"YOU WANT TO BE A PART OF EVERY THING "

THE ARTS, COMMUNITY, & LEARNING

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Dear Forum Participants:

Among the findings in AEP's compendium of research, *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*, is that arts experiences enable students to develop a sense of identity and self-direction as well as attitudes of empathy, tolerance, and cooperation. This combination of outcomes affects not only how young people see themselves and the potential of their individual lives, but how they relate to others, how they see themselves as part of a community. Through arts experiences young people are able to build powerful communities in which they can thrive.

We chose to focus on the arts and community building in this AEP forum for several reasons.

The Harvard researcher on youth development, Gil Noam, has commented that the world of young people today is a world of great risks and uncertainties. Navigating those risks requires a strong sense of self and the ability to forge positive and supportive relationships with others. The arts hold the promise of providing this direction and support.

The modes of learning, collaborating, and creating found in the arts can be contexts for exploring and incorporating multiple perspectives into a cohesive social environment. These outcomes are critical for young people growing up in increasingly pluralistic societies, striving to build understanding with others as well as to explore their own identities within a larger context of diverse cultural and social values.
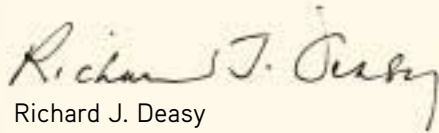
Enormous pressure is being placed on school administrators and teachers to demand higher test scores of students and to devote the time and energy of the school to that effort. Among the unintended

consequences of this pressure is that the multiple social purposes of schooling will be truncated. Among those purposes is to encourage and enable young people to grow and develop personally, socially, and culturally so they can actively create their futures. The arts are central to that goal and open windows of opportunity for young people to engage purposefully with each other and the adults around them, to shape their learning environment, and to come into communities around issues that are important to them.

As a recent National Research Council report (2002) puts it: "...positive development is not something adults do to young people, but rather something that young people do for themselves with a lot of help from parents and others. They are the agents of their own development. To foster development, then, it follows that settings need to be youth centered, providing youth — both individually and in groups — the opportunity to be efficacious and to make a difference in their social worlds — we refer to this opportunity as 'mattering.'"

We believe this kind of development is a natural outgrowth of a well designed, challenging arts practice with young people. The arts are a way of "mattering."

Sincerely,

Richard J. Deasy
Director
Arts Education Partnership

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BACK**STAGE**

On September 18th 2003, the director of the Human Creativity youth arts program at Central Falls High School in Central Falls, Rhode Island, and four of its youth leaders enter Lincoln Center in New York City. They are there to present their program's work at a national forum held by the Arts Education Partnership (AEP). The forum is one of three that AEP holds each year engaging its partner organizations across the country in critical conversations to advance the field of arts education. This forum will focus on the role of the arts in building community, particularly positive learning communities for youth.

With visual arts supplies and a djembe drum tucked under their arms, the team from Human Creativity searches for the Lincoln Center meeting room where it will gather with the four other youth arts organizations presenting at the forum: Artists for Humanity, Boston, Massachusetts; ArtsLiteracy, Providence, Rhode Island; City Lore, New York, New York; and COCA Urban Arts, St. Louis, Missouri. They find the room; they are the first ones there.

Waiting for the others to arrive, Human Creativity's four youth leaders, Elisa Ferreira, Raziel Ferreira, Cecilia Flores, and Anyeli Rivera, and their direc-

tor, Deanna Camputaro, are excited and nervous. AEP has charged them and the representatives from the four other presenting organizations to determine the central issues and ideas that should frame the discussions at Lincoln Center.

Reflecting on Community

In the weeks leading up to this moment, Camputaro facilitated conversations among the Human Creativity youth leaders about the topic of community building and the arts. They reflected on their arts experiences and the changes that these experiences fostered in them as individuals and in their interactions with others. They recognized a reciprocal relationship between these two sets of outcomes — impacts on self and on social interaction — and discussed how together they give rise to a powerful sense of community among Human Creativity's participants. Their reflections reinforced the hypothesis put forth by Richard Deasy, director of the Arts Education Partnership, in his purpose statement for the forum. Deasy suggested that the impacts of the arts on young people's self and social development dovetail in such a way as to build community, which he defined as a set of positive and supportive relationships.

Each of the four youth leaders had stories to tell of the "community" in Human Creativity and how it has affected their lives. Elisa described how she, in a sense, embodies the strong community in the program — an alumnus, she has returned to Human Creativity as a teacher to give back to the program and to ensure that other young people have the same arts experiences that she has had.

The Players Gather

When the other presenting groups file in, Camputaro watches closely the interactions among those in the room. She is reminded of potential obstacles to building community and of the ability of the arts to help build community in the face of such challenges.

We arrived a bit early and were sent to a conference room to wait for the other presenters. The longer we waited, the more nervous we got. We realized the scope and importance of the conference. One other group with two light skinned people entered the room. We made our introductions. It was very formal. We had talked, prior to our trip, about the fact that we may once again be some of the only people of color at the conference — how important it would be that we were there 'representin.' We also talked about the discomfort that may come along with that (the kids come from a school in which there is only a 28% Caucasian student body). Then the next group entered the room. Two dark skinned men and one light skinned woman. One of

the men carried a djembe drum. All at once, I saw the kids relax. The man was from Mali and noticed Raziel's drum right away. He also smiled and seemed a bit more relaxed. It was amazing how this connection with mere strangers occurred due to the commonality of the drum and our knowledge of West African tradition and art forms. It was like we felt 'at home.' The introductions were much more relaxed; we traded information about what dances and rhythms we knew and with whom we had studied. Even though they were from St. Louis, we all knew some of the same performers and teachers. I then realized how much the West African study for us had brought us together as a community. …It was through this art form we had come together. It was now through this art form that we felt connected to a larger global community (Camputaro, 2003).

A bit more at ease, the group from Human Creativity introduces itself to AEP staff and the representatives from the other presenting youth arts organizations. For the next three hours, they get to know each other and discuss their programs and plans for the impending forum.

Rehearsing the Breakout Sessions

Each of the organizations has designed an interactive workshop for the forum participants to illustrate how their program builds community through the arts. They will present these workshops in "breakout sessions" as a central component of the forum.

The groups share their workshop plans with each other and recognize the emergence of common themes across their work.

The representatives from **ARTISTS FOR HUMANITY**, youth leaders Cassandra Lattimore and Frenell Jean-George and adult mentor artists Rob Gibbs and Damon Butler, will lead forum participants in creating their own "identity molecule," an activity often used in their work at Artists for Humanity. The workshop participants will respond visually to several basic but hard questions, for example: Who is your family? Who is your community? Who are your artistic influences? What is your greatest fear? "We use this activity to find out where people are coming from, what they bring to the table. It's so we don't miss out on what's in our community," explains Gibbs.

When young artists first start out at Artists for Humanity — which hires young people as apprentice artists to work on commissions from the business and local community — the identity molecule is a piece of their earliest training. There is no time limit on how long one is able to work on the piece; some participants take as long as a year to complete theirs. Keeping track of who makes up the Artists for Humanity community and how it changes is essential for building community and supporting young people and is also an integral piece of good arts practice. "If we get hired to make a mural for the Cape Verdean neighborhood and we don't call on the

resources of our Cape Verdean youth to make that piece meaningful, not only will the piece be less beautiful, we won't get hired again," says Gibbs. At Artists for Humanity, it is in fact difficult to separate ideas about art from ideas about community.

Similarly, youth leaders Sandra Goncalves and Alexander Henao and mentor artist John Holdridge from **ARTSLITERACY** explain that the underlying philosophy of the ArtsLiteracy Project is that powerful learning environments are places where students participate in purposeful work; where teachers, artists, and students collaborate with each other and the larger community; and where all students have a voice in classrooms that are both academically rigorous and personally meaningful. They believe that the arts are a uniquely powerful tool for creating this type of environment, and that such an environment is indispensable for helping students to develop literacy skills — the main objective of the project.

At the heart of the ArtsLiteracy Project is what they call "the Performance Cycle." This educational and artistic process guides the theory and practice of the project and is composed of six steps: 1) building community, 2) entering text, 3) comprehending text, 4) creating text, 5) rehearsing and revising text, and 6) performing text, with ongoing reflection throughout the process. This cycle will be the basis of their workshop. Using

Shakespeare's *Sonnet 29* as their text, they will lead participants through activities that demonstrate each step in the performance cycle. Participants will engage in community and trust building exercises; "enter" the text by making human sculptures of various abstract concepts such as "disgrace" or "love," which are key to the sonnet; and work in small groups to develop their own interpretations of the text. In one group members will use their bodies to represent their interpretation of the sonnet by making a human tableau; in another, members will use their voices to read the sonnet aloud, acting as a chorus. In a third group, members will write original text

directly connecting the themes and ideas of the sonnet to their own lives. The three groups will then rehearse and perform these pieces together in varying combinations. At the end of the workshop all participants will reflect together on these experiences.

CITY LORE's Amanda Dargan and Leo Schaff explain that their organization brings artists into New York City public schools to engage students and teachers in arts projects that draw on students' investigations of the people and places in their community. Their mission is to document, preserve, and present the living

THE ARTSLITERACY PROJECT, BROWN UNIVERSITY, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

The ArtsLiteracy Project, based in the Education Department at Brown University, believes schools should be environments where students participate in purposeful work; where teachers, artists, and students collaborate with each other and the larger community; and where all students have a voice in classrooms that are both academically rigorous and personally meaningful. To achieve this goal, the ArtsLiteracy Project brings together a community of educators and artists consisting of youth, college students, teachers, administrators, and professional artists who seek to understand how to support student literacy development through performance and interaction with text. At the heart of ArtsLiteracy is the Performance Cycle, an educational and artistic process that guides the theory and practice of the project. At the top of the Performance Cycle, and central to all of ArtsLiteracy's work, is "Building Community."

Throughout the school year, the ArtsLiteracy Project works closely together with teachers and artists to integrate performance into literacy classrooms and to collaborate on ArtsLiteracy units with approximately 100 youth. These units last from six to twelve weeks and culminate in a student performance for the entire school and the local community. In the ArtsLiteracy program at Brown Summer High School, teachers and artists collaborate with each other and with youth in the Rhode Island area to create original performances based on a central text. At the end of the summer, students offer public performances to the local community.

City Lore is a nonprofit cultural center in New York City that focuses on documenting, interviewing, and presenting grass roots culture. At the core of its programs is the belief that students who acquire a deeper knowledge of the people and places of their community also develop a stronger sense of belonging to their community. City Lore engages students in activities that help them recognize the differences and similarities they share with others in their school and community, and gives them opportunities to develop skills in collaborating, listening, observing, reflecting, and creating with others.

In its school programs, City Lore brings artists into New York City public K-12 schools to engage students and teachers in community-building through the arts projects that draw on students' investigations of the people and places in their community. Students engage in community-building activities to encourage group collaboration and active participation by all members of the group. They conduct interviews with their families and members of the school and local community and go on neighborhood walks and field trips to observe community places and settings. Afterwards, they

create art based on their research which they share with the community. Student artwork and journal reflections show a greater self-awareness and pride in their artistic expressions, as well as an understanding of how the arts can be used to explore ideas and multiple perspectives, and to participate as an active member of the community.

cultural heritage of New York City. Students conduct interviews with members of their families, schools, and neighborhoods and take field trips to local landmarks. They then create art based upon their research, which they share back with their community.

In their session, Dargan and Schaff will begin by having participants sing *My Country 'Tis of Thee* and discuss the meaning of the lyrics. Using this well-known hymn and melody as a springboard, participants will then visualize their own neighborhood and think about it in the context of the song's lyrics. They will be prompted with reflection questions about their "imagined journey" to their neighborhood: What did you see? Who did you meet? If you asked them questions, what would they say?

Participants will then discuss and role-play some of the scenarios working toward developing an original song about the community stories that were shared. Participants will also listen to and discuss songs written by students in City Lore residencies.

The **COCA URBAN ARTS** program partners with a local housing authority in St. Louis to provide after-school dance instruction for its young residents. Shawna Flanigan, Urban Art's director, and Diadie Bathily, the program's dance teacher, explain that the dance program is helping young people develop a sense of accomplishment, pride, and shared purpose — self realization in the context of disciplined and collaborative activity. In their forum session, participants will learn West African dance. Bathily will begin the lesson

The Urban Arts Program of the Center for Creative Arts in St. Louis (COCA) is a multi-faceted effort to provide arts learning opportunities to students in St. Louis who have little access to the arts. COCA's programs are achieved through in-depth, sustained partnerships with housing developments, neighborhood revitalization projects, social service agencies, and local schools. At Jefferson Elementary School in St. Louis, COCA partners with COVAM Community Development Corporation to provide arts instruction during non-school hours to children living in the public housing communities around Jefferson. At the Jefferson School, COCA provides multi-disciplinary arts classes and camps after school and in the summer. The classes are taught by COCA artist/instructors who serve as mentors and models, teach the students the value of the arts, and help build talent. The curriculum includes dance, music, storytelling, drama, circus arts, and visual arts, including a computer-based arts program.

COCA's Urban Arts Program creates a safe haven for children in the non-school hours; provides positive associations with artists as role models; and helps develop arts, literacy, and technological skills. The culminating performance at the end of each trimester is a public celebration of the children's achievements, and serves to build student confidence and parent involvement. As part of the Urban Arts program, COCA is engaged in the Creative Communities Initiative, a program implemented by the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts through a cooperative agreement with the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

THE PROGRAM IS HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOP A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT, PRIDE, AND SHARED PURPOSE — SELF REALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF DISCIPLINED AND COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY.

teaching in his native language, Bamanakan, using gestures to indicate the meaning of his words, movements, and commands. He will lead the group through learning new movements and making them their own while exposing them to what it feels like when one doesn't understand the language of one's instructor. Participants will perform sequences of newly learned dance steps to rhythms played by drummer Weedie Braimah. They will also watch a video documentary of Bathily's students in the Urban Arts dance program learning to dance and talking about their experiences in doing so. Staff from the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts, which coordinates the Creative Communities Initiative of which COCA Urban Arts is a part, will be on hand to talk about the role of the arts in urban community development.

For their part, **HUMAN CREATIVITY**'s youth leaders describe how their school-day and after-school arts programming creates a sense of community among its participants and how that community supports their personal, social, and academic development. They will lead a session that begins by allowing participants working in small groups to join into a community and get to know each other through a combination of arts activities, including individual and collaborative movement. Then, once a sense of community is formed, participants will be presented with the challenge of visually representing the assets of their group and how they could be combined to help the group survive on a deserted island. An aim of the sequencing of the workshop is to allow the participants to see how they can work together effectively in the

context of a strong sense of community among group members.

After each of the organizations describes its plans for its breakout session, the presenters discuss how they will facilitate discussion among those attending their sessions to draw out the core themes related to community building and the arts.

Ready for their audience, they walk up to the main meeting hall in the Lincoln Center's Institute for the Arts in Education where close to two hundred representatives of national arts and education organizations are assembling. ■

HUMAN CREATIVITY, CENTRAL FALLS, RHODE ISLAND

Human Creativity is a school day and extended day arts program at Central Falls High School, which includes participation from students, school staff, school alumni, visiting artists, and partnering arts organizations. The mission of the program is to create a community of artists without regard to race, age, or gender who explore their creative potential through active participation in performance-based work. Participants' status is the same whether they are a professional artist, teacher, college student, or high school student; everyone is respected and valued as an equal and necessary creator for all production and exhibit work. This central philosophy allows students not only to find their own voice, but imbues them with the confidence to share it with others.

During the school day, students have a four-year sequential program in the visual arts including studio art, photography, ceramics, jewelry, performance art, and portfolio. Students who follow the four-year sequence (beginning with studio art, choosing among the concentration areas, and finishing with a two-year portfolio program) have a ninety-percent success rate of being accepted at all three institutions to which they apply for college. Both the extended school day program and the in-school performance and art curriculum offer experiences in all five arts disciplines, including classes that range from West African dance to acting workshops to theater tech to creative writing. All programming works collaboratively toward two major productions a year, the Martin Luther King, Jr. performance and an original student spring production. The extended school day performers also create an end of year showcase and the portfolio students have an annual exhibit and silent auction.

THE**FORUM**

**ART IS A PLACE
WHERE A BRIDGE
MIGHT BE BUILT
BETWEEN THE
OLD AND THE NEW,
THE CURRENT
REALITY AND THE
DESIRED ONE.**

A Framework for Understanding the Arts, Community, and Learning

When the forum convened, Kurt Wootton, the director of the Brown University ArtsLiteracy Project, set the stage with his opening remarks, *"Community This" and "Community That."* Wootton described the work of ArtsLiteracy — which integrates literacy and performing arts instruction — and provided a framework for grappling with issues of arts, education, and community (for the full text of his remarks, please see page 16).

Wootton was not alone on stage. As a way of showing how community building is inseparable from the work that happens at ArtsLiteracy, Wootton presented his remarks alongside a chorus of young people and teaching artists representing the multiple voices of ArtsLiteracy. Community, the presenters said, underpins every activity that happens at every stage of the ArtsLiteracy process. Why? Because it's a process where the expected end result is transformation — where students become artists, readers, writers, and performers; teachers become artists; and artists become educators — and that kind of transformation requires an enor-

mous amount of risk-taking. At ArtsLiteracy, they have come to understand that the best way to facilitate the process is to create a community, as Wootton says, "to create space where transformation can occur."

Yet community, this vital piece of the process, is hard to pin down and often runs counter to traditional, institutionalized ideas about learning. "Community," Wootton asserts, is a problematic word, an "ill-defined way of living" that we in the United States feel we lack. While we seek it out in our neighborhoods, our jobs, and our schools, our society's reliance on test scores, rankings, and individual job performance reviews reveals the lack of value placed on community in any real sense.

Powerful evidence exists, however, that knowledge is socially constructed, and that ignoring the relational component of knowledge building may actually lessen our potential to succeed in individual performance measures. As the National Research Council report *(1999), How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* states, "New developments in the science of learning suggest that the degree to which environments

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are community centered is also important for learning. . . . We use the term community centered to refer to several aspects of community, including the classroom as a community, the school as a community, and the degree to which students, teachers and administrators feel connected to the larger community of homes, businesses, states, the nation, and even the world." Art is a place where a bridge might be built between the old and the new, the current reality and the desired one.

In this light, Wootton and his partners from ArtsLiteracy went on to address two major questions: *1) Why are the arts uniquely positioned to create social opportunities for learning;* and *2) Why is community important in teaching and learning?*

Why Are the Arts Uniquely Positioned To Create Social Opportunities for Learning?

The staff members of the education department at Brown University, Wootton explained, were attempting to design effective literacy instruction for adolescents when they created the ArtsLiteracy Project. Building on their extensive work in school reform, they saw that the assets for the educational change that they were pursuing mapped beautifully with the assets that strong arts practice brings to learning environments — identified by Wootton as **purpose, audience, creation, collaboration,** and **visibility**. The arts, he stated, both demand and foster effective communities in which learning can be actively and

socially constructed. The arts focus participants on a joint project with clear goals and an understandable connection to the real world; they create a space where "meaningful work, driven by collective purpose" can happen.

Over the following day and a half at Lincoln Center, forum participants engaged the question of why certain forms of arts practice are so powerful for building community among young people.

Modeling the Assets of Arts Learning

Not surprisingly, each of the presenting youth arts programs' breakout sessions modeled Wootton's five assets although his address had not been shared with them prior to the meeting.

PURPOSE: In every session the arts activity had a structure for process and a purpose — a visual product or performance. Examples included: making and presenting a visual identity molecule, building a tableau of a sonnet with members of a group using their bodies, and writing a song based on reflection on one's community.

CREATION: The artistic process provides a balance of structure and choices. In the session activities, participants were asked to answer certain questions, use certain materials, or move certain parts of their bodies, but they also had choices about how to interpret the directions and use the materials — their creativity was an essential ingredient. Diadie Bathily of COCA
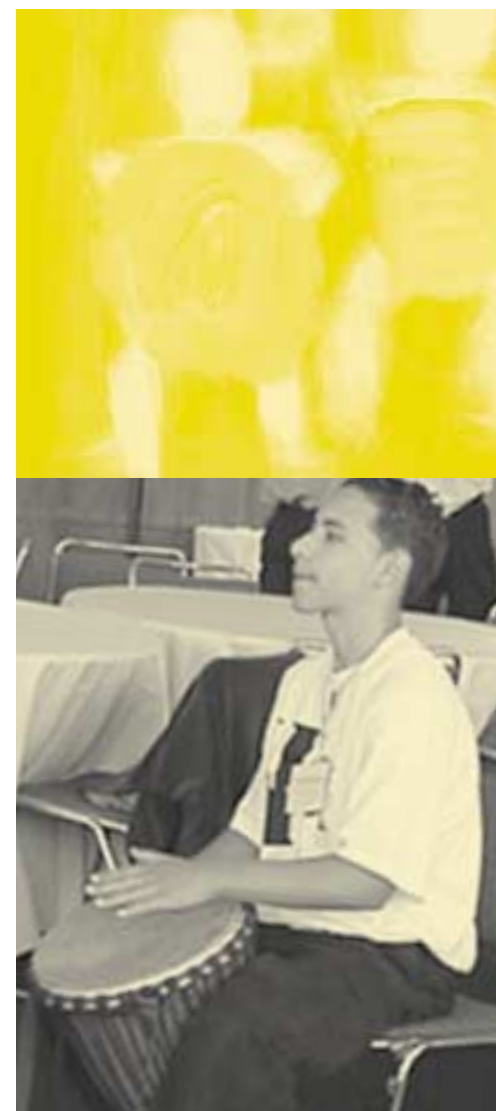
explained the creation process like this: "I am your teacher, but your goal is not to imitate me, but to be yourself. I will teach you movements and their meaning, but you must make them your own. Only then will you become who you should be."

In the Artists for Humanity session, Rob Gibbs noted that the identity molecules that were created were as different as the people in the room. Some radiated like maps out from the center of the paper; some were divided into quadrants like coats of arms. Some participants wrote their responses in rows of neat handwriting across the page; others drew pictures. As the molecules were presented, it was obvious that in the room there was a wide range of interpretations of family, community, and art. Talking about these issues and creating expressions of one's ideas about them involved what Gibbs called "the zone of risk," beyond comfort and passive learning into a realm open to real exploration and change — open to creation.

AUDIENCE: At the end of the day, session participants had to present what they had made to an audience, in some sort of finished form. The presenting organizations noted that the audience for their artwork generally involves a wider audience than just the teacher and/or the students in a single classroom. Young people who participate in arts organizations have internalized the importance of audience, whether real or virtual. As Frenell Jean-George of

Artists for Humanity explained, while describing how he tries to get his message across in a painting, "A painting is like a performance, except you (the artist) aren't there. The painting has to speak for itself — your message has to be there." Human Creativity's Elisa Ferreira described the power of having an audience this way: "You connect with someone, someone connects with you — you share things really deep — energy is exchanged. Someone appreciates what you do." In a video shared with breakout participants, a young participant in the COCA Urban Arts African dance program said similarly, "We performed in front of an audience and people was watching, clapping. I felt very happy because I felt like I was really doing something that really meant something. …It's a lot of things that I can really carry to my regular life because I show my parents and my family members what I've learned" (COCA, 2003).

COLLABORATION: Each group's activity required participants to work with — and get to know — their collaborators. Each breakout session had an icebreaker-type exercise where participants revealed important assets about themselves before setting to the task at hand. Through that initial sharing, each group's activity built a safe space for a collaborative arts process. For example, representatives from City Lore demonstrated their process, which helps children create songs together that tell the stories of important — but generally "unsung" — members of the community

(for example, see the lyrics for *Hey Luz* below). COCA showed how they use cooperative dance to create a safe space where mistakes are a source of learning and creativity rather than embarrassment.

VISIBILITY: In each session, participants had the opportunity to bring back to the group what they'd learned individually, as well as the opportunity to represent themselves and their cultures in meaningful ways — to become real to an audience in visual or written form or through performance. All the groups' presentations also left time for reflection and discussion of the activity where participants were encouraged to make their voices heard — demonstrating the way that young people are encouraged to own their experiences in each of the organizations. In their session, youth leaders from Human Creativity reported that the arts have helped them make their school visible in the Central Falls community in positive ways and counter the school's previously negative reputation. As Cecilia Flores put it: "Performances let people see what we're really made up of."

Why is Community Important in Teaching and Learning?

Wootton's opening presentation framed a second important question for the AEP forum participants, which also received attention throughout the forum discussions: What is the importance of this

HEY LUZ

Hey Luz
Luz works in a bakery…and here's a song about her
Out of 40 million people in Colombia
We are only singing about one
She told us of a place called San Andres
A beautiful island in the sun
She comes from a valley, a town they call Cali
Where people are friendly, say hi when you pass by
On weekends she would visit her family
But 9 years ago she said Bye-Bye
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you!

She works in a bakery, bakes a lot of things
She likes to go dancing, and hear the people sing
She went to a school called "Moderno"
With Walter, Hector, Franklin and Roberto
   (Those are her brothers!)
Walter, Hector, Franklin and Roberto
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you!
She loves to read, to dream, to go to the movies
She loves to eat cookies, and dance to the groovies
Read, dream, go to the movies
She loves to eat cookies, and dance to the groovies
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you!

For Valentine's Day, she don't get chocolate
She gets cards and flowers instead
She's not used to chocolate — she's more used to
   seafood
And she's always so busy baking bread
She's always so busy baking bread
She works in a bakery — the food is made deliciously
The sweets are so tasty — the pastries are so good
Arepas, empanadas — chicharon
Mmmm, I got to get me some
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you
Hey Luz, Hey Luz — This is a song about you

"community" that is created among young people in the arts, for student learning?

Educators and educational and youth development researchers are giving increasing attention to the interactions of young people and their multiple social worlds and the effects of those interactions on student learning and development. At issue is whether young people can establish an identity strong enough to enable them to knit their worlds — including home, friends, neighborhood, gender, race, ethnicity, and school — into a cohesive whole in which they grow and thrive or whether they will be caught in fragmented and disparate worlds that frustrate and impede their efforts to learn and develop.

Arts experiences, through structured collaboration, learning, and creation, allow young people to explore and absorb multiple worlds into a cohesive, active, participatory environment where they become agents of their own change. The critical and interpretive nature of the arts make them an ideal place both to hold multiple perspectives at arms length for observation and to embrace them as a source of creative strength and power.

According to Kurt Wootton's presentation, effective communities such as those created in arts programs have four characteristics that are essential to good teaching and learning: **shifting roles, collaborative cultural interchange, reflection,** and **support**.

From the Youth Perspective

After Wootton's presentation and the first afternoon of breakout sessions concluded, youth representatives from Artists for Humanity, ArtsLiteracy, and Human Creativity met to reflect on the first day's activities and conversations and to determine what more they felt the meeting participants needed to know about their experiences in their programs and about community building through the arts. Working with two facilitators from the Arts Education Partnership, they collectively agreed on a framework for a panel presentation the next morning during which they would discuss these issues in front of the entire forum.

When the second day of the meeting began, this panel of young people shared their thoughts with the captive audience of (adult) forum participants. Their comments reinforced and further brought to life Wootton's discussion of the four characteristics of effective youth arts practice that support teaching and learning.

SHIFTING ROLES: In a successful community, young people have an opportunity to take on adult roles and responsibilities and, with mentoring, prepare to negotiate the world they will inherit as adults. In organizations like Artists for Humanity, Human Creativity, or ArtsLiteracy, this is a natural part of the process as young people have roles in decision-making — taking on directorial roles in the organization and

sometimes paid positions. On the youth panel, Elisa Ferreira from Human Creativity stated, "Everybody makes decisions, but once you decide to do something, it's your responsibility." Sandra Goncalves from ArtsLiteracy added, "When I was working with Brown Summer High School, students felt more comfortable coming to me for advice than a teacher. That gave me confidence — yep, I can do anything." Such role-shifting is a vital model for education if the goal is to nurture effective, independent citizens. Yet most classrooms do not offer the opportunity for practicing these roles.

COLLABORATIVE CULTURAL INTERCHANGE: In effective communities, cultural interchange is an asset, not a social divider. The process of artmaking uncovers cultural differences and celebrates the richness of their resources where traditional learning environments often try to cover them up. "You learn your opinion isn't the only opinion," said one youth panelist. You also learn, added another, "how to tolerate, to take interest, take criticism." Finally, said Frenell Jean-George of Artists for Humanity, "The diverse backgrounds make the community work — you know people you wouldn't know otherwise." These are all building blocks for success in an increasingly diverse world and its microcosm, the schools.

REFLECTION: At a very basic level, successful communities learn from their experiences, both positive and negative. Arts programs pro-vide opportunities to distill and process experi-ence at every level, both through artmaking itself and through continual feedback sessions as a piece is shaped and formed. "It's a place of growth," said one young panelist. And Elisa Ferreira from Human Creativity added, "Now I know what I want to do. I can see myself in the future." Educational environments that provide ample time for this kind of reflection on process could be rewarded with stronger, more directed, and more engaged students.

SUPPORT: A successful community proves the point that, as Robert Putnam (2003) puts it, we are "better together." Community members who feel supported are more willing to work together and commit to common goals, as well as more willing to take the risks to achieve them. Arts pro-grams know those risks will never be taken with-out the creation of a safe and supportive space founded on mutual respect. "Somebody else believes in me," said one youth panelist. Said another, "Everybody has a part to play." Students who feel supported are more likely to participate and take risks. They are also less likely to feel isolated and drop out. The National Research Council report (1999) *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* states, "Social opportunities . . . affect motivation. Feeling that one is contributing something to others appears to be especially motivating. For example, young learners are highly motivated to write sto-ries and draw pictures that they can share with

"YOU LEARN YOUR OPINION ISN'T THE ONLY OPINION. YOU ALSO LEARN HOW TO TOLERATE, TO TAKE INTEREST, TAKE CRITICISM."

others. . . . Learners of all ages are more motivated when they can see the usefulness of what they are learning and when they can use that information to do something that has an impact on others — especially their local community."

The youth panel showed an internalization and ownership of the assets and characteristics of effective youth arts programs described by Wootton, and added a further point: for them, the dimensions of strong youth arts programs described by Wootton weave together to create a learning environment that is authentically youth-centered — in which they are valued.

Allowing young people to make themselves visible and heard is an important part of the work of each of the presenting organizations and is essential in building positive communities for youth in both in-school and out-of-school settings. The AEP forum itself modeled this understanding. The "youth voice" of each of the presenting youth arts organizations was heard throughout the forum, either through the presence of a program's youth leaders, as was the case for Human Creativity, ArtsLiteracy, and Artists for Humanity; or through student artwork as was the case for COCA Urban Arts, which shared a video of its students dancing and reflecting on learning to dance, and City Lore, which played recordings of songs written and sung by its students. One forum participant reflected concisely after engaging in Arts-

Literacy's workshop, "Student voice and leadership was essential to this and all community."

The comments of the youth panelists both reflected and underscored the hypothesis posed by AEP's director, Richard Deasy, in his letter of purpose for this forum — that strong youth arts programs are youth centered and provide a way for young people to matter. "Mattering" is a term used in the National Research Council report (2002), *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development,* to describe a crucial element of positive youth development. "Positive development," the report says, "is not something adults do to young people, but rather something that young people do for themselves with a lot of help from parents and others. They are the agents of their own development. To foster development, then, it follows that settings need to be youth centered, providing youth — both individually and in groups — the opportunity to be efficacious and to make a difference in their social worlds; we refer to this opportunity as 'mattering.'"

Reflections and Recommendations

The Arts Education Partnership convened this forum at a time when the word "community" has begun to take on a more muscular force. Community — in its many contested definitions — has long been a subtext of discussion in education reform and youth development, but the last decade of research is beginning to show how much of a role community building plays in shoring up the foundations for both to take place. In addition, recent research in sociology, urban reform, and medicine is developing a common language that echoes the findings of educational and youth development research. AEP believes that the research and knowledge base accumulating around arts learning fits right in with this trajectory. A strong case can be made for arts learning as an ideal environment for the tools and skills of community building to be developed and also to be practiced through the creation of meaningful product and performance.

In the background comments submitted by the ArtsLiteracy Project for the forum, one student participant wrote, "I have learned that building community is the most important part of the arts process. It allows you to have security, admiration, and interest in further involvement in much more dynamic situations. After a while it is feasible for you to be comfortable in any situation because you understand that you gain more than what you risk." At the meeting, another student put it succinctly, "You want to be a part of everything."

Risk-taking, individual responsibility, critical thinking, and creative exploration are the sets of skills that, as arts educators, we know are some of the most valuable outgrowths of participation in the arts, and the skills that the arts can model for other learning situations. Focusing our attention on community building tells us that these successes in the arts are not just enhanced by, but are founded on, community and that the process of making art serves to make that sense of community stronger.

If the skills that make strong arts practice and strong communities also make strong learning environments, then it seems that theorizing and emphasizing the role of community in arts practice directly rather than indirectly may help us better understand and articulate the role the arts can play in real school reform. ■

"COMMUNITY THIS" AND "COMMUNITY THAT"

ARTS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP KEYNOTE SPEECH
NEW YORK CITY, SEPTEMBER 2003
KURT WOOTTON AND VOICES OF THE ARTSLITERACY PROJECT AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

This speech was presented by five representatives of the ArtsLiteracy Project: Kurt Wootton, ArtsLiteracy Project director; Sandra Goncalves and Alex Henao, two youth leaders; Angela Richardson, ArtsLiteracy Project assistant director; and John Holdridge, ArtsLiteracy Project resident artist. At several points the group spoke in unison (marked by "CHORUS" in the speech's text).

Let's first take a moment to get to know each other. My name is Kurt Wootton. I'm the director of an organization in the Education Department at Brown University called the ArtsLiteracy Project. The ArtsLiteracy Project is an organization that, through professional development and direct work with students, explores ways to improve student literacy through the performing arts. We do our work in lab schools at Brown University and throughout urban districts in and around Providence, Rhode Island.

At each table, please spend a moment introducing yourself to those around you, including where you are from and what brings you to this room.

Why would I begin a keynote speech by having you introduce yourselves to each other? A couple of years ago, I was in an urban classroom in Providence, Rhode Island. The students were having a discussion, and one of the students referred to another student across the room as "what's his face." It was spring, they had been in class about 130 days together, and they still didn't know each other's names. One thing we know about education is that learning and development are highly socialized activities. If this is the case, then we must ask the question, "What kind of learning can take place in an environment where students, and often teachers, don't even know each other's names?"

The work of our organization, the ArtsLiteracy Project, starts with building community in the classroom, making it a safe space for kids to really want to perform and improve their reading and writing. We are in the business of transformation. Transforming students into readers, writers, and performers. Transforming teachers into artists. Transforming artists into educators. As you well know, transformation in any environment doesn't come easy. In our organization, what we have realized is that the most important thing we can do is to take care of the teachers, artists, and students we work with, and to create a space where transformation can occur.

Just as in this talk, at the ArtsLiteracy Project, we begin modeling community right away in our professional development. As one of our teachers says:

CHORUS: We teach how we are taught. [i]

In our professional development we take time for teachers and artists to tell stories about their lives and their work. We create a community where teachers and artists care about each other and spend time with each other outside of our program. This is how teachers should be treated in their professional lives — they should be given the time and space to know about and care for each other. And this is how we want our teachers to treat our students, to create an environment where everyone is valued and taken care of.

So how do I give a keynote speech on the topic of community? Isn't the very idea of the traditional keynote, a speech given by one person, counter to the idea of community? And isn't the very word, "community" itself problematic, a word that suffers from over-use in all sectors of American society? A Ghanaian teacher once said to one of my college students:

CHORUS: People in the States say "community this" and "community that" — I've never heard the word "community" so many times in my life from people who have no idea what it means. [ii]

We as a society seek community. In saying that, we appear to mean many different things — in a general sense it is something we feel we lack. And since schools are in many ways microcosms of the larger American society, we seek community in schools, even though teaching and learning traditionally have been highly individualistic. What does the emphasis on standardized test scores tell us about how we view community in our schools? What do ranking lists that score students in a class from the highest to lowest GPA say about how we want our society to look? At a nearby Providence urban high school, typical of many urban high schools, the dropout rate from

freshman to senior year is 45%.[iii] Nationally, almost a third of teachers leave the field within their first three years and half before their fifth year.[iv] Clearly something is wrong with school culture — *for students and for teachers.* I think this situation speaks to a lack of community and begs to be addressed.

In this talk, the five of us aim to model what community might look like by invoking the voices of the teachers, artists, youth, and professors we work with in Rhode Island. I'm excited about this meeting. I'm excited about the diversity — and I mean that in the broadest sense, diversity of age, culture, and background — of participants we have here today. Youth will be leading many of the workshops here and their voices will be heard throughout the weekend. It's a different feel and look than the meeting last spring, and is, I think, pointing schools and organizations in a new direction.

The two central questions we'll look at in the next few minutes are:

Why are the arts uniquely positioned to create social opportunities for learning?

And

Why is community important in teaching and learning?

Many of us who run non-profit organizations are struggling with evaluation and all of the demands placed on us to track test scores, grades, and attendance. In all of this evaluation noise, we as an organization asked, "What do we really want to know about ourselves?" What we wanted to know were the stories people had to tell us about performance and literacy. We asked our teachers, artists, and students for these stories and we found that many of these stories had quite a bit to say about how we develop community and why this attention to community is important.

One of these stories was written by Len Newman, an English language learning and special needs teacher at Central Falls High School in Central Falls, Rhode Island. Central Falls is a one-square-mile community north of Providence, with primarily an immigrant population. The students come from:

CHORUS: Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Cape Verde, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, Ecuador.

This is Len Newman's story, told in his words [story is read by John Holdridge]:

Carlos was a real gangster. He was the bad-boy of the neighborhood and well known throughout the community. He was tough and smart and he didn't take shit from anyone — neither his peers nor adults. He came to us from the Bronx and for the first two years that he attended the high school, Carlos was out of school more than he was there. He had the dubious distinction of being suspended from school more than any other student, and when he was not out of school because he was suspended, he could be found in the in-school detention space.

All of the teachers dreaded having Carlos in their classes and none of the administration

knew what to do with him. Then one day, there was a knock on our classroom door. There stood the assistant principal, with Carlos in tow:

"I've got a new student for you."

There he stood in all of his glory: 5'3" and solid as a rock, a big smirk on his face, seemingly licking his chops ready for his next victims.

Richard, my teaching partner, brought him into the class and naively introduced him to the class and naively introduced him to our other students, most of whom were gangsters just like Carlos.

And so it started. Within the next week or so we began reading *Of Mice and Men* and then it was on to *Othello.* When Carlos was not out on suspension, he always had something interesting, and more often comical, to add to the class. Everyone loved him, and as the weeks passed, everyone came to know that Carlos was not only very fun, but a really smart and insightful person who had great depth of feeling and a fine grasp of literature, despite the fact that he only read at about a 5th grade level.

Carlos became a star in our class, but unfortunately his reputation and his behavior in other classes kept him on the suspension list more often than I care to say.

In his fourth month with us, we began to gather our students' stories and review the texts that we had read in order to make ready for our final performance. Our artist joined the class and for the next eight weeks we moved from the page to the stage. We did warm-ups to get the class going and increased the "fun factor" in our class even beyond the limits it normally stood (which was generally pretty high). Collectively, we built our performance, a retrospective of several of the texts that we had read that year along with poems, tableaus, and improvisations of students' personal stories.

Midway through the process we suddenly realized that Carlos had not missed a day of class. It seemed miraculous. How could this be? We checked our attendance records, and sure enough, Carlos had not missed a day of class in nearly three weeks.

Later that afternoon, Richard and I were congratulating one another on our great success, crediting the process and the magic that came of performing, when we happened to glance at the school's daily attendance sheet. There in the "out of school suspension" section was Carlos's name, right at the top of the list. Next to his name was the notation that he had already served seven of his ten days of out-of-school suspension. How could this be? There must be a mistake or another student with the same name!

There was no mistake. Indeed Carlos had been suspended for 10 days. But that didn't stop our hero. He was sneaking back into school to do the work of performance as a member of our community.

Over the next couple of years we realized that Carlos was not the only gangster in our class who would sneak back from suspension. There was Eddy and Jose and several others. It was a real testament to the work and to the richness it affords our students.[v]

Why did Carlos feel compelled to sneak back into school every day? And let's remember to put this story next to that of the urban high school with a 45% dropout rate. What was it about this classroom at Central Falls, and the work that was going on in it, that made it more interesting for Carlos than what was going on outside of school?

Before we get into theories of the arts, we must take a look at the teachers. Len, in his story, mentions the "fun factor" in the classroom. Len and Richard's classroom is a room filled with laughter and celebration every day. They take the time to greet each of their students when they come into the room. It is a classroom where the students feel like a family, where they all are taken care of by the teacher and they take care of each other.

During the unit Len describes, the students and teachers were working with an artist from outside the school, Donald King, the artistic director of the Providence Black Repertory Company. In Don the students found a mentor who came from a similar urban background and who bridged the cultural worlds of school and student by creating a unique space inside their classroom. Collaborations between schools and outside arts organizations can naturally create spaces where work is purposeful and celebrates the possibility of what can happen in classrooms given the right environment.

The other reasons Carlos snuck back into school have to do with the nature of the arts themselves, and this really gets at our question, "Why the arts?" and the reason we positioned our project in the world of performance and theatre.

The ArtsLiteracy Project is a literacy development, as well as school reform, as well as arts, organization. We started the project seven years ago in the Education Department at Brown University. For many years Brown has been a center for public school reform. Ted Sizer founded the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown and later the Annenberg Institute of School Reform. Why is it that we looked towards the arts to answer issues of literacy develop-

ment and school reform? I think the answer to this question connects with Carlos's need to be a part of the classroom.

1. PURPOSE

Ted Sizer writes in his book on school reform, *Horace's School:*

CHORUS: People like to know why they are asked to do things. They value an enterprise where purposes are clear . . . Having a target is a crucial incentive. Knowing your destination helps you find your way.[vi]

In all mediums, the arts by their very nature have a unique ability to create real goals for a community to work toward. It is this target, this goal, that is a primary factor in bringing together a community. Targets in various art forms might include:

CHORUS:
the art exhibit
the photography exhibit
the theatre performance
the dance performance
the concert

Teaching and learning in schools is often content-based, focused on chapters that must be covered in a textbook. Once each chapter is covered, the students take a test or write a paper, receive a grade, and

then move onto the next chapter. Students often ask:

CHORUS:
Why do I have to do this?
What is the point of this?
What does this have to do the real world?

The arts are intimately connected to the world beyond the classroom. In a rich classroom arts experience, students are participating in the same kind of work that happens in adult arts environments of professional studios or theatre spaces. Actors, musicians, and dancers know why they are preparing for a performance and their commitment is derived from this sense of purpose. The arts classroom final performance or exhibit sends a message to students that they must work together as a group, everyone must participate, and the final product must be of a high quality. So when Carlos returns to the classroom each day, he knows exactly what the class is working toward, what his role is as a performer, and how to contribute to the larger community as well as what to expect from his fellow classmates.

2. AUDIENCE

In schools we often ask students to produce work for a grade, for the sole audience of the teacher, or at best, for the other students in the classrooms. In the arts we involve larger communities beyond the walls of the classroom.

Before one of our performances, Donald King, the artist mentioned earlier, said to a group of students:

CHORUS: Mother's Day is coming soon. I want you to think of this performance as a gift for you mothers, as a gift for your community. All of us have to work together to create something larger than ourselves. We all need to dig deep and play a part in that creation.

When students have a real audience they are preparing their art for, they create a self-imposed set of high standards. They demand a high level of quality from each other.

3. CREATION

The Coalition of Essential Schools has as one of its ten common principles, "student as worker, teacher as coach." The arts do it even better. We say, "student as artist." Compare student as worker with student as artist: worker certainly implies an active way of learning, but it sounds somewhat dull, like folding laundry or mopping the floor. Artist means creation, the offering of something new to the world, something the world hasn't seen before, and that new thing we are offering is unique to us, to our world view, and to our passions. Creation is about possibility, imagination, a grand open-endedness.

The nature of creation also allows students, to use Maxine Greene's term, to bring their "lived worlds" into the classroom.[vii] When students are creating in this way, they learn about each other in ways that go much deeper than knowing each other's names.

Paolo Freire coined the term "ruptura" to talk about education.[viii] It is a break from the old and a birth of the new. When we open the room up for students to create, they surprise us. Unlike filling out a worksheet on character motivation or answering an essay question exploring symbolism in Macbeth, when students bring their lived worlds to a text in a rich arts environment, the artistic work they produce has the power to surprise us with the shock of the new.

4. COLLABORATION

Students have a range of skills, passions, and talents they can bring into the classroom — if we extend the invitation. When space is opened in the classroom for students to bring their set of skills and interests, traditional teacher/student roles are inverted. The teacher becomes a student and the student a teacher.

We see this at our teaching lab school at Brown called Brown Summer High School. Our lab school involves 160 students from the Rhode Island region, teachers from Providence and Providence-area schools, and local professional artists. This past summer we also partnered with teachers, artists, and youth from Kenya, Brazil, India, and England. Classrooms consisted of teaching teams of a local artist, an international artist/teacher, a local teacher, and a local youth leader, all working with 20 students. When we brought various cultures together to collaborate, we saw remarkable changes in the power dynamic in the classroom. Teachers became learners as students shared performance forms from their countries. In this clip you will see two girls from Kenya teaching the rest of the class an African dance and song. [Video clip shown].

In the video, two youth from Kenya, Marian and Juliet, shift the traditional role of who is the teacher and who is the learner. In this sit-

uation, the girls have something unique to bring from their culture and show a passion for teaching it to the rest of the class. The adult artists and teachers become learners since they have no previous experience with the students' art form or culture. The students' culture is not only honored, it becomes part of the fabric of the class and eventually of the final performance. Drumming and dance is how the students collectively decided to begin and end their final performance.

The way the teacher sets up a collaborative environment with the students has the potential to create a shared vision and mutual understanding between teacher and students. The very nature of performance in particular, the process of rehearsal, lends itself to this dialogue. This summer one of our artists put the structure for the performance on the board. A student responded:

CHORUS: "I don't think that's an effective way to end the performance, I think we should end with the other piece." The teacher responded, "Does the rest of the class agree with that? O.K, we'll change it." [ix]

Even though the teacher and artist have the ultimate responsibility for the class, such dialogue offers all students legitimate voice in the decision making process. Teacher and artist act as coach.

5. VISIBILITY.

To illustrate the point of visibility, we will read a story written by one of our students, a sophomore at Central Falls High School [story is read by Sandra Goncalves]:

I remember our actor first stepped into our class. He was so energetic and alive. We were gathered in a circle on stage and there were instruments set aside. I know that this man was up to no good. He wanted to break our silence and the comfort cliques that we were in. For a person like me this was not a very good sign.

For years I've been known as the shy kid, the intelligent one that always sits in her little corner. I built this wall around me that seemed so soothing, unaware of the excitement around me. I had given up on becoming an out-spoken person, the leader. But now it was all about to change.

Here I was standing in a circle with some crazy actor making us do all of these chants or "exercises." He emphasized so much on the word "ensemble."

"Now we must work as an ensemble in order to feel comfortable with each other. This way things run smoothly and everyone becomes a family."

At this point everyone was giggling, it was as if we were in the first grade all over again. He would put on the most exaggerated facial expressions every time he said ENSEMBLE. No one could believe that we would be standing here for a month doing these silly activities.

"Now would everyone honor my gesture and repeat it in unison while saying my name."

I know that everyone was probably thinking: "How can this help us on stage? This is so stupid and useless."

But I learned the answer to that sooner than I would have thought. Who would have known that at the end of that school year not only would I be performing but I would also teach an ArtsLit class.

All of those silly activities that actor made us go through were able to break the shells that everyone had built around themselves. Now I have more friends than I would have asked for and our class left united. We created our own community in which no one is frightened of performing or sharing anything personal. We have truly created a model of what an ArtsLit classroom should look like! [x]

In arts rich classrooms it's impossible for a student to go unnoticed. In JahnMary's words, we break the shells students hide in. When we ask students to read a book, or listen to a lecture or discussion, it's very difficult to tell who
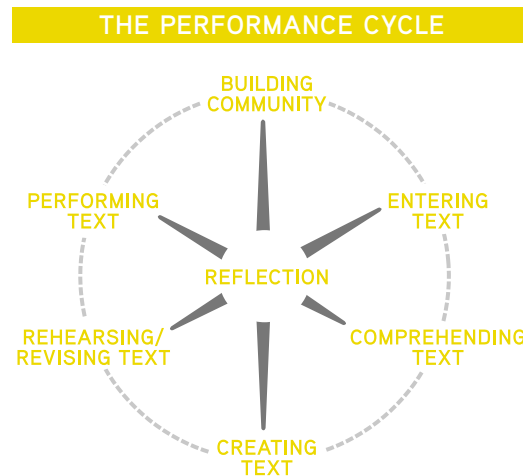
is engaged, who is understanding versus who is confused or bored. In the arts, it becomes very evident from the moment a student enters the room who is not engaged.

One of our students said of performance work [story is read by Alex Henao]:

In the morning, every day, we have to, like do a warm-up. And the teacher, a lot of times she'll make up like a bunch of stupid words and put together tongue-twisters and everything, or come up with like really silly dances that we have to do. And everybody has to do it. So it's like, if you're, if you're just standin' there, you're gonna look stupid. Rather than if you're doing the little stupid dance, then you look better than standin' there looking stupid.[xi]

The arts ask students to put themselves out in front of the rest of the class or community. In this way, they demand engagement and participation, but they also require a space where students feel safe enough to take these risks and come out of their shells. From a literacy perspective, we're particularly interested in the idea of visibility because students' reading processes are generally invisible. When a student is reading a book, silently, it's difficult to tell how they are understanding it or even if they are understanding it. The arts are one way of making these invisible cognitive processes visible.

Purpose. Creation. Audience. Collaboration. Visibility. These are the reasons we choose the arts, and specifically performance, as a way of getting at issues of literacy development and school reform. Over time, we developed a process called the Performance Cycle. This process serves as a guide for all of our curricular work in schools, professional development, and it even serves as a set of principles for how we run our organization.

THE PERFORMANCE CYCLE

BUILDING COMMUNITY

ENTERING TEXT

PERFORMING TEXT

REFLECTION

COMPREHENDING TEXT

REHEARSING/ REVISING TEXT

CREATING TEXT

You can see that "Building Community" is a central part of the process. It is important to recognize that "Building Community" doesn't stand on its own, it is intimately tied to the rest of the process, particularly performing and reflection.

If any of you have done any kind of performance work with youth, you know that after the final

performance, it is that student that was resisting the entire time that is the first to say, "When can we do that again?" The first public performance or exhibit a group of students produce is often what solidifies the community. So we can't view community in our classrooms and organizations as something that needs to be built, and then we can move on — community is intimately tied into the entire process of creating art.

So the arts are important for building community. But why does community matter?

In our organization, we think about community on three levels:

a) Community in the classroom
b) Community in professional development
c) Community in the organization

The same philosophy of community governs all three aspects of our organization.

1. SHIFTING ROLES

In our view, youth development means that with mentoring and support, youth are placed in adult roles and given professional responsibilities.

We have a program called Youth Leaders, represented here by Sandra and Alex. These are students who are in our classrooms at Central Falls. They also work in paid positions after school, both teaching professional develop-

3. REFLECTION

In the Project we create constant opportunities for feedback and reflection — in our organization, our professional development, and our classrooms. Our teachers spend three full days at the end of the summer reflecting on our process and how we can improve as an organization. This year we're launching a new kind of project evaluation: we ask our partners to tell us a story about their involvement in the project and we're asking the question, "What do stories reveal about teaching and learning in our organization?" This reflection is critical to our organization's responsiveness to the needs of our teachers, artists, and students.

4. SUPPORT

How can teachers support their students if they themselves are not working in a supportive environment? In our work, we try to take care of everything for our teachers and artists — from food at our meetings to mentor teachers in their classrooms, we look out for them in every way we can. At the Project, we also ask and take into account everyone's opinion. As in the classroom, the ultimate responsibility rests with our staff, but everyone's voice matters. Respect in our organization is modeled and mirrored, and we are rewarded by the high level of respect teachers and artists show for the Project, for each other, and for their students.

ment workshops and performing as an ensemble at conferences and community events. They co-teach with artists and teachers in our lab school in the summer.

Youth also have a voice in the decisions and vision concerning the overall organization. This summer we had a focus group of our youth leaders after the summer and they gave us advice on how we might improve the summer program.

Why is it important to place youth in adult roles? Because they can take on these roles. Because they want to. And because we have a lot to learn from them. The biggest mistake we are making in education at the moment is that we, the adults, are making all the decisions for the students, from a policy level to a classroom level. Youth culture is rapidly changing. There is a great deal of literature about how

youth have a need to take risks, to negotiate the world from child to adult. Adult roles through the arts provide the opportunity for youth to take these risks in positive, constructive, and supported ways.

2. COLLABORATIVE CULTURAL INTERCHANGE

We actively seek out diverse participants in every level of our organization, then we create a space where different values, views, and art forms, specific to culture, can be honored and shared. For instance, in the film clip you saw, we partnered an African-American poet, a Kenyan filmmaker, a Guatemalan youth leader, and a white English language learning teacher in a classroom with 20 diverse students, and in that environment, everyone, with the help of a mentor teacher, had to figure out how to utilize everyone's talents and passions.

At the beginning of our professional development a couple of years ago, one of our teachers seemed agitated and distanced from the rest of the group. During the week she passed me a note that read [read by Angela Richardson]:

Lest you think I'm upset and cranky about things, just keep in mind that I have just come off of my worst year of teaching in many years (bad karma with downtown administration, no contract, low morale, and my own frazzled year with bad books I had to teach etc., not to mention the last week of school, with two sets of final performances and having to pack up my classroom, move upstairs, and unpack!)

In spite of all of this, I have only been in this group for two and a half days and I'm already energized and excited about September!

Just thought you'd like to know.[xii]

Theresa is a stunning teacher in a Providence middle school. In her comment you can hear how schools are often isolating, unforgiving environments. My parents are both teachers and I remember when my mom first started teaching she would come home crying. In the United States, as I mentioned earlier, we are losing half of new teachers in the first five years of teaching. Place this statistic next to that of urban high schools losing 45% of their students and it becomes obvious that we need schools and learning environments that provide a sense of community and support, for teachers and students alike. We need schools with such a sense of community that students, like Carlos, will feel compelled to want to be in them. We need schools that will notice a student like JahnMary and help her break out of her shell. Let's listen to all of the voices that are here this weekend and let's give the Partnership a round of applause for pushing us in this much needed direction. ◼

[i] Len Newman quoted in Jori Ketten, *The Community Behind the Curtain: Unpacking ArtsLiteracy Pedagogy.* (Brown University: Unpublished paper, 2002).

[ii] Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng quoted in Ketten, 2002.

[iii] www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2003/pdf/lsi-high.pdf

[iv] www.csmonitor.com/2003/1007/p13s01-lecl.html

[v] Len Newman, written communication, 2003.

[vi] Theodore R. Sizer, *Horace's School.* (Houghton Mifflin: 1992).

[vii] Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change.* (Wiley, John & Sons, Inc.: 2000).

[viii] Paulo Freire and Myles Horton, ed by Brenda Bell, John Gaventa, and John Peters, *We Make the Road by Walking.* (Temple University Press: 1991).

[ix] ArtsLiteracy Project interview transcripts, 2003.

[x] JahnMary Acosta, written communication, 2003.

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