and I) go and observe artists in the classroom and provide one-on-one feedback . . . I can walk into a meeting with a principal with 100% confidence in my team and share some of the wonderful things they are doing.

Artists

Relationship with Regional Manager

One of the program artists we interviewed in the Windsor region told us that he worked within the LTTA core program and its Youth Empowerment Program, as well as in the LivTTA program. He reported that his contact with the regional manager was frequent and useful:

I have contact with the program manager pretty frequently. She gives me support, and she runs workshops for us to keep our ideas flowing about how to create different lesson plans. We have one-on-one consultations as well, maybe twice a year, just to meet and see how things are going and to go over different ideas. I would say I definitely get good support.

Program Impacts on Learners

When asked to provide an example of the impact of LTTA on students, the second artist we interviewed said the following:

There are a lot of new Canadians in Windsor, and some classes have a lot of ESL students in them. It can be very confusing for the kids and tough for the teacher to assess learning. When we dance the lesson, everyone can follow along. The new Canadian kids do just as well as the others. You can't identify them. But if it were Math learning from writing on the board, they would not raise their hands to answer questions. But they are happy to show us their Math pattern for dance. It levels the playing field; plus it's giving a hand to the teacher with assessment.

The other program artist testified to the notion that LTTA is succeeding in its goal to provide teachers with arts-based teaching methods that they can use on their own in their classrooms:

Being in the program for a long time, I've had a number of the same teachers every year. And I've seen a huge change in the teachers. I go back and they are repeating a project I did with them 5 years ago. So it is really sustained in the classroom with many teachers.

The same artist spoke of LivTTA work in a drug rehabilitation centre:

[At the end of the programming at] the rehab centre, I made up a survey for the Director to give out to the participants after I left. It had about 10 questions, like: "What did you discover about yourself?" And she was so taken with how it really changed them – a lot of them. She copied them and took them to the Board to try to get a full time program.

Observations of an LTTA Class

A member of the research team observed a Grade 5 LTTA class where the subject was directly tied to the Science curriculum: stable and unstable structures. It was the last of the artist's four classroom visits with the group.

Part of the lesson consisted of a verbal review of both the science of structures and the principles of dance. Both were reinforced by an activity. Here is a snippet from the observations:

The music starts and the students and the teacher start moving all around. Some of the challenges are “slow motion”, “can’t be forward and can’t be standing,” “robotic dynamic,” “smooth,” “stable,” “unstable.” There are about 30 seconds of dancing time and 5 seconds to freeze for the next directions.

The next challenge was to create a dance of either stable or unstable structures:

The artist asks the students to create a dance that creates a force on a structure. She asks if anyone remembers examples of forces. The students remember hurricane, tsunami, earthquake, avalanche, wind, rain, flood, etc. . . .

The students proceed to brainstorm and collaborate through discussion and movements. “I’m a hurricane!” exclaims one student. Another group discusses: “We’re a rooftop, and we need an avalanche. Let’s all link arms.” . . .

A group of five students stomps their feet while holding hands in a circle, then they break free from each other while spinning and waving their arms, all travelling in the same direction. They start to count “1, 2, 3” for each set of movements. . . Every student is busy moving and chatting. . . .

The teacher says to the other group, “When the tsunami comes, you’re going down!” The teacher’s group shuffles over to one structure waving their arms, then changes direction and heads over to the other structure. The tsunami goes back to the first one again, and the group of girls standing tumbles to the ground. The tsunami group dances back over to the first and the sitting structure of boys’ sways, but is too stable to be dismantled. One of the girls from the “fallen structure” jumps up and hops in a circle, clapping and cheers, “Awesome!”

At the end of the class:

As we walked out, the artist received hugs. The students started packing up their bags in the hallway for the end of class, and one student consoled a peer who was upset that it was the artist’s last visit by saying, “We get her again in Grade 6!”

Researchers’ Comments

Program Impacts

It was impressive to observe the excitement with which the Grade 5 children embraced their learning in the *LTTA* class. We saw that it is, indeed, possible to combine arts and non-arts learning. We also saw the power of arts-based learning for children in Canadian classrooms whose first language is not English.

Teacher-Artist Partnership

In the class observed, the *LTTA* artist and the teacher shared responsibility for various parts of the lesson. There was an obvious, fruitful merging of the talents, kinds of knowledge, and commitment both brought to the classroom.

Discussion of the Research Findings

Introduction

We have commented on the case studies immediately following the relevant section of the paper. This section is not a collation of the earlier discussions. Instead, it serves a number of other purposes: it identifies trends, issues, and learning that are especially relevant for CNAL/RCAA and, in some instances for the entire sector, and summarizes some of the comments and findings from the case studies.

Some Characteristics of Different Program Models

ArtsSmarts and *LTTA* are excellently conceived and implemented programs driven by individuals at every level of operations who are passionate about the arts and about the arts-in-learning. The two programs provide leadership and lessons for other such programs, nationally and internationally.

The two case studies illustrate two different types of organizational models that we see repeatedly in many fields in Canada - a centrally run model, and a regional or locally based model. *LTTA* is more centrally organized and coordinated, though responsive to the needs and interests of its regional sites. *ArtsSmarts* is a network of autonomous programs sited across country, linked through a national network.

The different models, as noted above, have somewhat differently-worded goals. However, both have in common the partnership between the artist and the teacher, and the goal of increasing the well-being, success, and potential of the student. And both programs must deal with a dynamic tension between needs of the curriculum and the creative impulse expressed in the arts, and they must strive for a balance between the two.

This paper has referred, albeit in passing, to a third type of program and funding model. Arts councils and public arts funders support a number of programs in arts and learning. Until the advent of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*, they were the main supporters of arts-in-learning programs in Canada. They support programs such as individual artists in classrooms and arts education activities by arts organizations. The recent study by Hill Strategies/PAONE/Creative Trust (2011) examined the latter. It is not within the scope of this report to review the programs supported by the arts councils and public funders. However, another study could contribute to a more complete picture of the field by looking at their activity and the synergies between the different models.

Some Shared Issues and Challenges

We observed a number of issues and challenges that are present not only in both of the organizations in the case studies, but also in the sector as a whole.

Capacity Building and Sustainability

Arts-in-learning organizations must devote a great deal of time to fundraising. Despite these efforts, such organizations rarely succeed in securing a sense that their programs can operate on solid financial ground for any significant length of time. This in turn determines the very important matter of access to programs; that is, more learners cannot have access to the

benefits of these programs unless program reach is extended through increased capacity, which in turn is dependent upon adequate funding.

Both *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* still face the continual pressure to secure funding to make their programs sustainable even though they are now *mature* programs with proven track records. CNAL/RCAA can act to increase knowledge of the benefits of arts-in-learning and to advocate for financial support of these and other similar programs that are making such a positive difference to Canadians.

Organizational capacity requires infrastructure, and many funders, especially funders of projects, are loath to fund arts-in-learning infrastructure costs. Most arts-in-learning organizations struggle with minimal staff. The case studies recounted here show the positive impacts of a strong infrastructure on program sustainability: *ArtsSmarts* has had the infrastructure of first the McConnell Foundation and then of the CCA to support its development. *LTTA* has had the infrastructure of The Royal Conservatory to scaffold its growth. There is a lesson here for CNAL/RCAA as it considers its own evolution: a strong infrastructure is essential to its survival.

Digital resources and applications must not be ignored when contemplating means to promote organizational sustainability. Indeed, in their 2011 report, Patteson and Campbell indicated that many existing arts-in-learning organizations are using social media such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and email blasts to promote their activities.

Artists' Compensation

The perpetual scrambling for funding illustrates that we live in a society that seems to value the arts less than other endeavors. There also appears to be a belief that arts programmers and program artists are due less funding because they will do the work fired by passion, rather than monetary gain.

In this research, we heard from artists that they did not think that they were adequately compensated for their work, although that did not seem to dim their dedication to the programs in which they worked. We know from our interviews with other organizational personnel, that the artists in both programs are highly valued and considered indispensable. Nevertheless, we found that, at all levels of the organizations, personnel were usually paid less than their counterparts in non-arts organizations.

Career Balance for Artists

Arts and learning programs depend on the creativity of the artists. Consequently, artists need to stay connected and engaged with their own creative work, as well as stimulating that of learners. Management and program structures therefore may require some flexibility to allow artists the time to achieve a balance between their creative practice and their arts-in-learning work and development.

Need for Public Profile and Advocacy

Several of our interviewees spoke of the need for an increased public profile for the specific projects and programs in which they were involved. This need for a higher profile has always been a challenge for the sector, and it has occasionally conducted initiatives to address this issue. For example, the OTC has published a *Community Arts Workbook* (Lee & Fernandez, 1997) that provides information that can be used when groups or individuals are advocating for the arts and for arts-in-learning.

However, the need for a higher public profile and advocacy for resources remains great, especially in a time of austerity and competing demands for time and money. As noted above in the section on artists' compensation, discussion of the field may also involve a discussion of values, in this case the value of supporting the development of learning and human potential through the arts and learning. We know that CNAL/RCAA intends to address the need for a higher public profile and advocacy through its activities.

Collaborations between *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*

We do not feel that it our place to make specific recommendations for partnering between *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*. Rather, we hope that this report has made each organization more aware of the operations of the other and better positions them to make decisions about possible collaborations.

Networks

It was noted earlier that this paper follows an earlier paper, *Update On Collaborative Partnership Models and Network Discussions* (Patteson & Campbell, 2011). That paper noted that CNAL/RCAA has the opportunity to address many of the networking needs of the sector. While *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* are discrete programs, they contain and function as their own networks. Some of the challenges they deal with as networks are similar to the challenges facing CNAL/RCAA as a network and service organization.

For example, we noted above that *ArtsSmarts* employs a model of distributed leadership. This is an important strength of *ArtsSmarts*. It allows the needs, priorities, and mandates of regional partners to be addressed in a flexible fashion, while the partners at the same time have access to national partnerships and resources. This model of a national network with distributed leadership, build upon partnerships and collaboration, is relevant for CNAL/RCAA. Although CNAL/RCAA does not see itself as a program provider at this point in its development, it can play a role in the areas of research, advocacy, and building sustainability and capacity for the entire sector through a network of distributed leadership.

Research

Until relatively recently almost all of the research in the field of arts-in-learning has been conducted in other countries. Nevertheless, that research has been very effective for advocacy in Canada, and it has influenced program and policy decision making, and contributed to changing the context for arts in learning in Canada in the 1980's and 1990's. The research provided a theoretical framework for thinking about arts-in-learning, as well as quantitative and qualitative information on the benefits and outcomes.

The first major research study by *LTTA* (Upitis & Smithrim, 2003), while it focussed on the *LTTA* program, had a wider impact in increasing awareness in the media and public of the benefits of arts in learning, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, as well as student engagement in learning, at a time when these were priorities for the education system, governments, and the public. As a result, this research study benefited other arts-in-learning programs and the sector as a whole.

Since the release of the 2003 study, *LTTA* has continued to produce a large body of research, some of which may not be known by the sector. *ArtsSmarts* has likewise produced important research, and is currently engaged in a major study of engagement in arts-in-learning.

Despite the expense and time involved in conducting research and the fact that few Canadian

arts-in-learning organizations can afford to undertake major studies, there is still a great need for original Canadian research into our programs in the unique context of Canada and its regions. We identify here just a few key topics with which to begin to map out a Canadian research agenda: arts-in-learning in a multi-cultural society and school system, the arts-in-learning in First Nations schools and communities, and the increasing continuum of arts in learning activity in schools and communities.

However, from the case studies, we have seen that we need to be aware of the research demands on teachers and artists, and the need and the need for professional researchers to conduct the work.

One stream of Canadian research activity that does not fall within the scope of this research is that conducted by the public sector arts funders. A larger research project might be one that relates research done by organizations such as *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA* to research and program evaluation available from the arts councils and public funders that fund individual artists and organizations through a number of programs. An example of such a funded study is the recent PAONE-Creative Trust study in arts education activity (2011).

CNAL/RCAA could develop a repository of Canadian arts-in-learning research. Such a repository would be most useful if it were accompanied by curatorial comments.

Artist and Teacher Training

Teachers and artists both have extensive training and expertise in their respective fields. However, arts-in-learning require specialized skill sets. The sector as a whole has, in the past, relied upon gifted artists with a natural ability and interest in arts education, and teachers with specialized training, to deliver programs.

However, as the sector has evolved, programs have expanded and participant groups have become more diversified. Schools continue to have limited arts expertise, and the needs of learners of various cultural, social, and age groups have become more complex. The need for more artist training has increased, as these professionals become more prominent in the educational landscape.

Both case studies have identified the importance of artist training. The need is evident in the interviews with artists, and was acknowledged by managers of *ArtsSmarts* and *LTTA*. One interviewee suggested that artist training might be a possible shared resource between the two organizations. Another suggested that all organizations involved in program delivery in the sector should collaborate on the recruitment, training, and treatment of artists.

In fact, a partnership in training has already developed, although not between the two organizations that are the subjects of the case studies. The OAC has out-sourced its artist training to *LTTA*, indicating recognition of the need for artist training in schools and community work, and *LTTA*'s record of success in these areas. *LTTA* has and is conducting both artist and teacher training in Canada and internationally.

In a similar fashion, the issues of teacher training in the arts and arts in learning, at both the in-service and pre-service level, remain important to the success of program delivery. This is a complex and major issue to address. At the present time, the most pragmatic fashion of proceeding with training needs may be to concentrate on the development of effective partnerships between artists and teachers.

Closing Words

We would like to thank all of the individuals from *ArtsSmarts* and from *LTTA* who so generously gave of their time and knowledge to this study. Like so many other Canadians, we are grateful for their excellent contributions to arts-in-learning and to the blossoming of an ethos of sharing and mutual support among arts-in-learning organizations.

We are very grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for providing us with the opportunity to conduct this research.

There are many lessons embedded in these pages. We hope that those lessons will be of help to CNAL/RCAA at this early stage of its development, as well as to the arts-in-learning sector as a whole.

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