Creating Collaborative Spaces for Musical Meaning-Making:

Redefining the Music Specialist/Classroom Teacher Relationship

by

Sonja Wiens

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

ABSTRACT

This study examines what and how classroom teachers and a music specialist learn on their own, with each other, and with their students when they engage in collaborative, multimodal teaching and learning experiences. Through excerpts from interviews, planning sessions, focus groups, and the retelling of classroom experiences, this action research-inspired narrative inquiry documents and explores the experiences of four elementary school teachers as they worked together over a 12-week period. Through a restructured music schedule—designed to facilitate sustainable integrated, multiple literacy experiences—the teachers collaborated with the children and with one another to co-construct authentic learning experiences which drew upon and expanded students' interests and inquiries, and which positioned music in new ways as another classroom language. The unfolding stories examined in this inquiry resonate with the ideas and the spirit of the *atelier* in Reggio Emilia schools, and they point to the importance of meaningful, collaborative relationships in teacher learning and reflection. The study has implications for the ways in which musical experiences may be structured, made more complex, and revalued in elementary schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To the children who shared this journey with me:

you have been my true teachers throughout this work.

To "Toni", "Joan" and "Amy"—wonderful colleagues, collaborators and friends:

I hope I have done you and the amazing work you do with children justice here.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction: Three Vignettes from The Music Room

"Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do,

and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before"

(Malaguzzi, 1998a, p. 82).

Vignette I: Joan's Class, March 2011

A large purple sheet is strung across the middle of the music room, dividing the

riser area from the classroom window, and two overhead projectors are shining on it: a

shadow screen. On the boombox, Raffi is singing, and children sing with him:

Blue-white planet,

Spinning in space:

Our home sweet home . . .

(Raffi, 2008, track 2)

On either side of the shadow screen, children are dancing—those on the side of the

light making shadows on the screen, those on the other side using scarves to mirror the

shadows and dance with them. Some children are doing actions that they have created to

match the words of the song, large round gestures for the planet, fingers twirling to show

the spinning. Others have found objects to help them depict the ideas in the song—a hula

hoop, a large ball—and their shadows too are projected on the screen. One boy has found

a basket of round bells from a long-retired bell tree, and has discovered that he can spin

them, top-like, across the floor—just like a planet.

Up on the risers, a group of boys has assembled a "band"—a few drums, the wind

chimes, a suspended cymbal—and they are playing along with the beat of the music,

creating patterns together, and periodically trading instruments. Occasionally one of them gets up and goes to the music stand they have set up in front of their instruments, where he conducts using a baton they have created from an old instrument mallet.

Other instrumentalists are scattered along the bottom of the risers, some finding ways to play their instruments to match the movements of the dancers or illustrate the images in the song—"this sounds like the stars!" "this could be the rocket ship!"—and others tapping along with the rhythm of the lyrics. "Listen, Sonja!" someone says. "I can make my instrument say the words!"

In a corner, two students are busily huddled over a piece of paper. Using many colourful markers, they have written out the words to the song and they are planning to post them somewhere so that anyone who wants to can sing along. Nearby, a few more students are using scissors and big pieces of construction paper to make shapes—a rocket ship, a sun—that they want to project on the screen.

"Are we doing this again next time?" the children ask as they leave.

Vignette II: Amy's Class, April, 2011

We are listening to spring.

Our instruments in front of us, our own seasons yet to come, we sit in a circle and listen as spring, the season that we see out the window, comes to life in sound.

An icicle, a tinkling triangle, drips, drips, drips.

Another icicle answers it, and another.

The sun is getting brighter, stronger, warmer. A breeze whispers and then falls silent.

Somewhere a woodpecker taps. There is a rustling, a scurrying. A squirrel, perhaps?

The breeze rises again, blowing harder now, a thousand silver bars colliding. There is a crescendo of melting, of puddles, of splashing, as xylophones, metallophones, glockenspiels celebrate the season.

Snow is melting. Birds are chirping. Children are laughing, running, splashing.

"Listen for the ending," the teacher whispers.

The squirrel scurries to a final branch, the icicles drip more slowly. A glockenspiel continues to splash in the puddles, reluctant to stop. It stops in mid-splash, an unfinished jump…and as the sun shimmers and reflects in the cymbal's crash, the glockenspiel chimes again, a perfect sparkling last note for the first day of spring.

Vignette III: Toni's Class, February, 2011

Children are scattered all around the room, busy with instruments, drawing, conversations. On the floor, a boy, Paulo, is making a train out of puppets and instruments, blowing on a train whistle, while Mary sits next to him with the book *Down By The Station,* singing the song and trying to play it on a xylophone.

"I wonder if we can find some instruments that would go with this train?" asks the teaching assistant.

"Here's something!" calls Carlton, bringing over a cabasa. "Wait, I'll get some more."

By the window, three little girls are huddled around the keyboard.

"Okay, I'll do this part down here, and then you play your part up there, okay? Like the two people are talking to each other. But wait until the signal!" says one to another.

"Hey, the drum can be the signal!" says the third. "I'll go get one."

Next to them, a boy is organizing the handbells by colour, and setting them up next to a glockenspiel.

"I think that the ones that are the same colour have the same sound," he says. "I'm trying them all to be sure. And then I'm going to check and see if they match these bars."

A girl tugs on my sleeve. "Sonja!" she says. "Do you want to come hear my princess music?"

We go over to the bass metallophone, where her friend is sitting with a triangle. She plays a pattern, the notes C, D and E over and over again, while the triangle chirps along.

"That's the princess," she says. "And now listen to this! The princess is going to sleep!"

She plays the pattern again, but gradually gets slower and softer. When she is as quiet as she can be, she looks at her friend, who obligingly plays a final "ding" on the triangle.

"Now she's asleep!"

Nearby, a few more children are clustered around a large hand-drawn map of a town that one of them has just specially gone back to the classroom to get. They have placed instruments on top of various places on the map—the playground, the carwash, the grocery store—and they are telling a story about a walk in the town.

"I'm going to the playground," says one. She picks up the instrument from the playground and plays a rhythm on it.

"I'm going to the carwash," says another, picking up the tambourine.

"Hey, I'll point on the map to where I'm going," says another one, "and you guys can play where I am!"

Meanwhile, back at the train, Paulo and Mary are now drawing a train picture, each adding details and words and singing as they go. In the meantime, Carlton, the boy who was looking for train sounds, has changed directions. He and a couple of friends have collected some instruments and are drawing lightning, clouds, and rain on a big piece of chart paper.

"I brought these over for the train," he says, "but then I thought they sounded more like rain. So we're doing a rain storm instead. We've got rain, and thunder, and lightning, listen!"

"We start really quietly," says one of his friends. "and then BOOM!"

"And rumble, " adds another. "This instrument does a good rumble."

"Hey, guys, how about the cymbal for the lightning? That would be really good lightning . . ."

I look around for Toni, and find her crouched down in the corner with a few children who are drawing out a story.

"We're drawing the pictures so we remember the story," one of the girls says. "But it's not a word story, it's a music story."

"Snow White is running away from home, you're going to hear her feet. Like this." She taps on a woodblock.

"And see, see this door?" another asks. "That's Snow White's door. And when we play the music, you'll know because it will sound like chimes. But this door, see this door? That's the Stepmother's door. And it won't be chimes, it will be jingles."

"No, jingles make a high sound, that's not scary enough," says another girl. "Let's find something more exciting."

They run off towards the instrument table.

Toni and I exchange wondering glances.

How many stories can you fit in one room?

Chapter 2

Back-tracking: Another Introduction

"Where to start is the problem, because nothing begins when it begins and

nothing's over when it's over, and everything needs a preface: a preface, a

postscript, a chart of simultaneous events"

(Margaret Atwood, 1993, p.3).

Setting the Scene

Another place this story could begin—certainly not the only place, but a place

nonetheless—is when I returned to Winnipeg five years ago. I had spent the last six

years teaching in overseas international schools and now found myself returning not only

to my hometown, but also to the very same music room in the very same public

elementary school I had left six years previously. Although I knew this school well, the

six years I had spent working both outside of Canada and in the relatively exclusive and

"results"-driven private international system caused me to see things I had previously

taken for granted in our school in a new and much more appreciating light: the socio-

economic and cultural diversity of our school population, the commitment to meaningful

integration of students with special needs, the value placed on differentiated learning, the

emphasis on the development of life-long learners and moral, contributing citizens. In

the time I had been gone, an entire elementary school "generation" had passed through

our school's doors, and perhaps even more importantly, the staff of the school had

changed significantly. I returned to a workplace with not only many more young and

beginning teachers than there had been previously, but also with a new contingent of

highly experienced teachers from the Alternative Program[1] of another school division.

All of these teachers—some of whom the reader has already met in the three preceding

scenes—brought with them experiences with and beliefs about inquiry, multi-literacies,

environment and the expressive power of children (explained below) that gave the school

a distinctly new and exciting vibration.   Enter me: an Orff-trained music specialist with

twelve years of teaching experience, slightly culture shocked, starting the school year in a

place that, although familiar enough for me to feel confident and "at home", also offered

exciting possibilities for new learning, new collaborations, and for looking at my music

work with children in a new light.

Consequently, I spent the next several years thinking with these colleagues about

how I, as the music specialist in this increasingly inquiry- and multi-literacy-based

elementary school, could work with teachers and students in new ways in order to

facilitate sustainable, integrated literacy experiences which position music as a classroom

language. Inquiry as an educational approach embraces at its heart the belief that

children learn most effectively when engaged in personally meaningful and authentic

exploration, problem-solving and expression (Manitoba Education, 2009). A pedagogy

of multi-literacies, meanwhile, "focuses on modes of representation broader than

language alone" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), recognizing and harnessing the multiple

ways—visual, audio, gestural, spatial, linguistic—in which human beings make meaning

in an increasingly pluralistic, multi-cultural, and technological society. Considering both

these ideas in the context of my own teaching practice, then, it seemed to me that music

as a way of knowing should extend beyond the music room to the classroom, and, like

---

[1] "Alternative Program" refers to a multi-age, inquiry-based education program offered to
families in one particular city school division as an alternative to traditional approaches.

visual art, writing, and drama, be a regular way in which students express themselves and their learning. In practice, however, this desire to connect authentically to students' interests and inquiries and to find ways to use music as a language for expression and creation in the classroom seemed to be inhibited by two factors. Firstly, although many classroom teachers did use music for various purposes in their teaching practice, very few seemed to feel that they had the necessary musical expertise to support their students in creative or interpretive experiences with music in the classroom. Secondly, as the music specialist (the very person who is perceived as having the necessary expertise for music integration), I was limited to small blocks of contact time with students, outside of the regular classroom's domain, and exclusively at times when the classroom teacher was taking her contractually-mandated half-hour preparation period and was therefore absent from our activities. As I began to pursue a master's degree in education in the year following my return to Canada, these tensions became a primary focus of my thinking.

Much of this school's recent thinking about inquiry and multi-literacies had been influenced and inspired by the example of the early-childhood centres of Reggio Emilia, Italy. These schools, based on the ideas that children are inherently strong, rich, capable, deeply relational, and innately able to explore and make sense of the world around them through "a hundred languages" (Malaguzzi, 1998b, p. 3), provide a provocative invitation to all educators to consider the way we approach teaching and learning in our own contexts. For my part, I was intrigued by the layered and connected ways in which Reggio Emilia schools use multiple sign systems (writing, drawing, music, building, sculpture, movement, etc.) for children to express their thinking, and by the "researcher stance" from which Reggio Emilia teachers listen to and think with their students

(Malaguzzi, 1998a, p. 86). I was intrigued by the Reggio concept of the environment as third teacher (the idea that children learn not only from and with other children and adults, but also from the objects, media, and surroundings with which they interact), and of the classroom as a laboratory for thinking—an image implying experimentation, exploration, reflection, discovery, and discussion. I was also intrigued by the teacher collaboration inherent in the Reggio approach, where it is commonplace to have two teachers in each classroom, thinking, observing, teaching and planning together, in addition to an *atelierista*, an arts specialist who uses her craft to support the thinking and inquiries of the students and teacher both in the classroom and in a central *atelier* [workshop] located centrally in the school. Most of all, though, I was intrigued by how these ideas could be, and were currently, put into practice in the context of Canadian elementary school structures and design.

Considering the Orff Approach

My own approach to music teaching is grounded in what is now commonly referred to as the Orff Approach (or the Orff/Keetman Approach), a "whole-child" approach to music education developed by German composer Carl Orff and his colleague Gunild Keetman (Frazee, 1987). Originally, Orff's interest was not so much in the musical development of young children, but rather simply in finding what he called an "elemental music", which he later defined in this way:

> What then is elemental music? . . . It is music that one makes oneself, in which one takes part not as a listener, but as a participant. . . . . Elemental music is never music alone but forms a unity with movement, dance and speech. Elemental

music is near the earth, natural, physical, within the range of everyone to learn it

and experience it and suitable for the child. (Orff, 1963, p.2)

The Orff Approach is built on the premise that all children are inherently musical

and are naturally able and inclined to respond to the world around them through song,

sound, and movement (Frazee, 1987). The approach is designed to nurture this innate

musical understanding in a developmental and active way by building on the rhymes,

songs, and games of childhood, as well as on the musical experience that children bring

to the classroom.   Through child-centred play and experimentation, song, speech (by

which chant, rhyme, poetry and un-sung vocal sounds are meant), movement

(encompassing both creative movement and formalized dance), and instrumental play are

united under the umbrella of exploration and improvisation; to put it more simply,

children are invited to learn about music by making music. Through observation of the

child and scaffolding of experience, teachers lead children to an experiential "place"

where they are able to uncover and explore musical concepts for themselves.

The Orff Approach has much in common with the approach taken by educators in

Reggio Emilia. The image of the child in the Orff Approach, for instance, is not of an

empty vessel, but rather of a child who arrives in the classroom rich with potential,

experience, curiosity, and knowledge (Frazee, 1987). The environment is equipped with

child-friendly, easily-manipulated instruments and materials, which are aurally

enchanting, visually appealing, and equally accessible and satisfying to both the

sophisticated and novice musician. In the Orff approach, the teacher's role is ideally that

of facilitator and guide—one who creates thoughtful and deliberate opportunities (or to

use the Reggio word, "*provocations*", implying an invitation, intervention or

circumstance which provokes children's thinking) for children to use the skills and

understanding they have to make music, and from that point finds ways to deepen and

extend their understanding and skills. The social construction of knowledge is another

element shared by the approaches of both Orff and Reggio. Just as Reggio's small group

projects enable children to construct and negotiate ideas together, in an Orff class

children are invited to create music together: they build collaboratively on each other's

ideas and all make their contribution to the whole. In both of these contexts, these

collaborative experiences enable children to "realize that the world is multiple and . . .

discover how satisfying it is to exchange ideas and thereby transform their environment"

(Malaguzzi, 1998a, p.94). In terms of the development and "making conscious" of

musical skills and concepts, the Orff approach does seem to follow a more linear

progression (Frazee, 1987) than one might see in the schools of Reggio Emilia. Another

difference between the two approaches is one of documentation: Orff experiences

(perhaps by virtue of the aural nature of music) tend to happen mainly "in the moment"

and are not routinely subject to the discussion, deconstruction, and documentation which

accompany experiences in Reggio Emilia schools.

   Although I had (and still have) a strong belief in the musical power of the Orff

approach, in my new circumstances I found myself increasingly questioning certain

aspects of my Orff-related practice. Although this was strictly my personal opinion,

much of the Orff-related practice I witnessed in Canadian elementary schools (including

my own) seemed to me—perhaps in answer to the structure of 30-minute lesson blocks

the music teacher so often finds herself faced with, or perhaps due to large class sizes—

increasingly to follow a relatively teacher-directed format. Although it could be argued

that the children were still "learning by doing" and that the teacher was "building on what

the children know," the element of discovery and emergent curriculum inherent in Orff's

original approach seemed sometimes to be obscured in these quasi-formulaic Orff

interpretations. Similarly, I found myself wondering about the abundance of pre-

packaged materials I saw being offered to teachers as potential "Orff" resources, and I

questioned whether such resources helped or hindered the co-construction of musical

material between students and teacher. I found myself wondering how much of

children's own interests and experiences could be truly reflected and pursued in a lesson

which was based around material chosen by the teacher for pedagogical ("we're ready for

the half note!") or seasonal ("time for the pumpkin game!") reasons, and in which most

of the steps had been pre-planned by the teacher. I found myself wondering about the

fact that, although the nursery rhymes, singing games and children's songs that continue

at least partially to form the basis of Orff repertoire were once representative of the out-

of-school musical experience of most children, many children no longer come to school

already knowing these songs, games and rhymes. I wondered if this created a

disconnection between current practice and original intention: although these rhymes and

songs were still developmentally appropriate for young music learners, did they still

serve the purpose of allowing children to discover what they already know about music

through the use of familiar material? All of this is not to say that I had necessarily begun

to doubt the efficacy or relevance of the Orff Approach for music education, but rather

that I had become acutely aware of the importance of each practitioner being reflective,

critical and responsive in order to keep the approach relevant and effective. As Doug

Goodkin (2001) describes, the potential for exploration and creative co-construction of musical understanding is inherent in the Orff approach:

> Orff begins squarely in the heart of romance, eliciting creative responses and building a curriculum by tending to the particular sprout that has broken through the surface. Freedom is in the foreground here . . . a freedom to create one's own form from within rather than it being imposed from without. (Goodkin, 2001, p. 19)

Bringing the Strands Together

It seemed to me that there were two distinct-yet-connectable ways in which musical practice and Reggio Emilia ideas could function in relationship to each other. The first involved making space for music and movement as languages of expression, communication, and learning within the Reggio-inspired classroom setting. In this context, music and movement would be used as tools or media through which children could explore and represent learning, "to advance thinking and present challenges" (Hertzog, 2001, p. 5), and to give children a vehicle through which to express their ideas. The second way in which I could imagine music and Reggio Emilia ideas functioning together was in the exploration and deepening of actual musical concepts themselves. This would involve taking up the ideas of Reggio (particularly those of environment as third teacher and of teacher as facilitator, provocateur and co-learner) in the context of the music room in order to further children's musical understanding and to deepen and extend their musical thinking. The musical skills and understandings developed in this construct would in turn support students' ability to use music as a language of expression,

representation and interpretation in their classroom Explorations[2], much as art techniques

are explored in Reggio ateliers in order to familiarize students with "the grammars of

different materials" (Rankin, 1998, p. 236). With both these potentialities in mind, I

began to seek out opportunities to visit my colleagues' classrooms, connect with their

students' inquiries, and, as much as our schedules allowed, bring our music room

engagements into the classroom context.

Considering the Literature: An Integrated Approach

Within the literature, arguments are made that taking an integrated approach to

literacy instruction—that is, to incorporate multiple sign systems (drawing, music,

movement, visual media, and so on) and multi-modal experiences through the arts—has a

positive effect on language learning, including reading and writing achievement

(Burnaford, Aprill & Wiess, 2001; Eaton, 2007; Fisher & McDonald, 2001; Lowe, 2002;

Peters, 2011; Smagorinsky, 1995). Rather than privilege only written texts, a view of

literacy that includes multiple sign systems and modes of expression, whether they be

visual art, oral language, movement, gesture, music, or digital literacy forms, recognizes

that meaning is made, understood, and communicated in a multitude of ways (Albers &

Harste, 2007; Kalantzis & Cope, 2009). Creating a learning environment in which

children are supported in interpreting and creating through multiple sign systems

(drawing, music, movement, visual media, etc.) enables a deeper, richer, and more

interconnected literacy learning to occur (Peters, 2011, Serebrin & Morin, 2007). It is

---

[2] "Explorations", somewhat like "choice time", is a structure used in inquiry-based classrooms that allows curriculum to emerge through children's independent play and exploration. Learning is then deepened and thinking is "pushed" through sharing, classroom conversation, and further exploration.

suggested that students benefit from opportunities to express and develop their

knowledge through multiple sign systems and media, and that such experiences reinforce

understandings both of the curricular subject and of the arts (Burnaford, Aprill & Weiss,

2001; Lowe, 2002; McCusker, 2007; Niland, 2007). Furthermore, studies show that arts

instruction in isolation does not achieve the same gains in literacy development that are

seen when an integrated approach is taken (Burger & Winner, 2000; Peters, 2011).

Early Childhood Music Education: Current Trends

Current research on early childhood music learning points to the value of socially-

constructed, play-based, child-centred opportunities for children to explore and create

with music in a collaborative, learner-focused environment where the teacher functions as

facilitator, observer, and supporter (Bartel & Cameron, 2007; Smith & Montgomery,

2007; Suthers & Niland, 2007). Research into children's free-play in musical settings

indicates not only that what children do when given the opportunity to explore freely

differs greatly from the sorts of musical engagements which teachers may themselves

choose for children (Morin, 2001; Smithrim, 1997), but also that groups with little or no

adult intervention tend to exhibit more sophisticated and original musical behaviours than

children who are guided or aided by adults in their music-making (Tarnowski & Leclerc,

1994). Studies of older children's music-making in informal settings support these

findings and point to the value of observing how students learn and create music in

voluntary and playful contexts (Green, 2008), and to the importance of incorporating

students' out-of-school music experiences and preferences into the school music context

(Griffin, 2009; 2011). Research of this nature has enormous implications for those

seeking to construct an understanding of children's musical learning. As O'Hagin (2007)

states, "The art of music should not be limited to a product as narrowly defined as a composition. . . . We may want to discuss what musical thinking and musical behaviour are, especially in constructivist practice" (p. 205).

These ideas, which stand in contrast to the traditional, more discipline-based music educational practices (Serebrin & Morin, 2007), are reflected in the new Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes for Arts Education:

> Every student is a music maker, one whose growth and learning are best realized
> within rich, meaningful, hands-on music-making experiences. . . . Every student is
> a creator and composer. Students must be given opportunities to tap into their
> creative capacities and express themselves through the creation and sharing of
> their own music. (Manitoba Education, 2011, p.10)

These statements, along with the preceding research, have implications for the invention of collaborative, integrated music and literacy instruction not yet extensively explored in the literature. They compel both music specialists and classroom teachers to find connected and emergent ways in which to support their students in active, authentic, inquiry-based musical exploration and creation.

Collaboration as Professional Development

Although examples of artist-teacher collaboration exist in the literature, such as the atelierista model of Reggio Emilia (O'Hagin, 2007), or special collaborative projects with visiting artists (Burnaford, Aprill & Weiss, 2001; Morin, 2010), these examples do not necessarily translate easily to the realities of time and curriculum facing music specialists in schools. Contemplating a music education model which supports integrated arts and literacy experiences and which uses music as a language of expression while also

building musical understanding and skills presupposes a deep collaboration between

music specialist and classroom teachers and depends on a mutual belief that neither

subject is subservient to the other (Burnaford, Aprill & Weiss, 2001). It also presupposes

a certain level of confidence and/or willingness on the part of the classroom teacher to

use music as a creative and expressive medium in the classroom. Studies show that

"specialist" subjects such as music and physical education are often difficult for

generalist classroom teachers to integrate and incorporate confidently and holistically into

their classroom practice, in part because of the teachers' self-perceived lack of training

and personal ability in the subject (Morgan & Bourke, 2008; Morin, 2010; Philpott &

Plummeridge, 2001; Quay & Peters, 2008), and in part because of a belief that these

subjects do not fall within the realm of their responsibilities as classroom teachers

(Morin, 2010). Professional development, the nurturing of collaborative teaching

partnerships, and the re-thinking of scheduling and prep time in order to ensure that

classroom teacher and specialist are able to teach and plan together are indicated as ways

in which classroom teachers can be supported in arts integration (Burnaford, Aprill &

Weiss, 2001; Fisher & McDonald, 2001; Morin, 2010; Philpott & Plummeridge, 2001;

Serebrin & Morin, 2007; Shulman, 2004a; Wolf, 2008). Other studies point to the

empowering effects of professional development and/or teacher training opportunities

which, rather than attempting to "equip" generalists with arts-based skills and knowledge,

engage teachers actively and holistically in arts-based meaning-making and creation.

Having experienced for themselves the power and richness of meaning-making through

the arts, teachers are better able to imagine how and why this could be done with their

own students (Berghoff, Borgman & Parr, 2005: Eldridge, 2000; Graham & Goetz-Zwirn, 2005).

Implications

The literature discussed above had three particular implications for me as I began to consider a redefinition of music's role in my students' school experience. First, it points to the value of supporting students in making meaning through multiple sign systems by creating a rich, interconnected, and multi-modal learning environment where music and other art forms can be used authentically as languages of interpretation and expression in literacy experiences. Secondly, it underlines the importance of developing and nourishing music skills and understandings in their own right and giving students opportunities to create identities for themselves as music makers, composers, and creators. Thirdly, the literature points to the challenges and risks that exist when teachers begin to incorporate unfamiliar modalities into their teaching and to the strong benefits which such multi-modal collaboration between music specialists and classroom teachers—facilitated by creative scheduling, co-teaching, and ensemble planning—can have in terms of teachers' own professional development.

Towards an Inquiry

As I made my way through my graduate studies, the same questions and tensions returned again and again in my personal reflections and responses to readings and discussions.

Journal Entry October 2009

One of the things that I love about being a music teacher in a K-5

school is that I am able to build a relationship with my students and

watch them construct their identities as music makers and participants

in our music classes over the course of many years. Watching my

students this week, especially the ones who have been with me for

several years, I was struck by the strong sense they bring to music

class of what they want to do. They walk into the room and I am

barraged by requests. "Can we play the monster game? Can we play

the Number 8 game? Can we play the game with Gustav? Can we play

the recorder?" Meanwhile, there are also the students who don't

bother voicing their requests as questions: these are the ones that

jingle the wind chimes as they walk by, or go to a xylophone and try

to play the "I'm lovin' it" McDonald's theme, or sneak a hit or two on

the drums.   Being the kind of teacher who tends to have a plan for

the coming class, all these varying agendas can be overwhelming, and

more often than not, I find myself either refusing the students'

requests, or, doing what in my mind I see as "giving in" to them—that is

to say, putting aside my own plan so that we can "play". And then

there are the ones that come in, sit in a circle as I asked, and

patiently wait to find out from me what we are going to do that day.

Who is actually most ready to make music?

Something I began to consider as I examined the Orff approach in the

increasingly constructivist context of my new school reality was the idea of "music for

children" as opposed to "music of children". The former implies a music that is designed (most likely by adults) with children in mind, whether it be to teach them, amuse them, interest them or stimulate them. In this category one would place the aforementioned songs, nursery rhymes, singing games, and other similar "child-friendly" music. Music *of* children, on the other hand, implies music which is actually created by children and which reflects their musical understanding. This music is very different from "adult" music or adult-created "children's" music, much like the drawing or writing of children differs from the drawing and writing of adults—but for some reason the music of children often seems to be more suspect in the eyes of adults than children's expression through other media (Upitis, 1990). Children's music, in fact, may be suspect to the extent that adults may not recognize it as music at all: "Adults are accustomed to recognize musical production of children according to arbitrary standards of their own . . . rejecting most of what is real music for the child" (Moorhead & Pond, 1978, p.32).

Journal Entry March 2008

I've been thinking about the struggle that some music educators are experiencing as they adjust to the constructivist slant of the new arts curriculum document and its heavy emphasis on student-initiated expression and creation. Letting go of what we music teachers "know" about music and letting students explore and discover things for themselves (and perhaps come up with things that are not what we consider "right") is scary, and turns the tables on what many of us have always believed was our role as music educators. Although I've

always thought that I teach in a constructivist way (although I may

not always have known that term), and in a way that allows children to

think of themselves as composers and creators and to express their

own ideas and voices through music, the more I think about it, the

more I realize that I actually have been controlling and directing most

of what goes on in my classroom, generally limiting students'

opportunities to have "voice" to contributing small suggestions or

details to projects of my choosing.

ME: "Let's make a song about snow today. Who would like to go to the

glockenspiel and create a melodic pattern for the first falling

snowflake? Take out the F and B bars, and make sure your pattern

has four beats!"

STUDENTS: "Okay!"

It has begun to occur to me that the problem for many music teachers

is that we don't know how to allow children to make children's music—

perhaps if we could reconsider our relationship to our subject and our

students, and, as Bissex (1988) suggests in her article "On Learning and

Not Learning from Teaching," free ourselves from the baggage of the

notions we have constructed for ourselves about music, it might be

easier for us to let our students also construct their own

understandings.

Among this "baggage" for music teachers, I would suggest, is the developmental list of musical skills that we have traditionally regarded as our "curriculum" and have therefore felt obliged to follow in a more or less systematic progression. Looking at curriculum in another way, however—for instance, as what emerges in a classroom through the thoughtful interaction of a community of learners with a subject or idea in the context of their own cultural context and relationships—instantly opens up possibilities for the music teacher to follow the lead of her students rather than be led by a pre-determined developmental progression. As Jean Clandinin (2010) describes:

> Following Schwab (1970), curriculum can be understood as the interaction of four curriculum commonplaces—learner, teacher, subject matter and milieu (Clandinin and Connelly, 1988). In order to understand the negotiation of curriculum, we need to attend to each commonplace in relation with the others, in shifting relational ways. . . . This view of curriculum making asks us to understand teachers . . . by attending to each teacher's personal practical knowledge, his/her embodied, narrative, moral, emotional and relational knowledge as it is expressed in practice. This view of curriculum making asks us to understand children as learners and to understand their knowledge as personal, relational knowledge (Lyons, 1990; Murphy, 2004). This view of curriculum making asks us to attend simultaneously to the nested mileux of school places such as in-and-out of school places, community places . . . and so on. (Clandinin, p. 205)

Despite the fact that in my own practice I did sincerely endeavour to embody the original principles of the Orff Approach and despite the fact that I did truly believe that I saw my students as strong, capable, and musically able, studying my practice through the

lens of my new learning community caused me increasingly to question the teacher-directedness of my own lessons and whether students were getting enough opportunities to pursue their own areas of interest and to explore and discover musical concepts independently. I wondered if the large-group format in which our lessons so often took place allowed for the same level of experimentation, critical thinking, and social construction of knowledge that small group projects might facilitate, and I wondered how we could make more intentional opportunities to "revisit" and build on our musical experiences. I wondered if the rules of my classroom and structure of the environment were truly conducive to exploration of, and creation with, musical ideas.

Journal Entry October 2009

I want to think about two things here: how can I re-adjust the dynamics of the classroom so that the students do not feel they have to "ask" my permission to make the music they want to make? And secondly, how can I make the students' musical interests—their personal music curricula—my curriculum? I'm wondering: how much do the students actually need me to do what they want to do? Perhaps they do need me to show them possibilities from time to time, to teach a new game or introduce a new skill, for example, but do they need me in Grade 3 to facilitate a game they have been playing since Grade 1? What could they learn from doing it themselves?   Do they need me to decide for them what instruments they should be playing, or what they should be playing and in what groupings? How can I help students who

come to class with a plan bring that plan to life during our class, and

how can I help the "plan-less" see themselves as the protagonists in

their music making, rather than the passive participants?

Meanwhile, outside of the music room, although I knew that my Reggio-inspired

colleagues valued music and would have liked to (and in some cases did) provide musical

opportunities for meaning-making in their classrooms (that is, to use music as a way to

represent, interpret, and express learning), many factors (among them a lack of

confidence, a perceived lack of "expertise", logistical concerns, and lack of resources)

often seemed to conspire to keep musical exploration out of classrooms. This made me

regret the role of "prep-provider" in which music specialists are inevitably cast in our

schools: the fact that classroom teachers receive their prep time while their students are at

music seriously works against the possibility for co-teaching or collaboration between

classroom teacher, music teacher and students, either in the classroom or the music room.

Journal Entry March 2009

I am now thinking about a thesis project that looks at the way

scheduling/classroom structures can be changed so that music can be

delivered in a more integrated, team-taught kind of way (in

collaboration with the classroom teacher, rather than as a prep period)

and the effect this has on my own practice, the way music is used in

the classroom and on students' and teachers' perceptions of the role of

music in the classroom. I have already done some work with these

ideas which has confirmed for me that there is the potential for very

rich learning, transfer of knowledge, exploration and creation when

music is positioned and supported in the classroom as another way of

knowing and expressing, and when children are given open-ended

opportunities to experiment with and apply musical concepts in their

own ways...but what would be different this time is that I would be

investigating actually structural changes that would make this kind of

thing sustainable, rather than simply dabbling with the general idea of

arts integration in a "one-time experience" kind of way.

It seemed that if we truly wanted to connect students' music room experiences to

their classroom lives and vice versa, the way in which music classes were structured and

the ways in which classroom teachers and music specialists related to one another's

practice needed to reflect and nurture this connection. If we wanted students to use the

music room as a place where they could respond to their classroom discoveries and

pursue their own inquiries and self-expression, music specialists needed a deep

understanding of students' classroom experiences and the emerging curriculum and

learning processes of the classroom. If we wanted students to use music as a tool for

exploration, inquiry, and expression of thinking in the classroom, classroom teachers

needed to feel familiar and comfortable with musical ways of knowing and

communicating and to have access to musical resources and support. In short, if we

wanted to connect students' music room experiences to their classroom lives, classroom

teachers and music specialists needed access to one another's knowledge, expertise,

experiences, and stories. We needed spaces, both temporal and physical, which nurtured

critical dialogue, mutual inquiry, and reciprocal listening. We needed spaces, both

temporal and physical, in which we could share experiences together with our mutual

students, and opportunities to share with one another the meaning we made from these

experiences. We needed to create collaborative opportunities which not only supported

classroom teachers in their musical explorations and supported music specialists in their

understanding of classroom curriculum, but which also allowed us, in the shared context

of our students' learning, to experience and actively engage in one another's professional

learning and practice.

Considering An Action Research Methodology

At this point in my planning, I was imagining that this work would most likely

take the form of action research, as defined by McNiff and Whitehead (2006):

> Action research is a form of enquiry that enables practitioners to investigate and
>
> evaluate their work. They ask, 'What am I doing? What do I need to improve?
>
> How do I improve it?' Their accounts of practice show how they are trying to
>
> improve their own learning, and influence the learning of others. These accounts
>
> come to stand as their own practical theories of practice, from which others can
>
> learn if they wish. (p. 7)

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2006), action research is underpinned by several

ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions, many of which resonated

with me as an aspiring teacher researcher. Among these assumptions are the following:

- that action research is not neutral but rather steeped in the values of the

  researcher

- that action research is based in morally committed practice

- that action researchers view themselves in relation to others and their social

  contexts

- that the focus of the research is the researcher and her practice

- that knowledge can be ambiguous, uncertain, and multiple

- that the creation of knowledge is a collaborative endeavour

- that action researchers view themselves as agents of their own learning

- that action research methodology is open-ended and strives for more questions

  rather than definitive answers, and

- that the purpose of the research is to facilitate learning in a social context.

An action research inquiry often takes the form of what McNiff and Whitehead (2006)

call an "action-reflection cycle" (p. 6). Each cycle follows this progression:

- current practice is observed

- observations are reflected on, concerns are identified

- an intervention–or way forward–is chosen and implemented

- the results of this intervention are evaluated

- changes are made

- new directions or next steps are identified and pursued.

Following this model, I identified an aspect of my practice that I wished to change and

study—the way that music instruction time was scheduled and structured and the

implications that could have for student and teacher learning—and devised a systematic

change in practice which would allow me to experience and evaluate its effects.

Journal Entry May 2009

Imagine this: I would work with 3 or 4 teachers who are interested in piloting an integrated, potentially team-taught music program with me, for a fixed period of time — 12 weeks, let's say. During that time I would meet with students for 90 consecutive minutes once per cycle, as opposed to the current three 30-minute periods, in order to emulate the longer blocks of time that the children are accustomed to in their classrooms. This time would not be a prep period for the teacher but rather a co-teaching time when we are able to work together. Our goal would be to explore on-going classroom themes/areas of interest through music, and also to provide opportunities in the classroom where musical concepts could be further explored by students. The classes might take place in the music room or the regular classroom, depending on the context. Following the workshop[3] and Explorations formats which the students know from their reading, writing, and math experience, these music times will be formatted as a music workshop/exploration time. I envision beginning each class with a mini-lesson addressing musical concepts relevant to the students'

---

[3] A workshop format, often used in classrooms for reading, writing and math instruction, uses large blocks of time and a variety of structures—mini lessons, independent work, partner and small group work, large group sharing, conversation and reflection—to differentiate instruction, extend children's thinking, and to respond to the ideas and understandings children bring.

Explorations, and then breaking into smaller groups for small

group/individual creation, musical play, or exploration . . .

When I reflected on the stories which have shaped my own development as a

teacher, I was struck by the fact that the music teaching experiences which had been most

pivotal for me—those that seemed to embody to the greatest degree authentic, relevant,

creative, exciting, and rewarding learning for students and for myself—were all stories of

collaboration. From classroom-based projects to team-teaching situations with other

specialists to collaborative performance creations, the common element which all of these

meaningful experiences shared was that they were not closed-door pursuits which

happened exclusively between the students and me in the half-hour slots allotted to us in

the schedule. These experiences originated oftentimes outside of the music room; they

were connected to other people and other spaces; they brought in "non-music" ideas and

"non-music" voices; they responded to multiple agendas and were perceived through

multiple lenses; they involved all participants—students and teachers equally—in explicit

conceptualization, problem-solving, and negotiation; they transcended classroom or

music room boundaries and curricula; they felt "real" and "important" to the participants.

So why, I wondered, was students' musical experience in schools, and music specialists'

experience in schools, and classroom teachers' experience of music in schools, structured

in such a way that collaborative experiences are the exception rather than the norm?

And, furthermore: what role did these experiences, so memorable to me, play in the

stories of others who participated in them?

Journal Entry December 2009

The longer I think about this project, the more aware I become that what I am really thinking about is the collaborative relationship between teachers, specialist, and students in the context of music, meaning-making and literacy development. Obviously, this cannot be a one-way street that responds only to my own agenda or which takes only the relatively narrow lens of the music curriculum as its focus. If my project is about exploring what happens when the purview of music is expanded to encompass more people, places, and subjects, this means finding a way for my project not only to invite/incorporate/value multiple voices, perspectives and experiences, but also to be open to go where the journey takes us as collaborators.

I am just beginning to see that the process of designing one's research and one's data collection tools, and even the subsequent research and data collection, are really ways of setting the stage for seeing and reflecting and thinking and noticing and theorizing about whatever the thing that "happens" is…and at this point, there is really no way of predicting what will "happen". So as I write my proposal and think about my project design, I am realizing that what I really need is to set things up in such a way that a) things CAN happen, b) we are able to notice them when they do and c) that we are not so committed to

one theory/idea/model that we cannot/will not follow where the

journey takes us.

Towards a Methodology

In the end, I settled on a project framework that took place in my classroom over

a 12-week period, involving three teachers and their respective Grade 1 and 2 students, in

which four essential changes were made to the way music classes had been structured and

perceived in my school context. First of all, rather than see myself—and be seen by

others—as the isolated music specialist, I attempted to re-cast myself in the role of

"musical resource" to teachers and students, someone who seeks to facilitate music

learning, learning about music, and learning through music. Secondly, we arranged to

have classroom teacher prep time provided by someone other than the music teacher for

the duration of the project so that, rather than being absent from her students' musical

learning, the classroom teacher could be present during music classes to participate in our

activities and explorations, thereby helping to make the connections between classroom

and music room experiences more transparent and visible to students. Thirdly, the

timetabling of classes was changed so that, rather than being scheduled in 30 minute

blocks, music could take place in longer periods of time (90 minutes) so that more

extensive projects and explorations could be meaningfully sustained. Fourthly, I

attempted to adapt the internal structure of our music activities and engagements so that

they more closely resembled structures in which students already routinely worked in

their regular classrooms. In adopting such a model, I hoped to make my own music-

teaching practice more richly connected to the interests, inquiries, learning styles, and

previous experience of my students, to support and learn from my colleagues through co-

teaching, co-planning, and conversation, and to create a collaborative space in which

resonant teaching and learning stories could unfold and be recognized.

At the same time, however, I began to realize that although I did want this project

to unfold in the action-research-inspired context of the restructuring of music class and

music time, what I wanted to explore in my thesis was not so much a systematic study of

the effects of this restructuring as a narrative exploration of the collaborative stories

which unfolded against this backdrop.

Journal Entry December 2009

I think that eventually I want my project to take the form of a

narrative inquiry. What I would like to do, I think, is set the stage

with the co-taught, co-planned 90 minute "Music

Exploration/Workshop" experiences I have already described, and, over

the course of the 12 weeks that I am working with teachers and

classes in this new way, simply be open to [and document] the stories

(my own, my colleagues, our students) which emerge. The work

then—the "data analysis", if you will—would be to make sense of those

stories and how they relate to the common experience that we have

had.

For this reason, although aspects of this project could arguably be characterized as action

research, this thesis does not really document a full action-reflection cycle. Instead, the

restructured aspects of music instruction and music time are used to create the context for

a narrative inquiry exploring what and how teachers learn from themselves, each other, and their students when engaged in collaborative teaching experiences.

Considering Narrative Inquiry

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe narrative inquiry in the following way: Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

A narrative inquiry methodology, then, seemed a natural fit for this project, as the highly relational nature of teaching in general and collaboration in particular seemed to necessitate a research approach which made visible and explored not only the multiple understandings, motivations, and view points which participants bring to experience, but also the multiple meanings participants make from experience. Furthermore, because narrative inquiry is a relatively new mode of research in music education (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bowman, 2009), it changes in its very nature the lens through which music learning is traditionally viewed:

Multiplicity, particularity, and personally or individually constructed meaning [are not] the things music education has traditionally sought to affirm and honour in its professional discourses. To that extent, narrative inquiry is indeed a distinctive—perhaps even a revolutionary—way of pursuing questions of music's

(and education's, and music education's) potential meaning(s) and value(s).

(Bowman, 2009, p. 213)

Experiencing this inquiry through multiple narrative voices would add to the greater educational dialogue by raising the provocative questions of why and how we study music in schools and might potentially offer a more collaborative and integrated alternative to the traditional approaches of scheduling and teaching music.

Guiding Questions

The primary question guiding my inquiry into the stories my participants and I created was the following: What and how do classroom teachers and music specialists learn from themselves, from each other, and from students in collaborative teaching experiences? These sub-questions also guided my data collection:

- How do teachers' own stories of musical learning and experience affect the way they use music in their own teaching practice?

- How does a collaborative model of music learning affect the ways in which music and non-music curricula are understood and experienced, by both students and specialist/classroom teachers?

- How does a collaborative model of music learning affect the way teachers and students engage with music outside of the workshop times?

Teacher Participants

As a part of the evolving music practices at our school prior to this study, several teachers on our staff already routinely indicated to me if/when they were interested in working collaboratively through music with their students and me. It was primarily from this group of interested teachers that I intended to recruit participants for my study. A

memo was sent to all teachers on staff, inviting those who are currently working

collaboratively with me, who had done so in the past, or who were interested in doing so

in the future, to attend a short, voluntary meeting after school. In recognition of the fact

that my collegial relationship with teachers could be potentially coercive and compromise

voluntarism, I invited a colleague from another school in our division to inform teachers

of my study at this meeting. Using the oral transcript provided, she informed teachers of

my study and distributed the recruitment letters to those who were interested. I was not

present at the meeting but was available to any teachers who wished clarification or

further explanation. Potential participants were asked to submit their completed forms to

our school secretary, who placed them in an envelope and submitted them to me. From

the teachers who returned signed recruitment letters, I chose three participants based on

grade level and scheduling considerations.

Student Participation and Ethical Considerations

Prior to this study, I already routinely collected photos, videos, student work,

recorded conversations and personal observations in my teaching, which I used as tools to

remind my students and myself of what we had been doing and thinking, as well as to

guide our subsequent planning, exploration, and learning. Under normal classroom

circumstances I did not ask family permission to undertake these activities because the

artifacts were collected exclusively for classroom use and are shared only with the people

directly involved. For this study, however, I wished to consider these artifacts in a more

public forum, and for that reason I sought permission of students and families to use these

artifacts in the context of my study. I also sincerely wanted to honour the work and ideas

of my students and to acknowledge the profound effect they have on my learning and

understanding as a teacher. To both these ends, it was important that my students and their families be fully aware of and comfortable with any implications my study might have for them.

Letters of informed consent were sent to all families of children in classes of the teacher participants in my study. These letters informed parents and children of the fact that as part of my study I wished to use: unidentified photographs and samples of student work, unidentified photographs and videos of students working in music class, unidentified recordings of children's conversations relating to class work, and teachers' personal observations of unidentified children's engagements and responses in class as data which would then be considered and reflected on in our teacher focus groups. The letter then asked for their consent and their children's assent to do so. In this letter I emphasized the fact that the study of these unidentified artifacts was to help teachers engage in conversation about student thinking, learning, and engagement with music in general, not to focus on the understanding or progress of particular children. The letter also emphasized the fact that consenting or not consenting would in no way affect students' experience in music class or in the classroom. A script was also created that parents could choose to use when discussing the study and the consent/assent process with their child. The majority of families in all the three classes returned the letters with consent and assent to our school secretary. No letters were returned without consent, but several families in each class did not return the letter at all. The work, words, and images of children from whom consent and assent were not received were not considered in this study.

Data Sources, Field Texts and Credibility

When considering what narrative inquiry is, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) differentiate between the narrative inquiry methodologies of "telling" and "living"— the former working from stories told to the researcher by participants, and the latter working from living experience alongside participants (p. 482). Although this inquiry certainly incorporates teachers' (including my own) past stories into its narrative, its essential focus is on the lived narrative generated as we worked together in collaborative music/classroom structures and spaces. The stories that unfolded through the living of this experience were initially documented through the collection of what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as *field texts*, distinguishable from data in that they are not found or discovered by the researcher, but rather "created by participants and researcher in order to represent aspects of field research" (p.92). Over the course of the project, participant stories were collected in various ways. Each participant teacher was interviewed prior to the project beginning, and this interview was audio-recorded. During the course of our music classes together, both the participant teachers and I collected "field texts" in the form of our own notes, transcribed conversations with children, photos of children's engagements, and audio/video recordings of student work. After each Music Exploration session, the teacher and I met to discuss the morning's events and to plan for the next session, and these planning times were audio-recorded. Additionally, the three participant teachers and I met as a focus group three times throughout the project. During these focus group sessions, which were also audio-recorded, we shared selected field texts from Music Explorations and discussed the questions, tensions, connections, observations, and wonderings arising from this collaborative experience.

Finally, all participant teachers were individually interviewed and audio-taped at the conclusion of the project. These data sources and approaches to collecting and evaluating participant stories reflect many of the suggestions set out by Lincoln and Guba (1986) as a means of ensuring credibility in naturalistic inquiry, including:

- prolonged engagement in the field (being involved with a phenomenon—in our case, both Music Explorations and related teacher-learning—for a long enough period to gain a representative understanding)

- persistent observation (observing a phenomenon consistently enough to gain a representative understanding)

- triangulation of data (obtaining information on the phenomenon from a variety of sources, creating multi-dimensional understanding)

- peer-debriefing (sharing understandings and getting feedback from peers)

- member checks (checking to see if participants' observations, comments, and viewpoints have been accurately understood)

- negative case analysis (considering data which did not necessarily achieve the expected results).

The following schematic and succeeding paragraph depict the five primary data sources discussed and analyzed in this project, illustrate their relationship to each other, and indicate the ways in which Lincoln and Guba's (1986) approaches were used to help ensure credibility:

Data Source 1
Audio-recorded initial
interviews with individual
participants prior to
research period.

MUSIC EXPLORATIONS
(10 90-minute sessions per participant class over a 12 week period, co-planned
and taught by music specialist and classroom teacher)

⇓ informing ⇓

Data Source 2
Field texts
(notes, photos, videos, work samples)
collected by participants during
Music Explorations

Data Source 3
Audio-recorded
planning/debriefing sessions with
individual participants following each
Music Explorations session

⇓ informing ⇓

Data Source 4
Audio-Recorded Participant Focus Group conversations
(3 two-hour sessions over the course of a twelve-week period
involving all participants together)

Data Source 5
Audio-recorded interviews
with individual participants
following
research period

It can be noted that these data sources, systematically collected over a 12-week period

(prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation), are in fact layered and inter-

connected artifacts, both informing and refining each other (triangulation of data).

Consider, for example, the data gleaned from each Music Explorations session: the

teacher and I both experienced Music Explorations from our own viewpoints, taking

notes and collecting photos, videos and work samples that corresponded to our own

understandings of what was going on. Then we met together t debrief/explore the day's

events, sharing our insights and perspectives, exploring ideas, discussing surprises and

challenges, and generating new questions (peer debriefing, negative case analysis). All of this —both our individual and shared understandings, along with the Music Explorations field texts in their original forms—were then brought to the Focus Group Sessions, where yet another data source was created as stories were retold, field texts were examined through new eyes, new questions and theories were put forward by other participants, and our own questions and theories were discussed and explored by the larger group (peer debriefing, member checking, negative case analysis). This quasi-kaleidoscopic approach, bringing to the fore multiple viewpoints and revisiting field texts, theories and questions over time (prolonged engagement, persistent observation) and through shifting perspectives, works to ensure the truthfulness of the data collected. The "data" collected from these interconnected sources —or perhaps more properly phrased, the *field texts* created—are never solely one person's viewpoint, impression or memory, nor one unconnected moment or event (triangulation of data). These are multi-dimensional texts, reflecting time, relationship, and multiple perspectives, and their multiple dimensions reflect the many opportunities all participants were given to re-tell, re-visit, re-examine, and re-interpret experience, both individually and in community. This approach reflects the viewpoint put forth by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) in their book *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis and Interpretation*: "we propose that a process of consensual validation—namely, sharing one's views and conclusions and making sense in the eyes of a community of researchers and interested, informed individuals—is of the highest significance in narrative inquiry" (p. 175).

Standards, Criteria and Analysis

As I transcribed, read, and analyzed these field texts, recurring ideas, questions, and themes began to reveal themselves in increasingly cohesive and consistent ways. I used these emerging patterns to organize my data sources further. From these reorganized field texts, stories began to emerge: stories of children, their learning and their meaning-making, stories made manifest in the observation, planning, interpretation, questioning, and wondering of their teachers; stories of teachers and the learning that happens for teachers through conversation, collaboration and co-teaching; stories of music, stories of language, stories of place, of community, of time and of relationship. In judging the truthfulness and transferability of the stories collected and the evidence they generated, I created criteria for myself, by which I hope the reader may also judge this work:

- Do the stories reflect teachers actively thinking about children's learning and engagements?

- Do the stories reflect teachers asking questions, thinking critically, developing and testing theories, and reflecting on their own practice in the context of our collaborative teaching experiences and conversations?

- Do the stories incorporate the multiple viewpoints and voices of the various participants and the interaction of these distinct voices and viewpoints?

- Do the stories reflect teacher learning over time? Do they make teachers' changing perceptions or developing theories visible?

- Do the stories invite multiple interpretations?

- Do the stories incorporate enough diverse sources of data to make them multi-dimensional and believable?

- Are the stories told with enough detail and dimension to allow readers to draw their own conclusions about their truthfulness and credibility?

As much as possible in this presentation of these stories, I have attempted to let my participants speak for themselves and to use their voices to show what is happening, rather than attempt to tell it myself, in my voice and from my perspective. As Vinz and Schaafsma (2011) suggest in their book, *On Narrative Inquiry*, "one of the key ways character is revealed is through speech and dialogue, and as we see it, one of the failings of much research is that it reports speech rather than lets us listen in" (p. 109). Similarly, in his article "Teaching as Community Property: Putting an End to Professional Solitude," Lee Shulman (2004b) argues that in order to become "an important part of scholarship" teaching must be made visible "through artifacts which capture its richness and complexity. In the absence of such artifacts, teaching is a bit like dry ice; it disappears at room temperature" (p.457). My analysis and design of this thesis were also guided by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber's (1998) four suggested criteria for the evaluation of narrative work: *width* (the comprehensiveness of evidence), *coherence* (the telling and analysis of stories in clear, connected meaningful ways), *insightfulness* (communicating experience in an innovative, engaging and creative manner) and *parsimony* (distilling a small number of "big ideas" from experience).

With all these ideas in mind, the stories of this inquiry will be explored in the pages that follow through excerpts from teacher interviews, planning sessions and focus

group sessions, as well as re-imaged field-texts from Music Explorations in the form of vignettes and small screen plays. Names of all participants (including children who appear in teacher stories) have been changed to pseudonyms, and interviews excerpts have been condensed and edited, in collaboration with the relevant participants, in order to ensure ease of reading and clarity of meaning. Words in square brackets have been added to the original text for clarification, while ellipses indicate the removal of superfluous words or phrases.

Onwards!

Technically speaking, this thesis is a study of teacher learning, exploring the thinking, wondering, planning and learning of teachers and the dynamics of learning in collegial and classroom communities. It is children, however—their thinking, their learning, their playing, their communication—who are the true centre of this inquiry, and it is for this reason that this re-telling began in the midst of children's Music Explorations experience. In the following chapter, you will meet their teachers: "Teacher Voices" introduces the three teachers with whom I collaborated on this project through their own words, as they describe their teaching philosophies, beliefs about children and learning, and their experiences with collaboration and music. From this centre of students and teachers, ever-growing circles expand—and it is these interconnected relationships and experiences that will be explored in the following chapters. Chapter Four, "Who are these Children? Relationship and Time", explores our evolving image as teachers of our students as musicians and meaning-makers and documents our shifting understanding of our role in providing children with the environment, materials, opportunities and time they need to play, create and express themselves through music. Chapter Five, "Music as

a Language", deals with what it means to use music as a "language", the ways in which

music and other classroom languages support each other, and how this connects to and

influences our image of children as learners and communicators. Chapter Six,

"Connections", looks at how the physical boundaries of music room and classroom can

be transcended through co-planning, collaboration and mutual inquiry, and how these

practices support our image of the child, the use of music as a language of

communication and expression, and the emergence of curriculum. The concluding

section, "Reflections and Implications", returns to the voices of the teacher participants to

document their reflections on our collaborative experiences and their imaginings for the

future, and discusses the implications of our experiences for future practice.

     In their book *Narrative Inquiry in Music Education: Troubling Certainty*, Barrett

and Stauffer (2009) suggest that narrative inquiry "is one means of capturing the

dynamics, tensions, and complexities of lives lived in and through music by individuals

and groups, children and adults" (p. 26). In the pages that follow, as you meet and re-

meet the students and teachers with whom I have had the great pleasure of collaborating

on this project, as we revisit the opening vignettes through the lens of teacher

conversation, and as our voices join together to think about what experiences like this can

reveal to us, it is my hope that the multiple voices, stories, motives, perspectives, and

possibilities inherent in any relational endeavour will rise to the surface and, hopefully,

invite your own connections.

Chapter 3

Teacher Voices

"Teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives,

retell the stories with changed possibilities, and relive the changed stories. . . . They are

characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author"

(Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 12).

Introduction

The idea of teachers as livers, tellers, re-tellers and re-livers of stories (Clandinin

and Connelly, 2000) is one of the key ideas I wanted to explore in this project, and one of

the reasons that I chose to frame this project as a narrative inquiry. In considering the

potential shared stories that this project was designed to facilitate, I was intrigued by the

different meanings which one experience or story can have for different people, and by

the multiple motivations, understanding and viewpoints which different people bring to

the same story or experience. As a teacher-researcher, however— that is to say, both as a

character in the story and potential interpreter of the story—the Clandinin and Connelly

notion of teachers being "characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author"

gave me pause. The three teachers with whom I worked were already characters in my

own teaching "story"— three colleagues whom I had known for varying lengths of time

and had worked with in varying ways and in varying contexts—and, in the spirit of

Tennyson's (1833/2004) immortal line, "I am a part of all that I have met" (p.88), were

already woven into my own personal narrative. But although I certainly "knew" these

teachers, I knew them only in particular ways and particular contexts—not in all ways or

in all contexts. I knew them as characters in my own story, but not necessarily as the

characters they saw themselves as in their own stories. At the same time, I was also but one character in their own cumulative stories of themselves as teachers. Through the framing of my research problem and the sharing of the story which had led me to this particular inquiry, I had already made much of my personal narrative visible for them: it seemed to me that in order to begin the collaborative phase of this project on an even playing field, we had to begin by giving the participant teachers some opportunity to share their own stories and to make visible and contextual the various characters, experiences, philosophies, and ideas which were "part of them" and had brought them to this particular physical, ideological, and practical place.

To this end, I conducted a 90-minute interview/conversation with each participant prior to beginning the collaborative phase of the project. Prior to the interview, I gave each teacher the following questions to consider:

- Can you speak a bit about your teaching philosophy and your approach to teaching? Your influences? Ideas that are important to you or that intrigue you?

- What role does collaboration with other teachers/adults play in your practice? What kind of opportunities do you currently have in your school life for collaboration (working/thinking with) with other teachers/adults in the classroom? Outside of the classroom?

- Can you speak a bit obout experiences you have had collaborating/team-teaching with other teachers/adults in the context

of your classroom? What do you see as the benefits of collaboration

for your own practice? Are there challenges? Why is it valuable?

- How do students currently experience music in your classroom?

My relationship with the information collected during these interviews and my

understanding of the role of these interviews for this thesis has evolved over time. At the

time that I conducted these interviews, I was thinking of them primarily as a chance for

me to get to know my participants in a more systematic and thorough way, and to be able

to situate the stories we were going to be soon living together in the context of stories

already lived. After the interviews had taken place, I realized that these conversations

had also created an important base of shared understanding and common knowledge upon

which both the participants and I could build our subsequent experiences and

conversations. Later, as I began reviewing and analyzing the recordings and field texts

which had been collected over the course of the project, it occurred to me that these

interviews were also an amazing opportunity to introduce the reader not only to the

stories of the participants, but, perhaps even more importantly, to their unique and

distinct voices as well. By this point in this document, my own voice is hopefully already

well-established—but who are these participants? It seemed imperative to me that the

readers of this thesis have the same opportunity to hear the voices of the participants and

to get to know each character through her own words and from her own point of view as

they [the readers] have had to get to know me.

Therefore, in the Schaafsma/Vinz narrative tradition of letting the reader listen in

on speech rather than reporting it (2011), the three teacher participants in this

project—Toni, a Grade 1/2 multi-age teacher;Joan, a Grade 1 teacher; and Amy, a Grade

1/2 multi-age teacher—will largely speak for themselves in this section. With the

speaker's help and consent, these interviews have been edited for length, and in some

cases, for purposes of textual clarity. Words in square brackets have been added to the

original text for clarification, while ellipses indicate the removal of superfluous words or

phrases. For the most part, however, the following pages are the unadulterated voices of

the participants, as they reflected, in their own words, on particular aspects of their

personal teaching stories.

Toni

This is my fifth year of teaching, and, from my first year part of my philosophy

has been that I really want to access all my children—not only what they bring, but also

how they learn. For myself, I know I'm a visual learner, I'm a pictorial learner, I make

everything into pictures in my mind—so I want to access all my different children's

learning through writing, reading, movement, music, to try to get it from all angles, if that

makes sense. I started out in my first year being terrified about [bringing music into the

classroom], to be quite honest . . . I really didn't know where to start, and I really felt

like it wasn't my place, or that maybe I would step on people's toes . . . it was really

important to me, because for me it's a way of communicating and that's what I wanted to

try to develop in my classroom was lots of ways to communicate. And music was one of

those. I started by just bringing in a keyboard that I had, and I just put it out for

Explorations time . . . and what ended up happening was amazing. I had a child who

was really struggling in the classroom, he was struggling socially, he was struggling in

every way, and he just took to [the keyboard] and that became his way to interact with

other children in the classroom. . . . It allowed this child to share with the class. He was

not a child who would really talk to other children, he didn't seem to have a voice or a place in our classroom, he was constantly being asked to leave because of violence, so this was a way for him to find a really positive place in the classroom and a really positive way to interact with other children. So that's how I started.

My approach—well the whole day, really—is centred around Explorations. Our Explorations is in the morning, it's the first thing we do, and it's where we have our hands-on time, it's where children have time to explore things they're interested in, things or invitations I've set out. It's really a time where children get a long period of time so they can really explore something in depth. And it's from our Explorations and our sharing after Explorations that I figure out where I'm going next in my classroom. For example, right now my children are fascinated by the marble run, by Canadian animals, and with music. So those are three things that are really driving everything else in my classroom, and for our Writing Workshop, for our reading time, for our math time, even our singing is driven by what's happening in Explorations. For me, without Explorations I wouldn't know where to go with my children. I invite them to bring their interests, I bring mine, and I also just listen—I spend a lot of time just walking around and listening to my children, "eavesdropping" on conversations. I find that if I join conversations they tend to stop. So I walk around and listen to my children talk and play and pull ideas from what they're doing and what they're saying, and invite them to share that with other children. It's such an important part of my day that I really hardly know how to describe it. It's the time where we really get to explore and investigate and invite others to join us. That's where our science comes from, where a lot of our social studies comes from, a lot of our art happens during that time of the day.

I have spent the last five years really being influenced by and reading about

schools in Reggio Emilia—I am a part of a Reggio Ed Leave[4] group, …and that has

definitely influenced my style of teaching and my thought, especially my image of the

child. Our group really focused on that in my second year of teaching, I think, and it

wasn't until then that I really started to look at how I view children and how that

influences what I'm doing in my classroom. So if I really believe that children come

with important [theories and understandings and abilities], why am I asking them to do a

fill-in-the-blank science work sheet? which I did in my second year, which I've never

done since. It's really made me reevaluate, pretty much every day, what I'm doing in

my classroom. Just the other day I did this, I looked around my classroom and I asked

myself, is this really what I believe about children? And that's what Reggio has really

helped me to do, look at how I view who I am as a teacher, and who I would like to be as

a teacher, and how I view children and how those two things come together in a

classroom, where children feel safe enough to take risks and where I allow them to be

themselves. That's something I've had to go back to this year, with a group of children

who need more and different kinds of support, I've had to go back and ask myself, what

is my image of children, what do I expect them to bring with them every day, what can I

expect from them, and what do I need to expect from myself to support them and help

them continue to grow, and to be able to feel safe and take risks and to investigate what's

going on in the classroom?

---

[4] "Ed Leave group" refers to an initiative in this school division that allows a teacher or group of teachers to apply for release time in order to study a particular idea of professional interest. This particular group focused on the philosophical underpinnings of Reggio Emilia schools and the implications of those ideas for their own practice through a series of readings, discussion groups, presentations, and school visitations, among other things.

I think collaboration is hugely important for my growth as a teacher and for what I am doing in the classroom. Currently I'm collaborating a lot with Joan, the Grade 1 teacher—she and I discovered quite accidentally that our children are interested in a lot of the same things and we have a lot of the same philosophies and the same ideas, so we get together and plan our Explorations together . . . and so now at Explorations, our children also collaborate—children from my classroom go to her room, and vice versa, depending on what they're working on—and then they come back and share that with us. Putting our two classrooms together not only helped all the Grade 1's in her classroom to figure out what Explorations and sharing time looks like, but it also helped all my older guys to see that they're not the only ones with something to say. But also for me, I find I can sometimes get kind of stuck, so being able to find somebody with a like mind with whom I can talk through not only what we're doing in our classrooms but also our philosophies, has been a huge benefit for me. I feel like I've grown more just in these last months because I've had a chance to collaborate with her than I did by myself in a year.

Mostly Joan and I do our collaboration from separate rooms—except for the sharing part. Other collaborations I've done, with the learning support teacher, or with [the music teacher], have been more with them in the room with me, at the same time. And there's definitely a difference. I mean, having somebody in my classroom experiencing the same things with me and with the children is very different than collaborating with somebody who is in their own classroom doing similar things but just talking about it afterwards. Having somebody there and somebody experience it with you allows you to step back and look at it differently. I got to see it through [the music teacher's] eyes, the children's eyes and also through mine, and then when we talked

about it, I was able to really reflect on my own practice and on what the children were doing because we were experiencing the exact same events but in different ways. And that for me was really interesting to look at who I am in my classroom and how I deal with children and how I talk about them, I became very aware of things I do in my classroom that I didn't know I did. Things like if, when we're sharing in a sharing circle and we're all sharing, I get excited about the things I'm looking for as a teacher, which might not always be the things that excite children, but because of my excitement, they get excited and then that's the direction I head in. I didn't realize I did [that] until there was somebody else in the classroom with me and I got to watch somebody else interact with my kids. So that for me is a huge difference. The other part that I think is hugely different is that when you are a teacher on your own in Explorations, because children are doing different things all the time, you never get to see everything happen. You never get the full picture and you never get to hear all the things, all those little conversations and those great things that I am sure I miss every day. So having a second person in the room allows you to do a lot more and hear a lot more about what the children are saying, because I can work in one part of the room and she can work in another. And then at sharing time, it's another huge benefit. For me, sharing time is one of the most important parts of Explorations, because that's where we bring what we have been learning and thinking back to the group, so we can all think about it together—but children are not always able to articulate what they've done or what they've been thinking without the support of an adult. So when there are two adults and we've been working with different groups, you really get to hear a lot more of what the children were thinking, as opposed to just what they did. And that made our sharing time a lot richer, and even when those

collaborations have ended, our sharing time has remained richer throughout the whole

year—and that allows the following year to also be richer, because it's a multi-age

classroom. So that's a huge benefit [of co-teaching], which you don't get when you're in

two separate rooms and just collaborating through conversation.

During Explorations I have a box of instruments that children are more than

welcome to go explore—there are little glockenspiels, boomwhackers, sticks, I think

there are maracas, and some wooden flutes in there right now. What I'm finding really

interesting this year is that the musical instruments in the box don't often come out,

instead the children are creating their own. Like the other day in my classroom in

Explorations, all of sudden children were playing in blocks and the blocks became drum

sticks, and then the blocks became drums, and then the lids became part of the drum set

for the blocks and then they created a little stand for their music, and they labeled the

different drums so they knew which drum to play—but the actual musical instruments,

even though I've reminded them that they're there, are of very little interest to them so

far this year. Whereas, last year I found that the "real" musical instruments were the

most interesting [to the students] and even though we made our own instruments and we

had shelves of home-made instruments, the children never went back to them. Last year

they just wanted to play the real instruments, and the recording of their music, like

writing the notes, the A, B, C's of whatever they were doing, that became more important

than the actual music making for a while. But this year it is more about their natural

music-making abilities.

We also sing every day in the classroom and we have music on during Writing

Workshop—we have our special Writing Workshop music, which is a choice between

classical music or I guess what you'd call yoga music—and then we have the children's

songs that they put on themselves during Explorations. They've really taken that on

themselves this year—it's not often that there isn't music [playing] in my classroom and

it isn't often me that puts it on this year. They put it on themselves. (Toni, Initial

Interview, 2011)

Joan

I think I've always approached teaching with trying to think about who children

are and what their interests are and how to engage children in meaningful ways, but I

think it is in the last four or five years that I have felt a shift where I've started to

think—and it has been inspired by our work with Reggio Emilia—more about what is it

that I really believe about children and then having those moments where my practice is

bumping up against what I believe and starting to ask, "Why *am* I doing this sort of

thing?" or "If this is what I believe about children, then am I really doing that in the

classroom?" So it's been a four or five year journey of trying to look critically at the

kinds of things I'm doing, and I feel like I am still doing that, trying to figure that out. I

think maybe one never figures that out. I guess the shift that has occurred from when I

first started out is that instead of my first question being "What am I going to teach these

kids and how am I going to make it fun and interesting?", it now is "Who are these kids

I'm going to teach, and what does that mean for how we're going to go about doing the

things that we do together?" So I would say that my approach is centred around the

relationship I have with the kids and [the relationships] the kids have with each other, and

that the kids have choice and that they feel that what they are doing is purposeful and

meaningful, and that there are opportunities for play and lots of opportunities for talk.

And it's really important to me, in the work that I'm thinking about right now for my own

master's work, to be just really thinking about how children's voices are heard or

honoured in the classroom—what that means, what that looks like. [I'm] thinking about

those children whose voices are heard all the time and the kids whose voices haven't yet

found a way to be heard or expressed, and how does that process of sharing a bit of who

you are in the classroom help you to find your place or feel like you belong, and what

does that mean for children who are not yet able to do that?

  Coming to this school has changed in some ways the things that I'm doing just

because the context of this school is very different than the school that I was coming

from. In this school there's a lot more diversity, cultural diversity as well diversity in the

needs of the children in my class, so there's a new richness with that that I never really

experienced before and it's very exciting. And I think that in my past school I felt more

pressure around . . . parents having very traditional ideas of what "schooling"—and I use

that word "schooling" intentionally—should look like for their child and very strong

opinions and ideas around what their role was in terms of directing the course of

curriculum and teaching style in the school. So I felt that at that school one of my biggest

challenges and something I was working hard at was how I communicated with parents

and . . . how I began to have conversations with parents about what we valued and how

that looked and played itself out in the classroom and what that meant for our learning.

And that was really difficult because it was easy to get caught up in that sort of

"informing parents" and it was very difficult to get beyond [that] into a real conversation

about what was going on. So now coming here, I still think the parent piece is important,

but the thing that I just really found myself thinking about this year is back to that "how

do I ensure that every child feels like he or she has a place in our space, in our classroom,

and has a way of expressing who he or she is and has a way of making that shareable

with other people?" [For example] one of our best days was the first day that we had that

big snowfall and . . . for [three kids in our class] it was their first time to play in snow.

So we ended up all going outside and we played in the snow. And that experience then

started to come into our Explorations time and we started doing an exploration of snow,

and it trickled into our writing time and it just grew, you know . . . it was just an

unplanned, spontaneous moment, but if there had not been a value placed on who these

kids are and what is important to them, then that really special moment, that has actually

influenced tons of other moments of our time together, would have been totally missed.

So I think that being here I've really found myself having to slow down with some of my

previous ideas of where we *should* be or what we *should* be doing, and really think about

who we *are* and what that means for what we're doing.

     Collaboration plays a huge role for me and—I think anybody would say

this—once you have had collaboration or you're in an environment where you're having

dialogue with other people, there's no going back, right? When I started [at my previous

school], there was none of that happening. People were teaching in the isolation of their

classroom and there was a sense of, you know if I was doing something, then [my grade

level partner] sort of would have the vibe that I was trying to one-up her, and meanwhile

I wasn't even thinking of what she was doing, I was just doing what was working for us

in our space. So there was no dialogue going on . . . and that was very uncomfortable,

especially when you're a new teacher. But then a shift started to occur, we had a new

learning support teacher come in . . . and we started to talk about Reggio Emilia and it

started to bring people together and really got us talking about what we were doing, and once that started happening, because I was really struggling that year, it just breathed new life into everything I was doing and I felt so excited and connected. And so once that started happening it just started snowballing and you just wanted and needed more and more of that kind of talking and connecting with people about what you're doing and somebody challenging what you're doing. The next grade level partner I had, for example—she was awesome. She was the first teacher who, you know, we'd be sitting talking and she'd challenge me. She'd say, "Why *are* you doing that? And what does that mean? And what is that doing for you, and what does it say about the kids that you are teaching?". . . There were things that I was like "Well, I don't know! I don't know, I don't really know! I haven't really thought of it before." And so having someone like that both supporting you and challenging you, it was like this light switch went on and it was just really wonderful.

Now that I'm here at Moyer School, Toni and I have started collaborating. . . . One day after school we just started talking about [our classroom] Explorations, and we realized once we started talking how many connections there were between what her children were doing and what my children were doing. But obviously the point of Explorations is that children are uncovering things that they're interested in, it's not about us saying, "Okay, now we're going to learn about this, this, this," right? So we thought, "Okay, *we* know that these connections are happening between the kids in both classes, so this would be really interesting if we put these classes of kids together." So we got them together and just had an exploration time and let them choose where they wanted to go—some kids were in my room and some kids were in Toni's room, mixed up,

wherever they wanted to be—and then we got back together afterwards for the sharing

time, and then they started to make the connections between what they were doing. And

from the sharing we'd ask questions—"This kid is having a problem with this, is there

anybody who can think of an idea for them?"—and that would then help plan what would

happen the next day. So that was really rich, and that trickled into everything . . . there

were so many connections with so many things we were doing. And I felt at the time that

children were really engaged . . . I felt like everybody found something, some way that

was connected in some way that they felt they were part of it, you know? And having

Toni's older students—because she has a 1/2 multi-age, and I have a straight Grade

1—modeling some of that sharing and connection-making has been great. I was really

impressed, actually, with the way they are making connections to Explorations they had

done the previous year and using information from the previous year to help inform what

they were doing this year. That happened over and over again, really neat connections.

That's the beauty of the multi-age classrooms.

When I was at Sunrise School I feel that music was a big part of my Explorations

. . . whereas here [at Moyer School], I haven't made any instruments or anything like that

available to them yet. So I really am feeling its absence in Explorations and I am really

eager to offer more opportunities like that for my kids. But I *would* say that music kind

of sets the tone for our whole day. We start the day with a song everyday—we gather on

the carpet and we start every day with the same song. That's our signal, and we put our

books away and we get into the circle and there are actions and we sing together and part

of the song is putting your arms around your friend and there's that consistency that it's

the same thing you're going to do every day. For the new kids who are just learning to

speak English, they learn the song pretty quickly and it's something they can participate

in along with the rest of the class and do the actions and know that they are part of the

group. It's just a happy welcoming song and I feel like it sets the tone. We also do

poems and songs throughout the day, and we use music a lot during transition times, like

during clean up time and when it's time to come back to the carpet; we have our

favourites that we come back to over and over again. And we use music at writing time

and reading time, we just have soft relaxing instrumental music as a background, and

then we have music at the end of the day as we're getting ready to go home, we play

something fun and silly and we dance a little bit to say goodbye to each other at the end

of the day. I feel like we kind of have a soundtrack to our day, and I feel that it really sets

the tone for the day. When I first started teaching I never used music in the classroom,

and I don't know why. And one day I started using music in the classroom and it totally

just changed our day. It really did set the tone. I know I keep saying that over and over

again, but it really does! And now I can't go without it. And it is so much nicer—you

know, instead of me going, "Okay, clean up time's over! Everybody come to the

carpet!"—which is what you'll say 55 times, right?—instead, this song comes on and we

know we better put the broom away and come on the carpet because everybody's

meeting. . . . We're coming to the carpet, it's like a greeting, it's like a gathering, like

we're all coming together and we're happy to be together and we're doing something that

we can all do together, and we're settling down together. (Joan, Initial Interview, 2011)

Amy

I think I've been teaching—after twenty years it all blurs—I think this is my

twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth year of teaching. My focus has always been in early years.

I'm not a B. Ed person; my university background was in developmental studies. I started

out in Arts thinking I would go into social work, actually, and then in my second year

thought no, this wasn't really what I wanted to do. So I started doing more

developmental psychology stuff and was headed towards a graduate degree in child

psychology but realized I did not want my experiences with children to be clinical

experiences. I really wanted to certify in education and work with children in a more

playful, joyful way. And I had been a nursery assistant at the lab nursery school at the

University of Winnipeg way back when, when they used to have one attached to the child

psychology department, and I had done a lot of research in the lab, and . . . I was very

inspired by that nursery school. It was way up on the 4th floor of Centennial Hall—a

beautiful space, floor to ceiling windows the whole length of it, looking out onto Spence

Street, and then there were the two mirrors up where you could look down into the

nursery. [It] was probably one of the most Reggio-like of nursery spaces I had ever

seen—this was before I even knew about Reggio Emilia. It was so great when I started

reading about Reggio, it just brought me back to those years at the Child Studies Nursery.

So that really, really hooked me into thinking I wanted to work with young children, [and

that] took me on the path to certification in Education and focusing on early years and

being a Nursery/Kindergarten teacher for years. [Actually] both of my children went to

that nursery when they were four. Then they closed it down, so that's why I have a lot of

cool stuff in my classroom, like the big hollow wooden blocks. I bought those when they

were closing up the nursery. So that's why I come with a flat-bed truck full of classroom

stuff, because I got first dibs on a lot of stuff they were selling.

So that's how I got into education, and I think because I wasn't a B.Ed person and I was an Ed. Psych person, I've always come at what I do *not* from a curricular standpoint: I always have come to it from children and ideas of child development. And in the years I was [a student] at U of M . . . well, I don't think I ever looked at a curricular document until I was actually a teacher. And even then I looked at it and was like, "Okay, I've seen that!" (laugh) So, yeah, I think that sort of grounds where I come from in the classroom. And so there has always been a real natural fit with the ideas of Reggio, which I started reading about way back when. So that started being what I was really interested in pursuing professionally, probably fifteen to twenty years ago, and I started reading everything I could. And that's been what has guided my practice and allowed me to think along with other people who did that.

When I first started teaching, I felt like a Martian because I stood out like a sore thumb in my school. No one was practicing like I did at my school at all. I remember thinking, "Why did they hire me? Because I just like don't fit." Other teachers were likely thinking, "What the heck's going on in there?" Because we were playing! It was Nursery/Kindergarten and we just played all day. It didn't look at all like the desks in rows and the other things that were going on at that school. But the resource teacher saw me . . . she was a great educator and a real progressive thinker, and she connected with me right away. She started spending a lot time in my room and had lots of fun, playing with us—and the divisional early years support teacher . . . I remember her sweeping in, her hair was always up in this bun of hair flying, and wafting clothes and she'd come in, she'd plunk down and start playing with the children. She knew what I was doing and she understood that I was going to be fairly alone in my school, and she quickly hooked

me up with other people. She connected me to all kinds of people who were involved in

[our province's] Early Childhood Education Council way back in the day and so I started

being part of that group. [Then I met] Belle [the woman who eventually became Amy's

teaching partner] . . . she was looking for a half time job-sharing partner, because she was

in the 1/2/3 class in the Alternative Program [a multi-age program offered by a particular

school division] at Marcel School, and I was half-time . . . so I went along to be with her.

And that was the beginning of the most productive years for me as far as teacher growth

goes.

This was . . . a time when parents were very invested in [the Alternative]

Program, this was a time when parents were lining up at 3:00 am in lawn chairs in

February to sign their kids up for the Alternative Program. . . . All the Alternative

teachers in the school division would meet together a few times a year, sitting around

tables having these amazing conversations about inquiry and "multi-aged-ness" in

classrooms. There was real support in the school division for that program, it was a

really vibrant, vital program and the idea of teacher collaboration and teacher

conversation was really key. . . . So we had that bigger group to be very connected to, and

we also had a strong group in our school, and Belle and I were job sharing and that was

an amazing collaborative experience too. We planned everything collaboratively so there

was no planning in isolation or dividing up curricular areas. We didn't believe in that at

all. We believed in complete integration . . . and neither of us would ever feel

comfortable not being an active part of children's lives as mathematicians or as readers,

we needed to be part of all of that. So we would meet together, plan collaboratively, and

keep this very lengthy detailed journal so our transitions from my working days to Belle's

were very seamless. Our journal was at school and it fully documented all the details of

the day and pertinent information about the children, along with our reflections about

what had been going on at a writing workshop or an art workshop. And then we'd talk

too. We would talk at length on the telephone each night too. . . . It was very, very, very

intense and wonderful.

So my career so far has been definitely grounded in the belief in the power of

collaboration. I've lived that my whole career and I can't imagine not [living that] . . .

it's just part of my practice. I don't think we can work in isolation, I think that what we

do can only be better when more minds are thinking together about something, when

people are looking at something together. It can only be richer for children and their

experience in the classroom when there are more people involved in that process. That's

why I love working with teacher candidates; I see the power in that and I love those

collaborative opportunities, and I love the different perspectives that come out when you

are working with another adult with children. It's very powerful.

As far as music in our classroom goes: we sing throughout the day, and music is

usually playing on a CD player. Music is an important cueing system for the children in

my room, so music is pretty much playing all the time. I usually play music with no

lyrics during reading/writing workshop, so I play a lot of jazz, classical and instrumental

world music. During morning choice time we play quite a range of stuff—Jack Johnston,

Motown, Stevie Wonder—we play all kinds of things, and the children really develop

favourites from what they hear. [As for the singing], at the beginning of the year we

develop a repertoire of songs we all know, and these songs become our community

songs. I've made songbooks for much of the music I've collected, and the songbooks

help the children make the connection between the words we sing and printed text. It is a powerful experience when they realize that they can read a songbook for a song they know. Sometimes music will be playing and the children will be busy playing and suddenly someone will hear a song they know, and they'll drop what they're doing, go get the song book and sit in the rocking chair and sing along with the song book. I also put those songbooks in the home reading baskets so the children can take them home.

So we do a lot of that. And at different times there might be music production, children making their own music, but it kind of depends on where we're at, what's going on, if they make a connection or not, or if it's an interest . . . I mean, I'm always looking for ways to connect children's experiences in any rich way that I can, so if that's a fit, that's where we'll go. . . . I'll see what's presenting itself as an opportunity. (Amy, Initial Interview, 2011)

Chapter Four

Who Are These Children? Time and Relationship

"The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking …"
(Loris Malaguzzi, 1998b, p. 2).

Introduction

In the article "Teaching Alone, Learning Together", Lee Shulman (2004a) writes:

"Teachers . . . can become better teachers as they learn from experience. . . . Yet

the vision of learning to teach, of improving with experience through the

employment of strategies of reflection and review, is predicated on the availability

of that most precious and rare commodity for a teacher—time. This includes time

for both individual reflection and for collective deliberation, for thinking alone

and for being thoughtful with others." (p. 313)

One of the main ideas I hoped to explore in this project was the significance of

restructured time for both teacher and student learning, and how this restructuring could

allow teachers to know their students and access their students' thinking, knowledge, and

wondering more fully. Through the creation of intentional spaces for co-teaching,

debriefing, planning, and teacher discussion, as well as the documentation of these

interactions, we hoped to capture the many ways in which common time—time to

observe, time to explore, time to reflect, time to discuss—allows for the deepening of

relationship between teachers and students, and how these evolving relationships allow

for the development of new perspectives and understandings. The stories in this chapter were chosen to reflect and explore the evolution of these understandings, perspectives and relationships.

The second thread which runs through both of these stories is the notion of play as the work of children (Paley, 2005, Vygotsky, 1933/1967) and as foundational to children's literacy learning (Roskos & Christie, 2001, 2007, 2011). In restructuring the way in which I invited students to engage with music and musical ideas in this project, it was my intention to provide more opportunities for child-initiated musical play; learning to recognize and understand what musical learning looks like in the context of child-initiated play, and learning how to support and sustain that play and that learning was a whole other matter. In her dissertation "A Formative Study of Rhythm and Pattern: Semiotic Potential of Multimodal Experiences for Early Years Readers" (2011), Peters synthesizes the literature to describe the following characteristics of play:

- Play is intrinsically and personally motivated by satisfaction inherent in the activity.

- The activity is more important than the goal.

- Play includes spontaneous activity; play activities naturally unfold.

- Children bring their own meanings to and construct their own meanings through play activities.

- Play may be non-literal.

- Rules are flexible.

- Play creates positive emotional effects.

- Play involves imagination.

- Play actively engages all players and is sociable.

- Play is freely chosen by children.

- Each participant is essential to the play activity.

- Play reflects the real-life activities surrounding it. (Peters, 2011, p. 42)

These characteristics are evident in the stories explored in this section, in which children engage with classroom and musical ideas through play, and in which teachers negotiate, consider, and support these playful experiences through collaboration, conversation, and reflection. In the first of the two stories in this section, Toni and I look back over the four years leading up to this project and the ways in which our perceptions of children's musical learning have evolved over time through our collaborative work in each other's classrooms.

Keyboard Story

The keyboard in Toni's classroom has become a symbol for me of the evolution that has occurred over the last few years in both of our thinking about what music can be for students. When I first met Toni five years ago, she was in her second year of teaching and she was very keen to explore collaborative possibilities connected to the music room. She had brought a keyboard into her classroom the previous year:

> I started out being terrified about [bringing music into the classroom], to be quite honest. . . . I really didn't know where to start, I didn't know how to begin, and I really felt like . . . it wasn't my place, or that maybe I would step on people's toes . . . but it was really important to me, because for me it's a way of communicating and that's what I wanted to try to develop in my classroom was lots of ways to communicate, [and] music was one of those.

> So, I started by just bringing in a keyboard that I had . . . I just put the keyboard out with some earphones and just let children play with it. I was terrified about what might happen, I was terrified that they might take it up in the first place, because I didn't know where I would take anything. I didn't know what was going to come of it, I didn't know how to "teach" music. . . . And what

ended up happening was amazing. I had a child who was really struggling in the classroom, he was struggling socially, he was struggling in every way, and he just took to that keyboard, like, that became his way to interact with other children in the classroom, it became his way to be a part of our classroom. He started to explore with it and somebody else in our class who had taken music lessons at that time —formal music lessons—knew how to play piano and she wanted to share that with the children and play for the children. And he knew that she knew what the notes were, and from that he wanted to record what he was making up. So they came up with the idea of putting coloured stickers on the notes for them, and they brought over markers and paper and began to record with just dots what they were doing. Then they shared all of that and different children explored with that, and then over time that turned into, "Well, how do you know if it's a long note or a short note?" And they started making lines with the different colours of markers to show that you hold this note for longer, but this note is just a dot. Which through sharing time eventually turned into them putting numbers above the line, so you'd know how many counts to hold that note for. And it allowed this child to share with the class. He was not a child who would talk really to children, he didn't have voice or a place in our classroom, he was constantly being asked to leave because of violence, so this was a way for him to find a really positive place in the classroom and a really positive way to interact with other children. So that's how I started.

After all that stuff had happened I put [out] one of those "learn how to play " piano books with notes and nursery rhyme-y songs, and a couple of children looked at it, but that's kind of what killed it and ended it. That's when things kind of stopped and it kind of lost all interest at that point. (Toni, Initial Interview, January 2011)

Where to begin? Toni first told me the above story five years ago, as we were beginning to think together about a possible music project involving her students. I had been granted some educational leave time from our school division that was going to enable me to spend some time outside of my music room working on other educational projects, and I was keen to get into classrooms and work with musical ideas in the context of students' classroom inquiries. Meanwhile, she was keen to explore new possibilities for music as an expressive language in her classroom, picking up on her keyboard experience from the previous year.

Although I didn't express my reservations that clearly at the time, I was not sure

how the keyboard was going to fit into what I felt I could offer Toni and her students. I

was looking for opportunities to connect the musical experiences students were having in

the music room to the classroom, and give them a chance to use the musical skills and

tools we were exploring in music class to create their own music in the classroom. For

me, the keyboard didn't fit well with what we "knew" from the music room. I feared that

it was too complicated and left too much room for children to be accidentally playing

around with ideas that they weren't, in my view, "ready" to understand cognitively. I

wanted our work in the classroom to reflect what we "knew" from the music room, and

so I felt it was best if we limited ourselves to the concepts and skills that we were already

familiar with from music class—pentatonic melodies, rhythms involving quarter notes

and eighth notes, etc.—and to the less individual, more group-friendly instruments that

we used in class. And so we veered away from the keyboard, and found another entry

point for music in her classroom, as Toni retells here:

> I had puppets in my classroom and since I love to sing with my kids, we
> had put the song book *The Seals on the Bus* in with the puppets. And as the kids
> started going through that book they wanted to make animal noises so we were
> trying to figure out how to make those animal noises since we couldn't make
> them all with our mouth. I had specifically put things in the junk cart that I
> thought children might find interesting to make instruments out of, so I had lots of
> bottles and lots of beads and little containers and boxes and tubes, and . . . so they
> started to create sounds at the junk cart. And then I didn't know where to take it
> from there. . . . I felt like I didn't have enough music skills, which now I look
> back and I know I don't need those music skills, I don't need to be a music
> specialist, I'm not scared to have music in my room . . . but at the time that's how
> I felt. Anyway, that's when I went to talk to [Sonja], as a music specialist, to
> collaborate with me and work on where could I take it. What can I do next?
> Which turned into [Sonja] working in my classroom and being able to share some
> of those experiences with me, which allowed me to see what I could do with
> children. That's the thing about having someone working in the classroom with
> you, not only do the kids get to benefit from it, but I got to watch somebody else
> interact with my children. I got to watch how somebody else did things, which

changed and influenced the way I did things. Anyway, we spent months making our own instruments and cataloguing our own sounds and making sounds around the classroom by scraping and tapping things with sticks, and the science of sound at the same time, like how far sound could travel in the building and could we make sound at the water table. Sound came into our sand table, it was at blocks, it infiltrated our writing, it became a way of telling our stories, not only orally but also in our Writing Workshop.

But for me I think the biggest "a-ha!" was when we brought instruments, real musical instruments into the classroom, metallophones, xylophones, and other instruments from the music room, and that started a whole different thing, it kind of allowed children to look at it differently. We moved from just making instruments and making sounds to actually thinking about music and patterns . . . in the end all of the children composed a melody for the animal they were researching, actually. But I think one of the most important things that I realize now is that it wasn't only the play or the fact that we were having each child make a piece, it was that connection between music class and Explorations that was a huge key part for me. That they were learning in music class techniques and concepts and then bringing those concepts back to the classroom and then playing with those, and I think that's when I realized that I didn't need to "teach" music as a classroom teacher, all I really needed to do was really talk to them about what they were doing in music class, talk to the music teacher about what they were doing in music class, and allow them to bring that back with them to the classroom and explore with it. And that's when I realized that you don't need to be a music specialist to have music in your room. That was really the a-ha moment I was trying to talk about. (Toni, Initial Interview, 2011)

Throughout all this, the keyboard stayed on the fringes of the classroom. At the end of that year, when students had finished composing their animal melodies, some children were interested in trying to play them on the keyboard, and we used stickers (somewhat like Toni had done the previous year) to help them identify the notes they would need. For the most part, though, the keyboard did not have a primary role in the children's creative music making. And so another year began.

The children speak: we're making a band! As we embarked on our next year of working together, our experiences and questions from the previous year played a pivotal role in our planning and positioning of musical opportunities in the classroom. Toni elaborates:

I began my music journey in my first year with just having the keyboard as an Explorations choice, and although I knew in my mind right from the beginning that I wanted children to be using music as another way to communicate, for the first couple of years I didn't really present music to the kids as a communication tool. The musical instruments were on the same shelf as the magnets and the magnifying glasses and the bug boxes and the Explorations things, that's where the musical instruments were. The message I was [inadvertently] sending to children was that [the instruments] were an Explorations choice, more for playing with than communicating with. After those experiences in Explorations and my conversations with [the music teacher], I wanted to look at moving our instruments into the writing area, so they then became more a part of writing and our communication, as opposed to just a part of our play. So instead of putting them in with the play and Explorations things, the next year I put them with the Writing Workshop things. And I really do feel this changed the way that the children viewed the instruments, and how I viewed what were doing with those instruments. And it really did become more of a story-telling tool at the time. Now, this year I'm trying them between the two. This year I have the writing things on the one side, and I have the instruments in the middle, and then on the other side is the pretend play and dress up area, and I specifically put them there so that they're between the two: not only for writing, not only for play, and I'm hoping to send that message, that they can transcend across lines.

But what happened the year that the instruments were in the writing area was interesting, because it suddenly became all about recording their music and writing it down, writing down the notes they were playing. . . . So the explorations around music became about writing it down, and the writing-down inspired more children to create pieces of music and to explore with music who had never gone to the instruments before, so there was a definite positive side to that. But we started noticing that every time they wrote a piece down it went into this music folder that the children had made, and nobody ever played it again—it was just written down and put in the folder. I finally asked them one day what they wanted to do with all this music [in the folder], and they told me, like it was obvious and I should have known, that they were going to make a band. Well, I had no idea where to take it or how to start . . . so [Sonja] came into our classroom and we asked the children how this was going to work, how were we going to organize it, what were we going to do, and they told us, again as if it should be obvious, that we were just all going to get an instrument and play, and then we would sound like a band. (Toni, Initial Interview, 2011)

Toni and I were both very intrigued by the students' idea of a band, and decided

to do our best to follow their thinking without interfering—more easily said than done! It

took all our willpower to let them go down to the music room, all take an instrument, and

just start playing, without any organizing on our part—but in the name of documentation

and children's music, we did it, madly recording the children's conversation and music-

making all the way. After our first "band practice" we all returned to the classroom to

listen to the recording, incredibly curious to see what the children would think of what

they sounded like. In Toni's words:

> In my adult mind I was convinced that they would think it sounded awful
> and that they would not think that they sounded like a band, and that they would
> come to the conclusion that they all should be playing the same thing, or come up
> with something that they could all play together at the same time, because in my
> adult mind that's what a band was . . . but I was totally wrong. When they heard
> themselves, they thought they sounded amazing. They said they thought they
> sounded better than a real band.

> But one thing the children noticed was that they couldn't hear themselves,
> not everybody could hear their own instrument. That turned into a conversation
> about how different children could play quieter or louder, and that led someone to
> suggest that maybe we needed a pointer, a conductor, to tell people when to play.
> The person who was "the pointer" would point, and when they pointed to
> particular children, the children would play their instruments. When we listened
> to what we sounded like [with the pointer], the children started noticing way more
> things. What other people's instruments sounded like, patterns and rhythms that
> people were doing, people who were echoing each other—all kinds of stuff that
> influenced what they did next. And then the pointer started to develop signals,
> signals to play softer or louder or faster or slower. . . . Then one day, someone
> asked if we could stop practicing, and have the band play for real. And we were
> surprised, Sonja and I, because we thought we had been playing for real—but it
> turned out that the distinction for them between practicing and playing was having
> an audience. So half the children became the audience and the other half became
> the band with a pointer. Then they decided they needed a curtain, because that's
> what happens in a real band, you have a curtain that goes up, and the lights had to
> be off and there had to be special lights on the band, and also at that point
> somebody had mentioned that they had seen the Bugs Bunny Merry Melodies and
> that the conductor or the pointer always had a stick and music stand. One of the
> things I found most interesting about the music stand and the stick was that they
> had to have music notes on the stand even though they weren't looking at them
> and the notes meant nothing to them—but they felt that to be a real conductor (or
> pointer), they had to have the notes there. Which led us back to the written-down
> notes that had inspired the band in the first place, although no one had mentioned
> them in all the time we were playing. (Toni, Initial Conversation, 2011)

Expanding teacher notions of music. This experience profoundly influenced how Toni and I thought about what our role was in making music with children. It was a revelation to discover, first of all, that they didn't need their music to sound like adult music to be satisfied with it—and it was also a revelation to realize that they were able to discover and use the tools they needed to make the music work for them (figuring out how to make the band start and stop, play louder or softer, faster or slower, individually or together), without the explicit instruction of an adult. The pivotal role of play and imagination in children's construction of meaning was also made clear to us through this experience. Our role as teachers, it became clear, could be one of guidance and facilitation—recording conversations and ideas, making connections more obvious, posing questions, revisiting ideas from previous conversations—rather than direct leadership or organization. These realizations caused us both to look at our previous musical engagements with our students through new eyes, as Toni explains:

> It took me until last year, I guess, to realize that my idea of music and children's idea of music doesn't always mesh, and that I need to let go of my adult idea of music. . . . I think that I influenced that first group a lot to create music that fit my adult idea of what music is, but I think now that they may have been just as satisfied with something else. I mean, we had time for Explorations and to create music on the instruments, but it really became about creating a little piece in the end, and each child creating a little piece. I am not saying that that is bad—it was a wonderful experience, and I loved every step I took of it, but after the experiences I've had now, I look back and I wonder if I should have given them more time to play before we headed down that road. That's something I think about now, when I have musical instruments in my classroom and there's really enough time for children just to play with them . . . what I've discovered is that they will naturally find patterns in their music. (Toni, Initial Conversation, 2012)

Music as play, music as storytelling. This history definitely influenced us as we began this research project this year, in that it made us more relaxed about and also more attentive to the many ways students were making meaning through music, and reminded

us that the music students were making did not necessarily have to sound "right" to us as

adults for it to have value for them and for our learning as a group.

Here's an excerpt from a focus group with all participant teachers, where Toni is

talking about her students' recent engagements. Notice that the keyboard is back!

-Toni: The circus has totally taken over my classroom lately . . . and all the kids were
    making animal masks, and one child made a dinosaur mask just because that's
    him, and the teaching assistant kind of looked at me like, "How are we going
    to fit a dinosaur into the circus?" and [one of the other children], who's sitting
    right there, says, "Well, the dinosaur could be scaring the clowns!" So now
    there are a bunch of kids making clown masks. And then yesterday in the
    classroom two of the girls, they made this creepy dinosaur-sneaking-up-on-
    you music. . . . They asked at the beginning of Explorations if they could
    make music for the circus, and I said yes, expecting it to be background
    music—but it turns out they were telling the story of Paulo-the-Dinosaur
    scaring the clowns with the music. It is kind of neat how this has come all the
    way round. When kids have asked if they can make music for things we're
    doing in the classroom in the past, it has always been background music and it
    really hasn't connected particularly with whatever is going on in the
    classroom, except that it is happening at the same time. But this time, when I
    said, "Oh, what is this music for?", they said, "This is going to tell the
    audience the story". I'm putting it into adult words now, but in their own way
    that's what they explained to me that their music was supposed to do.

(*We take a break for a moment to listen to the two girls play their music. It has
distinct rhythmic and melodic patterns and uses the entire keyboard to evoke the idea
of a big dinosaur sneaking up and surprising the clowns*.)

- Sonja: What is neat about this [music] to me as a music teacher is how they're using
    the way the keyboard is set up to make patterns. That has been a big thing in
    your room this year when the kids have been composing, thinking about how
    you can compose something that's going to be easy to remember by doing a
    pattern or a sequence, or something that uses physical markers on the
    keyboard or the instrument that help situate you.

- Toni: And every time those girls play that music, it's the same. It doesn't change at
    all, there's nothing random about it now. They're not just doing a similar
    thing each time, but exactly the same. Which, especially for those two
    children, really surprised me.

- Sonja: Well, this morning when they went to play it for us, one of the girls started
    doing something else at first, not that same pattern of two beats, but just going
    straight up chromatically, and inside my head I thought, "Oh, darn,"—because

that does seem to inevitably happen with some Grade 1 things, they evolve
into something else and you just have to let them go—but then after she
started she was like, "No, no, that's not it." And then she went back and
started again, and there it was, she had her old pattern again.

- Amy: Yay!

- Sonja: Well, it was exciting that she was that aware of what she was doing, not just
caught up in the experience of it. Because it's kind of like that painting thing
that happens with small children . . .

- Amy: Yeah, when you just want to go "Ah! Stop!"

- Sonja: Yes, and give them a new paper . . .

- Joan: Oh, yes. Oh yes.

- Sonja: And that beautiful thing gets all painted over, because they're in the
experience, not in the product of it. And that's another level, I guess, of
awareness, of looking and saying, "I like this, I'm going to stop painting
now", or "I'm going to do it again the same way" is the piano playing
equivalent of that, I guess.

- Toni: But then the fact that they actually created that *for* something, and what I was
saying to Amy and Joan is that they were trying to tell their story with the
music, which is so what we've been doing this year. . . . It was ultimately that
they wanted to tell the story.

- Sonja: And these aren't the kids particularly who have been the big players in the
telling stories through music thing—like they've been along for the ride and
anything we've done as a big group they've done, but they aren't the ones
who have then been going off and taking up those ideas in a very purposeful
kind of way after. So when Toni told me this morning that some of the kids
had been creating circus music that they wanted to play for me, I was actually
surprised that it was those two girls who came in. I wasn't expecting it to be
those two girls, knowing Toni's kids. I thought it would be the ones, you
know the ones that you usually see take things up that way. So it was a nice
surprise to see them walk in.

- Toni: And it wasn't really something that was put out there—like the keyboard
was hidden behind this pile of stuff, and I didn't even know they had it
until I heard it—they went and managed to get it out from behind that pile
of stuff, plug it in, and then it was sitting flat on the floor, because there
was no room on the table where it usually is because seriously, my room is
just awful right now, there's just stuff everywhere, and they're completely
oblivious to it all, they're just playing on the floor.

- Sonja: What struck me is *who* it was, and how self-starting it was. Because . . . there have been times in Toni's room where we've done a mini-lesson that has been based on things that we see, things we think kids are wanting/needing to do, and then the children go off and they take it up—at least a certain group of kids do—so completely, almost derivatively—like we'll have done a story together about a boy who gets a dog and it runs away, and then they'll go off and create a music story about a girl who gets a cat and then it gets stolen. You know, that kind of thing. Whereas what these girls did was . . .

- Amy: Really more from them.

- Sonja: Exactly. Yet I think it has to be partly because of all the things we've been doing. Because those ideas about making a story with music are now out there.

- Amy: Oh yeah.

- Toni: And when the children were acting out the clown/dinosaur story for us with the dinosaur mask this morning, it was interesting for me to think how far the children have moved [in terms of] not having to "explain" to everyone what they're doing. . . . At the beginning of the year when we shared something, it had to be explained first because otherwise, in the children's minds, no one would understand it—they had to explain it to you. And it was very much about "telling". And now it's not so much about the words as about just doing it, which I find has been a huge shift throughout the year. Because I have a group of very verbal children this year . . . and I have some very *not* verbally strong children, and I feel that my verbally strong children have dominated a lot of the first half of the year. And now, they're not.

Amy: Now the others have their own kind of voice, whatever that might be.

- Toni: Yes. Like those piano-playing girls for example, one of them in particular, if she had felt that she had to explain something first, she wouldn't have done it at all.

- Amy: Yeah, a lot of children wouldn't. At all. Well, that's exciting.

- Toni: Because some of my kids, they're the kind of kids who people let take over because they have that way. And that has happened a lot in my room.

 - Sonja: Well, I think it speaks to making many languages accessible—

- Amy: Yes.

- Sonja: — and if you are privileging one, whether it is verbal or written or whatever, then there are people who aren't going to be sharing what they have to share, or we won't be seeing a different side of kids. (Focus Group II, March 2011)

Looking back: shifting perceptions and full circles. And so the keyboard in Toni's classroom has become for me a symbol of the evolution that has occurred in both of our thinking about what music can be for students.

- Toni: Looking back, I think I've kind of done a full circle in my thinking. . . . I [started out] wanting music to be in my room for children to express themselves, but . . . I didn't know what kind of "express themselves" I was really going for. I wanted them to explore with it in order to have what's inside come out, but I didn't really understand what that even meant at the beginning . . . and I think maybe part of my learning has been actually [making music] with the kids. It has been sitting on the floor with the kids during music class and Music Explorations, and actually playing the instruments alongside them. . . . I'm not sure I ever got to do this as a child in music class—in my [childhood] music class, I only played the sheet music I was given. So I got to do that alongside my children, and I feel a lot of what I bring to [Music Explorations now] is because I've experienced it, and I've experienced what they're experiencing, and that's kind of brought me all the way back to what I really wanted to be doing, although I didn't know how to get there or what it would look like.

- Sonja: Well, thinking back to when I first came into your classroom with the keyboard, and I remember . . . not being sure if a keyboard was really the best place to start, because it didn't connect with what we were learning in music class. . . . The things that I felt I could bring to your room didn't involve the keyboard, because I thought that it wouldn't work. But what is interesting now (is) that we've come . . . full circle, when you think about how kids are using that keyboard. . . . And I think that how we perceive [their music] and how we receive what they're doing is quite different now, because we've done so much thinking about what music is and what music for children is, and what that divide is between what we as adults think of as music and what children think of as music. I think we now "let" them and empower them to do really interesting things with that keyboard that they might have been doing before but we didn't appreciate, or that they weren't doing before because we were trying to get them to do something different.

- Toni: Huh, I never thought about it that way. Because I didn't value what they were doing on the keyboard back then nearly as much as I do now. And when I look back on it, the only reason that I had a keyboard in the first place was because it was an instrument I had at my disposal. That's really the only reason that there was a keyboard and no other instrument. When I look back

now, I don't think I'd ever just put a keyboard in my room, ever. I mean, yes, there's still a keyboard in my room, but it is paired with so many other instruments. I mean there are xylophones, there are so many other parts to that now, that make it more rich, I think.

- Sonja: Well, when you first put the keyboard in the room, I think . . . we were thinking of it being played traditionally, the way an adult would play. And now I think (we) let it be played the way a child plays it. But what is so intriguing to me is all of the structure and pattern and stuff that children have brought to it. . . . What they do is way less random than what I thought they would do. I think I thought that if you give them a complex instrument like that, they're going to be super random and they're never going to remember their song and they'll never be able to play it again, which was important to me, somehow.

- Toni: And I think for certain children when I started with that keyboard, it was incredibly random because they weren't bringing anything else to it. They weren't coming with all the knowledge and background that they're coming with now.

- Sonja: Well, the other thing about a keyboard [that I found problematic] is that there are usually always one or two kids who have taken piano lessons, so they sit down there and immediately play a "real" song and that puts it in everyone's mind that there's a "real" way to play this, that the goal is to play "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star" or whatever. And I guess I always worried that that would shut some doors for kids being creative themselves.

- Toni: That doesn't happen very much in my room anymore, which surprised me actually. I actually considered taking the keyboard out of my room this year, for that reason, and I did have to make one rule about them not using the demo mode, you know the one where the keyboard does the playing for you—but once they'd learned that that wasn't an option for them, they did use the keyboard in ways that were very expressive and exploratory and that did have a system and that were quite complicated in a way that they couldn't do on a xylophone—because really the xylophone is quite limiting in some ways.

- Sonja: Well, especially the ones we've been giving them that only have five notes!

- Toni: Well, a xylophone can be really very freeing for children. But also very limiting.

- Sonja: Well, that's also its beauty. Because when you are limited in what you can do, that frees you within that space to be very creative with the limited amount of things that you can do. Sometimes having too many choices is the worst thing you can do. But that "lack of limits" doesn't seem to be a problem for

your children creating at the keyboard anymore. (Toni, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Reading that final sentence now, it occurs to me that the "problem" was perhaps never so much with the students as with their music teacher. By forcing myself to let go of some of the things that I thought I needed to control in terms of children's musical learning, by allowing them to "do their work"—that is to say, to play—and by learning how to recognize and support the musical thinking and learning that was happening within that play, the musical life and learning of the classroom took on a much more natural, playful, connected, and meaningful dimension for both the students and the teachers.

Vignette I Revisited: A Screenplay

The second story in this section focuses on Joan and her students—all relative newcomers to Music Explorations—and how, through time, reflection and collaborative problem-solving, the children in her class emerged as agents of their own learning and music-making. We will begin by revisiting the first vignette from the introduction, this time in screenplay form.

FOCUS GROUP.

SONJA, JOAN, AMY and TONI are talking about what has been happening in Music Explorations and Joan has been describing the "Blue White Planet" experience. Together they watch some footage of what the class has been doing.

CUT TO:

Joan's class—l Grade 1 students—is in Music Explorations. The shadow screen, a large purple sheet strung across the

middle of the music room and dividing the riser area from
the classroom window, is up, and two overhead projectors
are shining on it. On the boombox, Raffi is singing, and
children sing with him:

> Blue-white planet,
>
> Spinning in space:
>
> Our home sweet home . . .
>
> (Raffi, 2008, track 2)

On either side of the shadow screen, children are dancing -
those on the side of the light making shadows on the
screen, those on the other side using scarves to mirror the
shadows and dance with them. Some children are doing
actions that they have created to match the words of the
song, large round gestures for the planet, fingers twirling
to show the spinning. Others have found objects to help
them depict the ideas in the song—a hula hoop, a large
ball—and their shadows too are projected on the screen. One
boy has found a basket of round bells from a long-retired
bell tree, and has discovered that he can spin them, top-
like, across the floor—just like a planet.

Up on the risers, a group of boys has assembled a "band"—a
few drums, the wind chimes, a suspended cymbal—and they are
playing along with the beat of the music, creating patterns
together and periodically trading instruments. Occasionally

one of them will get up and go to the music stand they have

set up in front of their instruments, where he will conduct

using a baton they have created from an old instrument

mallet.

Other instrumentalists are scattered along the bottom of

the risers, some finding ways to play their instruments to

match the movements of the dancers or illustrate the images

in the song— "this sounds like the stars!" "this could be

the rocket ship!" —and others tapping along with the rhythm

of the words. "Listen, Sonja!" someone says. "I can make

my instrument say the words!"

In a corner, two students are busily huddled over a piece

of paper. Using many colourful markers, they have written

out the words to the song and they are planning to post

them somewhere so that anyone who wants to can sing along.

Nearby, a few more students are using scissors and big

pieces of construction paper to make shapes—a rocket ship,

a sun—that they want to project on the screen.

                                        CUT TO:

FOCUS GROUP MEETING

                        JOAN

     We did it a lot. Three Explorations times, maybe
     four? And every time we [the teachers] were
     like, are we going to do it again? And we did it
     again, and it became richer every time, even
     though our "teacher" first instinct may have been
     to say, "we've already done that." Been there,

done that, that sort of thing. But no. The kids weren't done yet. There were so many, so many layers to it.

SONJA

And places for different people to be doing different things, but all feel like they were part of a whole. There were just so many levels that this was fascinating on. The band playing along—the fact that they even wanted to be playing "along" with the music, and over and over—and playing different rhythms, making different patterns, coming in in different places, and … everyone invested, in very different ways, but everybody completely part of this same experience. Which again is an example of [kids initiating] something I never would have thought of doing, something I never would have thought would work—and the fact that they came to it themselves . . .

JOAN

I know! We never thought it would go there! And it was a random thing, really—me even introducing that particular song to the kids was just random, there was no special intention behind that on my part—and it just grew. But again, that wouldn't have happened if all that stuff before hadn't happened, right?

SONJA

Well no. Because I think they were taking all these things they had been playing around with—the shadows, the idea of making a band, mirroring, making rhythms—and they connected them to something that meant a lot to them, that song, and they had all these ways to play around with it and have it evolve over all of that time, over all of those days that they wanted to just to do that over and over, yet always different and always evolving.
(Focus Group Meeting III, 2011)
                                        FADE OUT

Revisiting Vignette I—Tracing the Process through Conversation

    Assumptions and surprises. Part of what made this experience particularly exciting for Joan and me was where this group had started from in Music Explorations. Although I hadn't given it very much thought at the time, Joan's class was quite different from Amy's and Toni's in two important respects. First of all, the class was a straight Grade 1 rather than a 1/2 multi-age, which meant that none of her children had experienced anything like Music Explorations before, unlike the older students in both Toni and Amy's rooms, who had all participated in something similar the previous year. Secondly, Joan herself was a new teacher to our school, and although we had worked together outside of school and we knew that we were interested in many of the same ideas, she had not been an actual part of our journey towards Music Explorations until this year.

    As I planned the initial invitations for our first Music Explorations sessions, however, it didn't really occur to me that I should consider approaching Joan's class differently than the other two. Because we were planning to use these first invitations simply as a jumping-off place and then follow the children's interests and engagements where they led us, it seemed reasonable to me that starting with similar choices and structures should not only not be problematic, but would be both practical and potentially interesting. What I wasn't really conscious of, however, was that the choices and engagements I planned were, of course, based on what had happened the previous year. In planning the new invitations, I had thought about what we had done the year before and what had been effective and perhaps not so effective. I had thought about the kinds of engagements we had offered for students the previous year and how they had been

taken up, and then I had designed the initial invitations for our first Music Explorations together both to pick up from where we had left off and perhaps to suggest new directions. Although in my mind I believed I was designing these invitations for all the students in the project, the students I was really thinking about were the ones who had been part of the previous years' experience—none of whom were in Joan's class.

Although in retrospect I see that it perhaps shouldn't have been surprising, it came as quite a shock to me when Joan's class came to their first Music Explorations and things did not go the way they had for Amy's and Toni's classes. We began the session with a group activity, just like in Amy's and Toni's classes, and then we introduced the different choices, just like we had for Toni's and Amy's classes, and then we invited children to make choices, just like I had with Toni's and Amy's classes. But then, instead of the children getting to work and engaging in their choices in a purposeful and relatively focused way, as Toni's and Amy's had, the children flitted from choice to choice, trying every possibility for a brief moment and then running off to something else. Everyone, it seemed, was banging on an instrument, and no one was listening to what they were doing, not that they would have been able to hear themselves over the din if they had even wanted to. Instead of being able to observe children's work or engage in conversations with children, Joan and I found ourselves running from group to group, trying to keep things under control. I could imagine her thinking, "Is this the Music Explorations that Sonja has been so excited about?" and I myself was wondering what was wrong with these children. How come they were not behaving the way the other classes had?

Regrouping. Joan and I met that afternoon to debrief the morning and plan for the next session—both desperately trying, I imagine, to figure out how we could salvage this experience from chaos.

- Joan: Wow, that was a busy morning. Did it go the way you expected?

- Sonja: Yeah, I am trying to figure out what happened there. I think kids were doing some interesting things, but there was so much going on and it was so noisy, and it was so hard for anyone to hear what they were doing . . . like, I think last year—

- Joan: Well, I think they just had to get that out of their systems, I think they just had to muck about today, even though it was really loud and obnoxious. (laughs) And it was hard for some kids too—some kids had a hard time with all that noise.

- Sonja: Well, I've been thinking about this all day—and I think that last year I had a lot more activities that were quiet—like there were headphones on the piano, so two kids could sit and play together but only hear each other. And there was a lot of listening, like painting to music, and music stories, and a few other things that involved headphones, so really, almost half the class engaged in something that didn't make noise. And that worked well—but this year I wanted it to be not so much just responding to music, I wanted there to be really a lot more things where kids were creating music and making musical choices and really making music, as opposed to listening to music and painting or drawing. So that's why I didn't put out a lot of those quieter choices. But I wonder now if maybe that would be not a bad place to start, to have more choices like that out for your kids, so that there would be less noise and it would be less over-stimulating. There's a lot I think they could get out of those things, like painting fast to fast music, and picking colours of paint that match different moods in the music . . .

- Joan: I can bring those easels from out in the hallway if you want. And the other thing too is that I could bring in all the charts that have our poems on them, the ones that the kids wrote and also the ones that we regularly refer to, and just see what they do with those in the music room too. Maybe that would get them thinking about [those possibilities] . . .

- Sonja: And maybe some of these louder things, I think we might organize them a bit. Like that drum could go across the hall and just be used by small groups for a while, rather than be in here with everyone.

- Joan: The other thing is, we are going to be starting some animal research. . . . I went to this diorama workshop on Friday, and we've been doing a lot of work

all year with our bodies—making bodies, moving bodies, drawing bodies, and so on, and the kids have been making puppets in exploration time, so I am trying to move to have us have opportunities to represent our stories in different ways—like act it out, or turn it into a puppet show or whatever—so this diorama workshop gave me some ideas for that, but it also made me think of maybe beginning to transfer some of the stuff we've been doing about our own bodies to animals. Anyway, if we start this work over this week, I wonder if that could trickle into here too, like the sounds they would want for their diorama play.

- Sonja: Well, that reminds me of another quiet activity from last year, we did a lot of work with wire and tin foil, making statues to represent the different shapes we can make with our bodies when we move—because movement and making statues is a big part of what we do in the beginning of music, working on spatial awareness and all that. And so all of those invitations we had last year—when I started planning for this year, I was thinking that I wanted to do new stuff, but I wasn't even thinking that for you guys, all of that stuff IS new stuff. Those would be things we could definitely be exploring with your group and making those connections. And, oh yeah, that idea of sounds for their dioramas too, let's say you have a leopard and you're telling a story about it, finding sounds that tell that story. I'm wondering if maybe we want to do more stuff as a big group, at least at first, not the whole time, but maybe the first twenty minutes, that might inspire kids to go off and take up those ideas in different ways. Like we read a story about an animal that we find sounds in the room for, or that we move like the animal, or whatever, some kind of mini-lesson thing like that, which would sort of set the tone for the rest of what goes on, and it could totally be connected to what was going on in your room.

- Joan: Well, all the kids have an animal that they're interested in learning about —

- Sonja: And then exploring that through music and sound, I mean that's, that would be great, that would be a really [good connection.] And I think that in that case, these days would turn into, well, they'd have much more direction, and in a way be more of a Workshop than an Explorations, which is a totally fine thing as far as I'm concerned.

- Joan: Are you sure?

- Sonja: Oh yeah, totally. I mean, with Amy's class we even call it "Music Workshop". In my mind, what we're trying here, it kind of falls somewhere between the two things. Yes, it is a chance for kids to explore with things in the music in room in a way that they don't get to in a traditional music class, but to me, I also really want it to be a chance for kids to be thinking about music as a language and a way of expressing their ideas, in the same way that you do in Writing Workshop. You're developing the skills and getting a

chance to work with that, and sort of finding a place for music in all the other things that are going on in the classroom.

- Joan: Well the next time we have Music Explorations is Wednesday, so we may have more ideas to bring with us next time, or to frame some of those ideas that we've been thinking about in our classroom Explorations. Like "Gee, that's something you might want to try in Music Explorations."

- Sonja: Yeah, and that's something that Toni did that worked well last year—the day before they had Music Explorations, she'd have a talk a talk with her class, "Tomorrow's Music Explorations, what do we want to bring? What things do we want to try with music?", so they would come the next morning already with a plan.

- Joan: I think maybe we'll start a list too, on the chart paper, so maybe as the week goes on, so we don't forget, maybe there's things that we can write down, "Oh, let's write that down for Music Explorations". And if I start to model that, maybe kids will pick up on that. (Debriefing Conversation, February 2011)

Common experience: connection and community. And so we soldiered on. We incorporated more large group activities, more modeling, more creating music together as a large group, more choices that involved responding to music as opposed to creating music, more deliberate connections and scaffolding to things that were going on in the classroom. By March, we were feeling more positive about what we what was going on. This conversation took place after a Music Explorations in which we worked as a large group to imagine and create the sounds of various animal habitats that students were researching in class:

- Joan: We're moving along.

- Sonja: Yeah! And this is another way that this can look. . . . I mean, I really did like the way that [this went today], the "doing something together as a group" thing, and that's not the way that many of my Music Explorations experiences so far have gone, but there has always been a part of my mind that has been thinking that we could [go that way] and it would just be a whole different way of looking at it.

- Joan: And when you look at who these kids are, and that they are all Grade 1's, this class is a straight Grade 1 and they've never had this Music Explorations experience before, so some of that at the beginning, when they were all just "going to town", which caused me some anxiety because I was wondering, where am I going with this and this is really loud . . . but when I think of where we are now, I think they had kind of had to have that "muck-about" time—no, not kind of, they absolutely *had* to have that time. When I think about my classroom and [how I begin classroom] Explorations at the beginning of the year, [I would never] say to the kids, "you're going to come in and do this specific thing," right?

- Sonja: No, they need time to play around and see what the possibilities are. Yes, I think this is a good way for us to be heading.

- Joan: And it is nicely connected to what we're doing in the class. And we'll be working on those habitat backgrounds on Monday.

- Sonja: So we can have them in the background in Music Explorations while we're playing next time, and think about them while we're playing. Cool! (Debriefing Conversation, March 2011)

In our next focus group meeting, as each participant shared what was happening with

their class in Music Explorations, some of the same themes emerged:

-Toni: Well, it's so neat to hear what other people are doing. Because as you're talking, I'm thinking, "Wow, that's something I could be thinking about. That's something my kids haven't tried yet." I like that.

- Amy: Yes, they all sound pretty different.

- Sonja: Yes, considering that they all came from a similar beginning, with me just setting up the room based on what we did last year and on what I imagined you were doing now, that when you imagine that on the first day of Music Explorations we were kind of all starting in the same place, how everything goes in its own way depending on what is going on in the room and how much experience people have had and who these kids are and all of that, it's kind of amazing.

 - Toni: Yes, who the kids are makes a huge difference. Because last year, there was lots of neat Explorations but it was kind of disjointed and we didn't really have a . . . I'm not sure what the word is.

- Amy: Yeah, an over-arching idea. And I know that feeling from the classroom. There are always many interesting things going on, all kinds of little inquiries,

from little spontaneous moment-to-moment inquiries, to things that children are a little more invested in terms of the length of time they've been playing with an idea or making connections with an idea … but sometimes there's this sense of connectedness that comes to the work in the classroom, and when that happens, it just feels right. It just feels like, "ahh". The magic happens.

- Joan: Kind of like us just before Christmas, everything was happening, but since the holidays, we're kind of in a lull, and I was getting panicky and thinking, nothing is working, and even coming into Music Explorations, I kind of felt like I didn't know what to connect with.

- Amy: And I think we have to look at that as not a bad thing. Because that's all the foundation part, and everybody's going to be at a different pace doing that and everybody's going to have different connecting points. And it's only when there are a lot of those connecting points that you get there, and who knows what those connecting points will be?

- Joan: I need to remind myself of that. Because . . . the "buzz" part can't exist without the "making the connections" part, and that takes time.

- Toni: That's kind of what I feel this story and the music thing has done for my whole classroom, for our whole day—and the interest and excitement has gone class-wide.

- Amy: It doesn't happen often.

- Toni: And I don't think I've ever had something taken up by all, I think this may be the first time in my career where I've had something that all children have taken up in some way. Everyone has found a way to take this up, which is the part that I am finding [so amazing], that connecting it to all those different languages, all the different ways of communicating, just accessing one more, has . . . I don't know if that is what has created all this connection, but I've never had all my kids engage like this.

- Sonja: I think this year is different at least for the three of us, because we've done it before—even more different for you and me, Toni, because this is the fifth year that we've kind of been trying to do something like this. Which is why, Joan, why you guys are so interesting to me. Because your class—if they weren't here, I wouldn't even be thinking about time and experience as important in this—and I probably should have been. I think I would just be taking it for granted that Toni and Amy's classes are where they are, but not thinking about what experiences and conversations and reflection have gone into getting them there. Because it never occurred to me that it might not work to have your class start Explorations with the same engagements and structure as their classes, and yet last year when they began, we didn't start in that way at all. (Focus Group II, March 2011)

Letting children lead. I remember leaving that focus group feeling much better about all the different things that were going on in Music Explorations. It felt good to have had a chance to connect with each other's experiences, to be affirmed in things that we may have been thinking or feeling individually, to be challenged to think about some things in new ways, to talk with and be supported by people who were living a similar experience.

As the weeks went on, Joan and I began to feel more confident about re-introducing more open-ended choices in Music Explorations, in addition to our group activities and the engagements connected to classroom Explorations. Responding to children's interest in shadow puppets, we put up a shadow screen in the music room, and students became interested in dancing and copying each other's movements in shadow. Other children began to play along with the shadows that were dancing, and others began to become interested in making a band. At the same time, Joan had begun singing the song "Blue White Planet" with her class, and one day they brought it along to Music Explorations to sing for me. When we began to make our Explorations choices that day, a child asked if we could keep listening to the song during Explorations—and although I had reservations about how recorded music would inhibit children's own music making, we did. And from there came the scene that has already been described, the multi-modal, connected, exploratory experience that children created for themselves around a song that they loved, an experience which went on to resonate throughout our music Explorations for the rest of the year.

In our final interview, Joan and I looked back on what had transpired and how it had happened.

- Sonja: Did things turn out the way you had anticipated?

- Joan: Well, they did and they didn't, I guess. I mean, the way they ended up working was beautiful, and I guess that going into it, that's what I had hoped, but I didn't have a specific picture in mind of what would evolve. The end result—I mean, how everything came together, and the connectedness, and everybody was working together and everyone was invested in it—I mean ultimately, that's what I would have hoped would come out of it. But the specifics of what happened, no, I didn't imagine that things would go that way. But that's what Explorations are, right? You don't know where you're going, not product/result-wise, anyway.

- Sonja: Well, what happened with your group has definitely influenced what I think about what kids need Music Explorations to be, or what Music Explorations could be for kids. That sort of open-ended play and where that went, and all of the things they wanted to do within it . . . well, I am really glad that we kind of stood back and let them do what they wanted to do, because I would never have, I couldn't have ever taken it there myself. It's not the kind of thing that you can control or direct or suggest for them to do, but it went to such a rich place that was so much "their" world . . . I'm not describing it well, but . . . leaving room for kids to play with music in that way, to "play" music and *play* music—interesting that we use the word "play" in that way in regard to music, eh?—I think that's really important. And it's easy for me to get distracted by curricular things I might see within that, like kids creating rhythms or composing songs, and I'll go, oh yes, this is great—but on the other hand they can be so happy and be doing something so valuable and that is so appropriate for them to be doing when they're 5 and 6 years old, without my longer range curricular plans being imposed on them. And I've seen that in other class' Explorations, but not to the huge degree that your kids did with the Blue White Planet. And I think that part of it is just that we gave them time to do it, that we let them go back day after day and just keep going with that.

- Joan: That was a huge thing, honouring that time and having that time and giving that time. And it's easy not to give that time and to feel like we have to move on, or whatever, but how important it is, how that wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the time they were given to do that.

- Sonja: And for me, by the second or third time I was thinking, it's too easy just to let them do this again, should we not be planning something? Should we not be trying to move on?

- Joan: But they weren't finished. They were asking for it, they were coming in and setting it up—like you weren't even setting it up for them, they would get what they needed, set it up, put it in the right order. . . . It's still interesting to me how that band would play and switch instruments around. . . . But yeah, they weren't finished with it yet.

- Sonja: And really, the less that we tried to interfere with what they were doing, the better things were—like your example of the band, when we were trying to get them to share what they had been doing, and then instead of showing the

class that, they all switched parts and did something new. . . . I mean, I don't think they were consciously being unreceptive to [us wanting them to share that], but they weren't thinking about it at all on the same level as us. Their motivation wasn't about a performance; it was way more organic than that, way beyond our little "teachable moment".

- Joan: No, it wasn't about that for them.

- Sonja: And that's another thing we can be proud of ourselves for, I think, for just letting go of that and letting them do what they wanted to do, because I think they got way more out of that and that it was way more relevant and authentic and real for them than us imposing something. (Joan, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Making room for discomfort: the power of two. Looking back on this particular experience, it would be easy just to focus on the end result, rather than the journey. Having documented the process, however, we are able to revisit our conversations and be reminded that this didn't just happen on its own: work, worrying, conversation, collaboration and planning were needed to create the conditions and climate where something like that could happen.

- Joan: Looking back, it surprised me and yet it didn't surprise me, how when we first got into Music Explorations, how I felt uncomfortable with it feeling, kind of willy-nilly. It surprised me, as much as I like Explorations and I value it, and I would not *not* have Explorations, there is still a discomfort level in me when things feel like they're not, like they're too surface-level and too crazy, and I start to feel all itchy and like I'm not doing my job, and something's missing here. And I thought that day that we had that [focus group] conversation, all of us together, also was an example of why this is so valuable, because I've learned a lot. . . from all of us being able to be together and talk. To hear Amy's experience and Toni's experience helped me to reflect on my own experience with Explorations, and helped me to kind of calm down a little bit, and realize, it's not just me, it's not just my kids, it makes sense that they're going through this stage. And something that Amy said that really resonated with me, that sometimes there are times when Explorations is so multi-layered and you feel like, "Yeah! We're really going here!" and there's other times when it's just sort of up here (gestures surface level) and you're like, ugh, but you have to go through this [surface level] to get down to this [depth]. You have to allow for those maybe less-comfortable times, you have to allow for them to happen and value the space that can then get to those layered places, right? And I think hearing other teachers, that they feel like that sometimes too, that kind of reaffirmed to me, yeah, right, I need to let that go and give

myself permission to be in places with kids that aren't as comfortable for me, to know that I need—that *we* need—to go through that to get to somewhere richer. [It reaffirmed to me] that it's not just willy-nilly, but actually part of the process of getting to this richness. And I think that is why many, many teachers don't do Explorations, or they try Explorations and then they say, "Oh, that doesn't work for me", or they walk into a classroom without any of the context and say, "I could never do this in my classroom", because you naturally have those feelings, and if you don't have other people to talk with about it, and don't see it happening in other places, then I think it would be definitely a barrier to moving on with it.

- Sonja: Because my instinct too at first was—and we did do this at first, I think—was to say, okay, we need to rein this in a bit, we need to do more stuff together, like some of those activities that we did together in the circle—

- Joan: Yes, we did do that a bit, and I think those were important [things] too, because those got us to slow down and think about what we were using and why were using it and what it was capable of.

- Sonja: In a way, I think that discomfort that we both probably felt during those first Explorations led us to do certain things—because we did change what we were doing to make it more functional. Like bringing in those things to make the instruments, and thinking about how we could set this up in a little more purposeful, little more obvious ways—and I think that that's [what makes it work in the end], I think that you need both things. You need that discomfort, and you need to react to it—so not "I'm feeling uncomfortable, I'm shutting it down", but "I'm feeling uncomfortable, what can I do?"

- Joan: Yes, it makes me feel—well you know, you very rarely give yourself a pat on the back as a teacher, because you're always thinking about what you're not doing, not what you are doing—but I think that is something that we can feel really good about as a whole group who has been working through this, is that we really value this and our actions show that. Because that would have been the easiest thing, to have just shut it down—and it is just such an example of how easy it would be for other people who don't have support or people to talk about it with — no wonder they're not doing it! Because it's hard, and it's uncomfortable and it's loud, and it's messy—not the whole time, but it starts out like that. [Shutting it down] totally would have been the easiest thing to do, to say, "you know, this isn't working. They're not ready for this. We better just go back to regular music". I'm sure some people would have liked us to do that. . . . (laughs) And can I say something else too? Like how teacher-centric is it of me to think that everything I do with children needs to be comfortable? That it's got to be comfortable, that I need to know what's going on, that I've got to feel in control—it is so teacher-centric of me to think that way! [Instead] I should be doing things that make me think really critically about what I am doing and thinking, okay, how can I support this, how can I make this work, because I value this and the kids value this. And why should I think that everything should be [comfortable] . . . we're kind of conditioned to think that way.

- Sonja: Well, yes. And we do feel responsible, and we do feel—like you used the word "accountable" before—but you know, you do feel a responsibility, and you are the one who is supposed to be in charge of what's going on. And it needs to be worth doing—I think that is what we worry about. Like you look around and say, okay, I value this [exploration], but is this what I wanted it to be? Like yes, you value children exploring with music and having choice, but if they are all just running around here on the surface level—

- Joan: And I think we did that, I think we did a good job of that.

- Sonja: But it goes along with reflection, right? It can't just be an "anything goes" time, and the fact that we felt uncomfortable with it is a sign that it isn't just that.

- Joan: Right, that's right. Because you're not just, it's not just "okay, this is Music Explorations, go for it." It's "this is happening, I am feeling uncomfortable, where can we go with this?" right? Because that's our responsibility, and we have this conversation over and over again, about what's your role as a teacher in Explorations, and when do you step in and when do you not step in? Well, that's a good example of that, in those moments when you are feeling that tension and that pull and that discomfort, maybe that's like a signal or a message to you as a teacher to think, "Okay, what can I do here to support this? To take this somewhere different than where it is right now."

- Sonja: And I think that's where it is so nice when there are two people, and two people coming from different perspectives, because, well first of all, we can both look at each other and think, "Okay, I'm not sure about this." But also, like if you think about those kids that were going crazy drumming right at the beginning, there were things that you were worried about with that, and so was I on some level, except that there were other things that I could see in that that weren't necessarily what you saw in that. So I could say, yes, it's really loud, but I think I can see potential here, let's just find a different way, because there is something [musically] worthwhile here, it's more than just someone wailing on a drum really.

- Joan: And that's where that partnership is key, because if it were me, I would probably have just hidden the drum. Because it's easier to shut things down when you're by yourself.

- Sonja: And also, it's easier to only see what you know when you're by yourself. Like I see it from a music perspective, and the musical possibilities, and I probably can look past the noise sometimes to see where things could go, in terms of kids making rhythms or melodies or whatever. Whereas if I'm looking at kids' writing, and I saw a kid only drawing and not writing anything, not even letters, I might think, "I am failing as a teacher of writing, because these kids are just drawing and I can't get them to write any letters," whereas someone with more experience with kids' writing would come into that situation and look at the picture and say, "I can see where this kid is really telling their story and where this can go" so you would see things that I hadn't, and I could go, "Oh, okay then. This is normal. I can relax." So I

> think that is another advantage to having two people who have different
> expertise and experience, because then you can puzzle through those things a
> bit better, and you end up seeing way more than you would on your own.
> (Final Conversation with Joan, June 2011)

In Conclusion

Both of these stories point to the value of time, responsive structures and

relationship in the work of "researching" the students with whom we work and in being,

as teachers, students of children's learning processes. They also speak to the hard work

of putting values into action. We can say we value play and that we believe that children

learn through play, but what does that look like? How do we scaffold and structure those

experiences to support learning? How do we justify the choices that we make when the

destination is not always clear? These are the questions of co-constructed, emerging

curriculum, and it is in the negotiation of these questions that these stories illustrate the

power of shared, collaborative, and reflective teaching experience. It is easier to worry

about whether an engagement is "worthwhile", or whether an activity is "going

somewhere" when you do not have someone with whom to share your questions,

concerns, and frustrations. It is easier to get caught up in thinking about the product and

accidently to miss the miracles of the process when you do not have someone to notice

things with you. It is easier to worry about what people on the "outside"—whether they

be other colleagues or parents—might think about what is happening in the classroom if

you don't have someone with you on the "inside" who shares your understanding and

belief in the value of what you are doing. It is easier to fall back on old habits or routines

when you do not have someone with you who is also committed to trying things in a new

way. As Joan says, "this is where partnership is key."

Chapter Five

Music as a Language

"A hundred, always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling, of loving,
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream …"
(Loris Malaguzzi, 1998b, p. 2).

Introduction

In conversations with teachers leading up to this project, the phrase "music as a language" often came up. Sometimes I would use it, and sometimes my colleagues would use it, and eventually I began to wonder what exactly we meant by it and if it meant the same thing to all of us. Were we talking about music as a replacement or substitute for oral or written language, as a way to say the same thing in a different way? Did we mean music as way to enhance oral or written language? Did we mean it as a way to express things that are not expressible through oral or written language? Or as a way to understand other languages (oral, written, visual) in a new way? Were there different ways to think about "music as a language" than the ways we initially had in mind? Was there a difference between my definition of "music as a language" as a music specialist and the definitions of my early-literacy-specialized colleagues? And above all, what did "music as a language" mean to children?

In all of the possible interpretations of "music as a language" (and I am certain that there are more possible interpretations than the ones I have suggested above), the idea of

multimodality—that human beings make meaning from a variety of sources (aural,

visual, spatial, gestural) beyond spoken or written language (Kress & van Leuwven,

2001), and that all of these sources "contribute to meaning in different ways" (Peters,

2011, p. 15) —plays a key role. As Jewitt (2008) writes:

> "Multimodality attends to meaning as it is made through the situated
>
> configurations across gesture, gaze, body posture, sound, writing, music, speech,
>
> and so on. From a multi-modal perspective, [these] are referred to as modes, as
>
> organized sets of semiotic resources for meaning making." (p. 246)

The two stories which follow explore two different experiences of "music as a language"

and students' multimodal meaning-making. In the first story, we join Joan as she hopes

to use music as a way to access the stories of children who are perhaps not able to share

their stories in oral or written ways. This story, I believe, is a story of what in

multimodal theory would be considered multi-modal *design* (Albers & Harste, 2007) — a

story in which a student uses her own agency and the multimodal possibilities at her

disposal to make meaning for herself and others in ways that neither Joan or I had

necessarily imagined or planned. It also connects to the related but differently situated

idea of *multiple literacies* as defined by Brian Street (2005), which deals with the social

interactions and relations of power inherent in literacy-learning experiences and

environments.

Nina's Story

    Accessing the stories of children. From our initial interview prior to this project,

Joan had identified accessing the stories of all children and finding ways for all her

students to "appear" (Biesta, 2006) as an important aspect of her teaching:

Well, what I'm thinking about is, I'm really trying to look at the story-telling process. When we have our morning meeting time kids come in and we do a sharing circle, so they share a story about whatever. And what inevitably happens is that there are some children that always share and there are some children that never share. And then we go into Explorations and I'm trying to move away from feeling that, the feeling that now it's sharing time, now it's exploration time, now it's writing time. I think it's important that the work we're doing in all of those times is connected and that one can inform the other and back and forth and so forth. And I wonder, what does sharing time or story time look like for a student, like Nina, who has difficulty articulating what she's thinking verbally, but because she is legally blind, also can't necessarily sit down and pictorially represent it? What does that mean when you ask a child to sit down and represent something on paper but they can't articulate it, then what are you actually asking them to do? So I'm just really wondering what's getting shut out or lost in the process of "now we're going to sit down and do writing time and make our story picture and include all the details in our story picture and then we're going to start adding some words and then we're going to practice drawing our bodies and putting in the details," like all those things that I would normally do, that I've always done, but now I've got some kids like Nina, and I'm wondering, if you can't organize a story and tell somebody a story, are you able to sit down and draw it out? Some can and some can't, I guess. But if that's the only way they have of showing their story, the reality is that there is a sector of children who are never going to be telling their story in any meaningful way. So I guess where the music comes in is that I am trying to think about whether I am offering children a variety of languages or ways or opportunities to represent what they know or to make meaning, and what are some of the ways we can do that that are beyond what we are currently doing, and can music be one of those ways? (Joan, Initial Conversation, January 2011)

Nina's drum: starting places and possible paths. We began Music

Explorations experiences with these ideas and children in mind, wondering if and how

more open-ended and meaning-focused experiences with music and music making might

give them voice. Here is an excerpt from one of our first debriefing meetings after

beginning Music Explorations:

- Joan: Did you see Nina today with that drum? She just gravitated to that drum and started banging that drum. And then she took the marker and started drawing, one line for every time she played the drum. And that's huge for her, it's huge for her to make any kind of mark on a paper that would symbolize anything, whether musical or alphabetical . . . that has never happened before.

- Sonja: Did she write it first, or did she drum it first? Do you know?

- Joan: I think she wrote it as she drummed it. I think she went beat, line, beat, line, beat, line. . . . [But now] I am struggling with imposing my ideas of what she should share versus her just doing it because she wants to do it and because it's fun to do. Because my urge is [to push things in certain directions] . . . she was there and she was following the notes and she wanted me to drum too. And I said, "I wonder if there's a song we could sing, and sing along with your music." But she wanted nothing to do with that. She said, "No, no, no, I don't want to do that." So then, part of me was like, well, is that the end of that work? Is that it? Because she seems to be happy with just making the notes and playing the drum, which is great in itself. But I'm wanting . . . do you know what I am trying to say?

- Sonja: But there are probably other ways that she could share that, as well—I mean she has already shared her piece for the class and played it . . . but there are probably other ways you could go [to take it forward].

- Joan: Well, I was thinking, she doesn't want to go for the words thing, and that's fine, because words are hard for her to come up with. So I said, some children are working on writing their own songs right now, do you want to go over to the table and maybe work on a new drum song? And she said no, she just wanted to play this one. But it doesn't mean she would never take it up, it's just that today —

- Sonja: Well, maybe she's just still enjoying her song. Which is common enough, I think. When you think about a kid with a book, sometimes that book they know they can read is the book they want to read and read and read.

- Joan: And that's the first thing she's ever read.

- Sonja: And she's really pointing and playing, right? That's part of the point, eh? I mean, not just playing and maybe tracking with her eyes, but really making that correspondence obvious by pointing? I wonder what would happen if we wrote her a song to play. I mean something very similar to hers. If she would (a) be interested at all in trying to read someone else's music, or not, and (b) if she'd be able to do it.

- Joan: And I wonder if we could get her to start thinking about the tempo of what she's drumming. Like two beats together, or a slower beat. Because I think she could do that.

- Sonja: That's great. And you know, in terms of where this could go, now there could be the invitation for other people to take Nina's idea and write their own pieces for drums, which is a way of validating her idea, of making her more visible in the room as someone who had an idea that we all might enjoy doing—which I think is the kind of thing that some of your more "out there"

students tend to do—they have an idea, and a bunch of people try their idea, and that gives them a certain status.

- Joan: Maybe at Explorations time if I go back to Nina's drumming, she can give a reminder to the kids and have other kids come join her.

- Sonja: [looking at Nina's piece] Now what is—do the different colours mean something, that you can see?

- Joan: No, I think each note just means a beat on the drum. But that might be neat, maybe that's the direction we can go, that each colour means something different.

- Sonja: But we might have to get her to write another piece for that, because she seems pretty attached to this one the way it is. (Debriefing Conversation, February 2012)

Nina's drum: position, performance, print, and possibilities. Knowing the

end of the story, Joan's questions, "Is that it? Is that the end of the work?" strike me as

particularly interesting in that excerpt. Because it wasn't at all, as it turned out, the end

of the work—but the work that Nina went on to do was very different than what we

imagined that day. I think we had imagined that Nina might use music as means to

communicate and express herself, which she certainly did—but not in the concrete ways

that we had perhaps envisioned, such as using instruments to tell a story rather than

drawing it. Instead, she used her engagements with sound as an entry point into the

social world of her classmates and also into the world of print.

In our final interview, Joan describes what happened next:

- Joan: That was really kind of a turning point for Nina, when she came to music and started doing her invented notation. . . . She started to use that to then communicate and connect with a peer, because that even was rare for her to—I mean, she would certainly quip with her peers and sort of say short little things with them or little jokes with them, but not in a real communicative or relational way, it was just sort of making a joke, or things like that. So the markings on the paper were huge for her, the way she was using that to communicate with others in a reciprocal way was huge for her, then her wanting to perform it in front of the class was huge for her, it was her first

time that she was in that role of becoming "someone who shares"—like usually for sharing time she would just sit and choose not to share, and this was really her first performance piece. And after that she did a whole bunch of performing of other things in class, but that was a whole new beginning for her. And the best day—or one of the best days—was when she was doing that and she had her drums and was notating it, and she was reading the notations and playing it note for note, and she invited Marcy to come over and play with her who, of all the kids in the class, would be the last kid that you would think to partner with Nina, because Marcy is sort of your traditionally strong kind of student and she can take everything over and likes to be in control and everything—but she came over, and she didn't quite know what to make of Nina, but she was respectful enough to come over, and Nina said, "play with me!" and stood her music up, and Marcy started playing, and Nina was playing her drum, and as far as Nina was concerned, Marcy was reading her music and playing her music, and she was like "Yeah, you got it right!" and they were playing together. So on many levels, this was a turning point for Nina; she joined into something that many other children were already invested in, something that was very socially acceptable to all the other children, not just engaging in it in a sort of parallel play way, but in a way where she was really contributing something new and original that no one else had, but that also helped her to relate and interrelate with peers with whom she would NEVER have had the opportunity to do that before.

- Sonja: When you think of the stuff that she started doing after that in Music Explorations, where there would be those little groups of drummers and she would really be leading them, telling them, being the conductor or the director, telling them when to start and when to stop and making up her signals—you could see that she felt some responsibility for having brought in this idea of playing a drum piece, in that she then took on those leadership roles and made sure that everyone knew what they were supposed to do, and that she was very much the leader in those.

- Joan: And that's the first time that she had ever had the opportunity—or felt that she could take the opportunity—to take on a leadership role like that. It will be interesting to me to see where she goes next year with that music connection, because that will be really important for her. Because she's at the point now I think in her growth where . . . she can take on that leadership role and she can start to make those connections, where I now want to work on her tone of voice and the kinds of language she uses with kids so that it's more appropriate. I think that music connection is going to be a really great opportunity to do that with her, because one of her most social and most interactive times with other children is when she is interacting with the music like that. That will be interesting for next year, to see how she grows through that. And she learned so much this year, and I think next year we're ready to get into that part of her learning. But it is really interesting to me to think about where she would be [if she hadn't had this experience] and to think

about how music really is that language for her, and how music has really opened up a huge door her. I don't know otherwise how that door would have been opened, or if it would have opened at all.

- Sonja: Well, given her limited eyesight, I think it is possible that she is more connected to sound—but I don't know if she would know that other kids can see things that she can't see, but that they're all hearing the same thing. . . . I don't know how you could imagine, if you couldn't see, what other people can see. . . . But I guess it's not surprising to think that a child with a visual challenge could connect more to others through sound, because there aren't those levels of things that she's missing, whether she's aware that she's missing them or not.

- Joan: But it certainly makes me think as a teacher about what I'm doing, because I never really gave her the opportunity to tap into that until we went to Music Explorations. You'd think I would have thought of that sooner . . . but you can't just say, "here you go, you get an instrument, Nina." The whole point was that it was occurring within a relationship, with a connectedness to what was going on with our whole group, not just, "here's something different for you to do because you can't see like everybody else."

- Sonja: And I think that's what it was. Everybody was doing this thing, and it was something that she could completely do. And it probably took her a while to realize that. But that she then took it to that "writing down" place, and that "visual-notating" place, is really interesting.

- Joan: Well, you know what happened after that that was really interesting . . . as soon as she started doing that notation in music, she started having this new-found interest for words on the page. So we started making large sized books, the "how-to" type stories, and she would, hand-over-hand, make these simple black line pictures, and we would make the words very big so that she could see them. And then because they were easy, predictable stories—even if she didn't know the words, she could "read" it. And she could see the print—and that was a new world for her as well, a new connection—she really started to pay attention and make connections to print in a way that she hadn't at all before. And that happened after the music notation.

- Sonja: Which was creating a sound, and a mark representing a sound. And then she made the connection to a word, and letters representing a word.

- Joan: And then she started also doing squiggles, and she'd say, "Look, I wrote a poem." And then we started making books of things that were connected to what she was doing in the classroom . . . and then she really wanted to read and look at print and make connections to print in a way that she hadn't till that time of the year. So it was interesting how that all kind of sequenced.

- Sonja: And that it came from something she initiated herself . . . it was completely her who went and got that piece of paper, and writing the signs that were the sound of her drum.

- Joan: And nobody in our class had done that before, right? That was totally her.

- Sonja: To me it seems like at some point, Nina made the connection, through that simple drum thing, that you can represent a sound through a written down symbol . . . and then suddenly all these other things could be represented that way too. And she knew that she could do it because she had already done it—in fact, she had thought of doing it herself. (Joan, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Reading all of this, I am reminded of the fact that in English, at least, "making music" can have two meanings. You can think of it as what a composer does—the planning and writing down of musical ideas, perhaps the equivalent of an author—and you can also think of it as what a performer does—the actual production of the musical sounds, often in the social context of other performers and/or an audience (like an actor, or a storyteller). I think that in this story, we had been focusing on the first meaning, thinking that music-making for Nina could perhaps become for her what story-writing was for some of her classmates. What we underestimated was the power of the second meaning. It was not only in the physical writing of her music but in the social sharing of her music that she was able to see herself as a) a writer, b) a leader, and c) a member of the community.

Vignette III Revisited—A Screen Play

This second story, centering on Toni's students, deals primarily with multi-modal *production*, which Albers and Harste (2007) describe as "the creation and organization of the representation, the actual product or text (song, artwork, dance, play, photograph, webpage, and so on), as well as the technical skills used when working with media in

creating the text" (p. 14). This story explores the relationship between various modes of

meaning-making and expression and the ways in which experience with the

organizational principles and possibilities of one mode can inform, connect with, and

deepen students' understanding and meaning-making through others. This story also

demonstrates a key feature of multimodality: that "one sign system can never fully

represent all teaching [or] learning . . . . all modes are partial and . . . contribute to

learning in different ways" (Peters, 2011, p. 15).


```
SONJA is sitting in the school conference room at a long
table, writing in a notebook.  On the table is a small
voice recorder and a digital camera.

                        SONJA
         (VOICEOVER READING WHAT SONJA IS WRITING)


     Toni's class has been interested in using the
     classroom instruments to make music for the
     animals they are researching in class. So far
     their attempts have consisted mostly of creating
     sound effects, and Toni and I were interested in
     finding ways to get them to think about the
     possibility of organizing those sounds into
     melodic or rhythmic patterns.  So we decided to
     begin Music Explorations today by doing a group
     activity in which we would improvise rhythmic
     phrases through a question and answer technique.
     The first half of the phrase—the "question"—leads
     the listener's ear to an unresolved place, and
     then the second half of the phrase—the
     "answer"—picks up from where the question left
     off, to resolve the phrase on a strong beat
     followed by a rest.  In preparation for making
     our own musical questions and answers, we took
     some time to think with the children about the
     differences between questions and answers in
     general: how are they different from each other?
     How can you tell a question from an answer? If
     someone asks you "What is your favourite food?",
     would you answer them by saying, "What is your
     favourite food?" What if you answered that same
     question by saying "I am wearing a blue and red
```

dress." Would that be a good answer? Similarly, we suggested to the children, although rhythmic or melodic questions offer an exchange of different information than spoken questions and answers, musical phrases can nonetheless be created following (and conveying) a similar structural logic.

The children took up the game of making rhythmic phrases very enthusiastically, and very soon they were making connections between the musical phrases we are creating and spoken language. "Hey, Sonja, you always put a rest at the end of the answers," someone notices. "That must be like the period at the end of the sentence!" Someone else says: "Well, how do you make the question mark then?" "Oops, I made my answer the same as my question!" says someone else. "That doesn't make sense!"

When we moved on to Explorations time, Toni and I expected the children to take up the animal sound work that they had been planning in the classroom. Instead, everyone went off and in small groups began creating brand new musical stories—about a train, a thunderstorm, a fairy-tale princess—all told exclusively with music, not words. Toni came up to me and said, "I think I am going to start crying—my dreams of Music Explorations are coming true after all these years!

The recess bell RINGS and SONJA puts down her pencil.

TONI enters the room with two cups of coffee and sits down

at the table. She is obviously excited. SONJA gestures to

TONI to wait for a moment. She presses "record" on the

voice recorder.

                         TONI
Takes a sip of coffee.

    Man, I love having this meeting time right after
    recess.

                    TONI (CONT)
She bounces up and down in her chair, tapping the edge of

the table with both hands.

        Okay, are you recording this now? We don't want
        to miss this! So, okay. Okay, wasn't that
        amazing this morning? Wow! And what I've been
        wanting to say is, what intrigued me about
        today's Music Explorations, and what I was so
        excited about, my comment about, "My two years of
        dreams have come true in Music
        Explorations"—well, that's kind of how I felt
        watching the kids—but this is something I've been
        working towards with the kids, to use music as
        another form of communication and as another way
        to tell our stories, and what we'd always got to
        in the past was using music to aid our story-
        telling, like using sound-effects, using it to
        help the story along, but not to tell the story.
        And that's what I noticed, that's what was the
        huge difference in Music Explorations today. The
        stories they were making today didn't have any
        words to them, it was all music, or at least
        sounds . . . I've never really gotten to this
        point with kids. . . . So I was looking at them
        today and thinking, what is it that we've done,
        that you've done differently or I've done
        differently that has got them to this totally
        different place, where music is now doing [all]
        the story telling versus them using words and
        [just having] sound effects next to it?

                    SONJA
        Well, I think we've always wanted that to happen,
        but I am not quite sure why that happened now.
        And I can't quite believe that that our group
        activity that we did first this morning would
        have done that.

                    TONI
        Well, maybe it got them thinking about that
        composing is about more than just banging on
        notes and that there can be a back and forth? I
        don't know what . . . it was a really neat
        activity though. I had never done anything with
        that before. I really enjoyed that. But when

they went off to make their Explorations choices
after that, I was terrified at first, because
nobody was doing the animal things that I thought
we were bringing from the classroom, and in my
mind the whole Explorations was hanging from the
animal sounds and then nobody was interested in
it and I thought, "Oh, no" . . .

                         SONJA
But that's okay, because I think they're still
going to be interested in that in the classroom,
researching their animal and making their animal
statues, and I think you should hold on to that
"creating sounds for your animal" thing—although
it now may be more than just the "click click" of
the shark's teeth, it might be more of melody or
more of an actual musical piece . . . I think
that's very likely.

                         TONI
Well, it's just that switchover . . . like, once
they had decided on the actual storyline, the
story [the words] were immaterial. And the
sounds became more important.

                         SONJA
What also was neat was that it was quiet enough
in the room that all these groups could be
working near each other, and in a way I think
sustaining each other's activity, just because
they were all still engaged in something, and yet
it was not too noisy for anyone. You know,
putting those drums in the other room was the
best thing we ever did.

                         TONI
I wonder if part of this is just letting them go
crazy with their imaginations and not trying to
keep it all real. Because we don't need a real
story-teller [using words] because in our
imaginations we can tell the story—I don't know
if that's made the difference. Because we've
focused a lot on the non-real, like the animals
playing the instruments—and yes, the animal
sounds have been a part of it, but that's not
really what I've talked a lot about. I've talked
more about the make-believe part of it.

                                    SONJA
          Well, at some point you have to take a bit of a
          leap that way . . . I mean, if you're creating a
          piece of music for a beaver, if it's going to be
          a "real" piece of music with a melody and rhythm
          and stuff, it's got to be more than just the
          sound of the beaver slapping it's tail . . .
          you've got to incorporate it into something
          essentially that you've imagined, the beaver
          swimming [so you create accompaniment that sounds
          like water], or you think about the beaver being
          happy so you make a happy little melody and put
          some slaps in there . . . so yes, maybe that's
          partly it.

                                    TONI
          Maybe. Because in previous years I've stuck
          really to not really focusing on make-believe
          stories but a lot on our own stories, which we
          have [also done this year], but in Writing
          Workshop we've been starting to deviate to not
          only writing about ourselves . . . but [at the
          same time] we're focusing on animal non-fiction
          so it's very real. But there has been a lot of
          story-telling happening.

                                    SONJA
          And really, non-fiction about a beaver is not
          something that you actually know. You are not a
          beaver, you don't live with beavers. You still
          are making it up, based on things that you've
          learned. So if you can do that, if you can make
          up a non-fiction piece about a beaver, then
          theoretically I should be able to write another
          story about something else that I haven't
          personally experienced but I can imagine.

                                    TONI
          I really want to keep this imagination part
          going. So help.

She sits up straighter and gets out her notebook.

                              TONI (CONT'D)
          What can I do now? How can I keep this going in
          the classroom so we don't have to wait for a
          whole week for this to keep going?

                              SONJA
     Well, I think that *Peter and the Wolf* could be
     helpful. I think you should listen to that. And
     would it be interesting to play them parts of it,
     like the bird and the duck arguing, and have them
     imagine what's happening, to see if they can
     imagine it without telling them what it is? But
     what you might have to do, because it might never
     occur to them that it's a bird and a duck, so I
     wonder about actually reading the story from the
     book first, without the music. And then later,
     maybe even the same day, play them parts of the
     music, and say, these are parts of the same
     story, but told with music, not words. Can you
     tell what parts they are? You might have to play
     them the very beginning first, where the narrator
     introduces all the different characters and their
     instruments and themes, and then you could listen
     to different parts and say, "Who do you hear,
     what animals are in this part of the story?" And
     then once they realize that they can hear the
     story in the music, you could play them the whole
     thing, so they can listen to the story (words)
     and the music, but are hopefully now tuned more
     into the music so they aren't only focused on the
     words they hear, but also the sounds.

                              TONI
Writing furiously.

     I really like that, because in their own work I
     want to get them to the point where they're
     thinking not only about the sound the animal
     makes, but what melody, what music, could tell
     that story. How could we tell that it's that
     animal? I'm hoping that *Peter and the Wolf* will
     get us there.

                              SONJA
     Well, right, because in *Peter and the Wolf*, you
     do hear the animal [by itself], but then you
     [also] hear the animal in a lot of different
     situations.

                              TONI
Looks up from her notebook.

Okay, so that's Monday—I need to have a direction
after Monday.

                    SONJA
Well one could be, thinking about Peter and the
Wolf, make a story about your animal but using
sounds . . . and two different animals could meet
up. In a way, that might be better because more
could happen that way, like if you think about
the bird and the duck . . . like, there's a lot
of animal interaction that you will have heard.
But actually, that might be Wednesday. Tuesday
might be listening again and talking more about
what it sounds like—for instance, how can you
tell the duck is getting angry at the bird?
Because his honking is getting louder and faster.
. .

                    TONI
Yes, when we listen to the animals, we can talk
about what we think the animals are feeling and
what they're saying to each other, and how do we
know that.

                    SONJA
You could even do some acting out of the music—

                    TONI
Yes, get two kids up to act out what they think
is going on in the story.

                    SONJA
And by then they will know what is going on in
the story.

                    TONI
I'd like to do this in Writing Workshop, because
this has become about storytelling. So I really
want to give them the message that . . . this is
another way to write, to communicate, to tell
your stories, you don't have to use words. Just
like we don't use words in our pictures and the
picture can tell the whole story for us, so can
music . . . and when we talk about doing picture
stories, we talk about the detail so that other
people when they read our stories, know what is
going on in the stories so we have to add in all
of that detail . . .

                              SONJA
And that is maybe how we can get them to go
beyond just making a sound effect and saying
"This is a beaver." We can make that connection
to writing, we can talk about how it's kind of
like just writing the word "beaver" and saying
that it is a whole beaver story, if you just make
a sound and say "this is my beaver music." So,
great, you said "beaver", but now you need to
find ways with the other instruments or the
things you add, to tell us more about the beaver.
Such as, where is the beaver, what is the beaver
doing, how many beavers are there? That's when
you add in the sounds of the water or the sounds
of the forest or whatever. I think that they did
start to make that connection this morning in our
first activity, that the things that we say in
words can have an equivalent in what we say
through music—

                              TONI

Slams her hand down on the table.

Holy crow, maybe that's what it was! Because you
were equating spoken questions to rhythmic
questions, and talking about how in some ways
they are same thing. You can't answer the
question "What's your favourite animal?" by
saying "What's your favourite animal?" The
answer has to be something different, the same
with the rhythm you make. Maybe that activity
made them think about what they could say with
their music?

                              SONJA
Yeah, maybe that was it. I was excited actually
by how into [that activity] they were . . . and
it's going to get better when we add in melody.
And start to talk about what kind of information
you can put into in a music question. Because
it's the same as talking, but it's also
different. So I think next time too we should
have Music Explorations like a Writing Workshop,
so like in the first part, in the mini-lesson
we'll talk more about techniques you can use when
you're writing a melody, how can you make it make

```
sense and go somewhere, things like that.  And
we'll see what has happened in your room in the
meantime with Peter and the Wolf.
```

                                   FADE OUT

Re-visiting Vignette III - Conversations

      Connecting to language: opening doors. What strikes me as I revisit this

experience is how the connections the students have made between music and

spoken/written language have made new connections obvious to us as teachers: in

particular, how the mini-lessons and unifying activities we choose to do with students

affect their subsequent engagements, how musical ideas can inform our understanding of

other forms of expression, how speech, story and writing can inform our understanding of

music, and how these bigger literacy ideas can transcend the boundaries of the music

room or classroom to be developed and extended in new territory. In subsequent

planning meetings, these same themes continued to resonate. This excerpt comes from a

planning conversation in February:

    - Sonja: I was working with those girls and their Cinderella story today . . . one of
        them told me, "Every time we turn the page, we'll play her song, because she
        is on every page." And then someone pointed out that yes, Cinderella is in
        every picture, but what she is doing, feeling, who she is with, where she is,
        isn't always the same. So we started talking about how that's maybe
        something that the background music or the accompaniment can show us - we
        will hear her melody but we will also hear where she is. And of course they
        went right back to sound effects, but it's a start at least. But there are other
        instrumental possibilities—

   -Toni: I wonder if we go back and listen to that more closely, and listen to *Peter and
        the Wolf* more closely, and listen to Peter's music or another one of the
        animals, I wonder if that would help. Relating it to a story does seem to be
        working really well for them.

    - Sonja: I am wondering if there's something where we could kind of model or
        experience as a group, making different accompaniments that make our song
        sound different. So for example, if I said, I've made up this melody on my
        recorder, and it's supposed to sound like a bird. So let's make the bird go

different places by using different instruments to accompany my bird song. Let's say the bird is flying through dark scary forest. . . . we would think about that forest and as a group make an accompaniment that we then put the bird song with. And then we could make the bird go to the ocean, and make a different accompaniment that we hear the bird song with, and on and on.

- Toni: Quite often in Writing Workshop, when we do group writing, each group gets a different thing to write about . . . it would be kind of neat to do something like that.

- Sonja: So each group makes an accompaniment for a different place and then the bird comes and flies there -

- Toni: And the bird could keep flying around the room, past each group, and when the bird gets to them, the group would play and then we would hear the bird in that place. (Debriefing Conversation, February 2011)

Connecting to writing: making threads visible. This excerpt, on a similar

theme, comes from a conversation in March:

- Sonja: Your idea about writing word stories for different pieces of music—something like *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* might be a good one to work on together as a group. Because it tells a story, and it's fairly long, like eleven minutes or something—so if you think of it in terms of writing, that's a lot of stretching out the story, a lot of potential detail. Not that we would expect that we could read it solidly for eleven minutes—but I think that's why classical music can be boring for kids, because it takes so long, it expands on a small idea for a long time before it moves on.

- Toni: But that's what I am trying to get kids to understand. Like when we write our "This Week At School" letters, eventually we get to a point where they have to write their whole letter about just one thing. So you have to expand on one thing you did this week at school. And that's really where I'm struggling with some of my kids, to get the idea that a story isn't just a list of things.

- Sonja: So that's an idea for going forward. And it's interesting, eh, because another thing that we want to do with the music, I think, is get them beyond just making sound effects and melodies, and to start putting a lot more "information" and layers and levels into the music that they are making, which is just exactly what you are trying to do in writing. And it is cool that we can be using music to do both things, I think that's neat.

-Toni: I think it's very neat. And somehow, it has changed the way my kids are thinking. I mean, not all of them, of course, but it is getting them to think in

just that completely different way about creating and writing, which is so important for certain kids, especially ones who come from very traditional writing experiences, because this is suddenly a whole different way to write. But really interesting how that one group was working, how they're already starting to layer instrumental patterns together, and not just sounds. It was a repeating pattern, like a rhythm, but he was playing it on different notes—

- Sonja: Yeah, I was interested in what they shared, because it wasn't what I had heard them playing earlier. And I couldn't believe how quiet it was, how quiet they are all playing, I've never seen those particular kids be that delicate. (Debriefing Conversation, March 2011)

Message in the music. Toni and I were intrigued by the way that students were taking up the mini-lessons we presented and the way that those experiences were shaping students' work in Music Explorations. We wondered about the balance between student exploration/discovery and more directed teaching of concepts, and how that affects what happens in the classroom, so in our next focus group meeting with all the teacher participants, we broached the subject:

-Toni: I joined a group today, because I thought, you know what, I really want to see how this happens. So I sat there and said, what's the story, what are we going to do? And I thought, I'm just going to let them tell me exactly what to do so I can be a part of the conversation, and every once in a while I'd clarify what they said, but I really didn't put any input into [what they were creating]. And what they did was create a little melody for a little girl who lived on a farm. . . and they changed the accompaniment when the girl was sad, they had the music get quieter when her dog ran away, and a big bang at the end when the dog was gone—and it really has been fascinating for me to watch, because I've tried so hard for the last three years to have music be a part of our writing and another tool to tell stories and to express ourselves, and now it's happening and it is just the neatest experience to watch it grow and see how they can, they're really getting it, how they're telling stories, just like we write, just like we act, just like we draw . . . and there were no words when they shared that story today. They didn't tell the story, they just played it. And the other kids seemed to get it. I mean, I don't know if they really knew it was a dog, exactly, but still—

- Sonja: But that's one thing about music, you don't need to understand it as "literally" as you do spoken language. But you can still get an impression, or invent your own meaning.

- Amy: And what about the rest of the class, did just the group of children creating the music know what the "story" was?

- Sonja: Well, the group didn't seem to think that it was important to tell everybody, "This is a story about a dog and he's going to get lost" and all that.

- Amy: Well, that's great. Because I was wondering if they were going to need to [explain it to everyone], because that's kind of indicative of whether they're seeing that music as the communication, or just an additional thing to the story, like the pictures that might accompany an oral story. So that's really interesting to me, that [the music alone] was the communication.

- Toni: Not a word was spoken.

(Focus Group, March 2011)

Location and connection. Another theme that came up often in our focus group conversations was that of connection and location: what happens in the music room and the classroom, and how those things do or don't connect for us as teachers. From a conversation in April:

- Toni: I had an interesting day just before conferences—we wanted to be able to share the music-related writing we had been doing with our families and we were running out of time. And it was a Music Explorations day, and I really struggled with the idea of bringing that writing we needed to finish to Music Explorations and begin the morning with a writing must-do, because in my head I'm going, we have the music room, we have all these instruments, like we—

- Sonja: Yes, this is our chance to make music, why are we sitting here painting—

- Toni: Or writing or drawing when we could be making music? I felt a bit of guilt about it, like this is something we could be doing in the classroom, we don't need to be in the music room to do it—and yet, when I stood back and really thought about and watched them—what they were doing on paper was so much richer than what they had been doing in the classroom. And we've been working so hard on using music and listening to music and interpreting music, and making that connection about how stories can be told through music, so to be able to take our Writing Workshop and bring it into the Music Room for Music Explorations, was really very exciting.

- Amy: And maybe the situation, doing it like you chose to do it, only strengthened their connections of those things?

- Toni: Yeah, and I said to myself in the moment, that's what came to me. I said, why am I worrying about this? We're connecting our writing and our stories to music and using music, why wouldn't we bring our writing to music? We're bringing music to our writing, why wouldn't I go the other way around?

- Amy: And what a hugely important message for the children, about the connection and integration of these two areas (or any other curricular areas) and the fluid movement from one to another. … It also sends a message about who we are as teachers and the roles we play and what we bring to different situations.

- Sonja: And then what went on to happen, was that they worked on their writing for however long they needed, and then they just naturally went off to Explorations in the music room and it was so focused and calm. They were amazingly engaged, I thought, the way everyone was working and thinking, and part of it was that we had looked at their writing and had seen how it connected with the music, so I think that was partly what got them excited about keeping going, because you could see their stories coming to life in their pictures and hear it in the music—

- Toni: I also think that the change of venue—because for some of my children where drawing and writing is not their favourite activity—what they actually produced was of a much better quality than what they produce in the classroom. I noticed with them today was that it wasn't this, "Okay, it's Writing Workshop, I'm going to sit down and rush through my picture, and here, I'm done!" And none of the children came to me—and this always happens at Writing Workshop—saying, "I'm done, I'm done, I'm done," just five minutes in. . . . It was really interesting for me to realize that on some level I had been valuing their explorations with instruments as more important than their actual writing, especially considering how hard I've been working to get to a point where music becomes a tool for their writing and is a part of their writing. I hadn't been aware I was doing that.

- Sonja :Also interesting that after we did the writing thing first, their explorations with instruments was really way more involved for everybody across on the board than it often is. So in a way we inadvertently achieved both things—they got their writing done, and we also achieved the deeper instrument exploration, which is what you had wanted and had been afraid we wouldn't get if we began with the writing—by doing the writing.

- Toni: Yes! Which is really not at all what I expected. I also expected the children to be a lot more reluctant to do the writing in the music room—but there was no reluctance at all. (Focus Group April 2011)

Musical experience and the writing process. Toni and I had been hoping that

this project would develop students' ability to express themselves through music and to

use music as a tool for communication, but we had not necessarily expected that these

experiences would transfer to students' writing to the extent they did nor that music could

or would inform our understanding of writing and story to the extent that it did. This

March focus group session finds us discussing the links we are beginning to see between

students' writing and their musical explorations:

- Toni: I am also finding it interesting looking at some of my older children's writing
     now, connecting it to what we've been doing through with music. Sonja
     brought us a piece of music by Smetana that tells the story of a river going
     through the Czech Republic.

- Sonja: Yeah, I brought it for them to listen to after we had done all that *Peter and
     the Wolf* stuff, so they could think more about how a composer connects lots
     of different sounds to paint a musical picture . . . he doesn't just go "ding!
     It's a river!"—he connects lots of sounds to really describe the river to the
     listener.

- Toni: Yeah, so it starts out as little streams and then it gets bigger and it flows past a
     castle and through a forest and past people dancing, and there's this melody
     that depicts the river throughout, that the kids really focused on. Anyway,
     after we listened to it a few times we created all these illustrations to tell the
     story, because there are no words for that story, it's all just music, and we put
     them together and we were turning the pages of our illustrations as we listened
     to the music. But we noticed that there were some parts of the music that we
     didn't have enough pictures for. Because of course, as kids, they had jumped
     on the exciting parts of it, like when the river goes past the castle or the
     dancing village—but nobody thought to draw what comes in between those
     "exciting" parts—

- Amy: The river itself.

- Sonja: Right. So when we were listening to the music with the pictures, there would
     be these huge parts of the music where there were no new pictures, so they
     realized, hey, we have all this music and we don't have any pictures to go
     with it . . . we'd like to be able to turn the page, and there is no page to turn. . .
     so I think that maybe made a few things click in their heads: the music has
     enough length that they had to stop and say, okay, we have to actually dwell
     on the river just being a river for a while, before a new thing actually happens.

- Toni: It helped them make that connection, that realization, that yeah, those exciting
     things are important, but it is the stuff in between that makes it so much

richer. I saw light bulbs going on in kids' heads . . . and suddenly there was this kind of, "Oh, we get it!" And then to be able to use that [understanding] for their own writing, and their own story-telling . . . it has changed the conversation I'm having with my students about their writing, especially my older ones, and especially the ones who make lists in their writing, like "I went to the mall and then I did this, and then I did this, and then I did this." I had a small group work with me and we used that example and we actually pulled out all the river pictures and we talked about how there are those exciting parts of the story, but then there are those really important parts that fill up the story and give you all the details, and we wouldn't have known from the pictures that we drew how the river flowed from place to place, because there we have the castle right next to the village, so how important those pieces are with all the details. It has given us a different way to look at our writing.

- Sonja: Toni and I are actually thinking of going back with the students and writing a story in words that go with the pictures, because now we have all these pictures that fill up this 12-minute piece of music, like maybe forty pictures, and if we were to write something for each page, that could be interesting, because then you're going to get to these six pictures of the river, and what are you going to say? What is happening in a non-obvious way, in a descriptive way, as the river approaches the castle? It would be a way of forcing kids to think about stretching out—

- Amy: That's a thing we struggle with, with beginning writers, all the time.

- Toni: But the music forces us to stretch out our story-telling, because the music continues on for another four minutes of just river, we don't have a choice.

- Amy: I like that!

- Toni: It has given us a really great platform for that conversation. And of course, maybe not where all my kids are at, but for the ones who are ready for it it has given us such a different way to access that. Because that's something I've always struggled with as a teacher.

- Amy: Yes, I think we all do. I like that. (Focus Group, March 2012)

Time and tools: finding a balance. In our final conversation at the end of this project, Toni and I were still trying to put our finger on what it was that made this musical experience trigger so many connections for children and their writing.

- Sonja: And well, I think the other thing that we did . . . we were trying to be very respectful of what music is to children, and we were trying very hard I think

not to impose our own structures or our own "whatever" on them, but then there came a point, and here I go again with my analogies, but you know my thesis advisor was always saying to me whenever I would talk this way and talk about how we hadn't been appreciating what music is for children, he would say, "Yes, Sonja, but there is something to be said for being an expert and having tools and knowing things, and that is part of your job as a teacher is to share those things," . . . and I knew that on some level, and yet I didn't want to step on what kids were doing and turn it into just what I wanted to do. But that day when we did that mini-lesson on musical questions and answers and gave them some structure for how a composer can create a melody, you know what I'm talking about: that was the day that they all went off and started making musical stories. They didn't just go off and make melodies with questions and answers, they didn't just practice the skill, they went off and were suddenly creating these musical stories that were so much more, well purposeful might be the word, and somehow that little lesson is what pushed them to that next level. It was as if, you know with beginning writers, how they have that "scribbling" [mark-making] stage where they're "pretending" to write and they write the letter with scribbles [marks] or random letters strung together and they bring it you and say "What did I write, Mummy?" or they read it to you themselves—well, if you just kept them there forever and never gave them a chance to actually learn what the sounds of the letters were, or to practice writing "real" letters, or gave them a chance to read a word because you were not wanting to "spoil" them somehow, they would never learn to read and write. You do have to give them something at some point . . . well, maybe "give" isn't quite the right word . . .

- Toni: But it *is* giving them something, it's giving them the tools that they're not going to find on their own, I mean maybe they're going to stumble on parts of those, but they won't connect them to what, I mean, we don't learn everything by osmosis, there are some things we learn in a more direct way. But also, that question and answer lesson didn't just come randomly from you saying, "Okay, children, today we're going to learn about questions and answers," it came from what we had seen the children trying to do and what we thought they maybe needed.

- Sonja: Which I think is maybe what I did our first year [working together], just tried to plop a mini-lesson in somewhere in a more random kind of way. Because I was trying to get us from making musical instruments and wanted to turn it into making "actual" music, and so I think I kind of just did, in a vacuum, kind of say, "Hey, here's a way you can make melodies." I'm pretty sure I did. But this time it came around differently.

- Toni: Yes, this time it came from what children were already doing. There were already stories in the process of trying to come out, but they were in that "scribble" [mark-making] stage. And the kids were getting frustrated with that "scribble" [mark-making] stage, and that's when I came to you and said,

we need to do something more, I don't know how to get them past that. And I know you also wanted to [get them past it]. . . . I guess some things you need to know before you can get to other things, like you need to know the associated letter sounds before you can sound out words. There are some things in music that you just need to learn before you can jump in and do something. And I had wanted us to jump in the deep end, and it made sense to you to have us start at that other point. And in the end it did, when you saw what they did with that lesson, it made sense to start there.

- Sonja: And they did, they did take it way further just in that next ten minutes than you would have thought they would from what it was that that lesson was actually about, and yet it meant more to them, it opened a lot more possibilities and doors in their minds because of where they were and the frustration they might have been feeling, I think there was a little bit of "Finally! They've given us something to work with!"

- Toni: And it really didn't take this class that long to get there in Music Explorations this year. Whereas other years I don't think we have done mini-lessons until the very end.

- Sonja: I don't even know if we have at all, not in the same way we did this year.

- Toni: No. And really, those mini-lessons took up a good half hour, and we realized that they didn't really need an hour and a half to do what they needed to in Explorations, like taking that half hour didn't change their engagement—

- Sonja: In fact I think it made it better.

- Toni: Well yeah, it definitely made it better, but also nobody complained that they had less time for Explorations. You know how kids come to you and say they haven't had enough time—there was none of that. They were so ready for those tools.

- Sonja; And they seemed to need way fewer choices than they usually do. I mean, there were way more people than usual who were happy to be going off and doing similar things that were all pretty closely connected to what that mini-lesson had been.

- Toni: I found that really interesting . . . even those kids [who] in my mind maybe weren't as "ready" for that mini-lesson, were ready. They still participated and took something away, maybe not to the same extent the children who were ready to create stories did, but in their own place and their own way.

- Sonja: Well, look at Mindy and Olivia on the keyboard—Mindy particularly is one that I wouldn't have said was ready for that, she was still in the wandering–around-and-flitting–from-here-to-there stage I would have said,

not ready for something as "intentional", and yet look what she did with that keyboard—in a very different way than I would have imagined, but that often happens. Whereas some kids in your room did really very faithfully take up the example, and really tried to use those things very completely.

- Toni: And I don't know if Mindy would ever have done what she did on the keyboard if it hadn't been for that lesson. And that was really a lesson for me, to remember that that's the beauty of multi-age. Because whether I deem them ready because of what I see doesn't actually make them ready. What makes them ready is what they're doing, and what they take away from that lesson, and the beauty of it is that's why you can do those lessons more than once in a multiage and kids take them up so differently, because they're at different points when you do them. We could do that exact same lesson next year if we see the need, and Mindy will take that lesson up completely differently next year than she would have this year. Which is quite beautiful, and which reminds me, and I always pride myself on not being that kind of teacher who says, "Oh, this child's ready for that kind of book," to give them that chance to try it anyway. And this is just one more example of why it is so important to expose kids to these things even if we think they're not ready . . . and that's the joy of multi-age, really. (Toni, Final Conversation, June 2012)

Theory, Phenomenon, and Practice: The Forest for the Trees

Although these stories were chosen primarily to explore ideas of language and music, they also illuminate the thinking, questions, and actions of teachers as they negotiate the work of recognizing, creating, and mediating the conditions in which meaningful learning and communication occurs for their students in the context of classroom community and experience. In both of these stories we see children's work and learning in the social context of the classroom taking them beyond what they may have been capable of accomplishing alone, bringing to mind Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In both of these stories we see children engaged

in what Nakamura and Csikszentmihaly (2002) might call "flow experiences": "complete

absorption in what one does" (p. 89), characterized by, among other things,

> . . . intense and focused concentration on what one is doing in the present
>
> moment. . . . a sense that one can control one's actions. . . . [and] experience of
>
> the activity as intrinsically rewarding, such that often the end goal is just an
>
> excuse for the process. (p. 90)

Perhaps even more interesting than these phenomena in themselves, however, is the

thinking, questions, and actions of teachers as they are confronted with these educational

phenomena. How do they recognize them? How do they support and build on them?

How do they weave the values they bring to their teaching—exploration, discovery, play,

community— into the complex tapestry of theory, phenomenon, and practice?

It is interesting to me how both these stories of multi-modal experience were able

to put big picture pedagogical questions—the things we always think about as

teachers—in new relief and to challenge our assumptions. As I re-read these

conversations, it strikes me again that not only did students making new connections as

literacy learners allow Toni, Joan, and me to make new connections as teachers, but also

that in coming to those new connections and understandings, it was vital for us to be in

community. If another teaching adult had not been present with us in the classroom

during some of those experiences, would we have even noticed them? Alone, would we

have been as motivated to wonder about them and as able to make sense of what had

happened? An event in itself is not meaningful unless meaning is assigned to it. When an

event is examined in community, its meanings and potential become that much more

powerful and multi-dimensional.

Chapter Six

Connection

The child has a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine …
They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.
They tell the child that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred *is* there.
(Loris Malaguzzi, 1998b, p. 2)

Introduction

In his paper "The Practical: Language for Curriculum", Joseph Schwab (1969)

writes:

Scholars, as such, are incompetent to translate scholarly material into curriculum.

They possess one body of discipline indispensable to the task. They lack four

others, equally indispensable. . . . Yet, all five disciplines are necessary, and the

curriculum work their possessors do must be done in collaboration. They must

learn something of the concerns, values, and operations which arise from each

other's experience. They must learn to honor these various groupings of concerns,

values, and operations, and to adapt and diminish their own values enough to

make room in their thinking for the others. (p. 1)

The four other disciplines to which Schwab (1969) was alluding, in addition to

knowledge of curriculum theory, are: a) knowledge/understanding of the students for

whom the curriculum is intended; b) knowledge of the teachers who would be using the curriculum; c) knowledge/understanding of the environment (both in and outside of school) where this curriculum would be presented, and d) knowledge/understanding of the subject matter itself. Schwab's work in this area and insistence on the importance of responsive interplay among these disciplines (which he referred to as "desiderata" and which have subsequently been renamed by Connelly and Clandinin (1988) as "curriculum commonplaces") has had a profound effect on educators' current understanding of what curriculum is and how, why and by whom it is created (Clandinin, 2010; Eisner, 1984; Shulman, 2004a, 2004b).

As a music teacher endeavouring to work from a collaborative, integrated, emergent curriculum model, I am realizing more and more that my work needs to take into consideration these four commonplaces. If I hope to facilitate music learning that transcends the music room, that weaves into other subject areas and into other places in the school, that positions music not as a discrete subject but as a language, I need to know specifics—I need to know the particular students with whom I am working, I need to know the teachers with whom I am working, and I need to know the places in which we will be working—and then I need to marry what I know about my subject to what I know about those particular children, teachers, and places. And it stands to reason that these particular children and teachers need to do the same.

To this end, one of the key ideas I was wondering about in this project was that of emergent curriculum and connection: how to use shared structures, shared time, and shared instruction to create greater connections for children between what happens in the music room and what happens in the classroom. In our final interviews, the three

participants reflected on how they felt Music Explorations had influenced students' sense of connection. This section begins with excerpts from those interviews, and then leads into a revisitation of Vignette 2, probing deeper into the ideas of cross-classroom and cross-media connection.

Teacher Voices

Joan. I think Music Explorations has helped to bridge the divide between "this is music time" and "this is classroom time"—and what I think this has done for the kids and for me, is that the music room has become their space too, just like our classroom is their space—so that if they need something, they can go to the music room, and like I'm not worried about, "Oh, I don't want to interrupt," or "Oh, that's Sonja's space, and everything's got a special spot." Because [the students] participate in the exploration part, [and] a big part of it is the cleaning up at the end, they know where everything is so they're taking that responsibility and ownership for the care for these things that they value and they love to use, and they get to use regularly for their own real purposes.

I'm thinking of one student who was making a piano in the classroom, but then she realized that she didn't know how many keys or which keys to paint black. So then she asked if she could go to the music room, and she took her sketchbook and went to the music room. She knew that that was available to her, that that was another resource that she could use to do what she wanted to do. So yeah, I think aside from the physical space between the music room and the classroom, I felt like it was much more connected and you could really tell—it was really evident in the way that the kids made use of those spaces. (Joan, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Amy. I think they feel more connected to the music room now. . . . I think what

Music Workshop has done is that it has changed their idea of what music is. Now they

see it very much like their experiences in the classroom, not a different thing, which I

think is very powerful. I believe that they think of music now as a playful opportunity to

explore choices in music. This wouldn't be possible in a traditional 30 minute music

period with only the music teacher. (Amy, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Toni. I feel like now I don't "set up" activities for sound or music, I never have to

"set it up" anymore, except at the beginning of the year when I'm setting up my room I

set up a music area. . . . Now we talk about invitations and children talk about invitations

with each other, and they often bring ideas to our morning meetings that we have when

we are talking about what is going to happen in the day, or at the end of the day when we

are planning for the following day, a lot of that comes out in our conversation about what

children have been wanting to try or what they need for the next day, and sometimes I'll

bring [what they need] from the music room but quite often I won't, I'll send a child to

get it in the morning. And I think that's a huge switch for me as well. (Toni, Final

Conversation, June 2011)

Vignette II Revisited—A Screen Play

```
Amy's class—a Grade 1 and 2 multi-age—is in Music

Explorations.  Amy has brought three large panels that her

students have made throughout the course of the year, each

depicting one of the seasons, to the music room and we have

displayed them along three sides of the music room, leaving

a large space in the centre.  The children sit in the
```

centre, looking at and talking about the panels—what they

see, what they remember about making them, what they

remember about each season.

                    (VOICE OVER)
                    SONJA
    With Amy's room sometimes it was really, it was a
    challenge to find something that people really...

                    AMY

    Hooked into?

                    SONJA
    Yes, hooked into, and there'd be lots of little
    things, but then some people would go off and not
    quite sustain anything, and then Amy and I had
    this psychic moment where I think we had both
    been thinking ...

                    AMY
                    (laughing)
    "What the heck are we going to do," I think is
    what we were probably thinking ...

                    SONJA
    Because there had been interesting things
    happening [in previous Music Explorations], like
    drums and shadow play and dancing, but it kind of
    felt like every Explorations we were starting
    again—

                    AMY
    —needing to come up with something fresh—

                    SONJA
    —and kind of thinking, "I wonder if they'll like
    this! I wonder if they'll respond to this..."

                    AMY

    Exactly, I know!

                    SONJA
    So I had thought about the season panels in Amy's
    room and how it was spring and how surely a
    spring one was about to be created and that maybe

there was some way that we could connect with the
seasons and bring it into music. And on the very
same day, Amy had the very same idea—

                         AMY
Yes . . . because for each of the previous three
season panels, we had spent many weeks
experiencing, exploring, thinking about the
season in preparation for creating the panel.
And now the snow was beginning to melt, the
weather was getting warmer. It was time to begin
the spring panel. We had been outside for walks
to feel this change of season and to listen to
the beginnings of spring, so this seemed to be
presenting a possibility for connection in Music
Workshop.

                        SONJA
So we came into the room and we looked at the
panels, and we talked a bit about the seasons
that already were there. At the time it was just
the beginning of spring, the "melt-y" part of
spring, so we looked out the window of the music
and looked out at spring...

Everyone goes to the window and looks out.

                         AMY
...since we didn't have a mural yet.

                        Toni
What a great way to do it, though. What a great
way to inspire them.

                        SONJA
And we tried to look and talk about what we were
seeing. And what we might hear. But to speak
into the silence and not all talk over each
other.

                         AMY
The first time was lovely. I was quite impressed.
It went on for a long time and everybody was
really engaged.

                        SONJA
And then we went and—

                              AMY
     —gathered instruments.

The children begin to gather instruments from all around

the classroom, trying them and then placing them in front

of the panel for a particular season.

                         SONJA
     Right, we imagined what the seasons might sound
     like and all went and looked for instruments and
     put them in front of the panel that they matched
     with.

                         AMY
     The children spent a lot of time going around the
     whole music room finding instruments that they
     thought would work for that particular season and
     just laying them down. And they were so
     thoughtful. Some of them were looking so
     carefully through the whole room to find the one
     thing that they thought would work. They
     developed these huge collections—they put almost
     every instrument in the music room out . . . all
     arranged in front of the particular panels—and
     the one for spring was in front of the window.

Gradually, the collection in front of each panel grows.

Soon xylophones, metallophones, glockenspiels, bass bars,

hand drums, tambourines, triangles, cymbals, wind chimes,

cabasas, guiros, claves, woodblocks, rhythm sticks,

scrapers, shakers, a steel drum, a rain stick, castanets,

djembes, all these and more, are heaped in front of the

panels.

                         SONJA
     And then we made groups . . .

The children move into four groups and sit in front of the

panels with the instruments that have been selected for

that season. There is an adult (a teacher, a teacher

candidate or teaching assistant) with each group.

                    SONJA (CONT'D)
     . . . and each group used the instruments that
     had been chosen to make music for their season.
     For a while we all played at the same time, and
     then we listened to the groups play one by one.

The first group takes a turn playing their instruments.

They pick them up and the adult with their group gives them

a signal to play. For a moment they all play manically and

then put their instruments down.

                      AMY
     I think we both sensed that, we both knew as it
     was happening . . . it was going to be 1,2,3,
     bang, bang, bang. The adult with that group
     wasn't familiar with what we were doing and not
     as able to get them going—

                     SONJA
     Yes, [she] didn't have the same picture in her
     head of what was going to happen as we did, so
     the first group just kind of all played their
     instruments once and put them down. But on the
     other hand, I think that happening gave us a
     chance to put into words another way that we
     could try it, listening to each other to know
     what to play . . .

Amy reminds the class of the way they had talked at the

window, everyone speaking into silence. Sonja wonders if

that is something they could also try with the instruments.

The group plays again, this time each child playing

individually.

> SONJA
> And it was interesting how things evolved in
> terms of the things they were doing . . . the way
> they began listening to each other to know when
> to play . . .

When the next group takes its turn, the students begin to

intersperse and overlap their sounds with the sounds of the

other children—not overpowering them, but playing together

in ensemble with them.

> SONJA
> and then from there, not just taking turns, but
> playing into people's music. And it *is* different
> than talking, because it is something you can do
> together [at the same time], which you can't with
> speaking.

> AMY
> Which they started naturally doing . . . but
> doing so in such a responsive, respectful kind of
> way.

Some groups play with everyone facing the rest of the

class, whereas others begin immediately facing each other.

Some groups begin facing out, and then slowly turn to watch

their other group members as the music continues.

> SONJA
> It was interesting to watch them figuring out
> *what* they were doing—were they playing for us, or
> were they creating music together—and even then,

> deciding how, were they going to look at each
> other? Or were they going to look at us? I mean,
> even after we had talked about why you might want
> to look at each other to play "into" each other's
> music, there were many whose first instinct was
> still to look out at the "audience".

                    AMY
> Right, it's that "we're performing" thing. And
> what is that for them? What is their
> understanding of performance?

                    SONJA
> Especially when what they're "performing" is yet
> to be created, and it really has to be all about
> what's happening within that circle, between them
> and their group members . . . anyway, it was very
> interesting [to watch them negotiate that].

As the activity continues, the improvisations of each group

become longer. While the music is still going on, a boy

playing the triangle puts it down and reaches for a

woodblock. A girl picks up the triangle and continues the

rhythm he was playing. Another child gets up and moves to

another instrument near the back of the group, and someone

else slides over to take her place.

                    SONJA
> And the turn-taking on instruments within the
> piece, it was lovely to watch. And I felt that
> we took enough time, that it was a long enough
> amount of playing that they were really getting
> into it—

                    AMY
> They were!

After the group has played for several minutes with no

perceivable end in sight, SONJA asks the group to start

"listening for the ending".

                         SONJA
     And they could have just gone on and on. It
     always amuses me to ask kids to do that
     "listening for an ending" thing, because it's a
     skill to listen for a good place to stop, in the
     first place, but it is also a skill to accept
     when the ending comes. That's really hard to do.

Some children stop almost immediately but others gradually

get softer and eventually fade away. Some continue longer

than others, not wanting to stop playing before anyone

else. Some stop playing initially, and then add another

final sound after a moment or two of silence.

                         AMY
     Oh, some of them struggled with that. They had
     to play last. They had to have the "last word".

                         SONJA
     Yes, that silent negotiation is so interesting to
     watch.

                         AMY
     And for children, it is certainly challenging.

After each season has had a chance to improvise, the

children change groups and the process begins again. The

listening children watch silently and intently. When it is

their turn to play, some children experiment with playing

techniques or patterns that they have seen other children

trying.

                         SONJA
     And I was also really amazed by how engaged [the
     children not playing were], how these pieces
     could go on and on, and the rest of the groups
     were all so involved in just listening and
     absorbing what was happening, taking something
     from it.

                         AMY
     They were! There were a couple of specific ways
     that one played a particular instrument, and
     other groups tried the very same kind of thing
     . . . I remember thinking, "Wow, they're really
     thinking and listening."

                    FADE OUT FROM CLASSROOM

FADE INTO MEETING ROOM

AMY, SONJA, JOAN and TONI are sitting together around the

computer in the meeting room. They have been watching

video of AMY's class improvising their season music and

SONJA and AMY have been describing the process to TONI and

JOAN. AMY looks down at her notebook, which is full of

observations and notes. The teachers move back to the

table and the conversation continues.

                         TONI
     Wow, the ending parts, the way they ended those
     improvisations, to me was one of the most amazing
     parts.

                         AMY
     I know!

                         TONI
     I mean, it just blew me away. Like the way that
     one little guy picked up the mallets like he was

done, but then it didn't sound done to him, so
then he still goes back and plays that last note.
To me that just shows that he absolutely heard
that it wasn't done—

                    SONJA
And that he knew how—

                    AMY
—how he needed to end it. And he's a very young
little boy . . . much of what he does often
appears to be quite random and experiential
rather than purposeful.

                    SONJA
Well, I guess the other thing that contributed to
the whole experience being neat is that they were
starting with something they knew very well, and
that they were interpreting again—

                    AMY
That they had already interpreted again, and
again, and again.

                    SONJA
I mean, who knows how many interpretations of the
seasons they have lived through by this point.

                    AMY
There have been so many experiences that have
gone into each panel. We've read countless books
and poems, we've spent a great deal of time
outdoors, lying down on summer's grass, crunching
through autumn's leaves and rolling down winter's
snowy hills. We've spent the year experiencing
the seasons in as many ways as we could. And the
panels created by the children have been hanging
in the classroom all year. The children often
look at them and are reminded of the experiences
we shared together, and notice how things change
with the seasons.

                    SONJA
And could you ever hear that in their music! You
really heard the sledding. And the way they
picked up on what each other did, just like they

were playing together outside—that one was really
striking.

                         AMY
If I ever thought to do this again, I would
certainly hold on to video with them in each
season. We have lots of still shots, but the idea
of video and movement—like we were out today in
preparation for the spring panel [and] off we
went with the cameras outside, and they were over
ankle deep in the squelching and squishy mud out
there in the back, loving it, slipping and
sliding and almost not being able to get their
boots out . . . and I captured all that in still
shots, but now we don't have any of that movement
. . . I think about the slipping of their boots,
that sound the muck makes, and later, the
splashing in the puddles, or their rain boots
they're trying to scrape the mud off on the snow,
the wind blowing through our hair out there. We
stood under some of the cottonwoods out back
because the buds are just huge . . . and I said,
let's stop and look up, and they all gasped,
"Look at the leaves!!!" And there happened to be
a crow out in the tree and the branches swaying,
and when I got in I thought, well, we needed
video for that. Wouldn't it be amazing if we
could be playing video and then creating this
music? I think that would be amazing.

                        SONJA
That's what music is, isn't it? It's the
movement, the time, the idea—but the idea
stretched over time with movement, if you know
what I mean. We really should try this with
video, you're right.

                                        FADE OUT.

Re-visiting Vignette II - Conversations

   Giving choices, providing choice. One of the things that I had hoped to explore

during this project was how music class could adopt more classroom structures—such as

Explorations and Workshop, and the longer blocks of time that are associated with

both—in order to allow children to interact with and express themselves through musical

ideas in familiar ways. In attempting this, however, I often found myself struggling with

the balance of creating opportunities for open-ended exploration that offered

simultaneously choice and connectedness and my own notions around what this would

look like. This particular experience with Amy and hearing her speak about her

perceptions of it helped clarify for me some of the struggles I had been having around the

idea of choice and connection.

> - Amy: Today felt a lot more like a Writing Workshop in the classroom, less like choice time. But as a result, I think that's what really worked. When I think about Music Workshop, I see many similarities with Writing Workshop in terms of the structure of the workshop—mini-lesson, shared experience, choice and sharing. There is always choice in how children take up an idea presented in the mini-lesson, but everyone is working with the same framework. And that seems to fit really well with this.

> - Sonja: I'm not sure if I was really seeing it that way. I mean, I guess there's two ways of seeing what we did today, in terms of choice. Like in a way, yes, everyone could play what they wanted, how they wanted, when they wanted. . . . But the overall activity, if we can call it that, the "we're going to interpret this season through sound" thing that we did—I don't think I've been seeing that sort of thing as "enough" of a choice. I can see all the little choices within it, but I don't think that's how I was thinking. I was thinking, that we had to offer the kids eight different ways to interpret the season—you could go over here and do this, or you could go over there and do that—but then you're not doing something really connected and together anymore. And I think that is what I have been struggling with.

> Amy: Well, that maybe does work with different connections at different times with different circumstances. I think my Writing Workshop is sometimes like that, too. For example, the first year I was [at a new school]—oh man, Writing Workshop was torture. I didn't know what I was going to do, because everyone's experience of writing up until then had been quite narrow. It wasn't about communication, it was about the mechanics. [In my previous school] I had been using Writer's Notebooks [a writer's tool for free writing, experimenting with genres, documenting ideas, etc.] for years but [in this new school], oh my goodness . . . really no good writing was happening and I was really struggling to move the children's writing forward. [Looking back], what I was feeling was what happens when there's the absence of models for [good writing]. The sharing and the models that come from within the group can highlight certain things and lift the quality of everyone else's writing and really inspire students, but that [kind of modeling] just wasn't there. So I

really had to re-think things. [Eventually] we moved to more [prescribed] writing choices—because I was thinking, "Oh, how am I going to keep these kids engaged for an hour-long Writing Workshop?" [So] we went through a period of writing choices: there were these little pictures in a basket so you could grab one and use it as an inspiration. There was "writing at the window" where we'd set up some chairs, clipboards, some nice paper, facing out the window. . . . There was stationery for letter-writing, lists for people who wanted to make lists, story-boards for people who kind of had the idea of a storyboard or cartoon-ish sorts of things. . . . Anyway, we did that and as chaotic as that sometimes felt, there was way more engagement [and the children began] to see the possibilities for writing. So we did that for a few months, and then when I began to feel that they could really see potentials for themselves as writers, we went back to the Writer's Notebooks. And then the Writing Workshop using the notebooks was totally different, because the children had had all kinds of different experiences in the meantime. None of [those experiences] had been very connected, and [personally] I had sometimes struggled with that randomness, but [in the end] it paid off because it was all about building repertoire, about seeing possibilities for writing, about seeing different reasons for writing in different ways, so they could bring that to a more central experience. But what is interesting is that I remember an administrator saying, when I started doing all those random writing choices, "Oh, it's interesting how you're giving them more choice in writing now" and I responded, "There was always that much choice with Writer's Notebooks, but they were struggling with that because they hadn't had the experience to be able to make the choice." Writer's Notebooks are all about choice. [The notebook] is the form, it's the thing that captures the writing, but what's written, how it's written, topics, genres, everything else, is all about a choice. Not everyone understands that.

- Sonja: Yes, I guess there's a difference between "giving" them choices, saying, "You can choose this, or this, or this,"—as opposed to having them find choices—like, "What are you going to do?" I am not sure if I had thought of that distinction.

- Amy: I think there is connection between those two things, and both are important. I think that what we saw in Music Workshop today was a shared experience being rich enough for everyone to connect to in their own way. We experienced the season together in a very multi-sensory way, children made choices about the season to which they wanted to respond, they made choices in regards to the instruments and how they would be played and then they made choices in creating the sound piece with others in their group. I had never considered school music time as being so rich an opportunity for choice-making and creativity and responsiveness.

- Sonja: Yes, that responsiveness piece really stood out for me in the experience with your group. The music-making experience connected with the way we were

trying to get children to speak and listen when we were looking out the window and speaking into the silence, so that when we were playing together we began to see not just the parallels but also the differences between having a spoken conversation and playing music with others—that it isn't necessarily about "you play and then I play and then someone else plays", but that sounds can happen at the same time, which is different than when we speak. I think that if you hadn't been there facilitating that original conversation at the window the way you were doing, that connection would not have been as obvious to me, let alone to the kids. Because they did originally try to play in the same way as we had been talking—but then it turned out to *not* be like when we were talking. And I think that that discovery was partly what carried that experience through and made it develop.

- Amy: I think so too. And that really made me think, "Yes, Music Workshop is so much like any other workshop in our classroom." Just as in Writing Workshop, the focus is not on the mechanics, such as spelling or punctuation. People are always expecting mini-lessons to be about punctuation or something, but that's the easy stuff. The real focus is on communicating ideas. The mechanics are addressed, but only to serve the message. [And that's what I saw in Music Workshop too]—the focus isn't skills or technique, it's creative expression of musical ideas. The skills and techniques are important and you address them, but it's to serve the musical communication. I'm not sure what else I expected Music Workshop or music mini-lessons to be about.

- Sonja: Well, I think that is partly what this conversation is for—because we're kind of making this up. I mean, I didn't really know what they were going to be either. It's interesting what it turned out to be—and how it turned out to be different things in different places.

- Amy: The freedom to explore and play with instruments or with ideas within the context of the music room is incredible. I don't think many children get that opportunity. And I could really see the children thinking about and experiencing musical ideas in many different ways, from being quite purposeful and working in connected ways, to being joyful and expressive and sensory. And I think that's important for young children, just like anything else. Everything children do—everything we do—is based on that foundation of general play experiences and connection . . . and if children don't have that in music class, then what are they hooking musical ideas onto? For example, I was just setting out the Cuisenaire rods [a mathematics manipulative] in my classroom for Math Workshop, and I realized there are a couple of children in the class who maybe have never used Cuisenaire rods. Well, I can't ask them to use Cuisenaire rods in purposeful ways in Math Workshop until they have had lots of time to explore them and play with them and build with them, because from that play they understand the qualities and attributes of those materials that will give the math work we do a context. It's the same in

music. Children need to have opportunities to play and explore with sound and music to provide foundational understandings on which they will build musical knowledge, skill, and technique. (Debriefing Conversation, April 2011)

Mini-lessons: structures for exploration. This connection between mini-lessons, classroom structures and students' musical engagements also resonated in our focus groups.

- Toni: Well, that's another interesting thing I've noticed this year, that we've really gone beyond needing to bang on every drum and needing to shake every instrument or wandering around—especially when we started doing the mini-lessons, because now we've started to focus them with mini-lessons, so now we have one at the beginning of every Music Explorations, depending on what we're doing, of course, just like Writing Workshop—

- Amy: Exactly, isn't that how we always work? We know who the group is, we read what's going on and what's going to be the thing that's going to tie this all together, or push us in a new direction. The mini-lesson is crucial to gathering thoughts and making connections, and then providing direction. This needs to happen in any workshop.

- Sonja: And really . . . when we've done some of these mini-lessons, they were just like, "Finally!" or "That's how you do it!" or "That's a way I could do that!" And they were certainly able to put all those things into practice in very appropriate ways and make their own meaning with it. So it seems to be what they need, although there is always the part of me that is worried that I am imposing my "standard music notions" on them.

- Amy: I don't think you need to worry about that. The mini-lessons haven't limited them in any way.

- Sonja: Because it doesn't seem fair on the other hand, I mean, these kids know these musical ideas are out there and they're obviously interested, so to not mention them at the peril of over-standardizing isn't right either.

- Amy: And we're not waiting for them to invent everything themselves.

- Toni: And what I noticed is that when they got to the point that they wanted to make their melodies, we could see them floundering. They needed new tools, and really they wouldn't have taken up those ideas and tried those things on their own if they didn't want to, because it wasn't a "must-do," it was a choice, and they wouldn't have taken up that choice if they didn't want to.

It was also interesting to see how students made connections between their classroom engagements and the musical possibilities available to them in Music Explorations, and how they began to take responsibility for bringing their classroom inquiries to the music room.

- Toni: I've found it really neat how the children in my class have taken on the responsibility of Music Explorations. It has become something that is very much "their" thing. It started with one child coming to me and saying, can we talk about Music Explorations, because it's tomorrow! And I said, okay, let's sit and talk about it. And that's become our routine now. And they found a calendar with the school days on it, and on all the Day 1's they've put a little triangle so they know when Music Explorations is coming. And then the day before Music Explorations, we talk about it and they have all these ideas. And so then the next day, usually in the morning message I just jot down things that we've talked about bringing the day before, and we go over that right before we leave [for the music room], and often I've had a couple of children who've said, "Hey, last night I was thinking that maybe we could take this with us to the music room"—so we're taking all these things with us from the classroom to the music room, because they've been thinking about what they'd like to try with it with music. And they've also been reminding each other about stuff the day after Music Explorations, like, "Remember when we did this, and Sonja said this? And we said we wanted to try this? And can we go get that instrument? And we forgot to bring this..." So we're bringing all these things, and then we're taking all these things back from the music room, and how its become this absolute natural flow of things that we do in the music room, it's like there's no disconnection between Music Explorations and classroom Explorations. So I'm finding that really interesting how they're taking it so [seriously], and how they want to talk about it the night before. They're like, "It's tomorrow . . . we want to make sure we know what we're doing".

- Amy: And that's important. I think when they do that it shows the importance of the opportunity for children to keep playing with an idea. When the children in my class became interested in playing the bells, for example, we were able to continue that exploration in class by creating the music basket. Children began to develop their musical notation so that they could recreate their music, share it, and to play music created by others. Now I am thinking of ways to return to ideas by including ongoing music play in our Morning Meeting planning time, and I'd like to find ways for them to plan some of their ideas before [we go to Music Workshop] as well.

- Toni: My students have really started doing that. One day they said, "We need music for our city," and so the buildings came with us to the music room.

And we needed music for the adventure story that is now a big map on the wall, and so they created the sound effects, and the giant is walking and you can hear the big giant steps on the xylophone . . . and I didn't expect them to bring so much of what we are doing in the classroom. Because as they're making things, as they were making that map, they were making their own sound effects and they were like "We can take it to music!" I'm finding that sense of connection really neat in my classroom, although part of it may be that music has been an important part of our writing and Explorations in the classroom for a while now.

- Amy: Yes, I think that is familiar to them and is just part of the way they look at it. I am thinking of encouraging more conversation in our classroom about the children's ideas of how we can pursue some of our classroom inquiry and activity in the Music Workshop. Something as simple as, "Is there anything you are thinking might be a great connection for when we go to Music Workshop?" I'm interested to see what they say.

Transcending boundaries, evolving practice. As the Music Explorations

experience progressed, the students' concept of connection between the two spaces

expanded, so that they were not only bringing classroom inquiries to the music room, but

also using musical ideas as the basis for new classroom inquiries. In this focus group

conversation, which took place after our official 12-week research project was over, Toni

spoke about how the connection between Music and her classroom was taking on new

dimensions, and how she was attempting to maintain the connections established between

music room and classroom through Music Explorations now that we had returned to our

regular, three-music-classes per cycle schedule. In an effort to keep at least some version

of Music Explorations going, Toni and I found a way to schedule one of her weekly

music classes alongside my prep-time, so that that particular class could be extended to

an hour and she could be present for at least part of it. This enabled us to do more open-

ended activities during that class which needed more than half an hour, and kept her

connected to some of the conversation and engagements. At the end of the hour, rather

than have a sharing time in the music room (which was no longer possible because I had

another class to teach directly after hers), she would return to the classroom with her

students and have the sharing time there.

- Toni: What I am finding most interesting right now is that in the beginning a lot of
    what we were doing in the classroom was influencing what was happening in
    Music Explorations, but right now the complete reverse is happening.

- Amy: Yeah?

- Toni: Right now a song that Sonja did with my kids [in music class] has completely
    taken over my classroom. It was that circus song, "The Circus is Coming to
    Town", and they came back from Music Explorations after doing that circus
    song, with a list, because when we come back from Music Explorations now
    [which is now shorter than before] we have half an hour after to talk about
    Music Explorations and what we want to do in the classroom from that and
    then we write in our sketchbooks, and I really like that, I wish I had been
    doing that right from the beginning. Because we come in and get our snacks,
    we get our sketchbooks, we come to the carpet and do some more sharing that
    couldn't happen in the music room, we have our sketchbooks, we write about
    it, we make plans for next time, and that circus—our entire conversation was a
    list of things they want to do at Explorations now around the circus. Okay, we
    need scarves, we need masks, we need this, we need that, we need animals,
    we need fabric—and my classroom now, well, the circus has come to town, let
    me tell you. And none of that came from the classroom. That all came from
    music class, whereas at the beginning it was exactly the opposite.

 - Sonja: And I think that maybe shows how the kids' mindset has changed in terms
    of what the relationship is between music and the classroom, because I don't
    think before kids would have come back from music class with a whole plan
    about what had to happen now in the classroom, or what they were going to
    get ready for next time they came to music. And I guess I'm looking at what I
    do differently, or the impact of what I do differently. Because even though
    this project is over, because of this new relationship that the kids have in
    music and in the classroom relating to music, it does make me feel like I still
    need to be more connected with the classroom teacher because you never
    know when something is going to catch on and if it does then suddenly you're
    having a circus. But I really like what has evolved with Toni's class now,
    even though this project is over, that we have found a way to have an hour of
    Music Explorations every week, so they have the chance to have that hour in
    music and then time to share and reflect in the classroom—

- Joan: Yes, I really hope we [can do something like that next year], because I am
    really excited to see next year how exploration evolves when I have older
    students, and not just a full class of Grade 1's. I really like that idea, that you
    have that half hour to come back to talk and reflect and make your plan.

- Toni: Yeah, we talk as a whole group first, I write things down for us, and then they go off and plan on their own or in small groups, and we have our snack and go out for recess.

- Amy: I like that idea, you said you draw or write in your sketchbooks then? That's a great idea, because we talk while we're having snack, but I think that writing or drawing would hold on to their ideas in another way.

- Sonja: And for me too—because since I'm not there for that part of the conversation, because I am still in the music room, then if it is drawn or written down, then that's a way for me to access what kids were thinking or wondering about, besides just having you tell me or kids tell me about it next time.

- Toni: And I keep saying to them, I need to get at what's in your head, because we need to keep going with this and you're so excited, and this seems to have changed how they're writing in their sketch books. Because at first they would just write down what they did that day—

- Amy: —right, like not planning.

- Toni: —whereas today and last time was a lot more "plan-full." For example, one child has written out what the clowns for our circus are going to look like, with the masks on their stomachs . . . and so he has drawn out this sketch of what it is going to look like and how we're going to attach it around the clown's stomach, so he's got a plan so that . . . and that's a step forward for him, because he usually comes up with ideas but he doesn't like to then put them into action—

- Amy: —right, take the steps to make them actually happen.

- Toni: —and today he wrote and sketched three pages in his sketchbook of ideas and what he wants to try. So it was kind of neat to see that shift in their writing … not all of them of course, but there's definitely a group of them who have shifted from "what I did today" to "these are the ideas I'd like to try and this is the plan". Like Zelda, she planned out the masks last time and then wrote down all the supplies she needed and the step-by-step "how-to" and then gave it to me . . . and the masks are pretty spectacular, mostly because of Zelda's instructions.

- Sonja: It's interesting to me that you don't need 90 minutes really. With an hour, even with a mini-lesson or something more group oriented at the beginning, you still get a good 25 minutes of real Explorations, just playing and doing, and we don't have to worry about stopping in time to share, because that

reflection is going to happen back in the classroom—and it also makes the sharing a different kind of sharing, not so much "listen to us play."

- Amy: In the classroom they are used to sharing in a different way.

- Sonja: And in the classroom it's more about talking when you share, right? You don't necessarily all traipse over to the sand table to see what happened, you talk about what happened, right? So being in the classroom kind of takes [what has happened in Music] to that place, and to the "planning and thinking and the remembering for next time" place.

- Amy: Which will enable you to hold on to those ideas throughout that time, which is important.

- Toni: Well, it has really changed that sharing. Because when we are in the music room and people perform, no one really shares ideas. In the classroom when we share, there is always the questions and comments part, where people share ideas and suggestions . . . so it's kind of feeling more like [classroom] Explorations now, not that Music Explorations didn't, but it is feeling a lot more substantial in our sharing times now, which is cool. Plus we've had a whole year of experience now, in doing this.

- Sonja: Well, yeah, we're now carrying on Music Explorations in a way that, in a way, is more supported by the structure, because we have the other weekly music classes that support it—

- Amy: Yes, I agree.

- Sonja: —and we also have the classroom structures supporting it, having the sketchbooks, and being able to have those conversations back in the room, and being able to think about all that music stuff through the classroom lens.

The Cycle Continues

The ideas and stories in this section were chosen to illustrate connection: connection between physical spaces, connection of curriculum, connection of students and their experience, connection between modes of expression, connection of teachers as co-teachers and co-learners, and connection as members of a learning community. In the exchange documented above, we also saw another kind of connection—connection to future practice and the journey to come—as teachers explored ways in which to connect

to and move beyond the Music Explorations experience. What had originated as a stand-alone project for a finite period of time has become a new way of thinking, knowing, and doing for all participants. Language such as "now we are trying…", "next time I will…", "I'd like to try that…","I wish I had been doing this from the beginning…" emphasizes the last steps of McNiff and Whitehead's (2006) action research cycle, in which the changes which have been made to one's practice are evaluated and new questions, possibilities, and challenges are identified, giving rise to a new cycle of research. Such language also positions each teacher as the protagonist and instigator of whatever may come next in the context of her own practice—still connected to others, still connected to what we began together through this Music Explorations experience—but also connected to wherever her own learning journey and evolving practice may lead.

Chapter 7

Reflections and Implications

"I believe there is no possibility of existing without relationship.

Relationship is a necessity of life"

(Malaguzzi in Kaufmann, 1998, p. 287).

Claims to Knowledge: Teacher Reasoning

In his 1994 article "The Knower and the Known: The Nature of Knowledge in Research on Teaching", Gary Fenstermacher spends considerable time wrestling with the epistemic question of the justification of claims to knowledge in qualitative teacher research. He writes:

> If the potential of the notion of practical knowledge, knowledge-in-action, personal practical knowledge, or teacher knowledge is to be realized, all who would study it face an obligation to take seriously the fact that they are studying notions of knowledge and, as such, must work through matters of warrant and justification. (p.49)

It is not, he says, that what teachers may "believe, imagine, intuit, sense and reflect upon" is not necessarily knowledge or may not lead to knowledge, but rather that "these mental events, once inferred or expressed, must be subjected to assessment for their epistemic merit" (p. 47).

One way in which these "mental events" can be assessed, he suggests, is through the intentional "making visible" of teacher-reasoning – to reveal the "good reasons" that teachers have for doing or believing what they do (p. 44). He explains:

So long as this knowledge or understanding is tacit, it is unavailable to the teacher

for further reflection. If the researcher probes, in a manner indicative of trust and

mutual regard, the teacher's reasons for acting as he or she did, the performance

knowledge heretofore tacit may reach a conscious level of awareness. Once

aware of it, the teacher can deliberate or reflect on it, and if it is found meritorious

in that teacher's conception of his or her work, advance it as a reason to justify

acting as he or she did. (p. 46)

I must admit that, as a teacher, there are parts of me that rail against some of the

implications of this statement. As someone who strives to be a reflective practitioner and

a responsive teacher in my daily teaching practice, the suggestion that teachers need

researchers to make them conscious of the thoughts and beliefs behind their actions, as if

teachers generally act unthinkingly or unreflectively, is somewhat inflammatory. As the

primary "researcher" in this project, I would never want to suggest that my colleagues

and participants "needed" my probing in order to understand the reasons behind what

they were doing or thinking. That being said, however, I am also aware of the fact that

there is not a chapter in this thesis that does not in some way allude to the fact that,

throughout this project, it was the interactions and conversation with one another that

allowed us—all the teachers involved in this project—to think about what we were

thinking and indeed to "know" (become conscious of) what we knew. This leads me to

wonder if it is perhaps simply the distinction made between "teachers" and "researchers"

in Fenstermacher's statement that causes me to bristle, conjuring up images of the

swampy lowlands and academic high grounds of qualitative research textbooks. If we

can rephrase his assertion so that each teacher can be considered a researcher and, in so

being, be considered to have the potential to help others make tacit performance

knowledge reach a conscious level of awareness for themselves, then I can quite happily

accept this reasoning and, in fact, embrace it as the justification of the claims to

knowledge that my fellow teachers and I might want to make based on our experiences in

this project.

I do believe that there are things that we can claim to have learned—indeed, to

know—through this project, and it is my hope that some of these things, and

the teacher reasoning that justifies them, have been made visible through teachers' own

retellings of their experiences and the documented echoes of our discussions and

conversations throughout this narrative. In this final chapter I would like to highlight, in

the context of my original guiding questions, a few "bigger picture ideas" which this

project generated for me personally and the potential connections I see for future practice,

as well as to give this same opportunity to my co-participants in this project. To this end,

this final section begins with reflections from Toni, Joan and Amy, in which they discuss

the experiences they have had during this project, the ways in which these experiences

may have affected their thinking about music, children, and teaching, and possibilities for

continuing similar collaborative work into the future. With these reflections in mind, we

then return to the original research questions and consider the implications of what we

have learned for our future practice, examining the barriers, challenges, and possibilities

inherent therein.

Reflections: Teacher Voices

Toni. I love the part of Music Explorations where the kids are [playing and

exploring], but for me, I am finding the part that I am really enjoying and really finding

beneficial is the part of the mini-lesson at the beginning . . . because once Music

Explorations is over, I want this to continue. . . . I don't want to stop talking about music

in the classroom just because Music Explorations has ended. So getting a feel for how [a

music specialist] does "music class" and being a part of that learning experience with the

children has changed my way of thinking about it. And it has really allowed me to be

part of what the learning was, so that when we're back in the classroom and we're

singing [a particular] song and improvising rhythm patterns together, I have a very

different understanding of it, and a different way of talking about it with the kids, than if

they had just done it with you and then had come back to the classroom. It makes a huge

difference.

      At this point there are no limits to what I can imagine happening next, because

I've seen what has come from what we've done so far and how it has already changed. I

mean, Music Explorations used to be inspired by the classroom, and we used to bring

everything from the classroom to the music room, and that's kind of what would

influence what we were doing in the music room in Music Explorations. But that now

it's turned around and come the other way, and I'm seeing what children are doing in the

music classroom really influencing what we're doing in our classroom, I don't think

there's anything we couldn't do next year. And what I hope can happen is that we can

keep having Music Explorations time for an hour every cycle from the beginning of the

year to the end of the year, hopefully, and also time for [the music teacher] to come in

and support whatever it is that has happened in the classroom or in the music room, or

what has happened with the connection between the music room or the classroom.

Because I think that a lot of times something would come out of the music room or the classroom, we'd take it back to class and I'd do everything I could to support that, but there would be limitations to what I could do, or the space we had to do it in, or the number of people I needed, or even a place to do it where they could really make the sounds and noise—and I don't mean noise in a bad way—but the noise and volume that they wanted to create—and also sometimes they do need an adult with them, and that's not always possible because I get interrupted a million times when I am working with a group and that always happens in Explorations. To have an individual, one person, spending uninterrupted time with them, would open up avenues to them that we've never had before. . . . Really, I see so much potential for next year.

Hopefully next year is going to allow for me to come to the music room, for you to come to my classroom, for there to be Music Explorations *and* to have music class. That didn't happen before—when we had Music Explorations, we didn't have regular music class. And I think that having music class every second day *and* having Music Explorations would mean that we aren't having just one big block of music, and then following it up in the classroom, but they would have that Music Explorations time followed up by two other times in the music room. The music room lends itself to children exploring differently with musical instruments, whether that means doing a lesson on something together or exploring independently—because just like you can't have a Writing Workshop without the tools of writing, you can't be a musician without the tools of music. And I think that's where the end of our Music Explorations was really heading, when we'd spend the first half hour working on the tools that they really needed, and then giving them time to explore with those tools—but next year [developing] those

tools could be happening three times a week instead of once, so I think that would bring a different level to what we are able to do in music and what children are able to do. . . . I realized at the end that this was a huge part of why my children took up the mini-lesson ideas we offered so fully, because they were just so ready for those tools—they had been exploring in an open-ended way and there were all these things they wanted to do, but the opportunity hadn't been there for them to get specific tools. And now they're going to have the opportunity to get those when they need to be there. You know? (Toni, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Joan. Well, mostly, [my engagement in Music Explorations was] just playing along, doing what [my students] were doing, joining in with what they were doing, asking them questions. But I think because it wasn't in the classroom—because it was in the music room, which I don't have as much experience with, I think my role sort of shifted a little bit in that way. I think in the classroom I would be more inclined to ask things or suggest things or offer things, which isn't necessarily always a good thing, whereas in the music room I think I was a little bit more "not" in that role, because it was a little out of my comfort zone, like it was a little more new to me. Which I think was good. And joining in with them was fun for me too, because it was new. I mean, I do "do along" with kids in the classroom during classroom Explorations but less so than in Music Explorations, and part of it is also because there's two teachers during Music Explorations time and during classroom Explorations time there is so much going on, that it's really hard to spend time with just one group—because you hear somebody's tone of voice, and you need to go and at least be accessible to them if they need help to negotiate that in a kind sort of way, or whatever.

[Next year] I'm going to have more things available in the classroom to them, and I think having [the music teacher] involved in our Explorations in the classroom, if that's possible, I think that would be really valuable. . . . And then having, continuing to have those connections between what they're doing in music and in the classroom—well, not necessarily connections, but that what they're learning about music can support what we're doing in the classroom. So not, we're interested in plants so you have to do something with plants, but that skills that you have there can help you do something there, and vice versa. [My students] looked forward to the Music Explorations . . . they wanted to go back and pick up where they left off—but they also like regular music class, the more structured music time too. I found there were times when they wanted that. So I think that that's important that they get both of those kinds of experiences—because yes, they liked Music Explorations and there were some really great connections, but . . . the half-hour, structured, "we all do this together" kind of thing, they liked that too, and they missed it when they didn't have that too. So it's interesting how they kind of need both of those things.

Oh, one thing that I think has changed for me is that I am thinking more about the ways I can use music in the classroom as another language, so I find myself thinking more about the way that children learn to read and write, and making connections between that and what we're doing in music. And I never really thought about music that way before, so when I am talking to you or even thinking about what I could do with kids, I'm thinking, "Yeah, well when we read, we start out like this, then we go and do this, and then we come back and do that"—and so I'm thinking more, like why wouldn't we have these available? And then they could explore with this and then do something

with a supported group and then come back and share—I mean, I'm imagining it more as blended into everything we're doing, as opposed to just trickled in here and there, you know? And I don't think I really thought of it that way before. And I think really for me, Nina has been my biggest "learning guide" around that. I mean, there has been growth for everybody, but her growth has been so "in-your-face" obvious about how she can express herself in a way that she never has been able to before . . . so for me that's really helping me to think about the music piece in a way that I never have thought about music before. I mean, I think I always thought about music and I always tried to incorporate music, but in a more "add-on" kind of way, not as a language, so to speak.

I think [having a musical *atelierista* working within my classroom] . . . would be ideal. Because I think that as much as I like the Explorations, just like when you do math or reading or writing or anything else, there's an importance to being together as a group and enjoying a shared experience—like we share a story together, or we play a math game together in the circle. Or we come together to do a Writing Workshop, or for someone to share their writing with other people. That's part of our community and our relationship with one another is coming together and enjoying something as a whole group—so I think that that would be great, to still have that shared time, but also to have [more individual time]—because I think that was one of the things that stood out to me was that "Oh, it would be so great to have time just to focus on this one small group," so to have that flexibility of you being able to come and say, "You know, this group is really on to something here, I'm going to support this group right now," I think it would be really interesting to see where that would go." (Joan, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Amy. The thing that I feel has really shifted Music Workshop is our collaborative time to debrief and plan forward—when we didn't have that, it was hard to keep things going. In our busy days, if the time isn't scheduled, it doesn't happen. There are a million things pulling at us to do at all times.

I always find that working alongside another teacher with a group of children provides some of the most powerful learning, because you're collaborating. Figuring things out together with the children present is a valuable experience. I get to see how you work with children, and I get to see your expertise in music and how that plays out in planning, which is something I know little about. This has been valuable for me. Having another teacher's perspective on the group and individual children and the work that they're doing, is very powerful. It serves to deepen my own understanding of the children that I work with in this slightly different context of the Music Workshop, and it gives me more information to really get the story of that child, especially the story of that child outside of the four walls of our little classroom. . . . And having two educators' perspectives on the group, on individuals, on how they work together as a group—that's huge in planning, in supporting them, in just kind of figuring out what little pathways to continue with them and what might be possible or not. That I love. This has reminded me of those years being a job-sharer. The power of two minds coming at the work with a group is amazing. And similarly, I'm very interested in knowing what has been going on with the other groups in music workshop. It helps me consider what is possible.

I'm thinking a lot about [this experience] for next year, even though I won't be teaching the same grades. I am thinking about space and about the musical opportunities for children. Next year I am hoping to create places in the classroom that provide more

opportunities for children to explore with sound. Currently, my classroom does not

provide many opportunities to explore sound and music, responding to music or creating

music. [The children] make their own opportunities, though—I can't tell you how many

times those big hollow blocks have been turned into drum kits! They have discovered

how the various sizes of blocks make different sounds, and they have also discovered that

if they build the blocks in different ways, they can create different sounds.

Next year I plan to offer materials and set up musical provocations in more

purposeful ways which would allow for more creative exploration for children. It has

been 15 years since I last taught Kindergarten. In those years I have been influenced by

the ideas of Reggio Emilia, I have a deeper understanding of environment as the third

teacher, I have a deeper understanding of the role of "provocations". I am thinking of

music through this lens now and I think this experience this year has really made me

think about what I choose for the my new classroom space.

My group went through a bit of transition in our block of time, starting from

open-ended explorations and time to explore all the things that were available to them in

the music room and all the things they enjoyed returning to. Later, we began to pull it

together more tightly in a way that provided a common framework but still allowed for

choice. I often see this process unfold in the classroom too, now that I look back. In the

middle of it I was thinking, what are we doing? But classroom inquiries often develop

this way. There is a shared experience that stimulates our thinking, possibilities present

themselves and are considered, children begin to make various connections which may be

pursued or not. Individuals or small groups of children may go off in many directions, or

we may happen upon a common direction. I think that's what ended up happening in

Music Workshop, but drawn out over a really long period of time, because we were only

there every week and sometimes even less than that. It would be interesting to see what

would happen if we did this in a more compacted period of time. It may be easier to

sustain a focus by returning to conversations, ideas, and work more frequently over a

period of time. There's a lot of power in that daily contact and the daily conversation that

feeds into everything we do. That's hard to sustain only once a week.

This makes me think of the Reggio ideas of the *atelier* and the *atelierista*, and the

continuity and the focused way that some groups might work on an idea day after day.

I've never been to Reggio Emilia, but from what I've read, in Reggio schools, the

atelierista meets with small groups to work with an idea or project regularly over a period

of time. The atelierista helps to keep the group focused and moving forward by working

with the group and developing meaningful provocations based on the ongoing

conversation and reflection of the group. I can see the power of that, and in doing this

[Music Workshop] project I can see the potential for that, but in Reggio it would never

usually be with the whole group. We were trying to do this with the whole class, so it

was challenging to provide the same sort of experience with many more children. That's

my dilemma going in . . . a lot of my students are pretty dependent, so invitations

sometimes fall flat if there isn't an adult there provoking thinking. (Amy, Final

Conversation, June 2011)

Implications

Returning to the guiding questions. The primary question guiding my inquiry

into the stories my participants and I created was the following: What and how do

classroom teachers and music specialists learn from themselves, each other, and from

students in collaborative teaching experiences?

These sub-questions also guided my data collection:

- How do teachers' own stories of musical learning and experience affect the way

  they use music in their own teaching practice?

- How does a collaborative model of music learning affect the ways in which music

  and non-music curricula are understood and experienced, by both students and

  specialist/classroom teachers?

- How does a collaborative model of music learning affect the way teachers and

  students engage with music outside of the workshop times?

Because these questions were created primarily to guide data collection and to create a

framework for inquiry and conversations, I will admit that throughout this project I have

been less concerned with finding concrete "answers" to these questions than with using

them as the contextual lens through which our collaborative experiences and stories could

be constructed, viewed and considered. That being said, however, there are nonetheless

several "big ideas" – answers, perhaps – which these stories have illuminated for me

about the power of collaborative teaching experiences and the ways these experiences

affect student and teacher learning: primarily the power of community, the power of

structure, and the power of many languages. These big ideas—as well as the barriers

standing in the way of their implementation, their implications for future practice, and

their connection to other educational contexts—will be discussed in the remaining

sections of this thesis.

The power of community. In Peter Johnston's (2004) book *Choice Words*, he makes the point that children and adults are not unalike in the ways that they learn, and that part of our responsibility as teachers is not only to provide responsive learning environments for our students, but also to seek them out for ourselves:

> Like children, teachers grow into the intellectual life around them. This requires that we build productive learning communities . . . [and] it also requires engaging in open activities—ones that do not have a single path to a single solution—that require us to articulate our thinking. (p. 75)

This idea of a "productive learning community" for me is almost a chicken-and-the-egg phenomenon: once you have been part of one, you understand how powerful and imperative it is, but unless you understand its power and importance, how likely are you to seek one out amid the hustle and bustle of the teaching life? As Johnston (2004) goes on to say: "Intellectual life is fundamentally social . . . the relationship associated with the learning is an inextricable part of what is learned" (p. 65). When we learn within a productive and supportive community, we are also learning the value of those productive and supportive relationships.

Thinking of this project in particular, it seems to me that in a productive learning community, teachers learn first of all that they are not alone in their struggles, their questions, and their discoveries, and furthermore they learn that, through conversation with members of their community, new dimensions to these struggles, questions, and discoveries will inevitably emerge. Through engagement in open-ended activities in the context of the learning community, teachers learn both *from* each other (for example, me learning from Amy, Toni and Joan how to structure Explorations effectively) and *with*

each other (for example, Toni and I together figuring out together how to help her

students use music to access their storytelling ideas). Although in the structural reality of

our North American schools, a professional learning community often means a group of

teachers working separately in their own classes (perhaps with common questions or

inquiries) and then coming together to share and reflect, there is even more power in a

collaborative teaching model where members can bring their own perspectives to shared

teaching experience, as the following conversation suggests:

> - Amy: I just don't think we can work in isolation, I think that what we do can only
>   be better when more minds are thinking about something, when more people
>   are looking at something together, it can only be richer for children and their
>   experience in the classroom when there are more people involved in that
>   process, and that's why I love those collaborative opportunities, and I love the
>   different perspectives that you have when you are working with another adult
>   with children. It's very powerful.
>
> - Sonja: Yeah, that's something I'm trying to think about here. Like you can talk with
>   people outside of the classroom, but when you're in the room with another
>   adult, another whole dimension is there, not just for you but for the kids.
>   They see different things as well, I think.
>
> - Amy: They do. Belle and I really felt that, after we stopped being job sharers but
>   still were working together in the same building. We would say, we're both
>   enjoying this but no, it's not the same as when we were working together in
>   one classroom. I mean, it's lovely working with great colleagues, but it's
>   fantastic when you're working alongside someone with those children.
>   (Debriefing Conversation, April, 2011)

Amy, Toni and Joan's final reflections, in which they all imagined and articulated

different ways in which our collaborative relationship could continue into the future, also

underscore the value of this kind of collaboration and sharing of experience.

The power of structure for relationship. It is my personal feeling that the

children with whom we worked in this project had a much more meaningful and personal

experience with music than they would have had otherwise, not only because they had

the opportunity to explore and create music independently rather than only in context of the larger group in music class, but also because they were able to experience musical ideas through open-ended learning structures (Explorations, Workshops) with which they were already familiar and comfortable. As Brian Street (2003) describes:

> . . . engaging with literacy is always a social act, even from the outset. The ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants, especially the new learners and their positions in relations of power. (p. 78)

Choosing to structure music in open-ended, creative and responsive ways which require children to make their own choices and make meaning for themselves sends strong messages to children about how they are perceived as learners, musicians, and capable people.

For me personally, having opportunities to work individually with children around the music they were making gave us an opportunity to relate to each other as collaborating musicians and gave me insights into their thinking and musical perceptions that I never would have had otherwise. The opportunity to work with children in these ways enabled me to learn a great deal about not only these children's musical understanding and the musical learning process, but also about these children as learners and thinkers in a more global way. For someone whose teaching life usually takes place in somewhat manic 30 minute blocks, having the time to really watch children at play and observe their learning and understanding was an invaluable and rare experience—and for someone whose classroom work generally happens in isolation, the chance to think about

these children and their learning with a collaborating teacher enhanced my thinking and

understanding even more. As Amy described:

> [This experience] only serves to deepen my understanding of the children that I
>
> work with in this slightly different context, so that just gives me more information
>
> to really get the story of that child, especially the story of that child outside of the
>
> four walls of our little classroom. (Amy, Debriefing Conversation, 2011)

The power of many languages. To return for a moment to one of our focus group

conversations:

- Toni: I feel that my verbally strong children have dominated a lot of the first half of
  the year. And now, they're not. Now—

- Amy: And now the others have their own kind of voice, whatever that might be.

- Toni: Yes. Because those piano playing girls, for example, one of them in particular,
  if she had felt that she had to explain something first, she wouldn't have done
  it at all.

- Sonja: Well, I think it speaks to making many languages accessible . . . and if you
  are privileging one, whether it is verbal or written or whatever, then there are
  people who aren't going to be sharing what they have to share. (Focus Group,
  April 2011)

Providing children with the opportunity to make meaning through many

languages and to negotiate creatively between languages, as illustrated in several of the

preceding stories in addition to the one referenced above, allows children to "appear"

(Biesta, 2006) and to make connections in ways that they otherwise might not.

Furthermore, however, providing children with these multimodal opportunities also

allows (and indeed requires) teachers to interact in different ways with their students than

they otherwise might. Thinking of Joan's comments looking back on her experiences in

the music room:

[I was mostly] just playing along, doing what they were doing, joining in with what they were doing, asking them questions . . . I think in the classroom I would be more inclined to ask things or suggest things or offer things, which isn't necessarily always a good thing, whereas in the music room I think I was a little bit more "not" in that role, because it was a little out of my comfort zone, it was a little more new to me. Which I think was good. (Joan, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Toni expressed similar thoughts:

Being a part of that [music class] learning experience with the children has changed my way of thinking about it. And it has really allowed me to be part of what the learning was, so that when we're back in the classroom and we're singing [a particular] song and improvising rhythm patterns together, I have a very different understanding of it, and a different way of talking about it with the kids. (Toni, Final Conversation, June 2011)

This idea of teachers going beyond the familiar and embracing new potentials for themselves resonates again with Johnston's idea of productive learning communities:

Children, just like adults, learn better in a supportive environment in which they can risk trying out new strategies and concepts and stretching themselves intellectually. . . . And learning communities are not simply about being supportive. For them to be evolutionary, they also require challenge. (Johnston, 2004, p.65)

Entering this place of challenge is not always natural for teachers, as Joan comments:

And can I say something else too? Like how teacher-centric is it of me to think

that everything I do with children needs to be comfortable? That it's got to be

comfortable, that I need to know what's going on, that I've got to feel in

control—it is so teacher-centric of me to think that way! [Instead] I should be

doing things that make me think really critically about what I am doing and

thinking, okay, how can I support this, how can I make this work, because I value

this and the kids value this. (Joan, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Barriers. Looking at this project from an action-research perspective, the pivotal

"intervention" in this project—that is to say, the element of teaching practice which was

modified with a view to exploring the implications of such a modification—was the

structuring and scheduling of time (both the frequency, duration, and organization of time

in the music room with students and the time to debrief, plan, and discuss with teachers)

in order to facilitate co-teaching and co-planning. Once these structures were in place, it

was possible, for lack of a less clinical phrase, to implement the other interventions which

more actively repositioned traditional music and teacher/student roles, such as the use of

Explorations and Workshop structures, the provision of opportunities for transliteration,

and the transfer of ideas between the classroom and music room—but it is certainly

arguable that without the foundational structural shifts which provided time for music

teacher and classroom teacher to meet, teach and plan together, none of those other

interventions would have been as successful or perhaps even possible. So although,

given our experience, it may seem obvious to those of us who participated in this project

that this connected and collaborative approach is the way that we would like to be

moving forward as teachers, it is important to recognize that the foundational

collaboration-friendly structures that were in place for this project do not actually exist in our current teaching reality. As Lee Shulman (2004a) describes, institutionalized barriers standing in the way of sustainable structures that support on-going collaboration are far from uncommon:

> It is now understood that teaching is, in many ways, an impossible job in which to succeed as an individual. The demands are too great, the range of talents required is too broad and varied, the requirements for learning from experience exceed the capacities of an individual learner. Nevertheless, the jobs of both student and of teachers are divided in ways that treat collectivization as odd or sinful. . . . Teachers who seek to collaborate are provided with few facilitating structures (scheduling changes to encourage joint planning, or team teaching arrangements) and even fewer incentives.
>
> Ironically, the lessons of recent research attest to the virtues of collective learning and teaching. They testify to the ways in which both students and teachers can come to achieve more and learn more effectively when the artificial barriers that limit collaboration are removed. It is no accident that the "real world" of work and play treats collaboration as a norm. (p. 315)

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that as Toni, Joan, Amy and I reflected on our experiences and ways that we could imagine such collaboration continuing in the future, we all found ourselves wondering about an example of an educational model where teacher collaboration *is* institutionalized—the schools and ateliers of Reggio Emilia.

Reggio Emilia: multiple literacies and the atelier. The schools of Reggio Emilia have, from very early days, always incorporated at their heart an atelier—a

workshop "rich in materials, tools, and people with professional competencies" in which "children's different languages could be explored by them and studied by [their teachers] in a favorable and peaceful atmosphere" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 74). Each atelier is staffed by an atelierista, an arts specialist who plans collaboratively with classroom teachers to facilitate and provoke children's learning and thinking through multimodal projects which explore and deepen children's interests and ideas. In addition to providing a physical workshop space for these explorations, the atelier serves as a "cultural vehicle for teacher development" (Vecchi, 1998, p. 140), a structure that enables teachers to better understand and scaffold their students' learning through the research of the children's thinking and expression.

In the words of Vea Vecchi (1998), an atelierista who has worked in the schools of Reggio Emilia since the early 1970's:

> The atelier serves two functions. First, it provides a place for children to become masters of all kinds of techniques, such as painting, drawing and working in clay—all the symbolic languages. Second, it assists the adults in understanding how children learn. It helps teachers understand how children invent autonomous vehicles of expressive freedom, cognitive freedom, symbolic freedom, and paths to communication. The atelier has an important, provocative and disturbing effect on old fashioned teaching ideas. (Vecchi, 1998, p. 140)

In this description we see again the ideas of multimodality and multiple literacies, discussed in chapter 2, at work. In giving children access to "all the symbolic languages", children in Reggio schools are clearly able to express their thinking "multimodally"— that is, to explore the various expressive possibilities of multiple sign-

systems, and to make meaning through various symbolic languages. The Reggio assumption that children will, given a conducive environment, "invent autonomous vehicles of expressive, cognitive, and symbolic freedom" (Vecchi, 1998, p. 140), however, takes us beyond mere multimodal theory (that meaning is made from many sources beyond written or spoken language) into the more political territory of multiple literacies—where, through the accessibility and valuing of multiple languages, the power and agency associated with literacy and competency are conferred upon all children, regardless of age or experience. This image of children positions them as powerful protagonists in their own learning and is a political as much as an educational stance. This idea reminds me of Joan's questions at the beginning of this project:

> I'm just really wondering what's getting shut out or lost in the process of "now we're going to sit down and do writing time and make our story picture and include all the details in our story picture and then we're going to start adding some words", all those things that I would normally do . . . [because] if that's the only way [children are invited to] show their story, the reality is that there is a sector of children that are never going to be telling their story in any meaningful way. (Joan, Initial Interview, January 2011)

The atelierista: time, collaboration and continuity. Providing space—whether physical or metaphorical—which not only acknowledges and values the multiple literacies of children but also supports children and teachers in the making of meaning and communication through multiple languages by offering of tools, materials and particular expertise is a key role of the atelierista. Vecchi (1998) describes her daily interactions with teachers in her school as follows:

We meet several times a day. Every morning I do a tour of each classroom. I am

particularly interested in what is happening at the beginning of the day, both with

regard to the larger ongoing projects and to the smaller, independent activities.

Teachers and I briefly talk about how to introduce certain things to the children

and what to anticipate, and then what to do about them. Sometimes I also suggest

the use of particular materials. Often, in the middle of the morning, I do another

circuit, being sure to go where something of particular interest might be

happening. Or sometimes, a teacher comes to ask advice or get me to come and

visit. Then, at the end of every morning I find at least 15 minutes to consult with

each teacher. And often, we gather as a group for discussion. (p. 147)

Similarly, having dedicated time for meeting and planning played an essential role in this

project, as Amy commented in her final interview:

The thing that I feel has really shifted Music Workshop [this year] is our

collaborative planning time, time to debrief and plan forward—when we didn't

have that, it was hard to keep things going. In our busy days, if the time isn't

scheduled, it doesn't happen. There are a million things pulling at us at all times.

(Amy, Final Conversation, 2011)

The second thing that strikes me in Vecchi's (1998) description is the continuity

afforded to classroom projects through the many daily opportunities for teacher

conversation and visitation. This is another point that Amy raised in her reflections:

I think if I was in my own ideal dream world, we would do this in a more

compacted time, maybe even if that was you working with us for a smaller block

of time but in a more regular sort of way, I would be interested to see how that

would go. . . . There's a lot of power in that daily contact, the daily conversation,

the daily happenings, that feed into everything we do. And that's hard to sustain

when it's once a week. (Amy, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Vecchi (1998) goes on to describe the ways in which these constant interactions

with teachers impact on the growth of the community:

Working together, guiding the children in their projects, teachers and I have

repeatedly found ourselves face to face—as if looking a mirror—learning from

one another, and together learning from the children. This way we were trying to

create paths to a new educational approach, one certainly not tried before, where

the visual language was interpreted and connected to other languages, all thereby

gaining in meaning. (p. 141)

This idea that connecting one language (in Vecchi's case visual, in ours musical) to other

languages enriches the potential of all languages is certainly one that we noticed in our

own experience in Music Explorations. I am reminded of the day Toni was worrying

about having students bring their writing with them to the music room to finish some

work:

- Toni: I felt a bit of guilt about it, like this is something we could be doing in the
        classroom, we don't need to be in the music room to do it—and yet, when I
        stood back and watched them—what they were doing on paper [in the music
        room] was so much richer than what they had been doing in the classroom.
        And we've been working so hard on using music and listening to music and
        interpreting music, and making that connection about how stories can be told
        through music, so to be able to take our Writing Workshop and bring it into
        the Music Room for Music Explorations, was really very exciting.

- Amy: And maybe them being in that situation, doing it like you chose to do it, only
       strengthens their connections of those things?

- Toni: Yeah, and I said to myself in the moment, that's what came to me. I said, why
        am I worrying about this? We're connecting our writing and our stories to

music and using music, why wouldn't we bring our writing to music? We're bringing music to our writing, why wouldn't I go the other way around?

- Amy: And what a hugely important message for the children about the connection and integration of these two areas—or any other curricular areas—and the fluid movement from one to another. . . . It also sends a message about who we are as teachers and the roles we play and what we bring to different situations. (Focus Group Conversation, March 2011)

The atelier: creator and communicator of culture. In addition to direct contact with individual teachers, Vecchi's role also involves sustaining these larger conversations among teachers:

An important part of my role is to ensure the circulation of ideas among teachers.

I am really their constant consultant. Because my training is different from theirs,

I can help them see the visual possibilities of themes and projects that are not

apparent to them. I may even intervene directly with the children to create

possibilities that have not occurred to them. . . . Certainly, I follow all of our

major and longer term projects. I always find most interesting and wonderful the

project on which we are currently working, because it seems to me that with each

project we advance and learn a little more, and thereby we work better with the

children. (Vecchi, 1998, p. 147)

This idea of "advancing and learning a bit more" resonates with a phenomenon which Toni and I had often puzzled about over the course of this project:

- Toni: Like when I think back to when we first started using music in the classroom all those years ago, and I think about what the kids were doing and the conversations we were having, there's no reason that we shouldn't still be having the same conversations this year with my new group of kids—but with my group this year, it's almost like we didn't have to have those conversations to get to where we are now, and that's what I am confused about.

- Sonja: Yes, it's weird. It's almost like there's an institutional memory there—but maybe that is what the teacher is.

- Amy: It's probably what you bring to it, in very subtle ways. It's probably what
    [you've learned and experienced over time], what you now bring to it. (Focus
    Group, February 2011)

As Vecchi (1998) elaborates on this idea of evolving work, it becomes clear that

the atelier, although represented by the workshop space, transcends the physical to

become a culture—a way of being—based around relationships and shared

understanding:

> The environment of the atelier becomes a center of culture, where through the
>
> years the processes and tools have been modified. The relationship between the
>
> atelierista and teachers has grown and deepened, affecting in turn the professional
>
> relationship between teachers and children. (p. 143)

In our particular project, the opportunity to come together with questions and to discover

that others have had similar experiences was very affirming, as Joan describes here:

> I've learned a lot from all of us being able to be together and talk. And to hear
>
> Amy's experience and Toni's experience helped me to reflect on my own
>
> experience with Explorations, and helped me to kind of calm down a little bit, and
>
> realize, it's not just me, it's not just my kids, it makes sense that they're going
>
> through this stage. . . . And I think hearing other teachers, that they feel like that
>
> sometimes too, that kind of re-affirmed to me, yeah, right, I need to let that go and
>
> give myself permission to be in places with kids that aren't as comfortable for me,
>
> to know that we need to go through that to get to somewhere richer. That it's not
>
> just willy-nilly, but actually part of the process of getting to this richness. . . .
>
> Because you naturally have those feelings, and if you don't have other people to
>
> talk about it with, and don't see it happening in other places, then I think it would

be definitely a barrier to moving on with it. (Joan, Final Conversation, June 2011)

Inspirations and echoes. Over the last several years, I have read Vecchi's (1998) descriptions of the culture of the atelier many times, never feeling that I didn't understand it. As I re-read it in the aftermath of this project, however, I feel that I understand it now in ways that I never did before. I see traces of our own experiences in Vecchi's words, and the text reverberates with new layers of meaning, new questions, and new challenges. It is exciting to look at the work of Reggio Emilia with the eyes of new experience and to begin to see the relationships and culture at play in new ways: as with so many things, the more you know, the more you realize you do not know. Although it is neither possible nor desirable to transplant a culture which has evolved in one particular historical, social, political, and intellectual context to another and expect the same results to ensue, it seems clear that the ideas and inspiration of the Reggio Emilia atelier hold great potential for us in our own context and culture. There may be no telling where this journey may lead us, but there is no doubt that we have set off.

A Final Thought

The power of narrative inquiry lies at least in part in the fact that no two individuals will ever experience a common event in exactly the same way: by harnessing and making visible the multiple experiences of an event, one is able to understand that event more fully and in more vibrant detail. Each participant in this project came to it with different questions, different histories, different expectations, different needs, and different strengths; all of these diverse elements were brought to a common, shared experience. What we each have taken from it and where it leads us next will be as

uniquely individual as each of us are ourselves, yet as intrinsically connected as the

community we have formed together: new relationships, new languages, new ways of

thinking about teaching and learning, new insights into our students. What this project

may point to more than anything is the value and the necessity of innovative structures

within our school institutions that not only support these kinds of communities,

relationships, languages, and ways of thinking, but also create spaces in which they can

begin to develop. These supportive and creative structures include: looking at specialists,

music or otherwise, as resources and co-teachers, rather than isolated entities; creating

larger blocks of time for more open-ended work to be done with students; scheduling in

flexible and responsive ways so that team-teaching and collaboration is possible; creating

dedicated time and space for co-planning and debriefing among co-teachers; providing

time and space for on-going professional dialogue and conversation among colleagues.

In the end, perhaps it all comes down to connection: connection to each other,

connection to our students, connection to what has happened and what may yet happen.

The substance of what we learn is inexorably connected to the relationships within which

we learn (Johnston, 2004). In the words of Loris Malaguzzi (cited in Kaufmann, 1998),

"there is no possibility of existing without relationship. Relationship is a necessity of

life" (p. 287).

References

Albers, P. & Harste, J. (2007). The arts, new literacies, and multimodality. *English*

     Education, 40(1), 6–20 Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40173265

Atwood, M. (1993). *The robber bride.* Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Ltd.

Bartel L., & Cameron L. (2007). Understanding the conditions of learning in early

     childhood music education. In K. Smithrim & R. Upitis (Eds.), *Listen to their*

     voices: Research and practice in early childhood music (pp. 57–86). Waterloo,

     ON: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Barrett M., & Stauffer, S. (2009). Narrative inquiry in music education: Towards

     resonant work. In M. Barrett & S. Stauffer (Eds.), *Narrative inquiry in music*

     education: Troubling certainty (pp. 19–34). Netherlands: Springer. doi:

     10.10071978-1-4020-9862-8

Berghoff, B., Borgmann, C., & Parr, C. (2005). *Arts together: Steps toward*

     transformative teacher education. Reston, VA: National Art Education

     Association.

Biesta, G. (2006). *Beyond learning: Democratic education for a human future.* Herndon,

     VA: Paradigm Publishers.

Bissex, G. (1988). On learning and not learning from teaching. *Language Arts, 65*(8),

     771–775.

Bowman, W. (2009). Charting narrative territory. In M. Barrett & S. Stauffer (Eds.),

     Narrative inquiry in music education: Troubling certainty (pp. 211–222).

     Netherlands: Springer. doi: 10.10071978-1-4020-9862-8

Burger, K., & Winner, E. (2000). Instruction in visual art: Can it help children learn to read? *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 34*(3–4), 77–89.

Burnaford, G., Aprill, A., & Weiss, C. (2001). *Renaissance in the classroom: Arts integration and meaningful learning*. Manwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Clandinin, D. J. (2010). Troubling certainty: Narrative possibilities for music education. In M. Barrett & S. Stauffer (Eds.), *Narrative inquiry in music education: Troubling certainty* (pp. 201–209). Netherlands: Springer. doi: 10.10071978-1-4020-9862-8

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 477–487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Inc.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2000). Multiliteracies: The beginning of an idea. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 3–8). New York, NY: Routeledge.

Eaton, J. (2007). The effects of an integrated reading and music instructional approach. *Dissertation Abstracts International: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 67*(12A), 44–92.

Eldridge, D. (2000). Learning about literacy through the arts. *College Teaching, 48(*3),
116–119.

Eisner, E. (1984). No easy answers: Joseph Schwab's contributions to curriculum.
Curriculum Inquiry, 14(2), 201–210.

Fenstermacher, G. (1994). The knower and the known: The nature of knowledge in
research on teaching. *Review of Research in Education, 20,* 3–56.

Fisher, D., & McDonald, N. (2001). The intersection between music and early literacy
instruction: Listening to literacy! *Reading Improvement, 38*(3), 106–115.

Frazee, J. (1987). *Discovering Orff.* New York, NY: Schott.

Goodkin, D. (2001). Orff-Schulwerk in the new millennium. *Music Educators Journal,
88*(3), 17–23

Graham, M., & Goetz-Zwirn S. (2005). Crossing borders: The arts engage academics and
inspire children. *Childhood Education, 81(*5), 267–273.

Green, L. (2008). *Music, informal learning, and the school: A new classroom pedagogy.*
Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Griffin, S. (2009). Listening to children's music perspectives: In- and out-of-school
thoughts. *Research Studies in Education, 31*(2), 161–177. DOI:
10.1177/1321103X09344383

Griffin, S. (2011). Through the eyes of children: Telling insights into music experiences.
Visions of Research in Music Education, 18. Retrieved from http://www-
usr.rider.edu/vrme-/

Hertzog, N. B. (2001). Reflections and impressions from Reggio Emilia: "It's not about

    art!". *Early Childhood Research and Practice, 3*(1). Retrieved from

    http://ecrp.uiuc.edu.proxy2.lib.umanitoba.ca/ pp[EP&AL2]?

Jewitt, C. (2008). Multimodality and literacy in school classrooms. *Review of Research in

    Education, 32*(1), 241–267.

Johnston, P. (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children's learning.*

    Portland, MN: Stenhouse Publishers.

Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (2009). "Multiliteracies": New literacies, new learning.

    Pedagogies: An International Journal, 4(3), 164–195.

Kaufman, P. (1998). Poppies and the dance of world making. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini,

    & G. Forman (Eds.), *The hundred languages of children* (pp. 285–289).

    Westport, CN: Ablex.

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The means and media of

    contemporary communication*. London, UK: Arnold.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: reading,

    analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in

    naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation, 30,* 73–84.

Lowe, A. (2002). Research collaborating music/art/language in a minority linguistics.

    Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 5(1–2), 93–116.

Malaguzzi, L. (1998a). History, ideas and philosophy. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G.

    Forman, (Eds.), *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach,

    advanced reflections* (pp.49–97). Westport, CN: Ablex Publishing Inc.

Malaguzzi, L. (1998b). Invece il cento c'e. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman,

(Eds.), *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach,*

advanced reflections (pp. 2–3). Westport, CN: Ablex Publishing Inc.

Manitoba Education. (2009). *Literacy with ICT across the curriculum: Supporting*

principles. Retrieved from

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/tech/lict/tell_me/inquiry.html

Manitoba Education. (2011). *Kindergarten to grade 8 music: Manitoba curriculum*

framework of outcomes for arts education. Retrieved from

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/docs/music_k8_interactive.pdf

McCusker, J. (2007). Listen to their voices: Young children's emerging musical literacy.

In K. Smithrim & R. Upitis (Eds.), *Listen to their voices: Research and practice*

in early childhood music (pp. 47–54). Waterloo, ON: Canadian Music Educators'

Association.

McNiff, J. &Whitehead, J. (2006). *All you need to know about action research.* London,

England: SAGE Publications.

Moorhead, G., & Pond, D. (1978). *Music of young children.* Santa Barbara, CA.:

Pillsbury Foundation for the Advancement of Music Education. (Original works

published 1941–1951).

Morgan, P., & Bourke, S. (2008). Non-specialist teachers' confidence to teach PE: The

nature and influence of personal school experiences in PE. *Physical Education &*

Sport Pedagogy, *13*, 1–29.

Morin, F. (2001). Cultivating musical play: The need for changed teaching practice.

General Music Today, 14, 24–29.

Morin, F. (2010). *Study of arts education in Manitoba schools*. *Manitoba Education Research Network Monograph Series*. Issue 3. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Research Network (MERN).

Nakamura J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). The concept of flow. In C. R. Snyder & S. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 89–105). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Niland, A. (2007). Musical stories: Strategies for integrating literature and music for young children. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 32*(4), 7–11.

O'Hagin, I. B. (2007). Musical learning and the Reggio Emilia approach. In K. Smithrim & R. Upitis (Eds.), *Listen to their voices: Research and practice in early childhood music* (pp. 198–210). Waterloo, ON: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Orff, C. (1963). Orff Schulwerk past and present: Speech at the opening of the Orff Institute. Retrieved on June 15, 2012 from http://www.vosa.org/aboutorff/?pageID=17

Paley, V. G. (2005). *A child's work*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Peters, J. B. (2011). *A formative study of rhythm and pattern: Semiotic potential of multimodal experiences for early years readers*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net.1993/4855

Philpott, C., & Plummeridge, C. (2001). *Issues in music teaching*. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Quay, J., & Peters, J. (2008). Skills, strategies, sport and social responsibility: Reconnecting physical education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 40*(5), 601–626.

Raffi. (1998). Blue White Planet. On *Songs of Our World* [CD]. Burlington, MA:

    Rounder Select.

Rankin, B. (1998). Curriculum development in Reggio Emilia: The dinosaur project. In

    C. P. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. E. Forman (Eds.), *The hundred languages of*

    children (pp. 215–237). Westport, CN: Ablex.

Roskos, K. A., & Christie, J. F. (2001). Examining the play-literacy interface: A critical

    review and future directions. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 1*(1), 59–89.

Roskos, K. A., & Christie, J. F. (2011). Mindbrain and play-literacy connections. *Journal*

    of Early Childhood Literacy, 11(1), 73–94. doi:10.1177/1468798410390889

Roskos, K. A., & Christie, J. F. (Eds.) (2007). *Play and literacy in early childhood:*

    Reseach from multiple perspectives. NewYork, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Schwab, J. J. (1969). The practical: A language for curriculum. *The School Review 78*(1),

    1–23.

Schwab, J. J. (1971). The practical: Arts of eclectic. *The School Review 79*(4), 493–542.

Serebrin, W., & Morin, F. (2007). 21st century literacy education: New directions for

    music in the early years curriculum. In K. Smithrim & R. Upitis (Eds.), *Listen to*

    their voices: Research and practice in early childhood music (pp. 288–300).

    Waterloo, ON: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Shulman, L. S. (2004a). Teaching alone, learning together: Needed agendas for the new

    reforms. In S. Wilson (Ed.), *The wisdom of practice: Essays on teaching,*

    learning, and learning to teach. (pp. 309–334). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Shulman, L. S. (2004b). Teaching as community property: Putting an end to professional

    solitude. In S. Wilson (Ed.), *The wisdom of practice: Essays on teaching,*

    learning, and learning to teach. (pp. 453–460). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Smagorinsky, P. (1995). Constructing meaning in the disciplines: Reconceptualizing

    writing across the curriculum as composing across the curriculum. *American*

    Journal of Education, 103(2), 160–184.

Smith, K., & Montgomery, A. (2007). Free musical play. In K. Smithrim & R. Upitis

    (Eds.), *Listen to their voices: Research and practice in early childhood music* (pp.

    301–318). Waterloo, ON: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Smithrim, K. (1997). Free musical play in early childhood. *Canadian Music Educator.*

    38(4), 17–24.

Street, B. (2003). What's "new" in new literacy studies? Critical approaches to literacy in

    theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education, 5*(2), 77–91.

Street, B. (2005). At last: Recent applications of new literacy studies in educational

    contexts. *Research in the Teaching of English, 39*(4), 417–423.

Suthers, L., & Niland, A. (2007). An exploration of young children's engagement with

    music experiences. In K. Smithrim & R. Upitis (Eds.), *Listen to their voices:*

    Research and practice in early childhood music (pp. 19–32). Waterloo, ON:

    Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Tarnowski, S., & Leclerc, J. (1994). Musical play of preschoolers and teacher-child

    interaction. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education, 13*(1), 9–16.

Tennyson, A. (2004). *Tennyson: Poems.* New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Upitis, R. (1990). *This too is music.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Vecchi, V. (1998). The role of the atelierista. In C. P. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. E.

Forman (Eds.) *The hundred languages of children* (pp. 139–147). Westport, CN:

Ablex.

Vinz, R., & Schaafsma, D. (2011). On narrative inquiry: Approaches to language and

literacy. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1967). Play and its role in the mental development of the child (C.

Mulholland, Trans. from original work published 1933). *Journal of Russian and*

East European Psychology, *5*(3), 6–18. doi:10.2753/RPO1061-040505036

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wolf, S. (2008). The mysteries of creative partnerships, *Journal of Teacher Education*,

59(1), 89–102.