

The Artist within EVERY Child – Nurturing Artistic Ways of Knowing

I am honored to speak to you today and thank the Singapore Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education for inviting me to share ideas about artistic thinking with my many colleagues who specialize in gifted education across Asia. This morning we will discuss how we can develop artistic ways of knowing in every child and nurture the talents of those students specifically gifted in the arts. I find the simplest way to describe how artists in the visual and performing arts learn is to engage the audience in artistic experiences and discover the value of these experiences.

As you entered the auditorium you heard music playing – hopefully you were aware that music was playing. In our present-day world of constant sound and visual stimuli, we often, out of necessity, tune these sensory elements out of our eyes and ears. The music is a fugue by Johann Sebastian Bach. I recently taught this same fugue to a gifted 11 year-old pianist named Justin who had worked through the music to the point where it was technically proficient, accurate in notes, played at an appropriate tempo, with stylistic structure in place. However, something was missing. Justin had done his homework in learning the fugue, but he had not yet truly connected with it artistically. I asked him to think about the mood of the piece – what did it remind him of? He sat for a long reflective “thinking time”, obviously realizing the music in his head. He looked at me and smiled – “Why, it’s Don Quixote!” You can imagine how that fugue became an adventure to explore together. By the end of the lesson, the fugue had gained a new interpretive dimension – it became Justin’s fugue.

While the surface of the painting proves visible enough, what might be called the art in the art is invisible. Looking is not enough; the art in the art must be looked for.

David Perkins

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Looking for the art in a painting, a fugue, a dance, an event in history, or even a mathematical concept requires the ability to think as an artist. We decidedly “tune in” to the specific elements of the art that work with abstract higher-level thinking as well as fine-tuned perceptual discrimination and creative exploration. Seeking ways for every student in the classroom to learn how to think as an artist will broaden and deepen their capacity to learn and understand abstract concepts within the arts and beyond.

I realize you arrive at this conference from different professional positions in gifted education – researchers, administrators or supervisors, teachers, and gifted counselors. I’d like to know a bit more about artistic experiences of the audience.

Professionally first:

- How many of you specifically work in a specialized arts school or gifted/arts program?
- Please raise your hand if your schools include talent identification specifically in the visual and performing arts –such as music, dance, art, and drama.
- Please raise your hand if your schools include the arts as a basic component of your school curriculum.

Now a bit of about activities you may do personally in the arts:

- How many of you currently take lessons on a musical instrument or voice?
- How many are now a member of a performance group such as a choir, orchestra, or band? How many were in a performance group as a child?
- How many of you enjoy the visual arts as a hobby or avocation?

As you look around the auditorium, you can gauge involvement in the arts by our audience. You may even see someone sitting nearby who may share your artistic interests – do seek them out for a cup of tea and a chat to share ideas. I will have all of you experience a bit of artistic knowing this morning with hopes this will encourage each of you to look a bit closer, listen with more focus, and perhaps even pay attention to how you are moving throughout the day, inspired by our discussion of Artistic Ways of Knowing.

Perspectives of Artistic Knowing

Visual and performing artists are notorious for keeping the ultimate definition of their art and artistic process a mystery of sorts. It is difficult to describe and artists don't see a need to explain it without simply having you share in experiencing it. In the words of composer, Aaron Copland:

Music may express a state of meaning for which there exists no adequate word in any language. In that case, musicians often like to say that it has only purely musical meaning...What they really mean is that no appropriate word can express it, and even if it could, they do not feel the need of finding it.

What to Listen for in Music p. 13

However, as gifted specialists we are fascinated with how people think, understand, perceive, conceptualize, and “know.” What better way to preface our explorations of artistic knowing than reflecting on the views of experts who have examined art and the artistic process and have provided explanations to help us understand this unique aesthetic-artistic process.

We begin with Elliot Eisner, an eminent scholar at Stanford University in the fields of art education and curriculum development. I have always been fascinated with the basic role of the senses he places in describing cognition. He notes: “ I regard knowing as cognitive, but I regard cognition as pertaining to awareness. Awareness depends upon our sensitivity to the content of one's world. We need both a content to be sensitive to and the skills to experience it. .. The more our senses become differentiated the more we are able to discern subtle nuances within the qualities that we attend to every moment.”

Eisner's term, “connoisseurship” defines the ultimate level of ability to make very fine grain distinctions among certain qualities. “People who are connoisseurs in a particular domain are able to perceive qualities that most people cannot hear, cannot see

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or cannot feel when in the presence of those qualities.” He describes the tailor who can run a hand across a fabric and tell that is 86% silk, 10 % wool, and a balance of cotton or rayon fiber.

I’d like to share with you a personal experience that may clarify what he means. My husband and I are both musicians. He is a violinist in the National Symphony and several years ago he was preparing to perform a concerto with the orchestra that was the United States premiere of a work by an Armenian composer. During one of the last practice sessions at home before the concert, he called me into our music room with a wave of a hand. I sat on the sofa and he pointed to three different bows he had laid on the floor. Without a word, he picked up the first bow and began to play a passage of the music. He set this bow on the floor, picked up the second, and played the same passage. He repeated the process with the last bow. When he finished, he paused and looked at me. I motioned to the middle bow. He nodded in agreement. This was the bow he would use for the performance.

This wordless exchange exemplifies the fine-tuned discrimination of sound musicians make when making interpretive decisions. While listening to the repeated musical passage, my husband and I were both aware of the subtle qualities of the sound that each bow produced as it was drawn across the strings of the violin. The first had a gutsy, robust sound; the second a melancholy, sweet quality; the third a square cleanliness. We listened, interpretively reflected on these qualities and decided that the melancholy sweetness would best match the mood of the Armenian folk tunes within the solo concerto. Words were not necessary.

Those teaching and creating in the arts will agree that fine-tuned *perceptual awareness and discrimination* is what we seek to teach through our art forms and refine to a point of connoisseurship as artists. I find the term, connoisseurship a bit daunting because of its extreme level of perceptual refinement. Later in our discussion, we will use the term *perceptual awareness and discrimination* to explain this unique artistic way of knowing.

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Philosopher John Dewey's treatise, *Art as Experience*, was written in 1934, and still remains as the ultimate resource for understanding the depth of artistic experiences and works of art. "An artist, in comparison with his fellows, is not only especially gifted in powers of execution but in unusual sensitivity to the qualities of things. This sensitivity also directs his doings and makings." I share with you Dewey's description of the aesthetic-artistic process. I will read slowly as you read along with me to capture the depth of what he is explaining.

As we manipulate, we touch and feel; as we look, we see; as we listen, we hear. The hand moves with etching needle or with brush. The eye attends and reports the consequence of what is done. Because of this intimate connection, subsequent doing is cumulative and not a matter of caprice nor yet of routine. In an emphatic artistic-aesthetic experience, the relation is so close that it controls simultaneously both the doing and the perception.

Such vital intimacy of connection cannot be had if only hand and eye are engaged. When they do not, both of them, act as organs of the whole being, there is but a mechanical sequence of sense and movement, as in walking that is automatic. Hand and eye, when the experience is aesthetic, are but instruments through which the entire live creature, moved and active throughout, operates. Hence, the expression is emotional and guided by purpose. " p. 50.

Simplifying Dewey's terms, he describes the artist in the process of creating or creatively interpreting through the combination of cognition, perception, and expression – in an "intimate connection" that has a focused purpose. If we translate that to observing a child engaged in a creative movement activity, this child would be paying attention to this movement to a fine degree. Movement suddenly becomes dance when the child pays attention to what she is doing with her body, her arms, her feet. These are no longer moving in a "mechanical sequence" but showing personal expression through space and

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bodily-kinesthetic awareness. Our dancer may extend her arm further to reach for that “star” in her dance or embrace the imaginary star with a rocking motion to express joy.

The artist, the dancer, the musician, and the actor manipulates ideas by trying them out through the art form, evaluating and reworking them further through internal and external molding of ideas to create a uniquely personal interpretation or work of art. This cognitive/perceptive interpretive decision-making is at the heart of artistic knowing. In academic areas, it can be described as metacognition. However, the intermingling manipulation of perceptual and expressive elements do not quite reflect the same internal process. I have used the word *metaperception* in my discussions across artistic and academic fields and find it clarifies the artistic parallel of metacognition. Metaperception lies at the heart of artistic ways of knowing and describes this cognitive/perceptual functioning while making interpretive decisions through the arts.

We have imagined a young dancer working metaperceptively. However, the clearest way to understand what goes in this process is by viewing an artist at work. Let’s view the artist deKoonig at work in his studio. You will see him moving the brush as Dewey describes, but, more importantly, watch him when he is internalizing decisions through his visual perception of the work in progress.

De Koonig VIDEO

I am sure, as gifted specialists, you are all familiar with Howard Gardner, who developed the Multiple Intelligence Theory, that describes intelligences within seven to nine different domains. He also offers some insightful ideas about artistic development of children and the artistic process in his book, *The Arts and Human Development*. Gardner describes the existence of three systems that exist from birth:

Making – acts or actions

Perceiving – discriminations or distinctions

Feeling – affects

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Gardner describes artistic development as “a process wherein the three initially discrete systems gradually begin to influence each other, with interaction eventually becoming so dominant that each system inevitably involved the other one.” This denotes a similarity to the cumulative nature described by Dewey. This development is domain-specific. For example, in musical development these systems translate into psychomotor or skill development (making), perceptual listening skills (perceiving) and affective responses to or interpretation of music (feeling).

Gardner’s perspective of the artistic process involves up to four roles or modes of participation and a work of art. The creator or artist has gained sufficient skill in the use of the arts medium to be able to communicate through the creation of a work of art, be it a poem, musical composition, or art piece. He places the work of art – be it an object, performance, painting or dance – at the center of the experience. The audience member is one whose feeling life is affected when he or she encounters the work of art. The critic communicates his reactions and evaluations to other individuals. The performer is an individual who transmits and interprets a work created by an artist to a larger audience.

SLIDE - Gardner’s circle

Gardner’s enactive conception of the artistic process involves the relationship between these four individuals as they center about the performance of a work in music, dance, or drama or encountering a work of visual art. Anyone who has been involved in the performing arts realizes the *dynamic of performance* between the audience member and the performer. For example, the musical performer has the definitive task of interpreting how the composer would want the music to sound, bringing a distinct performing style that personalizes this performance while expressing the integrity of the music in the performance.

Philosopher Susan Langer believes “a real performance is as creative an act as composition.” This type of performance relies on a performer’s “impassioned utterance” and the contagious excitement of the artist over the vital content of the work.

Copeland calls this excitement “personality” which must be balanced by stylistic truth of the music through performance. This dynamic of performance and the aesthetic connection of performer and audience is another type of Artistic Way of Knowing.

These astute descriptions of the artistic process by artists and experts are enlightening, you must agree. However, we teach children – not artists. How can they learn to think, feel, and create as artists? Let’s examine the specific Artistic Ways of Knowing and see how these thinking and perceptual skills can be beneficial to all students, and especially to those you have identified as gifted and talented.

Artistic Ways of Knowing

There are five different aspects of artistic ways of knowing. They cumulatively work together as one develops an artistic work or performance.

1. Perceptual Awareness and Discrimination – to perceive through the senses with acute awareness.
2. Metaperception – to internally manipulate cognition, perceptions and emotions while making interpretive decisions
3. Creative Interpretation – to rework and refine interpretive decisions using elements of perceptual discrimination and metaperception
4. Dynamic of performance – to communicate a creative interpretation aesthetically through performance.
5. Critiquing – to evaluate oneself and others with artistic discrimination.

Let’s examine each type of artistic knowing in detail to help you realize how each functions in the artistic process or creative problem-solving activities. I also include how to differentiate for the gifted student in each aspect of artistic thinking

Perceptual Awareness and Discrimination

To perceive through the senses with acute awareness

For G/T: Differentiate to a higher level of complexity in perception of sounds, images, motions, and concentration.

Today I will differentiate an activity in perceptual awareness and discrimination for this prestigious audience. I will play a short video excerpt for you after which I will ask you some questions to test your perceptive abilities. Your task: watch carefully.

Video NYPD opening

Questions: What is the name of the show? What type of instruments were playing? How many clips were in black and white? When did the movement slow down or speed up?

I realize that the video was so quick, with many transitions, colors, moods, and actions that it is impossible to catch it all in a single viewing. Now, I will assign tasks to sections of the audience to fine-tune perceptions to a specific focus to see how much more acutely you will perceive and discriminate elements of this video. Assign – colors, people, motion, music, total number of changes, total length of the video.

Video - second showing - followed by questions concerning the mood of the people, slow motion, black and white, realizing there were 58 clips to the one minute video.

This exercise in discrimination skill exemplifies the type of visual and sound stimuli we encounter on a daily if not hourly basis on TV, ipod, movies, and video. It is an amazingly creative media piece that creates a mood, momentum and audience attention. The individual elements you discovered through fine-tuned perceptual awareness are not there by accident – they are carefully crafted by artists. Each of these artists had a specialized task to which they had expertise and were connoisseurs in discovering how to

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blend transitions, choose dominant colors, have the names of the actors enter a few seconds to their appearance. Even the percussion sounds are the result of uniquely creative problem-solving. The composer of the music for this opening was seeking a unique sound to portray the energy of New York City. He was in a large office building with marble floors one day and noticed that many of the business men wore leather soled shoes that made a wonderful clicking sound on the floor as they walked quickly through the lobby. He enlisted 20 or more gentlemen to stomp on crumpled aluminum and taped this sound. This is incorporated into the percussion sounds you heard.

I purposely chose this fast-paced medium rather than an art-work or composition to reflect what our students experience on a daily basis. They flip through computer screens, text messaging, cell phone images, with earplugs in place. They are almost in sense overload and pacing to a point where details in everyday life are unnoticed.

My daughter was conducting a drama workshop with a classroom of fifth graders which emphasized observation and awareness of others. She asked two students in the front of the classroom to look carefully at each other from head to toe. She gave them a full 30 seconds to eye each other. Then she asked them to turn around and describe what the other was wearing. I was amazed at what they did NOT see. Not only did the students not realize the type of shoes, color of eyes, or whether they wore a watch, but did not even notice that one student wore a sweatshirt emblazoned with the New York Yankees name and insignia on it. This is a simple exercise in awareness you could do in any classroom that is a starting point to determine basic visual awareness. School experiences that teach students how to fine-tune their sensory focus through learning in the arts will expand their awareness of the intricacies of the world around them.

Metaperception

To internally manipulate cognition, perceptions and emotions while making interpretive decisions

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GT: Differentiate through tasks that require more subtle, abstract decision-making, with multiple choices for interpretation.

Metaperception describes the internal cognitive/perceptual functioning at work when someone is working through an artistic process. You may see a music student in practice trying out a short passage one way, then another. There is a pause while he internalizes what was just done and evaluates it. Then the passage is manipulated yet another way until it seems to capture the interpretive intent of the musician. It is obvious the student is “creatively thinking in sound” rather than simply making fingers move on the instrument in a mechanical way. There is a connection and intent of purpose. Researchers in expertise performance call this “deliberate practice.”

Here is an example of a young 6 year old playing the piano for me. I was explaining dynamics and phrase shaping in a simple Mozart minuet. I want to see if you can notice when she suddenly starts working metaperceptively - creating musical ideas through performance in a focused manner.

TAPE Mozart performance

As you see artistic thinking can begin at any age. We simply need to provide experiences where students can create through the arts and realize they can express their ideas and emotions to others in this way.

Creative Interpretation

To rework and refine interpretive decisions using elements of perceptual discrimination and metaperception.

GT: Differentiate by expanding exploratory experiences, encouraging reworking and refinement of interpretive ideas.

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We use the term “creativity” a lot in gifted education because it is one of the key characteristics that identify a gifted and talented student. It is such a broad term that its definition can get lost or watered down when you are working within the arts where there are so many specific aspects of “creativity”. I use the term, creative interpretation in describing this aspect of artistic knowing because every person working through the arts brings a personal interpretation into the creation of an art-work or the performance of a dance or notated musical score. The term incorporates the uniquely personal connection between the artist and arts medium.

I would like to share with you a performance of a summer enrichment program in the arts that I developed in the late 1990s that pushed students who showed above average abilities to creatively develop artistic works through drama, dance, music, and stage design, lighting and costumes for our visual artists. Here is an example of a dance collaboratively created and developed by a group of teenagers working with a professional choreographer who sat back a bit to guide them only through their creation. The lighting was designed by our visual artists. Enjoy.

SEPIA dance video

Dynamic of performance

To communicate a creative interpretation aesthetically through performance.

GT: Differentiate through student-guided rehearsals towards performance, repeated performances for further refinement

Anyone who has been on stage, whether it was a play while a young child dressed as a princess, or king, or frog, or in a dance recital or singing with 100 other people in a choir realizes the dynamic of performance. A performance is a phenomenological experience between the performer and the audience. The performer communicates a personal interpretation through dance, music, or drama to the audience. As the audience experiences the performance, the interpretive process is shared. The mutual aesthetic

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experience of the audience and performer creates the dynamic of performance. This mutual dynamic often creates a shivers up the spine aesthetic sensation.

I would like you to see a performance by a dancer from the Alvin Ailey Dance Company that may send a few shivers up your spine. Imagine this gentleman performing live on stage. Do watch and listen with perceptual focus and discrimination because I will ask you some questions about your reactions to this performance.

Alvin Ailey – Tape

If you had to describe what you saw in reference to mood or emotion, what are some words or statements you might use? How did the dancer physically interpret this emotion through dance? What words in the music seemed to inspire the dancer to move in a certain expressive way? Thank you for your perceptive critique of this performance.

Critiquing

To evaluate oneself and others with artistic discrimination.

GT: Differentiate by “fine-tuning” discrimination through vocabulary,

Level of artistic work critiqued, detailed communication of perceptions.

The artistic process is not complete without the element of critiquing ones work or the work of others. This circular process then is further refined until the artist feels the interpretation expresses his artistic intent. Describing sounds and movement through words requires pushing vocabulary in new directions, which in turn requires the student to find ways to further describe and define his work.

I would like to share with you some comments written by a high school pianist who is critiquing a younger talented peer in a performance class. The students met regularly to not only perform for one another but to verbally critique each other in detail. This session had them share written comments provided to the student to take home. I

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happened upon this comment sheet hidden in the young student's Beethoven Sonata book, aptly placed at the third movement of the Moonlight Sonata, described here.

Make sure you get a good clean start. The octaves right after the beginning need to be a little quieter. In fact, I think, having played this piece, that it's the quiet parts that make this exciting. When you drop down really low, it makes the big parts (and there are plenty of them) that much bigger. This piece is not exciting – it's dramatic. And the difference is this: dramatic is the contrast between quiet and loud. Exciting is boring after a while, but the alternation of loud-soft, Loud – soft, LOUD – soft – makes this piece dynamite. *And you can make it so!* The notes are very good, only a little trouble in that notorious part with the repeated notes. Memory is perfect. Just concentrate on the drama. You *will* play this well. P.S. I know you can this because you DO I sometimes, right before the coda. You get real quiet and build and it was really exciting. Now, if you do that all over the piece, how great will it be?

Curricular activities that incorporate artistic ways of knowing in a regular classroom, an arts classroom or a specialized gifted and talented program will broaden thinking and perceptual skills of ALL students, with differentiated activities highlighting students who show talent in artistic domains. I am currently developing a curriculum package across the arts that will feature specialized lessons that highlight artistic ways of knowing across the arts as well as in interdisciplinary activities that can serve as a way to identify potential talent in the arts. These lessons will also provide substantive artistic experiences for all children to learn to think as artists. I call them “Sparkler” activities because they provide a way to recognize student with that spark of potential in the arts.

Slide – Sparkler Lesson and Note pad

Here is an example of an art activity using a newspaper article for inspiration as well as the media for developing a sculpture working in small groups. Each lesson leads

the teacher step by step through the activities with questions to guide them and sparkler characteristics to help identify talent. Each ends with the artistic ways of knowing used in the lesson. A Sparkler notepad provides a space for teachers to immediately jot down the name of students they noticed showing potential through these activities. The identification is followed up through the use of observation rating scales that specify talent characteristics of each arts area. Now that we have explored artistic ways of knowing, we are ready to examine effective procedures for identifying students who show potential and demonstrated talent in the arts.

Talent Identification in the Arts

The United States has included gifted identification in education since the 1970s, with the performing and visual arts included in this identification. However, the arts have been largely neglected in this process or peripherally included using generalized arts forms that were locally devised and often really didn't make sense. A painter is not a dancer or a musician and each have different talent criteria that define aptitude and abilities in their art-form.

There was a bit of excitement when the gifted field embraced the Multiple Intelligence Theory because we saw the arts integrated into the academic classroom to include musical, spatial, kinesthetic-bodily, and personal intelligences. However, the curricular packages that taught across these intelligences didn't make sense either. Rather than concentrating on strengthening intelligence within each arts domain, the arts were used at a surface level or as gimmicks for academic learning. A few examples I gleaned from actual MI curriculum packages that obviously provide no relationship to learning in the arts:

Musical Intelligence:

- Give student target word lists and have them identify synonyms for those words in lyrics of popular songs.
- Have students count the average number of beats per measure for

the first 5 measures of each of the 10 best selling pop musical pieces of a given week. Have them plot the data on a scatter plot and determine what relationship is shown. (positive, negative, none)

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence:

- Prepare index cards for each word and three synonyms. Scramble cards; arrange them so students can pull out cards until they find synonyms. Have students write sentences using two synonyms found, reading sentences to the class.
- Pair students and have them measure and record each other's height, head circumference, foot length, wrist circumference, etc. Have them plot data on a scatter plot.

The arts may also be integrated into schools for extra-artistic purposes. Music makes you smarter in math or simply smarter in general witnessed by the Mozart Effect phenomena. Studies by Winner and Vaughan do show a correlation between students who take courses in the arts and higher SAT scores - our basic achievement measurement at the high school level. However, these may be students who are high-achievers in other areas as well so there is not necessarily a causal effect. Winner and Hetland, in a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* devoted to the arts and academic achievement show that the claims of causal effects of the arts in academic achievement are shy of empirical evidence. However, they and others emphasize that researchers have focused too narrowly on test scores and grades as outcomes. Qualitative research exploring how the arts change the entire “culture of learning” in a school may reveal “how artistic learning deepens the understanding of and engagement in non-arts areas.” (Winner, 2000. p. 6).

There are many models for the identification of academic talent used in the United States. Each comes with its own figurative description of giftedness or talent. The terms gifted and talented have been discussed and debated in the gifted field over the past few decades, resulting in less use of the term “gifted” because of its inference of an

inherent rather than a developmental trait. Gagné’s recent model differentiates “giftedness” as natural ability or aptitude and “talent” as developed ability or skill. To Gagné, “one cannot become talented without being gifted: however, it is possible for natural abilities to remain simply as “gifts” if students do not work through learning, training and practicing.

Gagné’s Model of Giftedness & Talent

The model that is most prevalent in use in the United States is that of Renzulli’s three-ring conception of giftedness, which interlocks three clusters of traits: above average ability, task commitment, and creativity. The overlap of all three represents an interaction that is the necessary ingredient for creative/productive accomplishment.

Renzulli’s three ring model

I find that the simple conception framed by Renzulli can easily be adapted to talent in the arts with a few changes in terminology. An artistically talented student exhibits the traits of above average aptitude and ability within their artistic domain, commitment and self-motivation, and creative interpretation.

Arts Talent three ring model

My research of identification instruments and procedures at the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented paired with a collection of audition and rating forms from specialized arts schools across the United States help me develop an observational rating form, Indicators of Potential Talent, that can assist teachers in identifying the first signs of potential in arts areas. If we examine these forms, we will see how working through artistic ways of knowing in the classroom or arts program can highlight these traits for identification purposes.

Artistic Aptitude

Aptitude in arts areas refers to the elements of perceptual awareness and discrimination discussed earlier along with physical skills that outwardly show evidence of metaperceptive thought and expression. The field of music offers music aptitude tests that afford an objective measure for use as part of the identification process. The field of visual arts offers the Clark drawing test to assist in determining artistic talent through the medium of drawing.

Let's examine similarities in the characteristics of aptitude across all of the arts using the *Indicators of Potential Talent* rating scale as a basis of comparison. The first four items on each scale define the characteristics of aptitude in each art form.

Aptitude

Comparisons across arts areas

Note that each includes perceptual discrimination, artistic memory and recall of artistic elements, and the communication of artistic ideas. These are characteristics that are naturally developed through artistic ways of knowing.

Ability

The mainstay of talent identification across the arts is the assessment of a student's ability to demonstrate excellence in the arts. But what of the potentially talented student who has thus far not received formal training in an art form? What can we observe in a normal classroom to show this ability? The observation rating form does not define the specific characteristics of ability, but simply seeks a natural ease, quick mastery of skills, and accuracy. These characteristics are readily observable by a non-specialist in the arts.

Ability across disciplines

Further screening of students beyond initial observation will include some form of performance or portfolio assessment conducted by specialists in each arts area. The arts literature recommends the use of assessment forms that are balanced, offering specific characteristics indicative of the art form, an open space for qualitative comments and critique, and several general areas for quantitative input. Here is an example of a balanced music performance assessment form.

Music assessment form

Creative Interpretation

The element of creative interpretation is often the single criterion that singles out the talented student in the arts. There are a multitude of students who work efficiently and develop their skills to a high degree within the art-form, honing their craft. Then, there are the students who exhibit a sense of focused involvement with a creative stamp that is their own. In the performing arts, these characteristics can be present in an exploratory nature through improvisation and composition or through interpretive performance.

Creative Interpretation

Characteristics across the arts

Commitment & Self motivation

Perhaps the decisive factors that identify a student who will succeed in the arts over time are perseverance and self-motivation. The student who is talented in the arts shows focused concentration, energy, and internal motivation that grows as skills develop. They also are keenly aware of fine-tuning their art-form through self-critique as part of the creative-interpretive process of learning.

Commitment across the arts

Anyone who has worked with gifted students in the arts realizes the passion these students have for working through their arts domain. Ellen Winner’s description of the “rage to master” surely describes our aspiring artists - “desire to work so hard at something, to practice and explore for long hours comes from within, not without.” It is not unusual for a teenager who is gifted in the performing arts to practice or rehearse over 20 hours a week, equivalent to a part time job apart from academic work in school.

Guiding the Development of the Artistically Talented Student

Those in arts education in the United States have a continuous battle to include the arts as a basic component in school curricula. Even though parents say they want their children to be exposed to the arts, these programs are the first to be cut when there are budget constraints. Only one in four students in the United States sings, plays an instrument, or performs in plays in class each week.(Winner, 2000, p. 11)

One positive aspect of arts curriculum development in the United States is the establishment of the National Standards for Arts Education which establishes standards to “what every young American should know and be able to do in the arts.” Although not a mandate or national curriculum, these standards have helped guide school systems across the country develop arts curricula with common goals and assessment of achievement in the arts. At grades 9 – 12, each content standard has two levels – proficient and advanced, which opens up opportunities for differentiation for gifted students in the arts.

Realizing the limitations of arts programs in most schools, parents seek arts instruction outside of school, especially in the areas of dance and music. There are professional organizations of independent teachers in these areas that provide student opportunities extending to national level competitive events. Many gifted students may be performing at the level of a professional while in high school, which requires individual decisions on training and education that differ from students who can receive

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challenging levels of classes in the academics through school. A dancer may start dancing professionally at age 15. The Juilliard School does not require a high school diploma for entrance. Students with exceptional talents may choose home-schooling to afford enough time for practice, rehearsal, and travel to master teachers, major ballet and drama schools or conservatory training on weekends.

Fifteen years ago, I developed a program called MusicLink, which is now the MusicLink Foundation to provide this type of long-term specialized instruction with professional teachers to promising students in need. We seek out potentially talented students through nominations and simply link a student with a teacher who agrees to teach for whatever the student can pay for as long as the student wishes to learn. We guide and monitor progress with our MusicLink students, with many developing into students who have received prestigious scholarships and awards at the national level. This simple idea has reached over 3,000 students with teachers providing almost \$5 million in donated instructional scholarship to the program. The long-term relationship with these teachers have fostered the commitment that generalizes as a life skill and has allowed many students to choose music as a career path beyond high school. Here is a sample of students at the start and end of MusicLink training.

MusicLink video

Anyone seeking more information about the MusicLink Foundation can seek me out for that chat over tea at the conference.

In seeking an appropriate way to end our discussion of the value of arts education and the unique development of students with a passion for the arts, I am reminded of a very rainy day in Washington DC when I brought a group of educators from the Singapore Ministry of Education to see how the arts have transformed talented students from the inner city neighborhoods of DC through their education at the Duke Ellington School of Performing Arts.

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The school was literally caged up waiting for renovation and we sloshed in the mud arriving soaking wet at the door, going through metal detectors in the basement with armed guards at the door. As we ventured through the building, escorted by an energetic school dean, we spied students fully engaged in metaperceptive work – from the fine shadowing of charcoal sketching, to African dance, to drama rehearsals. We asked many questions, with the dean explaining how most students came from impoverished neighborhoods and yet, 98% were going on to college. The only problem – he can't get them to go home. They simply want to stay at the school enjoying their peers learning through the arts. I'd like to leave you this morning with a short video of their show choir, who have traveled extensively and whose enthusiasm exemplifies what it means to provide access to artistic ways of knowing to its full extent for talented students.

Ellington Show Choir

Thank you so much for your kind attention this morning. If you find yourself suddenly noticing how you are stepping on the escalator, notice details of the sights and sounds you encounter as you walk out the door, or actually listen to that elevator music, smile and remember this time we shared together exploring Artistic Ways of Knowing.

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