

SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF Excellence in Education



*ArtsSmarts at Caslan School:
A Longitudinal Case Study*

Yvette Stack

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Helen Raham, Editor

SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF Excellence in Education

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yvette Stack taught for twenty-six years with the Edmonton Separate School District as classroom teacher, music specialist and assistant principal, then for fifteen years at the University of Alberta, where she taught music pedagogy and practicum courses, and supervised student teachers in field placements. She has conducted numerous in-services and workshops on arts integration at teachers' conventions and fine arts conferences, and served as adjudicator in school choral classes in Alberta music festivals. She co-authored the Grades One and Two teachers' manuals and student materials for the school music series Musicanada, and authored a handbook, "Let's Make Music" for music education students and classroom music teachers. She has conducted research on music education for special needs students, on the effects of long term on-site in-servicing for classroom teachers, and on effective practices in field experience. She holds a Master's Degree in Elementary Music Education from the University of Alberta.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the ArtsSmarts program at Caslan School. This small K–9 school is attended by 130 students from the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, located about 200 kilometers northeast of Edmonton. With a history of poor achievement, attendance, behaviour, and parental involvement, and high staff turn-over, the school applied to ArtsSmarts for support. In September 2003, Caslan received a \$317,000 grant for a three-year initiative to infuse the core curriculum with arts in order to achieve five specific objectives. These were: to improve student achievement, attendance and behaviour, change teacher practice, and to increase parent and community involvement by incorporating Métis arts and culture into the curriculum and life of the school.

The research was conducted between September 2003 and September 2006, using a mixed methods approach. Provincial achievement and other test scores, report card marks, attendance figures and disciplinary incidents were collected and analyzed. Close to 1500 project evaluations from students, teachers and artists were tabulated. Over 130 interviews were conducted, along with surveys, focus groups, observations and field notes which provided further information of a qualitative nature. This evidence was triangulated with reports provided by the school division and ArtsSmarts officials.

During the three years, ArtsSmarts brought a rich variety of aesthetic experiences to Caslan. Over 50 artists conducted classes in visual arts, drama, music, dance, video, storytelling and creative writing, collaborating with teachers to integrate their art with core curriculum content. In all, 70 collaborative projects were undertaken, involving all grades and many curricular areas, with the highest number being related to science or social studies. The school became a showplace of Métis art and culture, students had hands-on exposure to multiple art forms, and their displays and performances generated new pride and engagement on the part of students and parents.

The ArtsSmarts program was administered by a part-time coordinator who was responsible for helping teachers plan their projects, bringing in the artists, and collecting evaluations from student, staff and artists on the success of each project. Program implementation was hindered by a number of obstacles which included initial lack of staff buy-in, the presence of competing programs, lack of teacher orientation and planning time, continued staff turn-over, insufficient professional development, and limited district support. Many of the early projects originated with the coordinator rather than the classroom teachers, although teacher ownership began to take hold in Year Three.

With respect to Caslan's five objectives for the introduction of ArtsSmarts, the findings were mixed:

- Academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores and report card marks declined significantly from the baseline year.
- While teachers, parents and students reported increased motivation to attend school and improved engagement during ArtsSmarts activities, the net attendance gain was 3%.
- Disciplinary incidents increased slightly in the years measured, but there were many anecdotal reports of students being more cooperative and engaged, and of beneficial effects on disruptive or difficult students.

- Changes in teacher practice were becoming evident in Year 3 as teachers demonstrated more ownership of the collaborations. Overall, 73% of teachers reported positive changes in practice.
- The incorporation of Métis arts and culture evoked a positive response from parents and community, as seen in improved attendance at performances and other school activities.

The voices of many participants are presented throughout the case study, yielding a firsthand glimpse of how these new arts opportunities and modes of instruction touched their lives. An overview of the literature offers a grounding in research related to arts-based education which is then linked to the findings in the present study. The final chapter of the report discusses important questions of capacity and conditions for success for such sweeping initiatives and concludes with a set of recommendations for policy and practice addressed to program innovators, schools and educators, policy makers, and other stakeholders.

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Photo: Courtesy of Amanda Hack, ArtsSmarts Coordinator

School-Wide Empathy Tile Mural

1. Introduction

This study documents the implementation and the impact of the ArtsSmarts program as an intervention at Caslan School during the period of 2003-2006.

BACKGROUND

Caslan School is situated approximately two hundred kilometers northeast of Edmonton, Alberta. It is a small K–9 school attended by 130 students who are bused from the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, eight kilometers away. The school was built in 1965, with an addition constructed in 1981 and further renovations completed in 1987. The school building is spacious and bright, with wide hallways and large windows. It has eight classrooms, an art room, a computer room and a science lab, a gym, a library, a lunch room and kitchen. A large playground, surrounded by trees on three sides and a road on the fourth, has a baseball diamond, a soccer field, and play equipment for younger students. The school is part of Northern Lights School Division No. 69, which serves a large area of northern Alberta.

The Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement occupies an area of three hundred and thirty-seven square kilometers and in 2006 lists its population as about 1300. The median household income in 2001, the last year for which figures were available, was \$26,848. Fifty-seven percent of persons over 25 years of age held certificates from trade schools or colleges and 3.1% held university degrees. In terms of employment, 65 persons were working full-time and 305, part-time. The settlement operates two nearby provincial park campgrounds as well as four other businesses.¹ Community facilities include a recreation centre, athletic fields, three churches, a community hall, an administration building, an elders' centre, and a health clinic. A Head Start program operates for pre-schoolers. In September 2004, Northern Lights School Division opened an off-campus school on the settlement for Grade 8–12 students. To address health issues among vulnerable children which generally occur at a higher rate in Aboriginal populations², the community is participating in a pilot study for a long-term intervention designed to promote healthy lifestyle choices.

Caslan School has a staff comprised of a principal and assistant principal, seven other teachers, a counselor, five teaching aides, a part-time fiddling instructor, a jigging instructor, a secretary, a custodian and two kitchen workers. A social worker and school nurse also make regular visits. Two retired teachers visit the school once a week to teach religion as an option. Historically, it has been

¹ Statistics taken from website of Statistics Canada: 2001 Aboriginal Population Profile

² A recent provincially funded initiative which screened 122 Métis children in Northern Alberta found that 26% were pre-diabetic, 61% were obese according to body mass index, and 31% had elevated blood pressure.

difficult to attract and retain experienced administrators and teachers to this isolated community. Teacher turnover has been high, and most teachers hired are in their first year. During the three years of this study, eight first-year teachers joined the staff: four in Year 1, three in Year 2 and one in Year 3. Of the fifteen teachers on staff during the study, four had more than three years of experience, and three remained on staff for the duration of the study.

The enrolment at the school for the three years of the study is shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Enrolment at Caslan School, 2003–06.

Grade	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
ECS	13	10	16
Grade 1	18	13	10
Grade 2	19	17	13
Grade 3	16	15	13
Grade 4	19	18	17
Grade 5	9	18	16
Grade 6	13	9	15
Grade 7	12	13	18
Grade 8	3	14	12
Grade 9	15	3	8
Total	137	130	138

Most classes are combined grades, with varying configurations each year depending on student numbers. The kindergarten runs a full-day program four days a week, unlike most Alberta schools which have a half-day program. All students arrive by bus, and a hot lunch is served every day. Lunch and recess times have been staggered, with younger children eating and playing at different times from the older students. In addition to the regular curriculum, all students receive jigging instruction for 90 to 120 minutes weekly. Thirty-five to forty students also take fiddling or guitar instruction twice weekly.

Caslan School has chronically ranked at or near the bottom of Alberta schools in the annual provincial achievement tests administered each June to students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 in language arts, social studies, mathematics and science. Poor attendance, frequent disciplinary incidents, physical fighting, bullying, a high rate of teacher turnover and low level of parent involvement were also matters of concern to school and district personnel and to parents.

In 2003, while studying how other schools with similar problems sought to effect positive change, school administrators discovered a wealth of research articles on various fine arts programs which had had a positive effect on student achievement and attitudes toward school. After consultation with staff and central office personnel, the school administration made a decision to introduce a strong arts component into the school curriculum, with emphasis on Métis culture and traditions.

Further study led the principal to the discovery of ArtsSmarts, a national initiative of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, created to promote active participation of students in the arts through integration

of arts activities in the regular school curriculum. The foundation and other partnerships with provincial ministries of education, school boards, community foundations and arts organizations fund its activities. ArtsSmarts is designed to increase and enhance arts-related activities in the classroom by using the arts to teach subjects across the curriculum. As described on their website³, the ArtsSmarts program has provided opportunities to an estimated 270,000 young people in 1,700 schools to work with over 3,600 artists, 11,400 educators and 6,500 volunteers on ArtsSmarts projects.

The objectives of ArtsSmarts as articulated in its handbook⁴ are:

- To build long-term, self-sufficient local partnerships that link young people, artists or arts organizations, schools and the broader community;
- To enable school and community organizations to explore ways to integrate arts activities into non-arts subject areas and, as much as possible, to be aligned with provincial curricula.
- To provide opportunities for young people to actively participate in the arts, thereby encouraging them to develop their intellectual and communication skills; and
- To enhance appreciation of the importance of culture and the arts, thereby encouraging long-term support for Canadian artists and arts organizations.

ArtsSmarts programs are designed according to local needs and priorities while meeting the overall objectives of ArtsSmarts.

GOALS OF THE ARTSSMARTS INITIATIVE AT CASLAN SCHOOL

In May 2003, ArtsSmarts issued a request for proposals to Alberta organizations. Caslan School submitted a proposal to ArtsSmarts and was successful in receiving a grant of \$317,000 spread over three years. The initiative was conceived and proposed by the principal and assistant principal, and the Aboriginal Liaison in consultation with the Northern Lights School Division and community stakeholders. Their goals for the intervention differed from, but did not conflict with the more general objectives of ArtsSmarts.

These objectives as articulated by the principal in the proposal were:

- Improved academic standards, reflected in higher achievement test scores and report card marks;
- More positive attitude toward school in students, demonstrated by better attendance and participation in class activities;
- Improved social skills, resulting in less fighting and bullying and fewer disciplinary incidents;
- Changes in teacher practice: integration of the arts to enhance core curriculum, learning to make cross-curricular connections in teaching through collaboration with visiting artists; and,

³ <http://www.artssmarts.ca> accessed October 12, 2006

⁴ Scott, Melanie. (2003). *ArtsSmarts: A handbook for artists and educators*. Canadian Conference of the Arts. Ottawa.

- Emphasis on Métis culture and heritage, reflected in curricular content and arts projects, resulting in better community relations and increased parent involvement.

Because it was late in the school year, and there was strong encouragement from the School Division to find new ways to address the problems in the school before the beginning of the next school year, there was little opportunity for consultation with staff, students or community about the implementation plan for the program. As a result, the planning and initial implementation was done with little input from the main stakeholders.

In addition to the ArtsSmarts funding, Caslan School received an Alberta Initiatives for School Improvement⁵ (AISI) grant of \$300,000 to be used over the next three years. This was used to hire fiddling and jigging instructors and a fine arts coordinator. Although the fine arts coordinator's salary came from the AISI grant, her primary function was to administer the ArtsSmarts program.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The ArtsSmarts initiative at Caslan School was funded by an anonymous Canadian foundation, which also funded an independent evaluation of the program. The research was commissioned as a policy impact study through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Its purpose was to document the implementation and effects of the ArtsSmarts program at Caslan School. Four specific objectives were identified. These were to:

1. Provide an overview of the literature on arts-integrated education programs and gather available data on their implementation and outcomes.
2. Produce a three-year case study describing the ArtsSmarts program in Caslan School, assessing achievement results and analyzing the factors contributing to the effectiveness of this intervention.
3. Provide evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice to government, faculties of education, First Nation and Métis leaders, and educators to guide efforts to improve student outcomes.
4. Share the report and its findings with relevant policymakers and public to increase public awareness and understanding of the value of arts-infused learning.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The researcher was contracted in August 2003 to conduct an independent evaluation of the program. A five-member advisory committee was formed at the outset of the study to offer additional guidance in the conduct of the research and interpretation of the findings. This committee was comprised of a recognized arts education scholar and representatives from the Northern Lights School Division, ArtsSmarts, and the foundation providing the research grant, and the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE) that was responsible for managing the study. A representative from the Aboriginal Services Branch of Alberta Education participated in one meeting, as

⁵ AISI provides funding to school authorities for specific local initiatives designed to improve student learning and performance. AISI funding is in addition to the basic school grants.

did the school principal and the program coordinator. The Advisory Committee met five times during the course of the research: at the beginning of Year 1 to establish data collection methods and indicators, to review findings annually through technical reports provided at the end of Years 1–3, and to provide feedback to the draft composite report. A recognized Métis expert on aboriginal education policy was also consulted during the drafting of the final report.

The over-all plan for data collection for 2003 to 2006 outlined in Table 1.2 was developed in consultation with the Advisory Committee and the researcher. Quantitative research consisted of the collection and analysis of provincial achievement test scores, literacy test scores, report card marks, attendance figures and numbers of suspensions, expulsions and other disciplinary incidents. Some of these data permitted comparisons to be made with Kikino School, an elementary school situated on the Kikino Métis Settlement and also in Northern Lights School Division. Information of a more qualitative nature was gathered through interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations and field notes. This evidence was triangulated with other data, documents, evaluations and reports provided by school division and ArtsSmarts officials.

Table 1.2 Data Collection Plan for Each Year of the Study

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER	FEBRUARY-MARCH	MAY-JUNE
DATA FROM STUDENTS		
Collect Provincial Achievement Test data from previous year		Collect attendance and discipline data for the current year.
Collect GORT scores from previous year.	Individual interviews with students.	Individual interviews with students.
Retrieve report card marks from previous year.	Classroom observations and informal conversations	Focus groups with students
DATA FROM STAFF		
Interviews with coordinator and principal	Informal meetings with principal, coordinator and teachers.	Focus groups with teachers and support staff
Introductions and informal interviews with staff	Classroom observations	Interviews with staff.
		Collect all evaluation forms from coordinator
DATA FROM ARTISTS		
Interview and observe any artists at the school.	Interview and observe any artists at the school.	Collect evaluation forms from coordinator.
		Telephone interviews
DATA FROM PARENTS		
		Focus group at settlement.
		Parent satisfaction surveys
During visits in November, January, April and May: classroom observation and informal interviews with students, staff, any visiting artist and parents in the school.		

Over the course of the study, the researcher spent 28 days at the school for purposes of data collection: ten days in Year One, twelve in Year Two and six days in Year Three.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

The following achievement data from standardized tests and report cards for the baseline year and the three years of the study were examined:

- Scores from Provincial Achievement Tests administered each June to all students in Grades 3, 6 and 9. All three groups are tested in language arts and mathematics. Grades 6 and 9 are also tested in social studies and science.
- Fluency and comprehension scores in the Gray Oral Reading Test, administered individually in May to six or seven randomly selected students per grade from Grades 3–9.
- Report card marks for the baseline year and the three years of the study for students in Grades 4–7 who were present in the school for all four years: twenty-five in all.

School attendance records for the baseline year and the three years of the study were obtained from the school district office. Suspensions and disciplinary incidents were tracked for Years Two and Three.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative information was gathered through a variety of means, including site visits, telephone interviews and e-mail. A total of 130 interviews were conducted, including those with teachers, administrators, and coordinators (42), parents (11), students (18), teacher aides (15), and artists (13). On-site interviews with artists were supplemented by an additional 31 interviews by telephone. Interviews with students and parents were augmented by numerous informal conversations in the school and community over the period of the study. Thirteen focus groups in all were conducted with teachers (4), teacher aides (1), students (6), and parents (2). The questions posed in the interviews and focus groups were designed to address the objectives of the ArtsSmarts initiative, although discussion was not limited to these questions. Teacher aides were included in the interviews and focus groups because they are directly involved in program delivery and some are also members of the Buffalo Lake Community, providing valuable community perspective.

Evaluation forms using a Likert scale for each ArtsSmarts project were completed by artists, students and staff. Artist and teacher forms had space for comments. These forms were designed in consultation with the coordinator and were kept consistent across the three years. A total of 1,484 evaluations⁶ were tabulated and analyzed to evaluate stakeholder perceptions of the success of these projects according to various criteria established by the program coordinator.

Surveys of parents and teachers were also administered and tabulated.

⁶ Teachers completed 50 evaluations (23 in Year 1, 17 in Year 2, 10 in Year 3). Students completed 1,372 evaluations (821 in Year 1, 477 in Year 2, and 74 in Year 3). Artists completed 62 evaluations (24 in Year 1, 28 in Year 2, and 10 in Year 3).

Other research activities took place off site:

- Three visits were made to Kikino School.
- One visit was made to Prince Charles School in Edmonton to interview the principal and observe a fine arts class. This Aboriginal school in the Edmonton Public system has raised achievement test scores and other markers of success from well below the provincial average to above average in three years, with intensive literacy and mathematics initiatives combined with a strong fine arts focus and emphasis on Aboriginal traditions and spirituality.
- Three interviews were held with researchers and administrators in the Alberta Education Aboriginal Services Branch concerning new research on Aboriginal student learning.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was restricted to the measures available to the researcher, as detailed in the description of the data collection. The extent to which the findings and conclusions of the study speak to the effects of the ArtsSmarts program is subject to two main contextual limitations. The first is that ArtsSmarts was not the only arts-related initiative introduced into the school. The simultaneous introduction of jigging and fiddling instruction as well as the Borba Moral Intelligence program clearly limits the extent to which effects can be attributed to ArtsSmarts. The second contextual limitation is the degree of staff turnover at the school during the three years of the study. The departure of nine staff (including the principal and ArtsSmarts Program Coordinator) and their replacement by newcomers out of a total complement of fifteen inevitably affected the degree of continuity available to the ArtsSmarts program, with the result that we cannot know what the effects of an intervention with more stability of personnel might be.



Photo: Courtesy of Amanda Hack, ArtsSmarts Coordinator

Space Mural

2. Literature Review

The following literature review is presented in three parts. The first section refers to research on arts integration programs and their effects on student achievement and social development. The second section discusses research on teacher education and impacts of arts integration on teacher practice. The final section focuses on research findings in the context of Aboriginal education. A brief discussion of this existing knowledge base provides a useful backdrop for the present study of Caslan School.

ARTS INTEGRATION

There is a wealth of research on arts integration in education, ranging from small case studies of five or six children, to broad-based national studies spanning years and involving thousands of participants. A number of common themes emerge from this literature base. Those most relevant to this study are: measurable academic achievement gains occur in some arts integration studies; participants report that student behaviour, attitudes and motivation improve in arts- integrated classes; low-achieving and at-risk students appear to benefit the most from arts integration, and arts integration does not replace the need for the arts to be taught separately as part of the regular curriculum.

Meredith (2003) provides an analysis of findings from a large survey and interviews and focus groups conducted with ArtsSmarts participants across Canada. He cites several examples of improved test scores in sections of language arts, literacy and social studies. As in other similar studies, the majority of educators said that while they knew intuitively that academic performance had improved, they could not provide marks or standardized scores to support their perceptions. Teachers, students and artists all reported positive changes in student behaviour, including increased attendance, homework completion and engagement in class, fewer behaviour problems and less bullying. Improved self-esteem was also frequently cited as a positive impact. One teacher saw skills and engagement not seen before from otherwise unconnected and disengaged students. These students demonstrated strong artistic skills, readily took extra work home and learned more than they normally would. This observation that normally disruptive students often become very focused and produce excellent work in arts activities supports findings in many other studies. While the teachers were enthusiastic about learning new instructional strategies and discovering their own creativity, they also spoke of the increased workload associated with planning new approaches to curriculum and collaborating with artists. They expressed a need for more support from their school systems and said that the presence of ArtsSmarts does not eliminate the need for students to learn the arts from specialist teachers in the regular curriculum.

In a study involving ten teachers and thirty students, DeMoss and Morris (2005) explored learning processes and outcomes associated with arts-integrated learning units versus learning processes and

outcomes in comparable non-arts units. Students from all achievement levels displayed significant increases in their ability to analytically assess their own learning following arts-integrated units. No such gains were associated with traditional instructional experiences. Students also described their arts-integrated versus non-arts learning differently. Arts-integrated instruction created more independent and intrinsically motivated investments in learning, fostered learning for understanding as opposed to recall of facts for tests, transformed students' characterizations of learning "barriers" into "challenges to be solved", and inspired students to pursue further learning opportunities outside of class.

This study also found important distinctions in the practice of arts integration. The arts units lay on a continuum from those in which academic content and the arts are tightly coupled, resulting in true integration, to those using the arts more as an enhancement. In the strongly integrated classrooms where teachers planned carefully with artists and where the artists were clearly attuned to the academic content, there was evidence of deeper integration of learning through art. As in other arts integration studies, researchers observed students who were disruptive in regular classes performing well in arts-integrated settings. Another interesting finding across all classes was that performances or exhibits staged for a broader audience at the culmination of a unit greatly enhanced students' commitment to their work.

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education conducted a five-year study on Learning Through the Arts (LTTA), a program created by the Royal Conservatory of Music in 1994, in which the arts are used in teaching core subjects. Wilkinson (1999) reported that LTTA students produce written work of higher quality, that they show respect for their teachers and peers and cause fewer discipline problems in class. An independent three-year study on LTTA conducted by Rena Upitis and Katharine Smithrim (1999-2002) indicates that arts integration helps improve academic performance. This study compared students in LTTA with students in two types of control schools. On most measures of mathematics and language, there were no significant differences between LTTA students and those in the control schools, but in tests of computation and estimation in math, the LTTA students scored 11% higher than their peers in control schools. Teachers, parents and administrators provided examples in interviews of how the arts engage children in learning. At the end of the study, 90% of parents involved said that the arts motivated their children to learn.

A 1999 report entitled, *The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, found that learners can improve academic performance through engagement with the arts. James Catterall's analysis of a database of 25,000 students in American schools shows that students exposed to fine arts outperform students without arts education by almost every measure. Because the sample was so large, he was able to make comparisons and find statistical significance in comparisons of high and low arts participation in low socio-economic groups. The data reveal that high arts participation makes a more significant difference to students from low-income backgrounds than for high-income students.

Rabkin and Redmond (2006) cite other studies in which arts-integrated programs had the greatest effects on disadvantaged learners (Rabkin and Redmond, 2004; Catterall and Waldorf, 1999; Ingram and Seashore, 2003). According to the writers, low-performing students consistently exceeded teachers' expectations, finding success that had eluded them in regular classes. Many progressed from being

withdrawn or disruptive to becoming productive class members. Rabkin and Redmond also found that the most successful arts integration programs draw on the artistic resources of their own communities, building sustained partnerships between schools, arts organizations, and artists. The best programs view student achievement and school improvement as pivotal to their mission, and provide arts instruction both within the context of other subjects and as a subject in its own right.

(Clinton, 2005) provides informative and concise summaries of 14 arts integration programs that demonstrate positive effects of arts-infused curricula on student grades and social development. Clinton cites studies that have used correlative and causal data analysis, noting that the vast majority are correlative, because it is rarely possible to state that changes are due solely to presence of the arts. However, according to Clinton, it can be stated that in schools where children are exposed to developmentally appropriate and well taught arts programs, there is a higher rate of success in test scores and other critical assessment factors.

In an extensive compendium that compares data from more than 60 countries, Bamford (2006) examines such questions as “Why are the arts taught?” and “What is good arts education?” She lists several characteristics most likely to be present in quality arts education programs: active partnerships among stakeholders; shared responsibility, collaboration, detailed strategies for assessing student progress; and ongoing professional development for teachers, artists and community. The compendium is the first international analysis of Arts Education research done by UNESCO in partnership with the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies and the Australia Council.

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) has published a comprehensive series of reports based on a longitudinal study of Arts for Academic Achievement: the Annenberg Challenge (known as AAA). A study by Ingram and Riedel (2003) emerging from the AAA project reports that the degree of arts integration makes a difference in how much scores increase. The study provides evidence that increased density of integration improves test scores, and suggests that it is better to create more integration in one discipline than lesser amounts in multiple disciplines. It was the level of integration in a specific discipline that affected achievement.

Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development (Deasy, 2002) is a compilation of 62 studies collected over three years by researchers James S. Catterall, Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner. One review of this volume notes:

There is some disagreement among the experts who contributed to Critical Links on the question of transfer from the arts. Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland are skeptical. Their own meta-analyses of research on transfer from the arts leads them to argue that when subjected to the rigorous statistical demands of meta-analysis the connections, while real, fall short of the requirements of causality. (Rabkin, International Journal of Education & the Arts: Vol. 3, October 2002)

Other contributors to *Critical Links* do believe that causal links are established. Commenting on drama research, Robert Horowitz and Jaci Webb-Dempsey argue that qualitative research does establish transfer between the arts and “positive cognitive, personal, and social outcomes... productive social

membership, critical and higher-order thinking, and commitment to the skills for lifelong learning” (p.99). Larry Scripp makes an even greater claim for the music research, arguing that it has produced “generative neurological and cognitive frameworks for learning transfer” (p. 133). However, Scripp, Horowitz, and others in *Critical Links* remind us that if the arts are going to have the power to improve learning more generally, instruction in the arts must be rigorous and learning must be deep. All agree that all children need high quality arts instruction.

Critical Evidence (Ruppert, 2006) was written in response to educators’ need for concise information about current research on arts learning and student achievement. Its content draws heavily on data from *Critical Links*. Ruppert identifies six major types of benefits associated with arts integration and student achievement: reading and language skills, mathematics skills, thinking and social skills, motivation to learn and positive school environment.

Robin Rooney (2004), in an extensive review of current literature on arts-based teaching and learning, addresses three broad questions: What are arts-based teaching and learning practices? How are arts-based teaching and learning practices implemented? What are the effects of such practices? The third topic is of interest to this study. According to studies cited, the following effects of arts-based teaching were noted:

- Arts-based teaching improves classroom and school climate. Schools reported increased attendance and better student participation. Authors linked student interest in learning with increased communication and attention to creativity and self-esteem.
- In the affective domain, studies report increased interest and motivation among students. Of special interest to this study, research shows that students who are not part of the dominant culture can benefit from arts in education because the arts make education more equitable (Annenberg study, 2004).
- As students become more engaged in learning, their attitudes toward school and toward themselves improve (Jensen, 2001). Students with a positive attitude are more willing to experiment (Stronge, 2002). Arts-based activities give students skills with which they can explore new ideas. Burton found, for example, that students with rich arts integration experiences were better able to express thoughts and ideas better than their peers in ‘low-arts’ groups.

Wahlstrom (2003) found improved communication in learner groups, with students staying on task and working better as teams to accomplish goals. Students who were not usually class leaders frequently took on leadership roles in the arts-integrated lessons, and children with disabilities of all types were more fully integrated into arts activities than other classroom activities.

In the cognitive domain, the literature provides some evidence of cognitive skill development through the arts. Standardized tests of creativity showed more highly developed creativity in students who participated in an arts-based curriculum. According to the literature reviewed in the Rooney article, arts-based instruction develops thinking skills, including improved comprehension, interpretation and problem solving.

Not all researchers are enthusiastic about arts integration. Brewer’s *Arts Education Policy Review*

(2002) provides a critical history and a two-part review of literature to address questions about the benefits, validity and implications of integrated teaching. In part one, several writers (Eisner, Elford, Winner, Hamblen) emphasize the unique qualities of arts learning and the need for more research to determine what these are. Part two presents theory, practice and research that claim that use of visual arts can reinforce learning in other subjects. Brewer conducted a seven-year review of educational writing and research on integrated curriculum approaches. Of the 479 articles examined, less than 2 percent focused on research. The low incidence of research articles indicates that more serious study of arts learning and its integration is needed. Brewer maintains that findings of positive association between arts classes and academic achievement do not mean that significant gains were produced. According to him, few were.

Much of the research literature from America refers to the effect of the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires all schools to reach certain academic standards. The considerable pressure on schools to raise test standardized scores has led to a narrowing of curriculum goals and teaching strategies, with the arts often being dropped from the curriculum. Thus, arts educators strive to find justification for the arts, often by claiming that they enhance learning in academic subjects and raise test scores. Brewer, (2002), Eisner (2002) and Winner (2000) all express concern that by justifying arts based on support for other curriculum areas, educators may inadvertently weaken the case for fine arts education. Winner and Hetland (2000) agree that although it is tempting to seek funding for the arts by associating it with improved academic achievement, this tactic can backfire when the hoped-for improvement does not occur. Schools should include the arts in their curriculum because they are valuable in themselves.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

As in the literature on arts integration, generalizations can be drawn from research findings on professional development and program implementation. There are four prominent themes in this body of work: teachers want and require in-depth training in arts integration in order to feel secure and competent in its practice; effective professional development and program implementation take time and must be ongoing; effective arts integration programs characterized by teacher/artist collaboration result in changes in teacher practice; and implementation is most apt to succeed when teachers participate in decision-making.

Much of the literature on change focuses on the necessity of having ample time for detailed planning and collaboration among the teachers in a school, and also between teachers and visiting artists. Day (1999) states: “The provision of time and opportunity as well as the dispositions and abilities of teachers to learn from and with one another inside the workplace and from others outside the school are key factors in continuing professional development. In the absence of these, it is not unreasonable to predict that their capacities for development and abilities to model these capacities for students... are likely to be diminished” (p.20).

Patteson et al. (2002) also cite time as a factor in teachers’ difficulties with change:

In terms of impediments to change, time concerns featured large in the responses of both groups. The second largest group of LTTA respondents (12%) to the question regarding conditions for sustaining change said that having more time to plan and implement arts activities would be the most important. (11)

The Patteson/Smith/Uptis paper was based on an eight-year (1994-2004) study of two large Canadian arts integration programs: Teachers as Artists (TAA) and Learning Through the Arts (LTTA). Both these models are designed to help generalist teachers, many of whom have no background in the arts, in providing rich arts experiences for their students. The study involved over 1,000 teachers, 200 principals and more than 12,000 students.

The paper has two parts. The first section presents data analysis from the two teacher development programs, with information on change, renewal, and/or transformation as experienced by the teachers as a result of participation in LTTA or TAA. Issues relevant to Caslan include relationships with artists, the nature of artistic activity, skill development, the role of arts in students' lives, changes to classroom practices, impetus and impediments to change, and conditions necessary for sustaining teacher change. The second section of the paper analyzes an extensive set of teacher comments and observations about their experiences with the arts using computer software. The findings on relationships with artists, impetus for change and children's skill development were similar to teachers' responses at Caslan.

The Annenberg Project produced a number of reports related to change implementation in arts-based education. Werner and Freeman (2001) discuss the importance of change in teacher practice in implementing new initiatives. Researchers found that if teachers are exposed to new concepts of the ideal classroom, they may change their practice to attain that new ideal. Integrating the arts caused teachers to think differently about how education can take place in the classroom. Besides making room for integration, they tended to shift from adult-centered to student-centered classrooms, alter what was displayed or emphasized, and expand learning resources within the classroom.

Werner (2002) writes about artists' collaboration experiences with teachers. Artists noted a fear of integration in some teachers and also that teachers had not had sufficient training in integration processes. Some artists encountered a level of resistance from teachers when it came to actually participating in arts integrated lessons. These artists found that over time, however, their partnering teachers usually relaxed and found a way to actively participate.

Teaching teachers how to integrate often meant shifting their focus from the final product to the process behind making that product. An artist outlined his process for encouraging teachers to think in terms of layering the curriculum:

There is a way of planning lessons into a sequential number of small steps. To think about that as a way to structure your time in a class is very useful. The quality of learning is a lot higher when you are able to sequence things. Each activity builds on the last one. (8)

Rhoda Bernard (2003) summarized findings from a large conference where educators attempted to identify the characteristics of successful arts-based schools. The participants concluded that schools that successfully implement arts-based programs view themselves as works in progress and regard mistakes as generative. They cultivate a culture of reflection and constantly review their objectives and practices. They also encourage a strong sense of community, foster collaboration and a sense of ownership among parents and students. They celebrate and cultivate differences among students and teachers, and they invite parent involvement.

Ingram and Riedel (2003) cited in the first section of this literature review also reported findings on implementation. After studying programs in 31 schools, they found that teaming with artists is strongly related to teachers' overall level of arts integration. Their data analysis suggests that teachers who work in depth with an arts partner to co-develop and teach arts integrated curricula are more likely to change their own teaching practice and their beliefs about student capabilities than teachers who collaborate less or not at all.

A smaller study within the large initiative used a group of six schools to study changes in teacher practice when community based artists are blended into regular instruction. Wahlstrom (2003) presents findings from a three-year longitudinal study using individual and group interviews with artists and teachers and extensive classroom observations. Wahlstrom found that having the teacher as co-learner in arts lessons helped students understand that learning is an ongoing process. As for revised pedagogy, there was greater emphasis on students' ideas, planning, thought processes, and completeness of product. There was also greater emphasis on revision and improvement of student work, and more freedom for the learner to deviate from a narrow expectation or a single answer. Teachers often used their classroom space differently during arts instruction, which led to using those alternative room arrangements during non-arts lessons as well. Risk-taking was encouraged.

Stevenson (2006) studied impacts of ArtsSmarts programming at 15 Canadian schools with high concentrations of aboriginal students. In discussions with teachers about effects on their own teaching practice, he found that teachers believed they were now thinking differently about instruction. Several said that they were more willing to take risks in their teaching practice now because they wanted to continue the gains that teaching through the arts was giving them. One of the biggest advantages of arts integration, they felt, was that different learning styles were being accommodated. Participants in this study also stressed the need for proper planning, teacher buy-in, and artists familiar with the school environment.

According to Eisner (2002), teachers in academic disciplines who learn arts-based strategies become more artistic and creative. Other studies indicate that participating in a blended curriculum helps teachers become more child-focused, more aware of student capacity, and better able to assess child progress (Burton et al., 1999).

Oreck (2004) has studied artistic development of teachers. In his mixed-methods study, data collected from 423 K–12 teachers indicated that teachers believe the arts are important in education, but use them rarely. They are hindered by a lack of professional development and intense pressure to teach the

mandated curriculum. Awareness of student diversity and the need for improved motivation and enjoyment in learning were the most frequently cited motivations for using the arts. Teachers' self-efficacy and self-image relating to creativity and artistry influenced arts use more than any other personal characteristic. Surprisingly, prior arts instruction, current artistic practice, and years of teaching experience were not found to be significant predictors of arts use in the classroom. In his recommendations, Oreck advocates strong ongoing professional development programs for teachers, especially for their own creative and artistic development. School and district administrators should make in-service art workshops a higher priority for teachers. Professional development should also help teachers recognize and articulate the impact of the arts on students.

An older study (Joyce & Showers, 1995) directly links faculty participation in these in-services with successful implementation of new approaches. The closer a school is to 100% involvement in in-servicing, the higher the transfer to the classroom.

Studies of the effects of teacher experience on student learning (Murnane & Phillips, 1981; Klitgaard & Hall, 1975) have found that there is a positive correlation between some aspects of student achievement, but not always a significant one or an entirely linear one. While many studies have established that inexperienced teachers (those with less than three years of experience) are typically less effective than more senior teachers, the benefits of experience appear to level off after about five years (Rosenholtz, 1985).

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

A number of recent Canadian studies on Aboriginal education issues are pertinent to Caslan's initiatives in school improvement. The themes drawn from this body of literature were: strong connections between community and school are essential to success; parental involvement is a key factor in student success; and recruitment and retention of good teachers, especially Aboriginal teachers, must be a priority.

Sharing Our Success (Bell et al., 2004) analyzes success factors common to ten academically successful schools serving predominantly Aboriginal populations. The purpose of the research was to discover what characteristics the schools had in common which may promote success, and to see what might be learned from these sites that could be transferred to other situations. The research makes a number of recommendations for schools in Aboriginal settings:

1. Foster strong community ownership of and partnerships in school programs.
2. Hold high expectations for Aboriginal student achievement while recognizing the existence of their special needs and providing multiple layers of support.
3. Make a particular effort to ensure that students are aware of the importance of acquiring proficiency in literacy, mathematics, science and technology to enhance their future prospects, and that the instruction and programs provided have a particular focus on developing these core competencies.

4. Use diverse measurement tools to monitor student progress and program effectiveness, including normed and provincial assessments, and employ the aggregate data produced in developing annual improvement plans.
5. Employ teachers and school leaders with the expertise and personal qualities that have been shown to be most effective with Aboriginal learners.
6. Recognize the importance of Aboriginal language and culture by offering specific programs and classes.
7. Encourage all staff to learn about local culture and traditions, by prominent displays of culturally relevant items, and by inviting local elders and community people to share their knowledge in classes.
8. Encourage open door policies and work to make families feel welcome.

In an extensive review of research on parental involvement in Aboriginal education, Kavanagh (2002) cites many studies that describe the positive impact of engaging parents in learning activities. There is significant evidence that when parents are involved in education, student achievement increases and schools improve (Wehlburg 1996). Numerous studies have concluded that when families are involved in their children's education in constructive ways, students have higher self-esteem, more positive attitudes toward school, and better attendance at school. They also achieve higher grades and test scores, and they complete higher quality and more age-appropriate homework, graduate at higher rates, and enroll more often in higher education (Ballen and Moles, 1994). Data show that about one-half to two-thirds of the variance in student achievement can be accounted for by home rather than school variables. In addition, for at-risk students, parent and family involvement in learning has been identified as the single most important determiner of success (Mills, 1994). Henderson and Berla (1994) claim that in programs designed to involve parents in full partnership, disadvantaged students' achievement not only improves; it can reach levels that are standard for all children.

Archibald et al. (2002) compiled a large review of literature on teacher recruitment, training and retention in Aboriginal schools. Articles listed in the review discuss challenges in teacher recruitment such as remote locations, social and economic factors and systemic problems. Strategies for hiring and retention of Aboriginal teachers are presented; these include strong administrative leadership and support, induction and mentorship programs, and rewards and incentives such as affordable housing and transportation allowances in remote areas.

Stevenson (2006) reported that the presence of ArtsSmarts had a strong influence on student's self-esteem in the 15 schools studied. The sense of pride observed by their teachers and parents stemmed from the fact that Aboriginal culture and traditions were being celebrated in their activities. Teachers stated that Aboriginal students were learning more about their own culture and experiencing a new-found pride in their heritage. In those schools with mixed student populations, Aboriginal students were self-identifying more openly. Participants said that having Aboriginal artists in the schools was a most important factor for success: they were not only artists, but also role models and resource persons for the schools.

SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the literature related to three areas of interest to the study of ArtsSmarts at Caslan School. The section on the effects of arts integration confirms that there was considerable research to support the school's decision to adopt ArtsSmarts as a means to improvement. The second section describes conditions for successful program implementation and professional development in the arts and in arts-based education. The need for strong, ongoing in-servicing, and teacher buy-in stood out as key factors in success. Section three examines the knowledge base on Aboriginal schooling and possible links to the case study now before us.



Photo: Courtesy of Amanda Hack, ArtsSmarts Coordinator

Grade 2/3 Social Studies Quilt

3. Implementing ArtsSmarts at Caslan School

As we have seen in the previous chapter, there is considerable research to support Caslan's decision to adopt arts-infused instruction as a means to school improvement. There are many models of arts integration. Some schools use a whole school plan, in which all classes are working simultaneously on one central theme. Others may incorporate a single arts discipline, such as music, in their program. In some schools, the arts integration is concentrated within one subject area, usually language arts. In other situations, the infusion of arts into the core curriculum may be limited to a few classrooms or a particular grade level.

The model introduced at Caslan involved the whole school, and the arts were infused across the full scope of the curriculum. During the three years of this study, 70 projects were initiated involving the participation of some 54 artists. The distribution of projects according to subject area and the various art disciplines is shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Projects According to Subject

	Number of Projects			Percentage of Projects		
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Language Arts	11	7	5	31.4	18.4	28
Mathematics	1	6	1	2.8	15.8	5.5
Social Studies	14	15	5	40	39.5	27.7
Science	9	10	7	26	26	38.8
Total	35	38	18			

NOTE: Totals are greater than the actual number of projects because some projects crossed two or more subject areas.

Table 3.2 Distribution of Projects According to Arts Discipline

	Dance		Drama		Music		Story-telling		Video		Visual Art		Writing	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2003/04	3	11	3	11	3	11	4	16	2	7	10	36	3	11
2004/05	2	7	3	10	1	3	4	14	1	3	21	72	4	14
2005/06	0	0	3	17	1	5.5	1	5.5	1	5.5	11	61	1	5.5
Total	5		9		5		9		4		42		8	

This chapter describes more fully the context into which the ArtsSmarts program at Caslan was introduced and its implementation in some detail as it evolved over three years. The major aspects of implementation each year include planning, resources and staffing, management and coordination, arts activities, professional development, and emergent issues. We also gain some insights into the program through the voices of selected participants offering firsthand accounts for each year of the project.

CONTEXT

In preparation for the introduction of ArtsSmarts in September 2003, three teachers were hired. All were new graduates of the University of Regina's Fine Arts Education Program. Two were needed to fill classroom vacancies, and one was designated the ArtsSmarts program coordinator as well as teaching 50% of the time. All teachers attended a two-day introductory session on arts-integration in June with a mentoring ArtsSmarts partner school in Calgary.

At the outset of the project, the school faced several challenges. The first and most important was the lack of input from staff and community in the decision making that led to choosing a fine arts approach for the school. The advisory committee of school, division and community representatives required a sustained collaborative effort which was not continued. As there was no prior collaborative planning, and in-service preparation took place simultaneously with implementation, teachers did not know what was expected of them in the new school year.

Staff composition presented another potential problem. Teachers who had been on staff for a number of years were familiar with the Alberta core curriculum in the core subjects, but lacked experience in teaching the arts or in collaborating with artists. Only the Kindergarten teacher had used an arts integrated approach in the classroom. While willing to try the new approach, they were anxious about their ability to use arts in their teaching and the additional demands on their time. The three new teachers, on the other hand, were well trained in fine arts as well as in arts integration. They were accustomed to collaborating with colleagues and using the arts to reinforce basic curricular concepts in their teaching. They had little knowledge of the Alberta curriculum, however, and like all first-year teachers struggled with classroom management issues. The program coordinator was in the position of having to try to initiate new directions for experienced teachers while she herself was in her first year, a situation which might be expected to cause tension and resentment among some staff.

The previous lack of a strong fine arts presence in the school and in the district also presented a challenge. Music had not been taught as a subject for several years, and art was taught sporadically. There was no sequential program in creative writing, drama or dance, and very little attention given to Aboriginal culture. The school division lacked a fine arts consultant, so there was no in-servicing available at the district level.

Additionally, two other innovations were being introduced at the same time as ArtsSmarts, making for a busy and confusing time for staff, especially first-year teachers. The Moral Intelligence Initiative, designed to improve social skills, was mandated by the school division. The jiggling and fiddling

programs were school initiatives facilitated by a substantial provincial grant.

YEAR ONE ACTIVITIES

With this as a backdrop, we examine the implementation of ArtsSmarts in Year One.

Management and Coordination

Caslan School received \$105,000 from ArtsSmarts in Year One of which \$75,000 was earmarked for projects and \$5,000 for professional development. According to information provided on the Year One list of activities, \$62,291 was spent on projects, and \$4,462 on in-service activities.

The coordinator was responsible for the administration of the program at the school. She tried to help teachers learn how to integrate fine arts with curriculum content, and demonstrated how to select activities and projects which would reinforce core curriculum concepts. She developed a process for encouraging teachers to find ways to use arts activities to enrich their classroom instruction in non-arts subjects. The following sequence of steps was to be used in initiating an ArtsSmarts project:

- The teacher developed the initial project concept and consulted with the coordinator in fleshing out the proposal. The planned activity had to be age appropriate and have a direct curricular link to a core subject.
- After securing approval from the principal for the proposal, the coordinator engaged an artist with appropriate expertise and arranged for the artist's time at the school.
- If possible, the artist made an advance visit to the school for planning and consultation, and sometimes a workshop with staff.
- Teacher and artist collaborated in the classroom during the intervention, sometimes with the coordinator's assistance. They monitored progress and adjusted strategies as necessary.
- On completion of a project, teachers, students and artists evaluated its success in terms of curricular links, skill development, motivation of the students and enjoyment.

The coordinator contracted artists with appropriate areas of expertise to collaborate with the teachers, and negotiated the terms of the artists' contracts: length of time, fees, and types of activities. She found accommodation for them, and ensured they had the required supplies and adequate preparation time. Artists were selected from a range of sources including her own contacts, research on the internet, lists of available artists published by the Alberta Teachers' Association Fine Arts Council, recommendations from staff, and applications from artists. Fees were set using guidelines provided by ArtsSmarts⁷ and the artists themselves. Most artists did not sign a written contract. The hours and description of duties were negotiated informally and this seemed to work well.

The coordinator also monitored the projects to ensure that a link was made between the artistic activity and curricular concepts, and that teachers, artists and children were working together. She also took responsibility for public relations about ArtsSmarts at Caslan by publishing a newsletter on

school activities. She also distributed, collected and tabulated evaluations of the projects and prepared the annual report required by ArtsSmarts, which summarizes the activities and their outcomes along with a financial statement.

Additionally, the coordinator was partly responsible for the provision of related professional development activities. She shared her expertise in the arts in informal sessions with other teachers, organized visits to two other schools, and with the other fine arts teachers in the school led projects using dance, music and visual arts to teach math and science concepts.

During Year One, few teachers came forward with ArtsSmarts proposals. Most projects were initiated by the coordinator in an attempt to demonstrate how arts integration could work, with the hope that teachers would initiate and plan some projects themselves. Artists were invited to the school, and teachers were asked to find ways to use their expertise in their classrooms. Sometimes it worked, but at other times this approach was met with resentment and passive resistance.

Description of Activities

The coordinator and the administrators planned two large-scale school/community events to introduce ArtsSmarts and to celebrate a change in direction at Caslan.

The first event was on the first day of the school year. A professional theatre company spent a morning rehearsing several students to play simple roles in a humorous contemporary interpretation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The performance took place 'in the round' outside on the lawn. An award-winning fiddler entertained the students for an afternoon, and a local elder shared stories, traditional knowledge and Native art pieces with students for a day. These presentations were not integrated with classroom instruction, but rather served as an introduction and motivation for students for what was to come in the new year.

The second event, in early October, was designated as "Change Day". The community was invited for a day of traditional games, dancing, food, and an introduction to ArtsSmarts. Elders, parents and officials from the school district were present. The highlight of this day was the raising of the Métis flag for the first time at Caslan School.

Generally, controlled chaos produced more creative art. It was so refreshing to walk into a class, hand out the paper, give the assignment and have the students settle into absolute quiet, so quiet, you could hear a pin drop, as they became absorbed and unaware of what was going on around them. This happened quite often in my classes.

Students work hard in integrated art and look forward to the art part of the assignment. They begged to be painting. All students participated; there was no division between academically strong and weak students.

This was a great experience for me. We used the power of the arts to release the creative potential of the students.
(Artist)

There were two other whole school public presentations during the year. A Christmas drama prepared by teachers and students with the assistance of a dramatist culminated in a concert in December which was well attended by parents. It featured an original piece based on the Grinch story and an adaptation of the Huron Carol story by students in Grades 1–4, and a shadow play on Christmas memories and original short plays by Grades 5–9. The dramatist shares her thoughts on the project:

The curriculum link was explored through the differences in the Huron and French culture and tradition at Christmas time. This piece was very successful through integrating song, story, tradition and history into dramatic expression. It allowed the students to appreciate two perspectives on a topic. The soundscape was powerful in that it allowed the audience to go back in time, to a storytelling session which involved a deep perspective and learning experience for the children. Storytelling, narration, tableaux, soundscape, song, music, character development, drumming, rhythm, movement and choral speech - it was all there. The coordinator threw herself into this project. It was good to work with an artist/teacher who has that creativity and passion. We always debriefed at the end of the day about how the class went, and if there were glitches we would problem-solve on a creative level. She listened and respected my ideas. I really appreciated her writing down children's ideas and answers which served as a resource in developing the script and the overall arch of the piece. There were a couple of times when the children would contribute their ideas and we would agree to steer in a direction that was appropriate; a moment of impulse and enlightenment. (Artist)

The tile project [a multiplication table chart made up of 196 individual tiles with numbers carved in and glazed] illustrates how difficult students can be reached. D has a lot of behaviour problems, but he is brilliant; he could knock off those tiles so fast. He loved doing them and helping me clean up. Once he was sent to finish some math, and he wasn't getting it done at all, so I said, "Maybe if you finish your work, you could come and help me." He finished that work in two minutes and then was able to help me. You can see him opening up; his mindset just needs to be changed. You have to really love these kids from your heart. They will do anything for you if you ask them and if you respect them. (Artist)

Another segment of the Christmas presentation featured a shadow play which worked in the end but caused frustration in its creation:

It was a lesson in making mistakes, but mistakes lead you to different and new ideas! (Artist)

A school-wide theatre project of songs, poetry, dance and drama created by the students with the help of theatre artists was presented on the afternoon of May 26 and repeated at an evening performance at the request of the parents.

The content followed a timeline related to the social studies curriculum, beginning with the Battle of Batoche and ending with contemporary issues. The themes of despair, loss and hopelessness in some of the content reflected the difficult situations that some of the students cope with every day. One teacher commented on the students' engagement in this production:

The kids were very motivated for the show; they all wanted to be in it. I saw them writing their songs at recess. If they could be that motivated all the time, it would be terrific. (Teacher)

Another memorable project was the creation of three quilts by the Grades 2, 4 and 5 classes. Each quilt related to social studies themes under study: nearby communities, symbols of Alberta, and a map of Canada featuring all the provinces with their provincial flowers, birds and trees. These quilts have been on display in Ottawa as well as at conventions in Alberta. They now hang proudly in the school library.

The Grade 1 teacher, in his third year of teaching, was particularly pleased with a storybook project featuring Curious George visiting Caslan School. The students composed the story together and created the illustrations with the help of a visual artist. The books were copied and bound and each child was given one as a souvenir. Even at the end of Year Two, the teacher said that this project had been a benchmark for him and that he will always evaluate future activities against his Curious George unit. He also composed a mathematics song which the class sang regularly to help them learn and remember their number facts: again, a new teaching practice for him. This teacher had embraced ArtsSmarts with an open mind. Although he had no arts background and had doubts about his ability to use them in his classroom, he was willing to learn:

I'll try anything to help my kids. I find that if you can take something and incorporate it and truly integrate it into what you are doing then it's really effective - not an addition, but an integration. (Teacher)

Video projects were always popular with the children, and provided valid curricular links, as shown by this student's comment:

The camera work was fun because we got to make movies and watch them after we were done. I liked the presentation in the gym where we watched all the movies together with our parents and laughed. At the time we were studying Drama in Language Arts. So the camera did help us a lot in learning about drama. (Student)

Throughout the year, 30 artists visited the school for varying periods of time, collaborating with teachers in a wide range of activities. All but one of the artists conducted sessions in several different classrooms, with five working in all classrooms and the others working in an average of four classes. Curricular links were most frequently made to social studies topics, including cultural traditions.

In all, a total of 24 ArtsSmarts projects, lasting from one half-day to six weeks, were completed. A complete listing of Year 1 activities is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 ArtsSmarts Projects at Caslan School in 2003/04

DATE and DURATION	ACTIVITIES	GRADE	SUBJECT	THEME	ACTIVITIES	COST	COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
September 2, 3, 4 Three days	Daniel Gervais Walter Quinn Gerald White Theatre Prospero	K-9	Language Arts Drama, Music, Dance	Experiencing various art forms; expanding students' and staff's concepts of art	Story telling, role playing, listening to music	\$1,608.40	
September 16-Oct.3 Three weeks	Richard Zywotkiewicz	1-9	Language Arts Social Studies	School and community	Photography Interviewing Creating video	\$5,956.43	Children interviewed some elders. Parents saw videos
September One half day	Sonja Houle Barry Sawka Rocky Dumais	K-9	Language Arts	Literature, culture	Storytelling	\$560.50	
October One week	Meredith LaRocque	1-9	Science Social Studies Phys. Ed	Seasons, Rocks Water, Cinderella	Creative dance	\$1,827.68	
October Two days	Susan Dean	3	Science	Fossils	Creating clay tiles	\$1,550.96	Artist lives in community
November Three days	Clint Buehler	3-6	Science Language Arts	Recycling	Creative writing	\$2,678.63	
November	Ken Ditchburn	6-9	Science		Creating cartoons of science concepts	\$600.00	
November Half day	Deborah Delaronde	K-5/6	Language Arts	Métis children's stories	storytelling	\$256.00	
December Two weeks	Bonnie Blasetti	1-9	Language Arts Social Studies Math, Health	Dr. Suess, The Huron Carol, Legends	Shadow theatre Creating plays for concert	\$3,221.21	Parents attended concert
December Three days	Susan Dean	ECS	Art	Christmas	Creating clay nativity scenes	\$899.00	Artist lives in community
January One month	Doreen Curnitsky	1-6	Science, Social Studies Language Arts	Trees, Alberta regions Métis culture	Painting Collage	\$4,930.64	
January Seven days	Patricia White	2, 4, 6	Social Studies	Culture, Alberta	Quilt making	\$3,513.61	Quilts displayed at school board meeting
February Three days	Margaret MacPhearson	5-9	Language Arts	Historical fiction	Creative writing	\$796.00	

Table 3.3 ArtsSmarts Projects at Caslan School in 2003/04 cont'd.

April Two days	Theresa Paternaude	3, 5/6	Social Studies	Métis traditions	Beads: creating infinity patterns	\$228.18	Artist is a local elder
March One and a half days	Cindy Oxley Kirk McLeod Paul Mercier	5-9	Social Studies Health	Story of Louis Riel	Actors presentation to prepare students to attend play in Edmonton	\$2,282.00	
April 5,6 Two Days	Lillian Copp	2-4	Social Studies, Science	Métis culture Aboriginal crafts	Making cornhusk dolls, miniature moss bags and fishscale flowers	\$384.46	Artist is a local elder.
April One day	Walter Quinn	1-9	Social, Language Arts	Traditions, culture	Storytelling, Singing		Artist lives in community
April 27-May 26 Six weeks	Michelle Sereda Cindy Oxley Phil Sarsons Theresa Grocholski Richard Zwyotkiewicz	K-9	Drama, Music Social Studies Language Arts Dance Art	Events and issues Battle of Batoche, To contemporary times	Composition of songs, poems and dances by students: videotaping, stage performance Lighting, props	\$23,972	Parents and other community members viewed two performances
May 31-June 18 Three weeks	Theresa Grocholski	1-2	Language Arts, Art	Curious George James and the Giant Peach	Creation and illustration of class's own Curious George story (Gr.1) Papier maché peaches and clay creatures (Gr.2)	\$2,840.00	
May	Margaret Desjarlais	4	Social Studies	Métis arts	Weaving on small looms	\$195.00	Artist lives in community
June Three weeks (not continuous)	Lillian Kopp	2-4	Social Studies Health	Family histories Métis arts	Creating dolls representing grandparents	\$810.00	Artist is a local elder
June 7-10 Four days	Susan Dean	K-3	Science Social Studies	Perspective Using nature to create art	Creating plaques as fathers' day gifts (Gr.1) Coiled pots (Gr.3)	\$2,054.00	Artist is a local potter
June 3,10,11 Three days		6/7	Social Studies Science, Art	Japan Japanese theatre; masks	Maskmaking using Raku method of glazing and firing		
June Three days	Walter Quinn	1-6	Social Studies Science, Music	Aboriginal traditions and culture	Living in tipis and a trapper's cabin	\$1,026.50	Artist is a local elder

Students, teachers and artists completed evaluation forms after each project. Analysis of participants' ratings and comments reveals a high level of satisfaction on the part of all groups. Detailed analysis of these evaluations is provided in Chapter 4 under Findings.

Professional Development

A number of associated professional development activities associated occurred this year:

- Teachers and administrators attended the ATA Fine Arts Conference in Banff in November. They also visited two CAPES schools in Calgary for the purpose of seeing successful arts integration in action. CAPES (Calgary Arts Partners in Education Society) supports arts-based programs in several Calgary schools to observe classes and speak with teachers about principles of collaboration and arts integration.
- The coordinator spent time with each teacher throughout the year, helping them to plan projects and to prepare for visiting artists.
- The coordinator and principal attended an ArtsSmarts conference in Halifax in November.

YEAR TWO ACTIVITIES

ArtsSmarts presented new opportunities and challenges for staff and students during the 2004/05 school year. Students were used to participating in a variety of arts activities in the midst of core subject classes. They were becoming familiar with concepts in visual art, drama and creative writing and were also more comfortable with performing in public. The returning staff also had had a year of experience with arts integration.

A new principal and three first-year teachers joined the staff. None had any fine arts training, but all had been informed about ArtsSmarts during interviews and showed interest in learning to collaborate with artists and integrate arts into their teaching.

Despite lower than expected student enrollment resulting in some loss of funding, the school was allowed to keep one more teacher and one more aide than normally allowed according to the teacher/student ratio guidelines. The school also gained a full-time counselor. The jiggling and fiddling programs continued under the AISI grant, and the school continued to work on the Moral Intelligence Program, concentrating this year on the virtue of self-control.

One requirement of ArtsSmarts is that teachers should initiate proposals for projects. This had been a problem in Year One. Teachers with no arts experience had no idea how to use the arts in teaching core curriculum. The coordinator tried to address the problem by bringing artists to the school to demonstrate how integration can work, and by suggesting projects the teachers could try, hoping that as the year progressed, they would propose projects of their own. Some did initiate projects later in the year, but there was still resistance on the part of some teachers to the new program, with complaints it had been imposed on them, they didn't feel qualified, and that it took time from the regular curriculum.

The introduction of four new staff in Year Two again necessitated teacher orientation to the concepts of collaboration and integration. While the new teachers in Year One possessed training in the arts, those appointed in Year Two had neither experience nor arts background. Continuing resistance from other staff also contributed to a situation in which, again, few ArtsSmarts proposals were initiated by teachers. In March 2005, the coordinator was assigned full-time to the classroom, and one of the other fine arts specialists was appointed as coordinator.

Management and Coordination

In Year Two, Caslan received \$89,000, of which \$65,000 was allocated for projects and \$5,000 for professional development.

The coordinator scheduled artists' projects and arranged for them to have planning and consultation time with teachers. Some artists were returning at the request of teachers; the coordinator initiated other visits. Evaluations of the projects were again collected and tabulated by the coordinator, as well as the preparation of the formal report required by ArtsSmarts which summarizes the activities and their outcomes.

In April, the principal, assistant principal, new coordinator and another staff member met with district personnel and a consultant to formulate new objectives for Caslan School. A full-day workshop was held in April, and a second in June, attended by the whole staff. Participants defined a mission statement, identified specific objectives for the next three years, and developed a strategic plan for achieving the objectives. In the section on ArtsSmarts planning, staff decided that each teacher would submit at least two project proposals to the coordinator and create and teach at least one arts integrated lesson per month in Year Three.

As in Year One, the principal reviewed and approved prospective projects before implementation. Artists' fees were set using guidelines suggested by ArtsSmarts and the artists themselves.

Description of Activities

Year Two of ArtsSmarts at Caslan saw fewer artists but more projects. Some artists came several times and stayed for longer periods. In total, 13 artists visited the school and completed 29 projects.

Students and artists created several murals in Year Two, adding interest to the hallways. All were related to curricular concepts: one used geometric shapes related to math lessons, while another featured cityscapes and skylines. Possibly the most interesting was a painting of rocks surrounding the school drinking fountain, in which the fountain became a waterfall. One of the year's highlights was the creation of a very large mural with Aboriginal themes, begun late in Year Two and completed and mounted in Year Three.

One of the most popular projects with students and teachers alike was a drama production, which featured two short plays—one on endangered rainforests, and one on the Persons' Case.

Now I know I'll never forget about the rainforest! (Student)

The project most often cited as a favourite among older students was conducted by a local potter, who helped the students create masks from geltrate molds. The geltrate had to be spread on their faces and allowed to set, causing stress for some.

The kids were afraid; there was trepidation about breathing. Six decided to do it. There was no pressure on them, and I made sure they could back out. It was one on one, in a little room. First I put the geltrate on, then the plaster; I read them a story and talked to them while the plaster dried for twenty minutes. Everyone who started, finished. They were so proud of themselves. It was a huge trust experience as they worked through their fear, and I really got to know them. (Artist)

One objective for the ArtsSmarts program was to incorporate more Métis culture in school activities. Many students enjoyed the visits of a storyteller who helped them appreciate their history:

The storytelling with B was awesome. I learned a lot about the "Old Times". I thought history was all cowboys and Indians, but she helped me realize that there was peace and not all wars. It helped me learn what a legend is and taught me more about history when she told all of the old Métis stories. It made learning a lot better than just sitting in class writing notes! It wasn't only me who enjoyed it. I could tell by the way that the other students were quiet and all of their ears were open. I could even tell that the teachers were enjoying the storytelling. (Student)

Interestingly, while three teachers spoke positively of this storyteller in interviews, two others criticized her for bringing different material and activities to the class than what had been agreed upon during planning.

Here is how one student describes her favourite project of the year:

There were a lot of artists and art projects this year, but the movies and stories that we did with R were the best. We shot the movies during Language Arts. I liked it because it helped me understand what kind of shots there were and how much pressure actors face. It was fun because we had the choice of what to make the video about. It sort of helped me in class because I knew how to put myself in other people's shoes and understand POV's (Point of view). While I didn't get to work with the camera, I got to be in the video. I worked hard on an idea for a horror movie I would love to do it next year: the characters are made and the script is almost finished. I want to act as a career, so it was cool to finally work with a cast and a good plot. I can't wait until R comes back!

Another student reflects about her year as she prepares to leave the school.

I am going into Grade 9 at a different school next year and will miss all these artists coming to Caslan and doing things for our school and making it prettier. What I will remember for the rest of my years is when Ms. D put geltrate on my face. I was scared at first because I thought that I would suffocate, but when she put the straws in my nose and I was able to

breathe easier I started to relax as she read me stories. Ms. D. also taught the Grade 9's to throw a pot on the potter's wheel, and she helped the Grade 8/9's make faces with little people sticking out. It taught me that beauty is in the inside as well as the outside, and taught me to try other things. It will get me places.

Table 3.4 summarizes Year Two ArtsSmarts activities. Eleven activities (38%) were related to Aboriginal themes.

Professional Development

The following training and in-service opportunities associated with arts integration were provided in 2004/05 school year:

- In September, the teaching staff attended a one-day workshop organized by CAPES schools in Calgary. They participated in sessions on arts integration, and visited two schools.
- Beginner teachers were visited by consultants in core subjects, and attended in-services for first-year teachers.
- Staff attended a presentation at Caslan School by Joanne Murdoch, art therapist.
- Three after-school workshops were held for teachers, presented by artists working in the school: one on African drumming, one on creating hand-thrown porcelain bowls, and one on story-telling.
- All staff participated in strategic planning sessions led by an educational leader from outside the school district. They examined the school's mission and purpose, studied curriculum goals and developed plans for improvement of ArtsSmarts program delivery in Year Three.

Table 3.4 ArtsSmarts Projects at Caslan School in 2004/05

DATE	ARTIST	GRADE	SUBJECT	THEME	ACTIVITIES	COMMUNITY
September	Doreen Curniski	K/1/2	Math Social Studies	Shapes	Cityscapes and landscapes with geometric shapes murals	Murals in halls for public viewing
September	Doreen Curniski	K/1/2	Math language	Alphabet, patterns	Creation of patterns using student names	
September	Doreen Curniski	K	Science	Colours	Examined colours and shapes of autumn leaves; created colours	
September	Doreen Curniski	4	Social Studies	Alberta	Painted landscapes of Alberta's four geographical areas	Art on display for public
October	Doreen Curniski	1	Science	Body parts	Explored visual representation of hands, heads, legs, arms, feet, and toes; drawing	
October	Doreen Curniski	1	Science	Colours	Painting pictures of school; explored colour	Art on display for public
October	Doreen Curniski	1	Math	More and less	Constructing cubes of different size and colour	
October	Doreen Curniski	3	Science	Community	Collages and paintings of rural and urban skylines	Art on display for public
October	Doreen Curniski	4/5/6	Social Studies	Pioneers	Paintings and murals of Red River carts	Art on display for public: part of Métis history

Table 3.4 cont'd.

October	Doreen Curniski	2	Science	Water	Painting and drawing; lakes,rivers	
October	Doreen Curniski	3	Science	Rocks	Drawing rocks in normal and magnified form Mural of waterfall around water fountain	
November	Doreen Curniski	5	Science	Clouds	Large mural of clouds during sunset	
November	Doreen Curniski	5	Social Studies	Canada	Paintings on canvas of provincial flags	Art on display for public
November	Doreen Curniski	6/7	Science	Forestry	Large mural depicting flora and fauna from ground level to treetop	Art on display for public
November	Doreen Curniski	2	Social Studies	Community	Collage of Community Activities	Art on display for public
November Five days	Susan Dean	7/8/9	Math	Multiplication Tables	Clay tiles etched with numerals, fired and glazed; mounted in classroom	
November Two weeks	Quinn Davis	2-9	Social Studies, Math, language	Patterns (math), Africa	African drumming	
November Four days	Denise Miller	K-9	Culture, language	Métis culture	Storytelling	Christmas production
December Two days	Susan Dean	K	Social Studies	Family	Creation of handprint plaques with Elders	Project executed at Elders' lunch at Community Center.
December Two weeks	Michele Sereta	K-9	Language Social Studies	Oral traditions, storytelling	Turning stories into a drama presentation	Parents came to production
December One week	Bonnie Blasetti	K-9	Language, Social Studies	Aboriginal stories	Worked with Michele	Part of Christmas concert
December Four days	Sharon and Shirley	K-5	Social Studies	Family, community, pioneers	Métis Christmas crafts	Artists are mother and daughter from community
March Ten days	Richard Zywockiewicz	K-9	Art, Math, Social Studies, Literature, Music	Legends, Native culture	Children prepared stories and poems, made a video	Videos taken home for viewing
April Three days	Ray Germain	3	Science, Art	Rocks	Field trip to collect rocks; jewelry-making	Jewelry used for gifts, fundraising
April	Susan Dean	6/7	Social Studies	China	Porcelain bowls thrown on wheel,glazed	On display, then taken home
May Ten days	Shaun Phillips	3, 5, 7	Social Studies, Science	Rainforest, Persons' case	Drama, creative dance	Parents attended production
May	Susan Dean	7/8/9	Social Studies	Canadian Geography	Students' hands and faces cast in geltrate,painted in provincial flag theme with matching display shelf	On display for public
May	Ed Plamondon	1, 2	Language Arts	Story sequence	Creating Dr. Seuss books	Books went home with children
June	Ian Mulder		Social Studies Art	Community	Created large mural for outside wall	Symbols of Métis culture visible to passersby

YEAR THREE ACTIVITIES

As in other years, there were changes in personnel and classroom populations at Caslan School. Two of the three fine arts specialists had left at the end of Year Two, leaving the coordinator as the only staff member with an arts background. However, a new first-year junior high teacher was a creative writing specialist and was open to using arts integration in his teaching.

In Year Three, student enrollment was 136. All classes had combined grades; there were two fewer teachers and one less teacher aide. Two new teachers were introduced later in the year to replace teachers who went on leave.

The jigging and fiddling programs funded by the AISI grant continued, with all students attending jigging classes three times weekly. In January 2006, the school and the larger community were greatly affected by the sudden death of the jigging instructor who had been a powerful presence in the school and a positive role model for students. After a period of mourning, the students resumed jigging on their own, taking the initiative to arrange for supervision while they practiced and coached the younger students until a new instructor was hired.

The large mural depicting symbols and traditions of Métis life completed in Year Two was mounted on an outside wall of the school, where it is clearly visible from the road.

The school continued with implementation of the Moral Intelligence Program as mandated by the school district, with a focus on empathy in Year Three. Posters and projects such as a tile mural, in which each student created a tile representing caring and empathy, were displayed throughout the school.

I have loved working with the students of Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement and hope that their newfound sense of personal and cultural pride is passed on to those following in their footsteps. I have learned enormously from my attempts to bring arts integration into the lives of students and staff. Teaching through the arts has the power to present academic material in a manner that is both relevant and thought-provoking. (Coordinator)

Successful collaboration is an art unto itself and presents an additional layer of challenge for teachers. Sharing one's classroom with an artist requires trust and co-operation. If teachers and artists have not had specific training by which to acquire collaborative skills, this can be a difficult juggling act resulting in frustration on one or both sides. Many projects that fell short of their potential did so due to breakdowns in the collaborative working process. Sometimes teachers did not make their academic goals and expectations clear. Sometimes artists did not make their ideas clear. Sometimes one side of the team was overly attached to specific details and was not really listening or willing to be open and flexible. I would love to see targeted hands-on training for teachers and artists so that the collaborative process can be one of sharing and teamwork instead of a struggle or a burden. (Coordinator)

There were other notable characteristics of Year Three that built upon the foundation created in the previous years. All artists' visits were positive experiences and resulted in successful projects. The students demonstrated continuing growth in artistic skills. The teachers began taking more initiative in creating project proposals.

Management and Coordination

In Year Three, Caslan again received \$89,000 from ArtsSmarts, of which \$65,000 was allocated for projects. The school spent \$43,014 on projects.

ArtsSmarts continued to be administered by the coordinator under supervision of the principal. Under the provisions of the strategic plan designed at the end of Year Two, each teacher was required to submit at least two ArtsSmarts proposals during the year. Teachers were also expected to design and teach one integrated lesson plan on their own each month. Not all teachers fulfilled these expectations, but others planned more than the required minimum.

Description of Activities

In Year Three, 11 artists visited the school to collaborate in a total of 17 projects. Seven of the artists were new to the school and four were returning for third and fourth visits.

Once again the Christmas concert was very well attended. It included a drama presentation facilitated by the artist who had helped students create the very successful "Memories and Milestones" production of Year One. The Provincial Minister of Education was present at this concert.

Another effective project was a giant map of Canada painted by Grade 6 /7 students on some unsightly folding doors that stretched across the stage. Besides reinforcing the geography of Canada for the students, the mural improved the appearance of the gym and was accessible to everyone in the school for reference.

A local potter designed a tile mural to reflect this year's Moral Intelligence theme of empathy. This project was requested by the counselor and included students from kindergarten to Grade 9. The artist describes the project best:

We designed a picture of four hands in a diamond pattern with a stylized globe in the center. The picture was cut into roughly 155 pieces. We worked with each class and after talking about what empathy means, each child made a tile, using carving, drawing and layering techniques depicting what empathy meant to them. The arms were glazed in shades of the four sacred colors: red, yellow, brown/black and white, representing the four races, directions, and seasons. The center, depicting a stylized plant, was glazed in blues and greens, and the outside glazed in jewel tones. The mosaic was mounted in a custom-made solid ash frame stained black. Over a meter square in size, this piece is a stunning project. The kids were fabulous and we had a great opportunity for discussions on the subject of empathy. (Artist)

A favourite project with Grade 6 students was the construction and painting of six picnic tables which were placed in the school yard for students' use. The project was conceived and developed completely by the teacher, with very satisfactory results:

On the tables we painted the flags of Alberta, Canada, Buffalo Lake, the Metis logo, self-portraits, and an Oilers' logo. Of all the ArtsSmarts projects I have done, this by far was the best. The kids loved it, and not only have my students made practical use of the tables but so have the teachers. It was a great community and team building exercise, with a curricular link to every subject I teach. (Teacher)

A junior high science teacher conducted a successful project on the solar system:

The overall concept was for students to create a mural of the solar system. They were required to calculate the relative distance from the sun to the nine major planets of the solar system, and accurately represent them on the mural. In so doing, they were connecting their knowledge of the solar system with math principles. They had to use cross multiplication and basic math operations to determine the ratios for each planet, and have an understanding of its characteristics to properly represent each one. Connections between the curriculum and the arts activity were strong. By completing the visual art project, the students had the basis for a major research project about the planets. The ArtsSmarts project in conjunction with the research assignment provided a good final product for the space exploration unit. (Coordinator)

Grade 6 and 7 students did copper-red pots in conjunction with their unit on China. They learned the history of porcelain, the most difficult clay to throw. I did a demo at a staff meeting, and over a period of two days, helped each staff member throw a pot. Then I took them home and fired them. Every one is different; not a single one cracked. They have a whole new understanding of the process... they'll never see a hand-thrown pot in the same way again. (Artist)

For the community concert, I wanted to give a theatrical experience that would excite them. I showed them what you can do when you don't have a lot to work with for physical facilities. The stage is small, so we had eight risers built by a kind and capable community member, and we did the performance in the round, with the kids in the middle of the gym, and the audience all around. We made our own lighting, using a very simple technique at very little cost. (Artist)

Each person's art reflects his or her own experience, so each student's work will be different. There is to be no criticism of others' work, and no throwing away of work. Art is a process; quality evolves from being there and trying. The teachers are often amazed at the results from students who are most troublesome in class. They are often the best artists. (Artist)

If time and budget allowed I would try to incorporate some kind of project with every science unit. There are strong connections that can be made between science and the arts, especially since science can be an abstract subject and the arts bring in a concrete element. (Teacher)

Another class also did a solar system project, this time creating papier maché models. Again, the students were required to study scale, relative sizes and distances of the planets from each other and from the sun, resulting in forging cross-curricular connections between science and math, combined with the artistic technical skills of molding papier maché and painting the finished products. Their models were suspended from the ceiling where students could refer to them. Students expressed satisfaction at seeing their work displayed.

Cultural Days, held in late May, was a project which brought the school and community together at Buffalo Lake Settlement. The students spent time with elders, learning various cultural skills: bannock making, trapping/snaring, fire-making, hide-tanning, meat-drying and story-telling. Later, students had an opportunity to show their newly gained proficiency to peers from a school on a neighbouring Métis settlement.

Table 3.5 outlines the ArtsSmarts activities in Year Three:

Table 3.5 ArtsSmarts Projects at Caslan School in 2005/06

DATE	ARTIST	GRADE	SUBJECT	THEME	ACTIVITIES	COMMUNITY
Oct. 7	Jacqueline Guest	K-9	L.A		Writing workshop	
October	Ian Mulder	K/1	Science	Colour mixing	Mural Colour mixing	Mural on display for public
Nov. 2-4	Richard Zywockiewicz	6/7	L.A.	Christmas story	Editing and video	Video available for viewing
Dec. 12-15	Cindy Oxley	K-9	Drama, L.A.	Christmas	Christmas play	Community attended concert
Feb. 5-10	Vanessa Sabourin	K/1	Social Studies	Past/present/future	Working on a play	Parents invited to play
Jan. 18	Maureen Devich	2/3	Social Studies	Communities	Quilting	Quilt hung for viewing
February	Robert Cahill	3/4	Science		Soapstone carving	Students took objects home
Ongoing	Susan Dean	K/9	Social Studies	Empathy	Tile mural made by students	Mural to be hung for public view.
Mar. 20-24	W Passmore	2/3	Science		Making puppets	Students produced puppet show
April	T. McEwen	6/7	Science	Fossils	Fossil making: art objects created from plaster of Paris	Students took finished product home
March	Ian Mulder	5/6	Science	Solar System	Paper maché models of solar system	Students took projects home

Table 3.5 cont'd.

March	Ian Mulder	8/9	Science	Solar System	Mural of solar system in hall	For public viewing
March	Ian Mulder	3/4	Science	Light; opaque/transparent	Acrylic painting on canvas	Individual paintings to take home
April	Ian Mulder	6/7	Social Studies	Canadian Geography	Mural of Canada map on gym doors	On view for everyone
May	P. Rossman	3/4	Language Arts	Animals	Pencil crayon artwork	
May 23	David Bouchard	K-9	Literature	Reading	Talk and book sharing	Presentation to the whole community
Jun. 5-8	W. Passmore	5/6	Social Studies	Caring and empathy	Making puppets	
June	Ian Mulder, R. Plamondon	5/6	Math Social Studies	Measuring Symbols of Canada	Design and build table: Painting	Table for use by everyone

Professional Development

The following in-service opportunities were provided in the 2005/06 school year:

- All teaching staff visited the CAPES Science Center in Calgary.
- The ArtsSmarts coordinator attended the ATA Fine Arts Conference in Edmonton.
- All staff participated in a soapstone carving workshop conducted by Robert Cahill, who also worked with the students.
- All staff/students/ and some community members attended a Literacy Workshop by a Métis author.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

A brief synopsis of the overall budget for the project is provided in Table 3.6. Caslan School received \$283,000 from ArtsSmarts during the three years of implementation. Of this amount, the school spent approximately \$238,000, or 84% of the total grant.

The largest expenditures were in Year One, with about \$27,000 directed toward start-up and administration costs. Of the total amount spent over the three years, 74% was allocated directly to projects. These expenditures included artists' fees, accommodations and project supplies. Administration and start-up fees used 17.6% of the total grant. Professional development accounted for just 6.4% of the funds spent, and travel expenses used 1.8%. No funds were spent in the capacity building category.

Average per-pupil costs were calculated by dividing expenditures in a given year by the student enrolment. Per-pupil costs were highest in Year One (\$957), due to start-up and administration costs and the larger number of projects undertaken. The per-pupil average of \$597 in Year Three reflects the smaller number of projects undertaken in that year.

Table 3.6 Financial Summary for Caslan Project

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	
REVENUES				TOTAL
Revenue From ArtsSmarts	105,000	89,000	89,000	283,000
Coordinator's .5 Salary From AISI ¹	28,500	30,000	31,500	90,000
Total	133,500	119,000	120,500	373,000
EXPENDITURES				
Allocations for Projects	69,081	65,000	43,014	177,095
Start-Up	14,050			14,050
Administration	13,000	19,000		32,000
Professional Development	4,462	4,535	5,766	14,763
Travel	2,000		2,100	4,100
Communications				
Capacity Building				
Coordinator Salary	28,500	30,000	31,500	90,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	131,093	118,535	82,380	332,008 ²
Cost per pupil for each year	\$957	\$912	\$597	
Average per pupil cost over three years				\$2,466

1. An AISI grant paid the salary of the .5 ArtsSmarts coordinator. This salary is included as project revenue and expenditure. The figure, supplied by NLSD personnel, reflects salary plus benefits.

2. \$36,675 of the total Artsmarts grant was not spent by the school at the conclusion of Year 3.

SUMMARY

ArtsSmarts brought a rich variety of aesthetic experience to the Caslan School community during its three years of implementation. Over 50 artists conducted classes in visual arts, drama, music, dance, video, storytelling and creative writing, collaborating with teachers to integrate their art with core curriculum content.

ArtsSmarts began Year One with experienced teachers with no fine arts training, and first-year fine arts teachers with no classroom experience. With little input into implementation decisions, staff did not know what to expect. Despite these challenges, the coordinator brought 30 artists to Caslan for 24 projects, including two creative stage performances that were well attended by the community. Most teachers participated willingly and welcomed artists into their classes as they began to see the possibilities for new approaches that motivated their students and helped reinforce curricular concepts. The school's appearance began to improve as new displays of student art began to fill bulletin boards, and murals decorated walls and doors. There was new emphasis on Métis culture in curriculum and arts content.

Year Two saw the arrival of a new principal, four new teachers and, midway through the year, a change in coordinator. Thirteen artists visited the school and collaborated with teachers for 29 projects. Students continued to develop their artistic talents as they created visual art, wrote plays and produced videos. Community involvement increased through higher attendance at performances and through some ArtsSmarts activities conducted at the settlement. Although most projects were successful, teachers

were still not submitting many proposals of their own. To address this problem, staff developed a strategic plan for Year Three which required each teacher to submit at least two ArtsSmarts proposals to the coordinator during the next school year and plan and teach one integrated lesson to their own classes at least once a month.

Year Three brought 11 artists to Caslan. This year, all 17 projects were initiated by teachers, resulting in clear expectations and effective teacher/artist collaborations. Teachers now felt ownership of their projects and knew how to create cross-curricular links to other subjects. Their new-found confidence produced the highest project approval ratings of the three years.



Photo: Courtesy of Amanda Hack, ArtsSmarts Coordinator

Tile Mural Detail

4. Findings

This chapter reports the aggregate findings from data collected over the three-year period of the study and attempts to assess program impacts on the students, staff, artists and community. Cumulative results on the indicators selected and the data emerging from focus groups, interviews, surveys and project evaluations are presented and discussed. These findings are then summarized in relation to the project goals.

Readers are reminded that this three-year intervention was atypical of ArtsSmarts projects in many aspects.⁸ Nor can causality for either positive or negative findings in this study be wholly attributed to ArtsSmarts due to the many other variables at play. These include the jiggling and fiddling programs and the Moral Intelligences initiative introduced over the same period of time which also had a strong presence in the school.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

ArtsSmarts' impact on student attitudes toward school, level of engagement and their perceptions of what they were learning was assessed through individual interviews, focus groups, class discussions, informal conversation, classroom observations and their own written accounts of favourite projects. Additionally, we examine the quantifiable data with respect to achievement, attendance and behaviour, including standardized test scores, report card marks and attendance and disciplinary statistics.

Academic Achievement

One of the school's objectives for ArtsSmarts was to improve students' academic achievement. Although teachers and students cited numerous instances of arts activities reinforcing understanding of curricular concepts, pre/post measures for units of study to demonstrate this were not tracked. There was no improvement in standardized test scores. Alberta schools administer Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) to students in Grades 3, 6, and 9 each June in core subjects. Caslan scores declined in all three grades tested, in all subjects, during the first two years of the program. Scores recovered somewhat in the third year, but not to the level achieved in the baseline year before ArtsSmarts was introduced. Comparison with the control school shows that while Kikino's baseline scores were lower than Caslan, Kikino scores were higher than those at Caslan by the end of Year Three.

⁸ Standard programs are usually funded to this level for a school district, region or province-wide program; an advisory committee of community stakeholders oversees and guides the program; project proposals are initiated by teachers in schools and evaluated by a selection committee of education and arts representatives according to established criteria.

Table 4.1 shows the percentage of Caslan students in each grade meeting the acceptable standard of 55%. Provincial expectations are that 85% of students will achieve this standard.

Table 4.1 Provincial Achievement Test Scores Showing Percentage of Students Achieving a Grade of 55% or Higher 2003 - 2006

	2002/03			2003/04			2004/05			2005/06		
	Caslan	Kikino	Prov.	Caslan	Kikino	Prov.	Caslan	Kikino	Prov.	Caslan	Kikino	Prov.
Gr.3	N=21	N=18	N=39011	N=18	N=14	N=34843	N=14	N=16	N=37717	N=12	N=23	N=33601
L.A.	76.2	63.2	90.1	55.6	50	90.5	28.6	75	91.1	8.3	34.8	89.8
Math	61.9	55.6	89.2	21.1	26	89.1	15.4	56.3	88.5	27.3	47.6	90.2
Gr. 6	N=14	N=20	N=38848	N=12	N=20	N=33962	N=13	N=9	N=39236	N=13	N=11	N=32324
L.A.	76.9	75	89.2	36.4	70	87	16.7	44.4	85.9	38.5	81.8	87.6
Math	92.3	30	85.3	25	60	85.8	7.7	27.3	85.7	41.7	54.5	82.7
Soc. St.	85.7	60	86.2	25	60	86.4	0#	22.2	87.2	38.5	9.1	86.8
Science	92.3	60	87.8	23.1	80	88.2	21.4	36.4	88.1	23.1	54.5	86.7
Gr. 9	N=15		N=36858	N=16		N=35098	N=2*		N=39941	N=4		N=39466
L.A.	69.2		89.2	25		88.9	0		89.1	50		88.2
Math	6.7		71.8	0		74.7	0			0		76.5
Soc. St	46.7		82.4	7.1		82.2	0		80.8	20		81.8
Science	46.7		75.6	6.3		74.7	0		76.3	50		76.1

The following table shows a comparison of raw scores for the same tests.

Table 4.2 Provincial Achievement Tests, Average Raw Scores 2003 - 2006

		2002/03			2003/04			2004/05			2005/06		
		Cas	Kik	Prov.	Cas	Kik	Prov.	Cas	Kik	Prov.	Cas	Kik	Prov.
Grade 3	max. score	n=21	n=18		n=18	n=14		n=14	n=16		n=11	n=23	
L.A.	100	57.1	55.6	69.4	53.4	53.2	69.9	45.3	64.2	71.4	43.2	45.2	69.3
Math	43	23.2	22.2	32.2	14.5	17.9	31.9	16.6	23.1	33	17.7	22	33.2
Grade 6		n=14	n=20		n=12	n=20		n=12	n=9		n=11	n=11	
L.A.	100	60.1	58.9	58.6	47.8	28.9	68.4	36.1	20.9	66.1	44.4	51.7	65.3
Math	54	34.8	22.8	37.3	18.1	37.7	38.3	16.3	20.5	37.8	21.4	22.2	35.7
Soc. St.	50	31.1	23.8	34	19.3	28.3	33.7	14.9	20.8	34.5	20.2	16.4	34.6
Science	50	29.8	25.7	34.3	16.8	28.7	34.1	17.8	20.4	34	17.8	20.9	34.1
Grade 9		n=15			n=16			n=2			n=4		
L.A.	100	56.4		66.9	47.8		67.6	36.1		67.8	55.8		67.6
Math	50	15.8		32.2	18.1		33.8	16.3		33.5	17.3		31.3
Soc. St.	55	26.8		37.5	19.3		36.4	14.9		36.8	25.6		37.9
Science	55	27.7		35.9	16.8		36.9	17.8		36.3	25.5		34.4

NOTE: This table shows raw scores only. Tables showing standard deviations along with raw scores for the two schools and the province are shown in Appendix A

There are many factors that may account for Caslan's poor academic achievement results in relation to provincial averages. Caslan has a higher than average number of children with special needs.⁹ Absenteeism is a problem. First and second year teachers outnumber more experienced staff. The jiggling and fiddling programs consume considerable class time. However, these variables have not changed at the school since the beginning of this study so they cannot solely account for the decline in achievement scores or for the poor comparison with Kikino School which has similar social conditions and also has jiggling and fiddling programs.

One possible explanation for the drop in scores is that with the focus on arts integration, the steep learning curve teachers experienced in cross-curricular planning and collaboration, and other simultaneous interventions, less time was spent on core curricular concepts than previously.

The Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT) of fluency and comprehension was administered individually each year in late May to six randomly selected students per grade from Grades 3–9. While there was significant growth in some individual scores from year to year, especially in comprehension, at the end of the three years most of the grade groups were still reading below grade level on 13/14 sets of measures.¹⁰

Table 4.3 GORT Scores for Caslan School 2004 - 2006

	2004		2005				2006			
	Fluency	Compre- hension	Fluency	Compre- hension	Fluency Growth	Comp. Growth	Fluency	Compre- hension	Fluency Growth	Comp. Growth
Grade 3	2	2.5	3.3	5.3	1.5	2.8	2.6	3.8	-0.7	-1.5
Grade 4	3.9	3.8	3.2	4.8	-0.7	1	4.6	6	1.4	1.2
Grade 5	5.2	0.4	4.6	6	-0.6	0.6	5.3	5.7	0.7	-0.3
Grade 6	7.4	6.3	5.1	5.6	-2.3	-0.7	4.7	6	-0.4	0.4
Grade 7	7.6	7.1	6.7	8.5	-0.9	1.4	6	7	-0.7	-1.5
Grade 8	9.6	8.8	7.8	8.5	-1.8	-0.3	8	8.8	0.2	0.3
Grade 9	8.4	6.9	7.6	8.7	-0.8	1.8	7.1	9	-0.5	0.3

Few comparisons can be made with the GORT scores at Kikino School. No testing of Grade 6 students occurred in Years 1 and 2, and only Grades 1 and 2 were tested in Year 3. Table 4.4 shows the comparative data available. Caslan 2004 scores were higher in both grades on all four indicators. In 2005, Kikino students scored higher in the passage section for both grades, and Caslan scored at least two grades higher than Kikino in comprehension. Undue importance should not be attached to these reading proficiency scores, as the samples are small, and students randomly chosen. A different sample could provide very different data.

⁹ In 2005/06, 17% of Caslan students were designated as special needs.

¹⁰ In late May, the expected grade level would be the grade number +0.9. For example the expected score for a Grade 5 student would be 5.9.

Table 4.4 GORT Scores for Caslan and Kikino Schools 2004 - 2005

	2003/04				2004/05			
	Passage		Comprehension		Passage		Comprehension	
	Caslan	Kikino	Caslan	Kikino	Caslan	Kikino	Caslan	Kikino
Grade 4	3.9	3	3.8	2.4	3.2	4	4.8	2.6
Grade 5	5.2	3.9	5.4	3.4	4.6	5	6	3.2

Report card marks were retrieved in the four core subjects for pupils in Grade 4–7 who were in the school during the baseline year and the three years of the study: 23 students in all. Each student in the sample has sixteen sets of marks: a set in each core subject for each year, creating a total of 368 sets. Each set contains three marks: one for each reporting period in the year. In the four years, 144 sets of marks improved, 11 remained unchanged from September to June, and 210 sets declined. The table below shows the mark changes by subject.¹¹

Table 4.5 Changes in Report Card Marks 2003 - 2006

	Number of Instances Marks rose	Number of Instances Marks Unchanged	Number of Instances Marks Fell
Language Arts	44	4	45
Mathematics	32	1	58
Social Studies	42	3	47
Science	26	3	60
Total	144	11	210

There is some anecdotal evidence from teachers and students themselves to indicate that ArtsSmarts projects helped them to understand and remember curricular concepts. One teacher reported that her students scored highly in a test on Alberta geography after completing a unit in which an artist helped them create painted landscapes of various landforms. Students said that creating a tile mural of the multiplication tables helped them remember their number facts. Murals and mobiles of the solar system helped students understand and retain concepts such as relative size and distances, according to teachers and students themselves. Painting a mural of a map of Canada helped students remember the placement and relative sizes of the provinces. One student spoke of her new understanding of the relative sizes of the provinces. She said she had seen many maps of Canada, but had never noticed any details.

Unfortunately, without a controlled study of classes taught the same content by the same teachers and identical pre and post-tests, there is no way of knowing if ArtsSmarts activities did indeed lead to improved learning and retention of curricular skills and concepts. Cross-curricular links were made, and new teaching strategies that suit intuitive, artistic learning styles were employed in ArtsSmarts projects. Students were deeply engaged in drama, music, and the visual arts projects using a range of

¹¹ Minor discrepancies in total figures are due to three students missing one set of marks due to absence during one term.

learning modalities suited to students with strengths in Gardner's categories of visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic and musical intelligences. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which this affects learning.

I can close my eyes and see that map: I didn't know P.E.I. was so small that it would fit into a tiny corner of Alberta!
(Student)

In considering the total picture of academic achievement at Caslan, it may be prudent to heed the thoughts of arts educators such as Elliot Eisner, who mused that the truly important facets of learning cannot be measured quantifiably.

Attendance

One of the stated objectives for ArtsSmarts was to improve student attendance. While staff members believed that students were attending more regularly, and parents reported that their children were more enthusiastic about going to school, the attendance records show a net increase of 3% over the baseline year. As seen in Figure 4.6, the percentage of students who achieved the 85% attendance standard increased 7% in the first year, remained the same in Year Two and declined 4% in Year Three.

Table 4.6 Attendance Figures for Caslan School 2003 - b2006

	2002-03			2003-04			2004-05			2005-06		
	No. of students	No. > 85%	% > 85%	No. of students	No. > 85%	% > 85%	No. of students	No. > 85%	% > 85%	No. of students	No. > 85%	% > 85%
Gr.1	16	11	69	17	7	41	14	7	50	10	4	40
Gr.2	19	11	58	15	9	60	17	9	53	12	8	67
Gr.3	22	16	73	19	13	68	15	12	80	13	8	62
Gr.4	15	7	47	21	17	81	15	10	66	15	12	80
Gr.5	14	4	29	20	11	55	17	13	76	14	10	71
Gr.6	14	8	57	14	7	50	17	6	35	14	8	57
Gr.7	3	3	100	15	9	60	11	6	55	15	4	27
Gr.8	19	8	42	5	4	80	12	8	66	12	6	50
Gr.9	19	7	37	15	8	53	3	2	66	8	3	38
Total	141	75	53%	141	85	60%	121	73	60%	113	63	56%

It should be noted that attendance can be affected by many factors beyond the school's control. In Year Three, for example, an unusually high number of deaths in the community kept some children out of school for several days. No consistent cohort patterns were evident in the cumulative data, but the annual overall attendance figures roughly mirror the volume of ArtsSmarts projects offered in a given year. That is, they are highest during the two years with the greatest number of activities. Anecdotal reports do indicate that many students were more eager to attend school when ArtsSmarts projects were in progress. Students, teachers and parents all said that students were more motivated to attend school when an ArtsSmarts project was underway. Parents noted changes in attitude toward going to school.

Kikino, the control school, was able to improve attendance through concerted efforts to call parents and institute home visits. During 2004/05, only 22 percent of Kikino students had 85% or better attendance. In 2005/06, attendance improved significantly, with 58 percent of students achieving the attendance standard.

I used to have trouble getting them up to go to school. Now there is no problem — they want to go, because there is always something going on. (Parent)

Behaviour

Caslan School's third objective for ArtsSmarts was to improve student behaviour, by developing social skills, resulting in less fighting and bullying, and fewer disciplinary incidents.

Anecdotal reports indicate that there has been considerable improvement in students' attitudes toward each other and toward the school. Students show more respect for school property, evidenced by reduction in vandalism and graffiti. They show pride in their artwork displayed around the school.

Teachers and teacher aides report that students display more cooperation amongst each other, especially when engaged in ArtsSmarts projects. This improved behaviour may be partly due to the influence of the Moral Intelligences Program, which stresses the virtues of respect, self-control and empathy. The jiggling program also demands cooperation among the dancers and teaches social skills. However, many ArtsSmarts projects also require cooperation, patience, waiting one's turn and respecting other students' individual talents, so improved behaviour can be at least partly attributed to the presence of ArtsSmarts in the school. Staff members commented that students who were often the most disruptive shone during one or more of their ArtsSmarts activities, a phenomenon noted in other similar studies (Oreck; 1997; Wahlstrom, 2003).

Kids who are usually fighting were lined up on the floor helping each other: they were great with the notes and the sketching. I was amazed at the detail; it's actually calming for them to be working at details. (Teacher)

The artist brought in blankets, and if you were stuck you sat there and she'd get to you. When I teach math, they are very frustrated if they don't get it, but they don't mind waiting on the blanket. They were out of their desks but still had boundaries. (Teacher)

Now kids say "Thank you" in the lunch room, and they listen to me. (Teacher Aide)

During the three years of ArtsSmarts, students have had many opportunities to be on stage in whole school productions as well as small group presentations. They have become accustomed to explaining their creations to others. Teachers believe that these experiences have helped the children gain confidence and self-assurance, thereby reducing incidents of acting out.

The incidents of unacceptable behaviour have been tracked at Caslan for the past two years, as shown in Table 4.7.

The total number of suspensions in Year Three was higher than Year Two, although suspensions decreased throughout the year from a high of 39 in September to 15 in June. The higher numbers in the final year may have resulted from higher expectations and stricter enforcement of rules as well as the enrolment of difficult new students who had not yet been affected by the ArtsSmarts program.

Behavior incidents seem to be way down this year with my kids. They helped each other in the doll making project. They really listen and ask if they can help. (Teacher)

Kikino School's behavior records shown in Table 4.8 are not comparable, because the Caslan figures represent suspensions, while the Kikino statistics represent incidents noted. Additionally, Kikino has no junior high students and a smaller student population at 102.

Table 4.7 Disciplinary Incidents at Caslan School 2004 - 2006.

Type of Incident	2004/05	2005/06
Fighting	56	40
Bullying	43	51
Defiance	34	68
Disrespect	18	14
Swearing	9	6
Stealing	2	7
Vandalism	2	1
Smoking	2	0
Drugs/Alcohol	1	4
Total	172	192

Table 4.8 Disciplinary Incidents at Kikino School 2005/06.

Type of Incident	2005-06
Fighting	34
Bullying	69
Defiance	72
Swearing	163
Stealing	12
Vandalism	4
Smoking	n/a
Total	354

Student Evaluations of Projects

Students evaluated each project in which they participated, using a star rating scale. The evaluation form was specific to each project, although the questions were the same. During Year One and part of Year Two the coordinator oversaw the completion of the ratings. In the final year, this task was left to the classroom teachers, who did not always ensure their completion.

As shown in the aggregate Table 4.9, students generally rated artists and projects very highly, with the strongest level of satisfaction in Year Three. Students especially liked return visits from artists who had already conducted successful projects in the school. The personality of the artist and his/her ability to communicate at age appropriate level were important factors in success of a project, according to students' comments.

Student Interviews and Focus Groups

The information gathered from student interviews and focus groups and informal avenues is organized into themes below. The interview and focus group questions are found in Appendix B. Further anecdotal

information was gathered through informal conversations with students while they worked at ArtsSmarts activities, as they exhibited their work, and after performances.

Table 4.9 Student Evaluations: Percentage Rating an Item as High* 2003 - 2006

Item	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Number of students in school	137	130	138
Number of Projects	24	29	17
Number of Evaluations Submitted	821	477	74
1. I had fun with Ms.....	73.5	77	86
2. I liked learning about.....	72.5	77	80
3. I liked creating...	73	78	88
4. I understand my schoolwork better from doing...	66	71	84
5. I would like to do this again.	70.8	70.5	92
Average percent of high ratings	71	74.7	86

*Rated 4 or 5 on a Likert scale of 1 to 5.

Students were unanimous in the view that ArtsSmarts had been good for Caslan School. ArtsSmarts made coming to school “more fun” and while projects were going on there was always something to look forward to. They concurred that the school looked more attractive with the new murals and displays of their artwork. They knew that they were being exposed to a wide variety of visual and performing arts experiences which would not have happened without ArtsSmarts.

Their favourite projects were those which ended with a finished product to take home. Unlike most of the teachers, students also enjoyed large-scale productions in which they had a chance to perform on stage. Middle school students recalled the three Christmas concerts and the Rain Forest drama as favourites, while older students named the Year One Memories and Milestones production, the geltrate plaster mask project, and all video filming activities.

Approval of projects was closely linked to approval of the artist. If the students liked the artist, they enjoyed the project: this was true for all age groups. Students did not enjoy projects that were “too hard” or “boring.” When asked to explain, it became evident that the problems were related to artists being unaware of the children’s attention span or unable to relate to students at age-appropriate level. Students’ favourite artists were those who took time to listen to them and respected them. They in turn respected artists who could cope with disruptive students without getting upset. When asked to describe their favourite artists, students most frequently listed respect for students, patience, and sense of humour as the most important traits. Youth and “coolness” were also mentioned. Empathy also emerged as an important quality, although the students did not use that word.

She really listened to our ideas, she always waited for us...He let us play our own music...She respected us, she never yelled... She hugged me when I messed up. (Students)

Students said that ArtsSmarts projects had helped them remember some of their schoolwork, citing the multiplication tile mural, the map mural, solar system projects and paintings of geographical formations as examples. They said they had learned new artistic skills, which they hope to use again. For some, discovering new talent was exciting. Students spoke particularly of the satisfaction they found in working with clay, and in developing their skills in video filming.

Students have learned about Métis culture and traditions through ArtsSmarts. Five recalled the storytelling sessions with a Métis story-teller in Year Two as highlights of ArtsSmarts and three others cited creating paintings of Red River carts. Cultural days at Buffalo Lake Settlement and a stage performance based on Louis Riel were also popular.

I know what it means to be Métis, and I'm proud of my background now. (Student)

Students did not think that ArtsSmarts in itself had changed behaviour. They offered examples of students working together and helping students in difficulty during projects but felt that overall, student behaviour had not really changed.

If they were hiring artists for another year, students would invite those who “liked being with kids” and were patient. One focus group said they would invite artists who could stay at the school longer than a few days. They named their favourite artists from previous ArtsSmarts projects as people they would invite again. If hiring new artists, they would ask for more video artists and more musicians. If they were planning activities for another year, students would include more video, music composition, pottery projects and stage performances that they would create themselves.

IMPACT ON TEACHERS

The influence of ArtsSmarts on teachers was assessed through written project evaluations, surveys, and individual interviews and focus groups held with staff each year.

Teacher Evaluations of ArtsSmarts Projects

A summary of the project evaluations submitted over the three years is shown in Table 4.10.

Teacher satisfaction with their collaborations with artists varied over the life of the initiative. Year One projects were generally coordinator-driven. In Year Two, the number of evaluations turned in declined, and those contained the lowest ratings of the three years. Year Three saw fewer evaluations, but the highest ratings, with an average of 90% of items being rated very highly.

There are at least three explanations for the more favourable ratings in Year 3. Research has found that the most successful program implementations are teacher-initiated. The strategic plan developed in Year Two by all staff, and in keeping with standard ArtsSmarts program practice stated the need for teacher-initiated projects. All projects in this year were planned and proposed by the teachers, so that they had ownership and control. They had formulated their own objectives and curricular links so that

each project fit in with the teacher's overall year plan. Additionally, four of the eleven artists were returning for the second or third time, and already had established good relations with the students. A third reason might be that teachers who still had negative attitudes toward ArtsSmarts chose not to do evaluations.

It is notable that the improvement in satisfaction is most marked in the item: *A curriculum link was made with the art form*. In Year Two, teachers believed that a curriculum link was made in only half their projects. That figure jumped to 90% in Year Three, along with significant improvement in items which refer to collaboration and transfer of learning.

Table 4.10 Teacher Evaluations of Projects: Percent of Teachers Rating Items Highly* 2003 - 2006

Item	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Number of Teachers	10	11	9
Number of Projects	24	29	17
Number of Evaluations Submitted	23	17	10
1. The artist met my expectations.	85.7	70.5	100
2. A curriculum link was made with the art form.	76.9	50	90
3. The students were engaged by the artist.	89.3	76.4	90
4. The students demonstrated understanding of the art form.	75	80	90
5. The experience reflected a collaborative effort between the artist and me.	100	58.8	90
6. The students showed transference of learning during non-art time.	36	47.3	80
Average percent of high ratings	77.15	63.8	90

*Rated 4 or 5 on a Likert scale of 1 to 5.

Teacher Interviews and Focus Groups

Much anecdotal information gathering occurred while observing classroom activities, and during informal conversations. Focus groups were more open-ended in format than the individual interviews, with the same questions being addressed, but with additional issues introduced by participants. Strong common themes evolved from the data gathered in focus groups, interviews, and informal conversation. To avoid repetition, responses from all three sources have been combined and categorized, and are discussed here together. Questions posed in interviews and focus group sessions are listed in Appendix C.

Teachers agreed that their students enjoyed ArtsSmarts and benefited from its presence. Examples were given of students with behaviour problems who became very focused in arts activities, producing excellent visual art, writing, or drama performances. They also noted that the children show considerable pride in their work.

You see kids getting more involved with the activity, but you can't really rate that. How do you measure that?

My former students come and take me to show me their work. It is so important for their work to be up.

I've heard kids laughing and having fun. I've had fun. I've had students talk to me with excitement about science class.

ArtsSmarts programming has impacted students positively. It has contributed to improved student attitudes and increased levels of self-esteem. Their definition of art has expanded. Overall, they seem to enjoy artistic explorations in the context of academic classroom instruction and demonstrate pride in their products. As a result of using arts as a vehicle for expression of information, many students appear to have expanded their options for expressing their personal ideas. (Coordinator)

Favourite projects featured strong teacher/artist collaboration, were teacher-initiated and had teacher-designed curriculum links. When asked to discuss their favourite projects, without exception, they named projects that they themselves had planned, sometimes expressing surprise at their success. Teachers also spoke of productive, enjoyable collaborations with artists in which they learned art skills and the artist understood and implemented the teacher's objectives. Preferred projects tended to be small classroom projects which were short in duration (one to two weeks). The one exception was a drama production about the Amazon rainforest which left a very strong impression on staff members, three of whom said it was the strongest project of the three years. Some projects stood out because of teachers' obvious sense of accomplishment, and their satisfaction in seeing the students' success. These were the Curious George project and the creating of clay nativity scenes in Year One, mask making and the tile multiplication table in Year Two, and picnic tables, gym mural and solar system mural in Year Three.

Projects failed when they were imposed on teachers or were poorly planned. Lack of clear objectives and poor communication with artists were also factors. When asked to describe projects that had not worked for them, they cited large-scale projects such as concerts in which they felt they had no say, and which didn't relate to their own curriculum goals. Here they differed from the students, who tended to enjoy the excitement of large performances. There were also instances where the artist did not do what had been expected or could not relate to the children.

The most important element for project success is that it be teacher-initiated and tied to the curriculum. During Year One, the coordinator invited artists to the school and initiated projects in an effort to demonstrate strategies for implementing arts integration. In the end, only several of the 24 Year One projects were initiated by teachers. This pattern continued in Year Two. In Year Three, the school's strategic plan required all teachers to plan at least two curriculum-based ArtsSmarts projects during the year, and one arts-integrated lesson a month. This resulted in fewer projects, but those that were implemented were successful, and teachers were pleased with their results, as evidenced by their high ratings of Year Three projects.

Teachers believed that the two-project requirement was a good idea, as it placed the onus on them to

make ArtsSmarts work. One teacher planned her two projects for early in the year so she could “get them over with”, but she was very pleased with the results and continues to use integration in her teaching. Others delayed their projects until late in the year but were satisfied with results, citing strong curricular connections which they themselves had forged, and good collaboration with artists as reasons for success.

Choosing your own artist and choosing your own project is very important, because then you have a stake in it. (Teacher)

Teacher-initiated projects definitely help with student academic achievement because I already have the goal or outcome in mind when I am planning my projects. I am probably in the best position to create projects that will support or complement student academic achievement because I am the one who is most familiar with the curriculum and is responsible for making sure that my students successfully acquire these academics set out by the curriculum. (Teacher)

For a successful collaboration to take place, the artist must be able to interact well with children and use age-appropriate language and instructional techniques. Some Year 1 projects were unsuccessful because of the artist’s inability to communicate well with students and/or staff. Usually the problems were with classroom management, or the artist’s inability to relate to students at their age level. Some artists ignored the teacher’s objectives and followed their own agendas. These artists were not invited to Caslan again, but artists who were particularly successful in their projects returned for further projects. By Year Three, teacher/artist collaborations were running smoothly.

Some excel at their art, but can’t manage the kids. They get impatient... you need patience. With the behaviour problems at our school, classroom management is hard for a lot of artists. (Teacher)

Sometimes I wanted to be more involved with the art and the artist, but I had to play the role of teacher/manager to be sure that certain students were doing what they were supposed to be doing. (Teacher)

Teachers also cited a number of artists who seemed to have a natural gift for teaching and who related very well to students; their projects were successful.

Adequate time to plan and to interact and exchange ideas with colleagues is essential. Teachers need time together to share ideas and create school-wide initiatives: this is how collaboration is learned. As in any work environment, some of the most successful innovations and problem solutions evolve from casual staffroom conversation and exchange of ideas. New teachers especially need this interchange and mutual support. Caslan teachers, however, are rarely together as a group except at staff meetings. Due to staggered recesses and lunches and supervision requirements, they do not have lunch or coffee as unit. They do not stay after school to work or socialize, especially in winter when darkness and icy roads are a concern. These factors contribute toward a situation which restricts collaboration.

There is much to be learned from the ArtsSmarts approach if one is flexible and open to new ideas. Teachers spoke of instances where things took a different direction than planned, but sometimes turned out better.

We have to be flexible; sometimes things don't turn out the way we planned. I said, "Here's sort of what I'm looking for, but when she came up with what she had in mind, it was different. So what I'm doing now, based on what she did, isn't what I had in mind, but it's actually better. So for me, it's this willingness to be open. Now I'm really pleased with the result. (Teacher)

Sometimes having an artist land on your doorstep can be a good thing. I had no curriculum link, but I worked at it and made one and we all learned. It made me think outside the box. (Teacher)

I've done things with the class that I'd never have done otherwise. (Teacher)

Changes in teacher practice did occur. Teachers reported changes in the way they approached lesson and unit planning. Of the total of 15 teachers involved in ArtsSmarts over the three years, only one said that he would probably never use arts integration in future. The three fine arts specialists and one other teacher said they had always integrated arts in their teaching and would continue to do so. All other teachers (73%) said that it had changed the way they thought about curriculum, and would affect the way they taught in the future.

Teachers felt that initially they were not adequately informed about how ArtsSmarts works. They didn't understand that that it was up to them to take the initiative.

I didn't know anything about the philosophy of ArtsSmarts at the beginning of the year. I didn't know that we were supposed to take the initiative and come up with projects.

This was no longer a problem in Year 3. The strategic planning sessions in Year 2 had clarified teachers' roles in ArtsSmarts projects, and the principal and the coordinator oriented the one new teacher to the program.

I don't see how anyone could go through all this and not be changed. (Teacher)

The experience has definitely changed my teaching practice. I used to have each subject in a separate little box: that's the way we were taught. Now when I plan, I'm thinking, what else can I connect this to? It took me awhile, but it's opened my eyes to possibilities. It'll certainly help me in my teaching career, no matter where I go. (Teacher)

It was evident that teachers did not feel strongly supported by the school district in the ArtsSmarts Program. The perception of lack of support emerged most strongly in Year 2 and was still present to a slightly lesser extent in Year 3. Teachers said that district personnel rarely visited their classrooms and seldom attended school functions. They expressed a need for more in-servicing and support for new teachers. They spoke of having to pay for project materials themselves and of the difficulties in getting reimbursed.

IMPACT ON SUPPORT STAFF

Support staff were affected by the presence of ArtsSmarts in that they were working directly with students, artists and teachers in projects and performances. They were included in pottery and soapstone carving workshops presented by artists, as well as a session on literacy. While participating in the program, they were able to enjoy the benefits of ArtsSmarts without the pressure of having to create proposals and meet curriculum goals. Perhaps because of this, their overall assessment of ArtsSmarts was more positive than their teacher colleagues. A number of themes were revealed through focus groups, individual interviews and informal conversations with support staff.

The presence of ArtsSmarts has been good for the school. All support staff agreed that while there have been problems, on the whole, the students and the school have benefited from the presence of ArtsSmarts.

The second year wasn't like starting over; it took off from the first year and continued. There was progress, because people know what to expect.

It is a good thing; it's just going to take time. There's no magic wand, but I can't picture going back to a "normal" school.

As far as curriculum goes, the Brazilian rain forest production really made a difference for the group I worked with. They really got the concept and they'll remember that. They were so into it, whereas if they'd had it just from a textbook, it would have been in one ear and out the other.

The kids are experiencing special things they aren't going to see in their normal life, but I also like the fact that if a child isn't comfortable doing something, they're not made to do it. Almost none of the artists made a child feel uncomfortable.

I see definite progress—there's artwork everywhere. There used to be bulletin boards, nicely done, but not art—whereas this is artwork, painted, nicely framed, done by the children. And all the new people coming in, all the artists— that is so good for the school.

The appearance of the school has improved. Staff discussed the wide variety of art on view throughout the school and even outside. Pride in the artwork has transferred to pride in the school itself, according to a teacher aide. Others agreed that students not only respect the artwork, but now show respect for the school building itself by not littering or defacing walls and bulletin boards.

Students are so proud of their art. They used to rip things down from the walls, nothing stayed up. We don't see that any more, and they aren't scribbling on the walls as much.

There's definitely less destruction in the halls, less vandalism. Last year, other kids were wrecking artwork and tearing papers off the wall. They are respecting each other's artwork a lot more this year.

Support staff agreed that while there are still serious discipline problems in the school, they believe that overall student behaviour has improved.

They are more respectful of the artists this year than last, but then it's a more respectful class all round this year.

Students with behavioural problems are often very focused when doing arts-related activities. Several examples were given:

Kids still get sent to the office a lot, but this year when they are waiting to see the principal, they will talk to you and not be so angry.

Bullying has dropped dramatically this year—not all the kids, but some for sure. A lot of the fighting last year started with bathroom graffiti and escalated. Now that they aren't vandalizing the walls, it doesn't build up.

A lot of our more severe behaviour kids were really into the drumming.

I've seen shy children working with an artist who brought them out of their shell. It changed their attitude toward other people.

Three teaching assistants said that the school district did not support ArtsSmarts as well as they could. They spoke of the difficulty in getting reimbursed for supplies and expressed regret that district personnel did not attend concerts and presentations as often as they might.

Two assistants felt that teachers had not always taken full advantage of the opportunities available to them through ArtsSmarts.

I don't think teachers were taking enough advantage of the opportunities they had. New teachers that don't understand the program need help. If it's visual and hands on, it helps students learn better.

IMPACT ON ARTISTS

Information was collected from artists through personal individual interviews when possible, but more often through telephone interviews and e-mail. They also completed evaluation forms related to their own projects.

Artist Project Evaluations

The following table presents the artists' evaluations of their ArtsSmarts experiences at Caslan. In Year One, there are more artists than projects because three of the whole-school projects involved several artists. In Years Two and Three there are more projects than artists, because some artists conducted more than one project.

Table 4.11 Artist Evaluations: Percent Rating Items Highly* 2003 - 2006

Year	2003/04	2004/04	2005/06
Number of Artists	30	13	11
Number of Projects	24	29	17
Number of Evaluations Submitted	24	28	10
1.The teacher met my expectations.	87.4	92.8	100
2. A curricular link was made with my art form.	83.3	96.5	100
3.The teacher worked with me in developing the project.	82.6	75	70
4.The teacher made his/her curricular objectives clear.	82.6	89.9	80
5. The experience reflected a collaborative effort between the teacher and me.	83.3	92.8	100
6. The arts coordinator met my expectations,	91.7	96	100
7. I had adequate preparation and reflection time.	70.8	87.5	100
Average percent of high ratings.	83.1	90	92.8

*Rated 4 or 5 on a Likert scale of 1 to 5.

Levels of satisfaction increased on all items except two, with artists reporting 100% satisfaction with five of seven items in Year Three. It is interesting to note that while artists perceived 83% – 100% of their projects as collaborative efforts in all three years, teacher ratings were much lower. In Years 1 and 2, teachers perceived less than half of their projects as collaborative; this rose to 80% in Year 3.

Interview questions for artists are shown in Appendix D. They willingly described their projects in detail, revealing genuine enthusiasm for their work and pleasure in teaching their skills to children. Themes from these interviews are summarized briefly here.

All artists were able to access the materials and supplies needed, and all said that they were satisfied with the results of their work at Caslan. All were willing to return to Caslan.

At the same time, all spoke of the challenges of working with Caslan students. For some, classroom management was a serious problem.

I always had an amazing support system there, but there are some really difficult situations...Sometimes teachers are just stick-handling their way through the day. It's very hard: not all artists can take it. (Artist)

In spite of the difficulties, artists were unanimous in their high regard and concern for the children, and returning artists spoke of bonding with the students:

It's a wonderful thing to go up there, and feel a bit of change each time. Students were always excited and wanted to come out of class and work with me. (Artist)

The kids welcome me like a favourite aunt. Some of them still e-mail me. (Artist)

Although they found the children challenging, the artists recognized their latent artistic abilities and were impressed by how focused the children could become when they were engaged in the task at hand. Artists recognized the challenges of classroom management and special needs of students:

It was hard to see them make such progress and then slip back. The school and I have no control over what happens in their lives outside school. I had two sessions with a girl who was amazing on camera, and was looking forward to working with her again. She could have had a great future in film, but when I went back she was gone. (Artist)

Working at Caslan gave these artists exposure to the community, and allowed them to work collaboratively with teachers to demonstrate and share their skills. By introducing students and community to the various arts and processes of creating art, they were also providing an awareness of the importance of the arts in the learning environment.

In terms of the collaborative process with teachers, while Year 1 artists often found teachers unprepared for their arrival and unsure of how to use them, these problems had largely disappeared in Year 3. By this point, staff knew which artists fit in well and understood the

ArtsSmarts approach. Four Year Three artists were repeat visitors and knew what to expect. One artist felt strongly that first-year teachers should not participate in ArtsSmarts and other similar programs which require collaboration. He had taught arts integration in several school settings and had found that novice teachers are too overwhelmed with the demands of their position to cope with the additional stress of having a visitor in the classroom.

IMPACT ON SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

There are strong indications that the presence of ArtsSmarts has forged new links between the school and Buffalo Lake Community. The Change Day held early in Year One to introduce ArtsSmarts to the school and larger community sent an important signal that things were about to change at Caslan. The raising of the Alberta Métis flag was a powerful symbol of the new connection to the community. Métis counselors and community Elders, school district and government officials and school trustees were all present to participate in traditional games and food, and to view jigging and fiddling performances. Several fiddles were presented to the school by various agencies and individuals, and Métis sashes were presented to visitors.

The school is now a showplace of art, mostly with a Métis theme, connecting it to the community. Probably every home of a Caslan student contains pieces of art created during ArtsSmarts activities. Every student has participated in performing arts productions attended by larger numbers of parents than ever before. The Christmas concerts and the Memories and Milestones production in Year One drew large crowds and positive reviews. There have been several whole school performances planned and presented by the students with the help of visiting artists, who were introduced to the parents. As

well, there was a session for parents by David Bouchard, award-winning Métis author, who spoke of the importance of fostering literacy and writing skills.

Some ArtsSmarts projects have taken place at Buffalo Lake, with parent participation. The Culture Days described in Chapter 3 were highly successful. An Elders' dinner held at the settlement early in Year Two created a strong community link and left a lasting impression. The kindergarten class and their teacher attended the dinner, bringing cookies that they had baked. After dinner an artist helped each child create a plaque on which his/her handprint was pressed beside the handprint of a grandparent or other elder. Their first names were etched above the hands along with the words "*Mamawe Wekotowin*," meaning "We are all connected" and the plaques were later painted and glazed. The Elders expressed great appreciation for this project.

The school administration has taken several steps to strengthen the bond between school and community, including holding Parent Advisory committee meetings and parent teacher interviews on the settlement rather than at the school. While not directly related to ArtsSmarts, these innovations sprang in part from the ArtsSmarts objectives to increase parent involvement at school. Attendance at Parent Advisory Committee meetings has increased from two or three parents to over twenty at times.

Parents have expressed satisfaction with the presence of ArtsSmarts in the school. Several observed that their children appeared more confident and were taking pride in their schoolwork. Parents are pleased about the new emphasis on Aboriginal culture and traditions and want to see even more of this in the future.

I'm glad they're learning about their own history; it was passed over when I was in school.
(Parent)

From what I understand, the school has never had the community involvement that it now has. People are beginning to be proud of our school rather than ashamed. (Teacher)

Parents appreciated the creations of both the students and the artists. They placed a higher priority on having Aboriginal artists than did the students. All parents interviewed felt that it was important to have Aboriginal artists teaching the children Aboriginal art and stories, but none suggested that only Aboriginal artists be invited to the school.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELATED TO PROJECT GOALS

Five objectives for the ArtsSmarts program were identified by the school in its proposal. Based on the evidence gathered in this study, we summarize how well each was attained:

1. Improved academic standards

As to the first goal, improved academic standards, results on all measures chosen were negative. The provincial achievement test scores showed a significant drop in all subjects and grades (3, 6 and 9) from the baseline year to Year Two, recovering somewhat in Year Three, but not to baseline level. Comparisons with the control school on provincial achievement results were negative. Report card

marks for Caslan students, compiled from class tests, daily assignments, term work and teacher observations, showed no net improvement. More sets of marks declined than improved across the three years. Anecdotally, however, teachers and students maintained that ArtsSmarts projects had helped them understand and retain concepts, and there were examples of students doing well on post-tests following an integrated unit of study.

2. More positive attitudes toward school in students, including better attendance.

The second goal, more positive attitudes toward school, is complex to measure. The net increase in students achieving the acceptable standard of attendance was modest, at 3%. Parents, teachers and students, however, reported pupils were more motivated to attend school than previously, and all teachers agree that more students are present when an ArtsSmarts project is in progress. According to data gathered during interviews and focus groups with participants, student attitudes toward school have improved. Concrete evidence of this is seen in the drop in vandalism and graffiti in and around the school. Students appear to be genuinely proud of their works of art displayed throughout the school and are eager to show visitors around and point out their work.

3. Improved social skills

The third goal, improved social skills, is also difficult to assess. If the number of disciplinary incidents is used as a measure, little progress is shown. Between Years Two and Three of the study, reported incidents of fighting dropped, but incidents of bullying and defiance rose. The weight of anecdotal evidence, however, suggests improved cooperation and respect among students. Teachers and support staff maintain that students are displaying more pride and self-confidence, which they say translates to better behaviour toward others.

4. Changes in teacher practice, toward arts integration and cross-curricular connections

The evidence suggests that this goal was being achieved. Eleven of the fifteen (or 73%) of the teachers participating in ArtsSmarts during part or all of the three years of the study, believe that working with ArtsSmarts has changed the way they will teach in the future. They spoke of learning to look at curriculum planning in new ways, seeing different cross-curricular connections and strategies for teaching to different learning styles. They stated that they were introduced to new arts concepts which they plan to incorporate in future classes. Teachers also learned some collaborative skills and became accustomed to having visiting artists in their classrooms. Teachers said that they learned most from projects that they initiated themselves and that these projects had the strongest impact in terms of any change in teacher practice.

5. Emphasis on Métis culture and heritage, resulting in better community relations and increased parent involvement

Caslan's fifth objective for ArtsSmarts was very successfully met. Students have learned about their history in integrated social studies units and literature studies, through visits from storytellers and Aboriginal artists. Métis symbols are displayed throughout the school and the Alberta Métis flag flies

in front of the school. Stronger ties have been forged with the community by holding meetings and parent conferences at Buffalo Lake rather than at the school, by inviting parents to participate in school functions. Caslan students have worked on ArtsSmarts projects on the settlement, sometimes with Elders and community artists. ArtsSmarts has inspired many performances and arts presentations at the school, all well attended.

To summarize then, the first and third objectives of the program were not met on the quantifiable measures chosen, although there are many anecdotal reports of improvement in academic understandings, behaviours and attitudes which must also be taken into account. The second goal was partially achieved, and the fourth and fifth goals for the project were attained.



Photo: Courtesy of Amanda Hack, ArtsSmarts Coordinator

Students working on the Space Mural

5. Implications for Policy and Practice

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the ArtsSmarts program at Caslan School and analyze the factors contributing to the effectiveness of this intervention in order to provide evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice.

It must be acknowledged that there is no way to measure all program effects in absolute terms, especially many of those in the affective domain. We further note that that causality – that is, linking the ArtsSmarts program with the results reported – is hindered by at least two significant limitations: the simultaneous presence of other competing interventions and the impact of considerable staff and leadership turn-over in the school throughout the period of the study. As in any pre-post study without a rigorous control group, the extent to which our findings may be generalizable to other schools is clouded by the inability to conclude whether the effects – either positive or negative – would have occurred without the intervention. It should also be emphasized that the ArtsSmarts initiative at Caslan School was unique in both the size of the grant and its duration, intensity, and ambitious school-wide scope, and it was the school, and not ArtsSmarts, who determined the level of fidelity in program delivery.

Nonetheless, the range of evidence collected across the three years provides a valuable window through which to examine implementation issues and the progress of the school towards its stated objectives for the ArtsSmarts program. In this chapter, we seek to tease out the lessons gleaned from the Caslan experience to provide guidance for future ArtsSmarts and other arts-based learning program design and delivery in Aboriginal settings.

DISCUSSION

There have undoubtedly been important successes since the introduction of ArtsSmarts at Caslan. The school has become a showplace of art. The many colourful murals decorating the halls and classrooms and exterior, the quilts and the pottery: all were accomplished with the help of visiting artists, who would not have been at the school without ArtsSmarts. Incidents of graffiti and vandalism have lessened. Caslan has a growing reputation as an arts-based school. Students have had numerous opportunities to interact with artists and to discover their own latent artistic talents. All students have participated in rich arts experiences, and both students and teachers have developed new skills in the visual and performing arts. There is heightened awareness and understanding of Métis history, culture and traditions on the part of students and community. Student engagement and attitude have improved. The many occasions to display their artistic accomplishments and to perform in public have bolstered students' confidence and self-esteem. Artists have introduced students to potential careers in the arts, and benefited themselves from new avenues to

display their talents in the community. Successful artists, many of them Aboriginal, have established lasting relationships with the school. Teachers have been introduced to new ways of looking at curriculum and classroom instruction in a more holistic manner. All stakeholders believe the school climate has become far more positive. Parent involvement has increased, and community members have had new opportunities to experience multiple forms of art and drama. Possibly the change most appreciated by parents is the students' new awareness of their own culture, and the pride they exhibit as they share their art and their stories with the community.

There are also serious challenges that the school and the ArtsSmarts program have been unable to overcome during the three years under study. Most importantly, academic achievement on several measures declined significantly from the baseline year. Student behavior and social skills as measured by disciplinary incidents statistics did not improve, although greater cooperation among students was noted during arts projects, and at-risk and disruptive students experienced new success. There was only a 3% net increase in the number of students meeting provincial standards of attendance. Teacher turnover remains an issue, as does program leadership and continuity. Until recently, there has been little teacher ownership of arts-based collaborative planning and instruction, and the professional development to support this remains inadequate.

The ArtsSmarts project was intended to improve chronic academic failure and attendance and behavior issues, transform teacher practice, and involve parents and community in their children's education. As summarized in the previous chapter, the evidence that can be quantified reveals that two of these objectives were attained and a third minimally so. There are many complex and inter-related reasons which may help to explain these mixed findings. Some explanations are found in the research literature, some in the program implementation, and others are related to school capacity.

When ArtsSmarts was introduced at Caslan, few conditions that the literature describes as necessary for success were in place. A high percentage of staff were novice teachers. Chronic teacher turn-over as well as changes in school leadership hindered program continuity and retention of accrued teacher expertise. The absence of formal music and art instruction in previous years meant that students, like staff, lacked a strong arts foundation on which to build. The school's isolated location mitigated against a comprehensive in-service program to support the initiative, and there was no fine arts consultant in the district to provide technical expertise to those who needed assistance. The busing schedule ruled out regular after-school activities, which meant that students were sometimes pulled out of core instruction to rehearse performances or work on projects. The jiggling, fiddling and moral intelligence programs made additional competing demands on a crowded timetable.

Perhaps the most serious obstacle was the school's lack of readiness for its introduction and implementation. The decision to adopt arts integration as a solution to academic and social problems in the school was made quickly and urgently, with little input from staff and community. There was insufficient provision made for in-servicing and collaborative planning. A novice teacher was made responsible for showing experienced teachers how to integrate arts into a curriculum which she was just beginning to learn herself. Few teachers possessed both classroom experience *and* arts training, and there was very little mentoring or support available for them at school or district level.

Many of the results reported in this study are supported in the research literature. Improved attitudes towards school and self-esteem are similar to those found in Uptis, Catterall, Wilkinson, Meredith and Wahlstrom. The finding that high-risk, low-achieving students often benefit the most from arts integration is echoed in Rabkin and Redmond, Stevenson and Meredith. Caslan teachers corroborated other research (Day, Paterson) in identifying adequate planning time and extensive in-servicing as priorities for effective collaboration. Research by Horowitz and Ingram and Reidel showed that integration works better with in-depth long-term projects than scattered short ones. That finding is borne out in Caslan's high approval ratings for Year 3 ArtsSmarts projects, which were fewer in number but longer in duration. Caslan's decision to incorporate Métis art and culture and to strengthen bonds with the community is supported by studies (Bell, Stevenson, Kavanagh) which found these to be important elements for success. Caslan's lack of improvement in standardized test scores and report card marks over the three years is not the norm, according to the literature. Clinton, Catterall, Meredith, Uptis and Smithrim all reported significant gains in reading and mathematics scores in their research. Indeed, Catterall found positive effects on academic measures to be strongest for low-socioeconomic students. Other studies reported no significant changes in test scores, but no research examined found a significant drop in scores over three years.

LESSONS LEARNED

The experiences of Caslan School provide useful lessons for enhancing the potential of school-wide arts-based interventions to positively impact student learning.

At the district level, the presence of fine arts consultants, the provision of systematic professional development in the arts for teachers, opportunities to visit other schools, mentoring programs for novice teachers and concrete help with program implementation and teaching strategies appear to be necessary factors for optimum success. Without this support, significant and lasting change in teacher practice is unlikely to occur. It is also reasonable to assume that programs introduced with short-term funding are unlikely to have lasting effects, and adequate resources must be in place to sustain the initiative when the outside intervention ends.

At the school level, another set of critical ingredients must be in place. Teachers must be consulted in the initial planning stages to develop ownership and commitment to the chosen approach. Staffing must be stabilized to maximize investments in professional development, planning and program continuity. Strong instructional leadership should be present to ensure the intervention is aligned with and supporting core academic goals. Staff focus and the likelihood of achieving the program's objectives will be diluted if too many innovations are being implemented simultaneously.

The Caslan experience suggests that the introduction of ArtsSmarts on a school-wide basis requires the following personnel: an experienced principal with some knowledge of the place of the arts in the curriculum, at least one seasoned teacher with a fine arts background who can serve as a coordinator, a fine arts consultant at Central office who can provide appropriate in-servicing, mentors for first-year teachers, and creative teachers who are committed to the program philosophy, are open to innovation and collaboration, and who possess strong grounding in core curriculum instruction. Optimum

professional development support includes extensive in-servicing on integration theory and practice, mentoring of new teachers, collaborative planning time for teachers, opportunities to visit other fine arts schools, as well as exposure to Aboriginal culture and traditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This leads to a number of broad recommendations for policy and practice addressed to the various partners and stakeholders who seek to improve outcomes for First Nations students through innovative arts and culture programs and partnerships such as ArtsSmarts.



Arts/Education Sponsors and Program Innovators

1. Before entering into educational partnerships with schools, funders and program innovators should consider both district and school capacity to implement and sustain an effective program and ensure these essential pre-requisites are in place prior to providing the grant.
2. Sponsors should ensure that an intensive in-service component for artists and teachers has been built directly into the program funded.
3. Research on promising practices should be collected and widely shared to assist other schools.



Schools and Educators

4. Engage in adequate pre-planning and consultation with staff and community. Confirm that the program is closely aligned with established school goals. Do not proceed without securing buy-in, especially from teachers who must implement the program.
5. Participant groups should jointly formulate appropriate objectives for the intervention adopted. The program's objectives and indicators of success (and how they will be measured) must be understood and supported by all stakeholders.
6. Start small (perhaps in one subject area) and consolidate new practices before expanding across the curriculum. This is especially important for schools in challenging environments.
7. Invest in ongoing meaningful professional development to support new teaching strategies and provide opportunities for reflective practice, allowing teachers to assess their own learning.
8. Ensure adequate teacher-artist planning and collaboration time, including debriefing after each project for lessons learned.
9. Create visual displays of finished products and performance opportunities for students to showcase their talents.

10. Incorporate Aboriginal art, history and culture in the projects and create ways for the Aboriginal community to be engaged in the program.

11. Establish processes to regularly monitor the impact of the intervention on the school's goals for learning. Gather pre and post-performance data to evaluate the program's impact and guide instructional decisions. Review frequently to adjust strategies as needed.



Policymakers

12. School districts must commit to provide adequate school support to ensure the goals of the project are achieved. This support includes experienced leadership, a qualified and stable staff, initial and ongoing professional development, resources, and technical support in program planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluating. Districts must also be prepared to intervene proactively should student progress be negatively affected.

13. Governments and districts must adopt a long-term approach to interventions to improve student achievement. Explore ways to build capacity in low-performing schools, especially those embarking on school-wide innovations to improve student success. Ontario's Turnaround Schools Program¹² is a useful model for supporting such schools with sustained attention and resources.

14. Both governments and school districts must find new solutions to address recruitment and retention issues for schools in challenging settings. Students in such schools deserve our best teachers and most experienced administrators.

15. Districts and governments should invest in independent evaluation of innovative school programs. Participants who have devoted considerable energy and resources to new programs are understandably anxious to see them succeed. It is tempting to focus on anecdotal evidence such as student enthusiasm, positive comments from the public, high profile performances and art displays and use them as "proof" that the intervention is making a difference. Rigorous independent research can provide objective data to help inform program planning and decisions.

16. Districts need to support students' skill development in the arts through the formal fine arts curriculum. An arts-infused approach to instruction is not intended to be a substitute for the teaching of the arts disciplines.

17. Districts desiring to increase aboriginal content and culture in the curriculum could look to arts programs as a vehicle to accomplish this goal.



Faculties of Education

18. Ensure that teacher pre-service training includes familiarization with arts-integration theory and techniques. Systematic training for teachers on standards for practice in the area of arts integration

¹² <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/help.html>

delivered in cooperation with arts agencies would foster higher success rates in delivery of such programs.

19. Increase the number of qualified First Nations teachers entering the school system and ensure that all graduates of teacher training programs have some background in First Nations content and pedagogy.

20. Provide all teacher candidates with grounding in the rudiments of action research and collaborative practice.



Aboriginal Leaders

21. Aboriginal leaders should take a proactive role in engaging their communities in the goal-setting and collaborative efforts necessary to successfully implement arts programs to benefit student achievement.

22. Provide incentives and support for Aboriginal people to enter and stay in both the teaching profession and the arts.

23. Encourage Elders and others to share their knowledge and skills of traditional culture with students. Provide training for those willing to work with staff and children in school settings.

CONCLUSION

This case study of Caslan School illustrates the many challenges of tackling chronic under-achievement through a school-wide intervention such as ArtsSmarts. Despite the obstacles documented in this report, there were notable successes that should be celebrated. Although the results have been mixed thus far, the experiment has yielded many valuable lessons to guide Caslan and other schools across Canada who seek to positively impact student success through the arts.

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APPENDIX A

Average Raw Scores on Provincial Achievement Test

CASLAN SCHOOL AVERAGE RAW SCORES, 2003-2006

		2002/03		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	Max Score	A.R.S.	S.D.	A.R.S.	S.D.	A.R.S.	S.D.	A.R.S.	S.D.
Grade 3		N=21		N=18		N=14		N=11	
L. A.	100	57.1	9.7	53.4	11	45.3	12.8	43.2	6.9
Math	43	23.2	7.2	14.5	7.2	16.6	5.5	17.7	8.1
Grade 6		N=14		N=12		N=12		N=	
L.A.	100	60.1	8.1	47.8	16.4	36.1	11.2	44.4	8.9
Math	54	34.8	6.9	18.1	7.7	16.3	6.4	21.4	9.5
Soc. St.	50	31.1	5.4	19.3	6.1	14.9	5.3	20.2	7.3
Science	50	29.8	5	16.8	7	17.8	6.4	17.8	6.6
Grade 9		N=15		N=16		N=2		N=	
L.A.	100	56.4	11.3	43.5	9.1	48	1.4	55.8	9.5
Math	50	15.8	6.8	12.4	4.9	13.7	3.5	17.3	3.9
Soc. St.	55	26.8	7.2	18.7	4.1	15.5	3.5	25.6	8
Science	55	27.7	9.7	18.6	5.7	18.7	3.5	25.5	9.6

* A.R.S.=average raw score S.D.= standard deviation

KIKINO SCHOOL AVERAGE RAW SCORES, 2003-2006

		2002/03		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	Max. Score	A.R.S	S.D.	A.R.S	S.D.	A.R.S	S.D.	A.R.S	S.D.
Grade 3		N=18		N=14		N=16		N=23	
L.A.	100	55.6	13.9	53.2	13.4	64.2	15.4	45.2	16.4
Math	43	22.2	8.6	17.9	8.4	23.1	8.2	22	9.8
Grade 6		N=20		N=20		N=9		N=11	
L.A.	100	58.9	9.7	28.9	8.8	20.9	6.8	51.7	9.1
Math	54	22.8	9.2	37.7	10.2	20.5	6.9	22.2	5.6
Soc. St.	50	23.8	9	28.3	9.3	20.8	5.7	16.4	4.7
Science	50	25.7	7.3	28.7	6.9	20.4	5.5	20.9	6.1

PROVINCEWIDE AVERAGE RAW SCORES, 2003-2006

		2002/03		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	Max.Score	A.R.S	S.D.	A.R.S	S.D.	A.R.S	S.D.	A.R.S	S.D.
Grade 3		N=39011		N=34843		N=37717		N=34572	
L. A.	100	69.4	13.9	69.9	13.2	71.4	13.4	69.3	13.3
Math	43	32.2	8.1	31.9	7.9	33	7.8	33.2	7.7
Grade 6		N=38848		N=33962		N=39236			
L.A.	100	58.6	13.2	68.4	13.7	66.1	14	65.3	13.9
Math	54	37.3	10.2	38.3	10.5	37.8	10.3	35.7	10.5
Soc. St.	50	34	8.7	33.7	8.5	34.5	8.7	34.6	8.9
Science	50	34.3	8.4	34.1	8.7	34	8.2	34.1	8.7
Grade 9		N=36858		N=35098		N=39941			
L.A.	100	66.9	12.9	67.6	13.4	67.8	1.4	67.6	13.2
Math	50	32.2	10.5	33.8	10.4	33.5	10.8	31.3	11.2
Soc. St.	55	37.5	9.8	36.4	10.3	36.8	9.8	37.9	9.6
Science	55	35.9	9.9	36.9	10.4	36.3	10.3	34.4	10.3

APPENDIX B

Interview and Focus Group Questions for Students

1. What was your favourite ArtsSmarts activity this year? What did you like about it?
2. Was there an activity that didn't work well for you? Why?
3. Can you think of an example of an ArtsSmarts activity that helped you understand and remember lessons in math, social studies, science or reading?
4. Do you have a favourite artist who came to Caslan? What did you like best about this person?
5. What makes a really good visiting artist?
6. Does doing art and music help you learn other things? How?
7. Did ArtsSmarts help you learn more about your Métis history and culture?
8. Do you think that having more arts in the school has changed the way any students behave? Has it changed the way you behave?
9. If you were planning all the ArtsSmarts visitors and projects for next year, what kind of artists would you invite to the school? What activities would you have?
10. Are there any other ideas you would like to talk about? Anything else you would like to say about all the ArtsSmarts things you have done?

APPENDIX C

Interview and Focus Group Questions for Teachers and Support Staff

Year One

1. How did you visualize ArtsSmarts working in your classroom? In what ways has it been as you expected? Differences?
2. Which activities were most successful in your view? Why?
3. Which activities were least successful in your view? Why?
4. Have the activities enhanced your students' learning and understanding of concepts in core curriculum? Any examples?
5. Has the presence of ArtsSmarts changed the way you teach and plan to teach curriculum content? If so, how?
6. Has ArtsSmarts changed the way you look at school curriculum?
7. (For teachers who were at Caslan before start of study) In your opinion, have student attitudes and behaviour changed this year?
8. Do you have any recommendations for next year?

Year Two

1. (For new teachers) Were you introduced to the concept of arts integration at University? Did you see any examples of arts integration during your practicum? Did you have any opportunities to plan or teach arts integrated lessons? Describe.
2. What was your most successful project this year? What made it work?
3. Was there a project that did not work for you? Why do you think it didn't work?
4. What, for you, are the components of a really great project?
5. Has ArtsSmarts changed your teaching style? If so, how?
6. Have the activities enhanced your students' learning and understanding of concepts in core curriculum? Any examples?
7. Has ArtsSmarts changed the way you look at school curriculum? If so, describe how.
8. In your opinion, have any of your students' attitudes and behaviour changed in the last two years ?
9. Do you have any recommendations for next year?

Year Three

1. In the strategic plan which the staff designed for the school last June, each teacher was to create at least two ArtsSmarts projects during this school year. How did that work for you?
2. You were also expected to plan at least one arts-integrated lesson a month on your own. How did that work for you?
3. Please describe your most successful project this year: what made it work so well?
4. Has ArtsSmarts changed your teaching style? If so, how?
5. Have the activities enhanced your students' learning and understanding of concepts in core curriculum? Any examples?
6. Has ArtsSmarts changed the way you look at school curriculum? If so, describe how.
7. In your opinion, have any of your students' attitudes and behaviour changed in the last three years ?
8. Was ArtsSmarts a good thing for Caslan School? Why or why not?
9. Is ArtsSmarts sustainable here at Caslan? What factors would have to be in place for it to continue successfully?

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for Artists

1. Please describe the project you did at Caslan School.
2. Can you describe how you and the teacher planned your project at Caslan?
3. Were you able to visit the school before the project began, for detailed planning and preparation?
4. Did you do any workshops or professional development work with Caslan staff? Were you able to access the materials you needed for the project?
5. Did you have enough time to confer with the teacher outside of class time?
6. How was the coordinator involved in your project?
7. Were curricular links to core subjects part of the planning process? Were the links successfully made by the end of the project?
8. Do you feel you were prepared for the classroom management issues at Caslan School?
9. Any thoughts you would like to share about working with the Caslan students?
10. Were you satisfied with the results of your project at Caslan?
11. Would you return to Caslan for further projects?
12. What do you think are the elements of a successful arts integration project?
13. Any other comments or suggestions for the school staff?

ArtsSmarts at Caslan School

Yvette Stack

What do we know about school-based interventions to improve outcomes for aboriginal students? This longitudinal case study yields important insights to this question.

Author Yvette Stack documents the impact of the ArtsSmarts program in a small K–9 school in northern Alberta serving children of a Métis community. Struggling with poor student achievement, attendance, behaviour, and parental involvement, the school received a \$317,000 grant to tackle these persistent challenges by infusing the core curriculum with arts.

Her report describes the three-year ArtsSmarts intervention at Caslan and traces its impact on students, staff, participating artists and community. An overview of the research related to arts-based education and aboriginal schooling is connected to the findings. The final chapter discusses important questions of capacity and conditions for success for such sweeping initiatives and concludes with a set of recommendations for policy and practice.

Stack's insightful commentary illuminates the complexity of school improvement and the internal and external structures necessary to support it. Other schools and districts undertaking similar journeys will find both inspiration and practical advice to help them succeed.

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