

INTERN REPORT: STRENGTHENING THE ARTIST-TEACHER-SCHOLAR TRIANGLE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

by

LARISSA NIKOLA-LISA

“I FEEL REAFFIRMED IN MY BELIEF THAT PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ARTISTS AND TEACHERS FIRST STEM FROM THE TWO OF THEM FORMING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP. WHEN PEOPLE SIT DOWN TO TALK AND EXPLAIN THE BASICS OF ART AND THE BASICS OF ACADEMICS TO EACH OTHER, IT FACILITATES COOPERATION AND A WILLINGNESS TO EXPLORE AND EXPERIENCE NEW THINGS.”

—BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION, OCTOBER 17, 2002

Northwestern students from the School of Education and the School of Music who earned a *Partnership through the Arts* certification did indeed explore new territory in the field of arts integration and education. The certification process exposed students to an intensive internship in a Chicago Public School and offered coursework surrounding community issues and partnership themes. From this experience, Northwestern interns have articulated a deep understanding of this kind of work. One intern remarked, “As far as arts education in general goes, all of us in this class obviously see its benefits. But now, with the information from this course, I can actually put up a pretty darn good argument as to why I favor such a deep role for the arts in education” (Blackboard Discussion, November 21, 2002). The knowledge and skills they have gained from learning about their art form, planning lessons, collaborating with teachers and artists, and working with youth has helped them define and articulate their ideas about art partnerships in education.

Although the participants in this program were varied in terms of personality, interests, and background, they all had one characteristic in common: a deep love for their art form and a strong desire to share this love with others. For this group, art really did have the power to make you “think outside the box.” This program pushed the interns beyond the ivory walls of Northwestern and into the urban classrooms of Chicago Public Schools. The partnerships in which the interns were involved functioned symbiotically; while Northwestern students reaped the benefits of experiential fieldwork, the arts organizations and schools took advantage of Northwestern’s resources, utilizing the talents of the interns and their performance groups and gaining much needed access to the Northwestern libraries and auditoriums. As one Northwestern intern, Nicole Macrini, put it, “We’re young and have all this energy and ideas. We’re bubbly and optimistic, and the community needs us” (Personal Interview, April 24, 2003).

Through service learning, *Partnership through the Arts* interns began to identify the roles, responsibilities and opportunities available for teaching-artists and, by extension, these roles were played out in their own lives on campus. Jamie Howe recalled, “I am just more

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aware of the attitude and the environment on campus. And I’m more aware of different opportunities where people could be doing more, in the community” (Personal Interview, April 24, 2003). Soon afterwards, Jamie sparked an educational outreach component to Northwestern’s a cappella group *Purple Haze*. Members of the group developed lessons in conjunction with their performances in order to further educate their audience about the music (See Howe, in this *Journal*).

For example, in December 2002, *Purple Haze* performed at the Chicago Children’s Choir Academy. During this appearance, members of the group engaged students through interactive demonstrations on sound, instruments, and vocal warm-ups. After the concert a select number of students were brought behind the scenes to create and perform their own rendition of a pop song. As a result of this experience, Jamie came to understand firsthand the importance of erasing the boundaries between the performing artist and the community of learners and has become an advocate for moving performance majors out of the practice rooms and into the community—but not just for the benefit of the community. As the interns came to internalize the value of arts education and integration, the interns themselves were awakened to new possibilities for themselves as both artists and teachers. As NU Intern Laura McCann remarked, “Having this experience with kids and teaching has opened up many more avenues toward places that I could perform, or to what I could do with my performances” (Personal Interview, April 24, 2003).

The most widespread and apparent outcome of the *Partnership through the Arts* program was that Northwestern interns learned the meaning of a true arts partnership. Macrini pointed out that the components of a good arts partnership are already out there, they just need to be brought together: “It doesn’t make sense that a university, a school, and an arts program can all have education and outreach programs and yet are not in communication with each other. It’s just a question of getting everyone to open their doors to one another, and then the part-

nership is just right there—it’s completely reciprocal on all ends” (Personal Interview, April, 24, 2003). The interns in no way felt ancillary to the partnership, but rather felt they were vital players in the process. Discussions in the *Partnership through the Arts* courses and the related fieldwork demonstrated that each participant in the program experienced key partnership issues, such as *establishing planning time, communication, collaboration, and relationships throughout the partnership.*

Interns have found that *scheduling common planning time* among the teacher, the artist, and themselves was essential in distinguishing their roles in the partnership and thus keeping the partnership from becoming a disjointed effort. Interns recognized the importance of discovering common goals because prior to the internship experience they had been introduced to the concept of lesson planning, a process that involves setting goals, meeting objectives and standards, and following through with assessment. For many interns, creating a lesson plan sequence was a difficult task. Kate Love recalled her experience: “I think my best



Increasingly sophisticated collaborations develop between interns and classroom students as the guided internship experience expands to include new art forms. Here, Northwestern guided interns ask students about their color selection process and the painting of wood panels for invented instruments.

LARISSA NIKOLA-LISA WORKED AS THE INTERN COORDINATOR FOR NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY’S PARTNERSHIP THROUGH THE ARTS DURING THE 2002/03 ACADEMIC YEAR. A GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, SHE HAS A SPECIAL INTEREST IN VIDEO DOCUMENTATION.

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experience and my hardest experience was the lesson plans we wrote. Just trying to think of something to integrate and how to do it and maintain the integrity of all the subjects involved requires a lot more thought than I thought it would. It's pretty clear, though, that if you can figure that out, then it is worth the trouble" (Personal Interview, April 27, 2003). By beginning with a practical foundation of teaching and artistry, when in the field interns became a part of the dialogue that took place in the partnership and were more willing to share their reflections on the project.

Finding a common language among all participants is another partnership theme that Northwestern students came across in this program. Because the visiting artist, classroom teacher, and researcher naturally approach the partnership with their own terminology, it was necessary for all partners to identify and assimilate their varied vocabulary, so that everyone was on the same page. In the internship Laura McCann experienced, the teaching-artist and the classroom teacher discovered their common language by combining their music-related vocabulary and definitions. Laura was responsible for creating a bulletin board highlighting the chosen vocabulary and definitions, which the students then referred to throughout the lesson. Having a coherent language for the project fostered clear communication among all participants and thus assisted student learning.

Communication took shape in many forms across the internship sites; in fact, the roles for each player within the partnership evolved and expanded in ways that were



Intern Tramaine Wilkes (pictured here engaged in an MIE rhythm activity with children from one of the Chicago schools in Northwestern's Partnerships through the Arts program) recognized early on that teacher and intern fulfilled different roles within the partnership: "They [teaching-artist and teacher] both have something to contribute, something that the other is lacking. Together the two can provide the best overall education for students."

impossible without regular communication and participation among the artist, teacher, and intern. Whether the interactions were via email, over the phone, or through casual and more formal conversations, interns remarked that maintaining constant contact with their partners intensified both their learning and level of involvement. In addition, those students who were successful in keeping communication clear and open found themselves in more substantial partnership roles, such as

observer, documenter, performer, and co-implementer. Interns have taken field notes, designed bulletin boards and interactive handouts for students, demonstrated various instruments and vocal techniques, created songbooks of scores using music technology, led warm-ups, and modeled and shadowed the teacher's and artist's work.

At the same time the artist, teacher and intern fulfilled different roles within the partnership. The goal here was not to function as separate entities, but as a team of collaborators willing to share their expertise. Intern Tramaine Wilkes recognized early on that, "They [teaching-artist and teacher] both have something to contribute, something that the other is lacking. Together the two can provide the best overall education for students" (Blackboard Discussion, October 3, 2002). When the artist and teacher view each other as resources, they are able to go beyond their own limitations to provide the students with more effective, innovative, art integrated curriculum. Moreover, as McCann pointed out, in order to achieve this collaborative equilibrium, a partnership requires "a selflessness from both sides willing to compromise and sacrifice whatever they can for the benefit of the kids" (Personal Interview, April 27, 2003). Jamie Howe agreed, saying that above all a strong collaboration requires mutual trust. "I think it is a matter of letting go a little bit and saying okay we'll make it work," she said. "To do so, it is necessary for both sides of the teacher/artist partnership to let go of inhibitions, old habits, attitudes, preconceptions, power, and convention" (Blackboard Discussion, October 17, 2002). When a balanced partnership is in place, the roles we assume as teacher, artist, or scholar become flexible and intertwined, so that it is possible for all partners to experience each facet of the Artist-Teacher-Scholar triangle.

Once open communication and a collaborative environment was established, over time a *productive relationship* could develop. Northwestern interns acknowledged that the success and sustainability of a partnership depended a great deal on the amount of time the team of collaborators

were able to spend working with one another. Nicole Macrini expressed disappointment that her busy schedule prevented her from spending more time in her internship. She felt like extra time would have allowed her to "understand the school culture and get to know the principal" and suggested that future interns "Try to spend more time at the school, setting aside big blocks of time" (Personal Interview, April 24, 2003). Although scheduling can present problems, most interns were attracted to the *Partnerships through the Arts* program because it was structured in a way that was sensitive to how much time was available, and because it allowed them to form productive relationships within the Chicago Public Schools. This exposure occurred earlier than in a more traditional program, and their experience as guided

interns corresponded more closely to the real-world situations that they encountered after graduation.

The *Partnerships Through the Arts* program at Northwestern University was a successful effort in preparing students to enter the arts-integrated classrooms of Chicago Public Schools. By examining successful models of partnerships between arts organizations and schools and by identifying leaders in the field of arts education reform, graduates of this program explored new ways of enhancing education. As intern John Olin put it, "By learning the key ingredients for an effective partnership first, we were more prepared and less fearful when it was our turn for the real thing, the guided internship itself" (Blackboard Discussion, October 17, 2002). ¶

WHEN THE ARTIST AND TEACHER VIEW EACH OTHER AS RESOURCES, THEY ARE ABLE TO GO BEYOND THEIR OWN LIMITATIONS TO PROVIDE THE STUDENT WITH MORE EFFECTIVE, INNOVATIVE, ARTS-INTEGRATED CURRICULUM.

NOTES

1. Backboard written responses. Northwestern University: Mus_Ed 335, "Creating Partnerships through the Arts". Instructors, Burnaford, G., Hickey, M.

Responses are in reaction to the following readings:

- Burnaford, G., Aprill, A., Weiss, C. *Renaissance in the Classroom: Art Integration and Meaningful Learning*. Lawrence Erlbaum, Associates, 2001.
- Boardman, E. (2001). *Generating a Theory of Music Instruction*. Music Educators Journal, Sept. 2001, (pp. 46-53).
- Champions of Change: *The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. (available on-line at AEP site: <http://aep-arts.org>).
- Critical Links: *Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*.
- Greene, M. (2001). *Partnerships and the search for a common language*. *Variations on a Blue Guitar*: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education. New York: Teachers College, (pp. 161-167).
- Myers, D. (2002). Policy issues in connecting music education with arts education. In R. Colwell & C. Richardson (eds.) *The new handbook of research on music teaching and learning*. New York Oxford University Press. (pp. 909-930).
- Shuler, S. (2001) Music and Education in the 21st century: A retrospective. *Arts Education Policy Review*. (pp. 102-103, 25-36).

2. Interviews with Northwestern interns.

- Howe, Jamie. Interview. November 25, 2002.
- Macrini, Nicole. Interview. December 9, 2002.
- McCann, Laura. Interview. November 25, 2002.
- Love, Kate. Interview. November 25, 2002.