A DEPICTION OF ART EDUCATION IN AN OHIO METROPOLITAN PROFIT-CHARTER SCHOOL SYSTEM

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Overview

The depiction of art education in metropolitan areas is relative based on the perceptions of its efficacy through the eyes of its instructors. Aside from state standards and objectives, there are no rubrics to assess the visual arts’ success or value. New political innovations allow urban parents to enroll their children in many alternatives to geographically determined public school systems. A fierce competition exists between educational venues offering government vouchers to parents registering their students in primary and secondary school systems. The most controversial of these choices is the recent onset of the Profit-Charter School (PCS); those academic settings that operate on voluntary enrollment while claiming fiscal profit with the use of government vouchers (Ohio Federation of Teachers, 2008). The educational climate of metropolitan areas specifically, is a complex and problematic learning landscape. In order to reach appropriate levels of academic achievement, novice and veteran teachers must adapt their teaching philosophies and executions to best accommodate their personal strengths and student demographics. It is widely accepted that children of metropolitan areas are diverse and callused to the harsh realities of the inner city. Though art may be seen as a form of release through expression and visual exploration, its validity to resistant students, parents and administrators must compete with other factors affecting the ability for at-risk metropolitan youth to constructively cope with the stressors that may plague their realities (Camilleri, Rodgers, & Dennis, 2007). Teachers and parents contend with
opposing perspectives on the educational route for their students. Academic performance must compete with economic disadvantages, nontraditional family structures, and the harsh realities of urban life. Art education must find relevance and validity among these factors. The question has yet to be answered: What is the depiction of art education in PCS through the eyes of its instructors?

Statement of the Problem

Current literature reviews provide only segmented information about the status of art education in metropolitan areas. Why has art education in PCS largely escaped the scrutiny of research for their quality and effectiveness? Following the proposal and research of this study, an overlooked area of the art education field will be opened for further analysis. Abodeely (2010), art manager for the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education, warns of the complete elimination of visual arts in public and private school systems across the country, due to the high administrative turnover in legislators that control the federal and state funding for the visual arts education. Investigating the quality of the art education provided in Profit-Charter systems will assist to magnify a subculture of contemporary education, not thoroughly researched. A specified research attempt to document the voices of educators, in regards to arts education in PCS would be invaluable to the future of PCS and public school models of art education.

The voices of art educators in PCS will be documented here in reference to visual arts education in this school profile. In order to determine the positive or negative effects of art education in PCS, research must be initiated. I hope to inspire a new wave of visual arts education research that deals with questions that previously were not raised. A light
needs to be shown on a small shadow of our nation’s education system: Metropolitan Art Education in PCS. I hope to set precedents for future instruction and curriculum design and research to intervene and improve the quality of art education these students deserve.

Research Questions

In order to depict the current state of art education within PCS in conjunction with relative content analysis of the social landscape of metropolitan cities, I observed and interpreted the perspectives of the participants in this case study to identify the conclusions and results that subsequently formed.

Primary Research Questions

The primary research questions were as follows:

1. What is the depiction of art education in PCS through the eyes of its instructors?
2. What empowers teachers to achieve their goals in art education within metropolitan charter schools?
3. What discourages teachers to achieve their goals in art education within metropolitan PCS?

Secondary Research Questions

Related questions of inquiry are as follows:

1. How does the fluxing economic status of metropolitan school districts relate to art programs present in its PCS?
2. How does administrative support and classroom resources affect the success of art educators’ classroom goals?

3. How does parental choice influence parental involvement in a metropolitan PCS art program?

4. How does the experience of teaching art in a metropolitan PCS influence the morale and satisfaction of its instructors?

These research questions and concerns have been researched and inquired in much detail, allowing for supplemental data and insight into the depiction of art education in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS systems.

Definition of Terms

In order to offer clarity and consistency, the following terms have been operationally defined in relation to this case study:

1. **Profit-Charter School (PCS):** Any school system: (1) operating privately through a sponsor company; (2) funded by educational tax dollars outside of the public school system; (3) Are not directly held accountable through teachers unions or the state department of education; (4) That fiscally declare a profit of educational tax dollars not utilized in the distribution of funds to school buildings (Ohio Federation of Teachers, 2008).

2. **At-Risk Youth:** Any child that resides within inner cities that may contribute to the danger of negative future events. The deterrents may include: poor self-esteem, lack of coping mechanisms to self-heal after trauma or stress, destructive social behavior, pregnancy, promiscuity, gang involvement,
depression and poor school achievement (Camilleri, Rodgers, & Dennis, 2007).

3. **Metropolitan:** A large city regarded as a center of specified activity (metropolitan. 2011).

   Though metropolitan areas may ignite a sense of economic advantage and promise, for the purpose of this case study the term metropolitan areas will signify many aspects of larger cities such as neighboring suburbs, inner cities and downtown areas.

4. **Parental Choice:** Governmental plans and policies that grant parents an increased voice in determining where their children will attend elementary and secondary school. Parental choice provides individual parents or families with some range of alternatives in their children’s education, school choice allows families to make choices they believe are best suited for their children (Tompkins, 1991, Metcalf, Muller, & Legan, 2001).

**Limitations of the Study**

Limitations arise in qualitative studies. Those that are specific to this case study are as follows:

1. The research design only involved metropolitan PCS from a single corporate management company (CMC) operating within Ohio. Art educators from similar, profit-charter settings were not investigated, as well as teachers from other educational infrastructures such as public, religious or non-profit charters. The research was also limited to grades kindergarten through eighth.
2. Although PCS within metropolitan Ohio cities are in constant debate regarding standardizing testing and annual yearly progress reports regarding core curriculum achievement, my research efforts were solely concentrated to the art departments and the perception of art educators with respect to their satisfaction and experiences inside their school buildings. I did not methodically investigate any other program within the schools.

3. The PCS selected for this study were purposive. The corporate management company maintains the highest number of PCS in the state of Ohio, including GED preparation schools and distanced learning home schooling programs (Reid, 2002).

4. The fact that I was an active art teacher in the same PCS as two of my participants for two years, researcher bias was a concern. However it can be constructed as an advantage, since I directly participated as a member of the PCS community, and therefore shared in firsthand knowledge and experience from the perspective of a teacher. Both positive and negative aspects of such an environment were still considered during the course of the study.

5. Since this case study relied upon the narratives and recollections from the years 2002-2011, there was the possibility for participants to recreate their interpretation and perception of the school. A large portion of the data relied on the memories of the participants. As a result the data may not have fully, adequately or accurately described the actual atmosphere of Ohio metropolitan PCS during that time frame.

6. A concise variety of individuals were sampled for this study. Subsequently
the sample cannot attempt to characterize the complex population as a whole, and is not representative as such.

7. The school buildings that individual participants represent are very specific in their demographic location and facility descriptions. Anonymity was attempted at all costs, though it was likely that specific details of buildings and classrooms may be revealed through honest and uncensored responses and reflections.

Basic Assumptions

The basic assumptions related to this study were as follows:

1. Through the use of interviews, it was assumed that all of the participants attempted to answer questions as candidly as possible without outside influences or believed benefits.

2. It was assumed that I, as principal investigator, maintained confidentiality regarding the identity of the participants and data collected. The possibility that correspondence between participants occurred was assumed not to be of concern, as all participants were interviewed individually and belong to communities in differing school buildings inside the PCS system. It was assumed not to be an imminent cause for dismissal of the data as contaminated or ineffectual.

3. It was assumed that I protected the dignity of the participants by eliminating any unnecessary information divulged that might have emotionally or personally harmed anyone involved.
4. Due to the transient nature of students in metropolitan charter schools and the parental right to choose or change a child’s educational venue, it was assumed that this study only able to serve a small percentage of the metropolitan community at the time of research.

5. It was assumed that I, as principal investigator, did not solely choose to interview those participants whose beliefs, perceptions and experiences had only negative or biased opinions of the school. A variety of experiences and depictions were sought to create a constructive, critical and honest perspective of the school.

Significance of the Problem and Justification

Current problems in metropolitan education revolve around a depressed economic area paired with public school systems that continued to prove detrimental in their students' academic achievement as shown by standardized testing. Peterson and Greene (1998), argue that prior to the opportunity for government vouchers, test scores in metropolitan public schools were dropping as students increased in grade level. Parents without resources to improve their children’s learning environment were helpless to improve the quality of education offered. The parental sentiment was voiced through the enactment of publicly funded vouchers. They thought it was the government's duty to supplement the public school system to invigorate public education to be competitive rather than exclusive in urban communities.

Art education in these metropolitan areas was also seen to decline as resources and funding decreased for such programs. In predominantly economically depressed
schools systems the ideal that discipline and structure would result in self-confidence and
social reform was socially accepted. The “school-art” style contributes to this structure
with little room to divert from teacher models in art projects. Young (1985), however
feels that these principles when implemented in extreme scenarios create a body of
students that become dependent on a world of correct answers and are unable to critically
problem solve. In authoritarian learning environments, the lack of critical thinking,
active inquiry and environmental investigation proves to be unrelated to the economic
and social realities that metropolitan children face in their everyday lives. Art education
curriculum can be affected by lack of materials and administrative support when
attempting to achieve an educator’s vision.

These aspects combine to propose a new area of research within the field of art
education as it relates to alternative education in metropolitan areas. Prior to this case
study, no identifiable research has been found to directly involve the combination of the
two. I personally do not see art education as an answer to the complexities that exist in
promoting academic achievement in metropolitan areas, but as a supportive content area
to promote the ability to critically examine the realities and circumstances of the
environment, thus resulting in the potential for change socio-economically. Furthermore,
mainstream literature involving the combination of art education in alternative school
venues such as PCS is non-existent. This case study is necessary in order to fill
vacancies in research data pertaining to similar issues in the field of art education.
Summary

Art education in PCS escaped the scrutiny of research for their quality and effectiveness. Following the completion of this study, an overlooked area of the art education field will be opened for further analysis. Visual arts education historically has fallen victim to budget cuts, standardized testing and elimination within many public school systems. Investigating the individual perceptions of art educators in PCS will assist to magnify a subculture of contemporary education, not thoroughly researched. A specified research attempt to document the voices of educators, in regards to arts education in PCS would be invaluable to the future of profit-charter and public school models of art education.

The voices of art educators in PCSs will be heard, in reference to visual arts education in this school profile. In order to determine the positive or negative effects of art education in PCS, research must be initiated. In order to better understand the topics surrounding the PCS debate in reference to its art educators; theories and research pertinent to this discussion will been presented in a literature review as a means of purpose and justification to the case study. Data collected may only be truly appreciated and implicit after prior theory and related research are thoroughly examined.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Overview

Narratives of art educators from some of Ohio’s metropolitan PCS were conducted in order to identify empowering as well as discouraging aspects of their experiences. This case study explored, depicted, and interpreted the stories of six art educators in different metropolitan cities in Ohio, through the use of interview. Though each personality accounted for unique responses to inquiry, all participants are related by their affiliation to an identical corporate management company (CMC), sponsoring their respective chartered school building. In addition to documenting these chronicles, the political, socio-economic and racial aspects surrounding the PCS phenomenon were studied through an inquiry into current and related research. Specific themes discussed in this chapter are: The origin of vouchers with metropolitan students; the discussion of metropolitan stressors and their effect on At-Risk youth, including the historical and socio-economical realities of African Americans in urban migration and education; as well as the unresolved details of a school system in legal dispute with its sponsor. A constant comparative approach was utilized to incorporate relevant literature to theories and research to the abovementioned topics. To fully convey the circumstances that exist between metropolitan areas, profit charter schools and art education, the precursors, political backgrounds, and debates were addressed to give meaning to the personal experiences of art teachers in these environments in this study.
Vouchers and Metropolitan Students

Educational tax vouchers and the student population residing in metropolitan cities in Ohio are closely related. The Ohio department of education enacted legislation in 1997 that gave choice to parents to enroll their children in school systems alternative to those of public school districts, in the form of the EdChoice Scholarship Program (1998). This was due to the poor achievement on standardized testing and the high level of public school districts operating in a dismal state of academic emergency. Since the inception of the EdChoice Scholarship Program, much debate has surrounded private educational venues, including PCS (Ohio Department of Education, 1998). Increased understanding of the implications of vouchers and metropolitan students is the intention of this section. Economic stability of Ohio’s metropolitan cities; the birth of educational vouchers; the profile of White Hat Management as an example of the largest profit-charter sponsor in the state as well as the effect of parental choice on art education within the profit-charter model of education are areas investigated.

The Fluxing Economic State of Ohio’s Metropolitan Cities

Understanding the demographic of the students served in metropolitan cities is vital to establishing trust and understanding with study participants. The population abandonment of Ohio’s metropolitan cities over the past 100 years is something well documented through the United States Census Bureau. Guest and Price-Spratlin (2002) examined one example through the drastic change in Cleveland, Ohio’s demographic in regards to race and social class. Many ideas and theories presented in their study involve the African American community. It is considered relevant to the research topic, as most
of my participants in this current study cite the almost homogenous racial populations of their school systems as such. The data presented the increase of African American populations from 1.37% in 1910 to 24% in 1990. In these areas extreme racial segregation, economic decline and industry abandonment deeply affected a lower class of African American citizens. Two theories were proposed to explain the phenomenon: Life Cycle and Social Status. The Life Cycle theory clarifies the slow change of land use, paired with changes in population density that evolve a once highly populated area into an economically challenged living and learning environment. The cyclic pattern of this theory is loosely based on the fluctuation of residential appeal between the inner city and the suburbs. The more people condensed into a city, the more need for commercial presence. Once the area becomes overcrowded and property values become too high, the residential investment appeal declines and the population thins out for migration to the suburbs; where property values are lower and intrigue potential residential investors. As a result the commercial resources slowly migrate to follow its now-suburban consumer base. Once the same cycle happens in the suburbs, the cycle begins all over again in yet another migration of resources and residents to the city. Those without the means to relocate to find employment or adequate housing are stuck and unable to change their socioeconomic status with little property power.

The Social Status theory stems from the “Great Migration.” In the times between 1910 and 1930, southern African Americans were evicted from southern farmlands. After the emancipation of slaves, African Americans were a new expense to farm and plantation owners. By evicting their former human property, farmers were able to control the availability of produce and increase the demand for their crop; thus raising produce
prices across the south. A vicious cycle began as they moved north in large groups, and populated many metropolitan areas. The migration of such a homogenous culture of Americans started the upward curve of cities such as Cleveland’s ever fluctuating socio-economic demographic, only to drop again due to the human predictability of property values and urban-to-suburban migration. Guest and Price-Spratlin (2002) warned that those who were financially unable to relocate to chase blue-collar jobs would continue to lead a life of instability and domestic stress.

Further illustrating the dilemma of the lower class African American demographic during times of metropolitan economic flux, Guest and Price-Spratlin (2002) discussed a psychological explanation. They claimed that as the globalization of blue-collared employment left metropolitan areas, African American citizens without higher education resulted to a fight-or-flight mentality. The “fight” stayed in those who choose to work or be socially dependent as the job market decreased. The “flight” left the city completely for suburbs in flux with higher paying jobs and more amenities. Stated in Guest and Price-Spratlin’s conclusion, Cleveland was identified specifically as a city in constant demographic and economic change. Despite attempts of governmental influence and economic revitalization, those without the means to create change would remain to populate a lineage of disadvantaged citizens disempowered to create economic improvement on a monumental scale. Thus, a basis for political innovation was set to assist in the education of metropolitan children to ignite social and economic stimulus.

*The Beginning of Educational Vouchers*

The notion of school choice and educational vouchers is not a recent philosophy.
The Harvard Law Review Association (1996) cites Milton Freedman as the first to introduce the idea of school choice in 1965. He began with an analogy of basic standards and expectations for school performance to be implemented by school choice:

The role of the government would be limited to insuring that schools met certain minimum standards, … much as it now inspects restaurants to ensure that they maintain minimum sanitary standards (Harvard Law Review Association, 1996, p. 2002).

His hope with this educational philosophy was to reveal the public school systems’ minimal educational habits, to create meaningful change. He recommended that school vouchers be adopted to promote competition, much like other areas of commerce, thus stimulating and motivating school systems to serve a better academic product to attract its customers. Freedman did heed warning of school choice by acknowledging the potential failure of its implementation in economically depressed areas. He projected that the remains of public education would be left with disadvantaged students and apathetic parents. At that point, public education would crumble being financial depleted of resources by educational vouchers.

Given the context of the conditions of city living, citizens all over the country began to understandably question the ability of the public school system to educate its metropolitan children in the late 1990’s. Excluding Freedman’s warning, politicians spoke to generalized crowds of lobbyists and citizens that were eager to identify the problem of metropolitan education and initiate a solution. Educational reform under the guise of government vouchers was created (Ohio Department of Education, 1998). The actions of Cleveland’s EdChoice Scholarship Program were slowly adopted by many metropolitan cities in Ohio including: Toledo, Youngstown, Canton, Akron, Columbus,
Elyria, Lorain, and Cincinnati. This scholarship program determined a monetary standard entitled to students to fund their education at any school of parental choice. In order to utilize the city’s program, the student must have been enrolled in a public school system operating under academic emergency as determined by standardized testing scores. If all requirements were met, parents were able to enroll their children in any alternative educational venue, public or private in attempts to improve the quality and performance of their children’s education.

Reid (2002) discussed the diversity of educational venues created by this type of legislation. Vouchers were extended to churches, non-profit entrepreneurs as well as businesses wishing to charter independent school systems in metropolitan areas. The business-oriented school systems could elect to operate as a non-profit entity or as a CMC. In all cases, management companies were required by the EdChoice program to receive and disperse the amount of voucher dollars entitled by the enrollment of their school buildings. The manners in which those funds were provided are directly negotiated between the management company and the charter school buildings’ board of executives. The educational voucher was born, and a sentiment of hope and promise was given to metropolitan parents and students. But the question remained as to the future of parental choice and its motives in regards to the warnings heeded by the Harvard Law Review Association (1996) in exposing empathic and apathetic involvement in a new wave of educational reform.
Parental Choice: Empathy and Apathy

Peterson & Greene (1998) asked if providing government vouchers for alternative education would improve race relations in the United States. Their investigation is optimistic based on the promises of voucher-funded charter legislation. Their conclusion was that providing choice education, not reliant on school district boundaries or socio-economic status, would result in unbiased racial equality and possibly prevent the cycle of minority youth in poverty, by diversifying the educational atmosphere of At-Risk youth. The feelings regarding school choice for parents, standardized testing performance, and the responsibility of the government to public education were discussed. The argument was posed that urban public school systems have failed African American youth, resulting in the optimistic appeal of alternative school environments. The best expectations were rooted in the idea that something radically different could proficiently meet the needs of metropolitan children. Prior to the opportunity for government vouchers, test scores in urban public schools were dropping as students increased in grade level. Private schools charging tuition received higher enrollment in urban cities than rural or non-urban school districts. However, parents without resources to improve their children’s’ learning environment were helpless to improve the quality of education offered.

Peterson and Greene (1998) developed a case study in 5 major cities in the United States that interviewed parents receiving school vouchers, who paralleled improvement of their students’ grades, with superior success in school choice. In all five cities students enrolled in voucher programs were seen to be primarily African American, from single-parent households and receiving some sort of government supplemental income. Parents
felt satisfied with being given a choice for schooling, and saw an improvement in their children’s grades within the first year. The continued perception of academic success was not studied. Parents felt entitled and satisfied with supplemental educational choices to increase the academic standing of their children. The question remains: How do parents know the best school to choose?

Initial pessimism regarding the competence of parents in choosing appropriate school systems for their children was also the root of educational research shortly after the educational voucher initiatives that swept America’s metropolitan cities. Buckley and Schneider (2002) interpreted the legislation to infer that parents would choose a school that best fit their academic needs and provided the richest education experience for their children. Their research question aimed to update initial research of Sociologists that questioned the factors that motivate a parent to search outside the public school system for alternative educational opportunities. Prior parent surveys regarding the motives behind school choice were conducted in the 1990s. Sociologists predicted school choice, when left to an option-choose model by parents would lead to a consumerist approach to alternative education, and be a detriment to metropolitan education. The assumption that lower income and poorly educated families would choose convenience over educational research was the driving force behind these studies. Buckley and Schneider conducted surveys to find validity in these allegations. Contrary to sociologists’ expectations, parents who responded to the early sociological surveys expressed motives for choice revolving around academics, test scores and the quality of teachers available. This information seems to debunk the idea that metropolitan parents are incapable of choosing schools for their children based on the quality of education provided. But are these
studies a reliable source today, and are they true in the majority of cases?

Over a decade since the sociological surveys of the 1990’s cited by Buckley and Schneider (2002) had passed; and they hoped to update the educational motives of metropolitan parent’s right to choose. A nontraditional approach was taken to confirm the profile of parental choice in metropolitan areas. A website was created where parents, students, and school staff were able to review district credentials and information. Members were required to answer brief questions about themselves when registering for website access. The activities were tracked for frequency and order in which areas of school information were viewed. The study seemed to result contradictory to the surveys of prior decades. Only 12% of parents viewed the area for teacher credentials and test scores, while most of the information was frequently geared towards student racial makeup, location and school activities. A conclusion that non-regulated parental choice models in charter schools, will lead to higher levels of race and class segregation in children’s education was ascertained.

Since the launch of educational vouchers in 1997, community and charter school systems both public and private have been amended slightly to increase the level of accountability in reporting such areas as standardized testing and special education. Community and charter schools have much more freedom in their operations than their public counterparts. There has been a clear separation between the structures and restrictions of public school systems versus the bureaucratic autonomy offered at alternative metropolitan school venues. Jeannine Fox (2002) attempted to answer the question of whether Community Charter Schools (CCS) have benefited from bureaucratic autonomy in the eyes of its educators. An increase of CCS systems, both non-and for-
profit, began by expanding parental-choice legislation to eight metropolitan Ohio cities. Lobbyists for CCS claimed that student performance could be improved without regulations imposed by the traditional public school system, including teachers unions and the strict infrastructure of public school boards. Metropolitan parents of students in poor achieving public school systems were optimistic and unsure of what this innovative school reform would do to improve the academic performance of their students.

Five years after this legislation, Fox (2002) interviewed 18 teachers, four administrators and one board member in Cleveland CCS to discover if parental choice offered a truly effective educational alternative from an educator perspective. She categorized her findings into three sections: perceived autonomy, governance structures, and leadership. Her findings suggest that autonomy from regulations led to teacher isolation in professional development and curriculum assistance. Though teachers were struggling to establish a sense of community within the school systems, some administrators, who held less educational credentials, took it upon themselves to be mentored by public school principals. The excess obligations of CCS administrators, regarding budget, community and staff relations led to a high turnover of leadership. Fox concluded that there is little hope for CCS, if they continue to operate separately from their public counterparts in terms of community and staff retention—items that are felt to be incredibly important in the education of metropolitan youth. Fox urges political leaders to create legislation to generate long-term effective learning environments benefiting both teachers and students.
White Hat Management: An Example of the Largest Profit-Charter Sponsor in Ohio

A more specific example of parental choice in action is the founder of Cleveland’s most widespread PCS Systems: White Hat Management. The image of White Hat Management’s founder David Brennan and the actual performance of his alternative profit educational infrastructure are compared and examined by Reid (2002). White Hat Management operates 30% of Ohio’s charter schools. The image of the company is prided on superior alternative and an effective educational environment, supported by diverse students and teaching staff, and state-of-the-art technology. From a struggling parent of an inner-city child, this must appear to be a genuine opportunity for At-Risk youth to become surrounded by individuals that can help them self-heal and cope beyond their current situation to achieve academic success.

However, a closer look by Reid (2002), poses items contradictory to Brennan’s representation. He found that more than 30% of the staff at the company’s schools was under-certified as educators by the state. Students enrolled in online school programs were seen to be disinterested with a less than 50% graduation rate. In Hope Academies, a traditional school system by Brennan, only 4.7% of students passed the required standardized test by grade level. In the corporate office, students were spoken of as customers, and parent satisfaction—not standardized test scores assessed the quality of education provided by White Hat Management. Many previous teachers of the company were interviewed by Reid and expressed their distaste for their experiences within the schools. They revealed a lack of classroom resources and the importance of over-enrollment to promote financial gain through vouchers as reasons for their disenchantedment with the company. Reid concluded that despite poor performance of his
school systems, Brennan prides himself as the “good guy” of PCS in Ohio. It is suggested that Brennan’s marketing plan was misleading and promoted potential perpetual risk of continuous academic deficiency in metropolitan youth, despite the fact that it is the largest CMC in the state of Ohio.

*The Effects of Parental Choice Inside Profit-Charter Art Education*

Fox’s (2002) findings contained data involving classroom teachers and administration, but what are art educators searching for when designing and executing a visual arts curriculum in any school system? In early 2010, collaborative researchers sampled 11 art teachers in attempts to answer this query. Over the course of their interviews researchers were qualitatively organizing their data for frequency of themes. Four areas of meaning in art curriculum were studied: meaningful art curriculum definitions, curriculum challenges, and the level of success identified at the close of the school year. Most first-year art educators desired for the art room to connect directly to their students’ lives and cultures. They put emphasis on the quality of artwork that was produced and were concerned about building trust with their students. At the end of the study the most crucial item that seemed to control success of the teachers was preparation time. Those who had prepared their units and contacted classroom teachers before the school year started, seemed much more optimistic about the productivity of their curriculum. Reversely, those who had found employment very soon to the start of the school year felt very overwhelmed to develop their curriculum while in the process of teaching. The researchers concluded that art education is a complete disservice with studio alone. 11 of the most successful first-year art educators cited the importance of
visual culture, core classroom integration, art history and art criticism in their curriculum. (Bain, Kuster, Milbrandt, & Newton, 2010).

**Harlem Success Academies: A Different Approach to Parental Choice**

Although the portrait of White Hat Management may paint a suspicious or misleading picture of charter school education for Ohio’s metropolitan areas, other states have seen huge success in the charter phenomenon. The Harlem Success Academy in Harlem, New York was founded in 2006 by Dr. Eva Moskowitz, whose experience in education ranges from college professor to instructor of literary preparatory programs in New York City. She is committed to challenging the status quo of New York’s public education system by implementing high levels of accountability to students, staff and parents (Eichna, 2010).

New York City is often regarded as an urban world all its own. It is diverse in its racial, socio-economic and professional demographics. Certain boroughs are seen to be extremely resource-poor, with conditions conducive to at-risk youth. The public school systems consistently perform with approximately 50% passing state standardized testing requirements, as a cycle of poverty is perpetuated by mediocre expectations of academic success in lower income families (Ashman-Kipervaser, Lawler, & Sackler, 2009). Amidst the adversity of success, a former New York city council member has created a charter school system, exceeding the expectations for children in Harlem and The Bronx, as described by a documentary by Ashman-Kipervaser, Lawler and Sackler (2009). The metropolitan cities of Ohio could benefit greatly from a similar school model.
The goals and culture of the Harlem Success Academies are committed to addressing many issues present in this study: combating parental apathy; securing teacher retention; and student accountability through high expectations for family success in student education beyond the rigid and limiting constraints of state standardized testing. Though the case studies presented in this study are limited to school systems in metropolitan cities of Ohio, much can be learned from successful charter schools in larger metropolitan areas, as the detailed effects of her school model is discussed in greater detail in Chapter five.

Metropolitan Stressors and its Effect on At-Risk Youth

Disclaimer to Readers

Metropolitan communities can be seen as sites for corporate industry, venues for arts, leisure, and sporting events and at the same time are known for dismal residential areas, crime and poverty. In searching for relevant literature and research I sought to discover the reasons behind such dichotomy in metropolitan areas and the realities of these answers’ effect on the children that reside there. All sources led back to the idea of race relations among central-city youth. Due to the high number of African American families participating in educational vouchers cited by Peterson and Greene (1998) in the previous section, some themes below may seem extreme and pessimistic in reference to situations presented in both circumstantial and theoretical data. However the reports of the following scholars provide an important perspective when attempting to fully understand the conditions of a unique culture of individuals within the PCS phenomenon. The subsequent data refers to racism, the perpetual nature of those oppressed to remain
victims of an economically depressed environment, and the benefits the visual arts may have on metropolitan youth to survive and exceed their current circumstances. The themes in this section include: Visual Arts as an expressive gateway with children At-Risk; Poverty as educational racism, and African Americans’ potential for contemporary oppression.

Visual Arts as an Expressive Gateway with Children At-Risk

Due to the lack of economic stimuli, many metropolitan areas are considered resource-poor and are unable to provide lower class families with proper prenatal care, education, life skills and psychological services. It is the accumulation of these stressors that makes an inner city child at-risk in regards to social status and education. Camilleri, Rodgers and Dennis (2007) define a child as At-Risk if they reside within metropolitan areas that may contribute to the danger of negative future events. The detriments may include: poor self-esteem, lack of coping mechanisms to self-heal after trauma or stress, destructive social behavior, pregnancy, promiscuity, gang involvement, depression and poor scholastic achievement. In order to combat and prevent cyclic generations of under-supported youth within inner cities, participation in the visual arts has proven effective in assisting the development of self-esteem and coping mechanisms within At-Risk youth. Children between the ages of 6 and 12 are of special concern. If an At-Risk youth has not developed significant role models or adult support systems prior to adolescence it is unlikely to reverse the high-risk behaviors and lifestyles that are in place. Those who have found protection in destructive peer groups or negative self-behavior may be resistant to intervention. Activity in the visual arts is supported and suggested as an
intervention to prevent high-risk behaviors in at-risk youth outside of the classroom. Some of the more severely traumatized children had found protection for themselves in nonverbal communication. The visual arts allow their voices to be heard and assist in identifying and mastering their emotions over time. The authors speak optimistically, that all children have the capacity to self-heal when supported by a safe learning environment.

The idealistic appeal of residing in metropolitan cities is filled with notions of excitement and promise. Some may be interested in its rich cultures and unique settings. Camilleri, Rodgers, and Dennis (2007) speak of the harsh realities facing families that migrate from rural areas to inner cities expecting the population to provide adequate work to support children and spouses. Disappointment, unemployment and poverty were more often found. These environmental and domestic stressors create a socially toxic environment for developing children. The warnings signs of a child At-Risk can be visibly external or individualized internally, making identification and classroom adaptation difficult. As such, risk factors for inner city children are separated into two broad categories: chronic and discrete. Cultural and environmental stressors such as racism, poverty and poor housing are characterized as chronic risk factors. Discrete risk factors encompass personal stressors such as domestic conflict, death, divorce or relocation. Children of minority descent under the age of 18, who live with accumulated chronic and discrete stressors, have debilitating outcomes. They absorb adult-like feelings of hopelessness, vulnerability and despair and struggle to develop appropriate coping mechanisms to allow them to self-heal and rise above their current situation.
The need for compassionate and patient educators to provide quality curriculum that invigorates the esteem and motivation of At-Risk metropolitan youth is urgent. Camilleri, Rodgers and Dennis (2007) claimed that primary-school aged children risk the greatest detriments. Intervening the potential for future risks with empathetic and compassionate educators may create an alternative support system to destructive peer groups. This task may not be easy, as the pre-service teacher training for metropolitan At-Risk students is not common in most higher education venues (Haberman, 1990). As a result, teacher retention rates in urban school districts are the lowest in the nation (Adam & Dial, 1993). Those that endure to inspire students from challenging environments must be sensitive to the lives their students lead outside of school, with an aim to narrow the gap between domestic and academic realities.

The notion of educating At-Risk youth through integration and exponential amounts of compassion and support is not a novel idea. Berry (2009) sought out to document the impact of one-art educators’ influence on the dangers facing students in the South Bronx of New York City since the 1980s. A resource poor public school system in the South Bronx invited Rollins to design a literacy program for its students incorporating the visual arts. Upon his arrival to the neighborhood, he described the place as “The Bronx were on fire!” (p. 41). This analogy was true in both arson and the evolution of hip-hop music in the early 1980s. The original goal for his involvement was to lay the groundwork for a potential full time art educator to assume after its creation. Rollins however felt it was a result of his Baptist upbringing that led him to pursue an education degree and remain at the school for almost a decade, in order to nurture the creative potential he saw in his students. The majority of his students were low-income, Latin
males with severe illiteracy. He described the social stressors of his students as “…challenges of geographic and cultural isolation, low expectations and limited economic opportunities.” (p. 42). The solution to his students needs was the creation of an instrumentalist curriculum that was society based with the influence of John Dewey’s democratic and art-as-experience models. So together, students with special needs in literacy were reading texts collaboratively and responding to their power through the visual arts.

Berry (2009) continued to document Rollins program as it became so popular that he was able to receive a grant for a larger studio space in close proximity to the school building. This center also operated as supplemental instruction, through his strict rules that art was not to be created until homework was completed. It was here that the large-scale works inspired by classic literature were exhibited under the name: Tim Rollins and the Kid of Survival (K.O.S). Through the creation and sale of works inspired by such inspirational minority role models as Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, Rollins was able to continuously expand and diversify the involvement of his group to enhance the life experiences of his students through art education. Former students who are still active in the arts expressed an endless amount of gratitude for the sense of purpose and confidence that allowed them to exceed the expectations of their environments as children.

The conditions of metropolitan cities that breed the dangers for youth to become At-Risk are possible to overcome, as can be seen by Rollins extraordinary mission to his students (Berry, 2009). However, if extra care and support is not offered to the majority of these children, what are the underlying structures and societal obstacles that can propel
a life of expected uncertainty and disappointment? The following section discusses the theoretical framework of racial oppression that may reflect the realities of educational inequalities presented here.

_African Americans and the Potential of Contemporary Oppression_

The philosophy of relationships is a thriving force throughout history of contemporary society. Human nature dictates the questioning of our place in the world relative to others materialistically, academically and culturally. Questions may be introspectively posed as to how race, gender, sex, and appearance relate to personal achievement in life. However, Spring (1997) suggested that the bigger question does not involve the individual; it stemmed from the root of success and adopted guidelines for proper academic etiquette based heavily on European and Caucasian American philosophies and guidelines. This theory accused educational discrimination against African Americans in the United States as creating an instilled supremacist mentality in the trends of measuring student success.

To focus on the history of oppression and segregation in the United States, the enslavement and denial of civil rights to African Americans cannot be ignored. Spring (1997) alluded to slavery, its emancipation and the segregation of African-American education as ugly shadows of American history. Eurocentric racial superiority was the justification of slavery. Poor living conditions, 3/5 human census status and illiteracy were common practices by slave owners to their human property. The Economic exploitation of individuals was the common way of life, prior to the Emancipation Proclamation. Caucasian-Americans were on the top of the societal food chain and the
only way to continue racial superiority at the apex was to perpetuate the inferiority of African Americans. At this point in history Spring described the Caucasian mindset “…as the only way these [African-American] people know how to live. They should be grateful for what I give them” (p. 69). This supremacist philosophy was a precursor for future events in regards to racial and educational inequalities.

The editors of *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (1996) attribute educational racism to not only students’ background or social economic status, but also the organization and training of metropolitan educators to maintain high standards for their students. Cultural differences between inner city youth and rural or suburban trained teachers causes a disconnection in understanding between teacher and student. Two common misinterpretations leading to lower academic expectations are: common language and the misreading of physical behaviors. The editors refer to a study in an inner-city kindergarten’s reading program. In the classroom the teacher lowered her expectations of students using cultural slang and exhibited higher expectations to other students using primarily proper English to communicate. Authentic assessment was suggested to assist educators’ perceptions of student capabilities. The authenticity included a more introspective approach, using student reflections and conversation to gauge the retention of knowledge and potential of students’ capacity to learn. Authentic assessment may act as the stepping-stone in correcting the supremacist philosophies introduced by Spring (1997).

Generations following the abolition of slavery led to high numbers of African American At-Risk youth reside in metropolitan cities (Spring 1994). Therefore superior consciousness of curriculum and behavioral goals are a necessity. Young (1985)
investigates two major problems in the current trends of visual arts education of African American students: restrictive learning environments and the hindrance of child imagination. Young alleged that certain practices in the field are culturally ignorant and irrevocably harm the creative spirit of African American students. Though children’s art is seen to be a form of play, and a true freedom of self-expression, the traditional teaching methods of elementary art curriculums proved to be passive, stifling and restrictive in nature. African American needs in art education revolved around a sense of community, and expression of their environment visually.

In predominantly African American schools systems the ideal that discipline and structure would result in racial pride and social reform is socially accepted. Though many art educators interpreted structure and discipline as mimetic and repetitive art projects, that leave little room for expression or creativity in the visual arts outside of the teacher’s model (Young, 1985). Young elaborates that mimetic principles when implemented in extreme scenarios create a body of students that become dependent on a world of correct answers and are unable to critically problem solve. In authoritarian learning environments, the lack of critical thinking, active inquiry and environmental investigation proves to be unrelated to the economic and social realities that African Americans face in their everyday lives.

The considerations cited above involving the instructional promotion of African American and At-Risk youth pose the issue and implication that these children may be more difficult to educate in a charter-school system. Buckley and Schneider (2005) attacks the question of student educability in charter schools in Washington D.C., based on the 2004 findings of schools performance as determined by the American Federation
of Teachers (AFT). The split between supporters and opponents of charter schools reveal different perspectives on the issue. Supporters of the charter systems claim to cater to students whose socioeconomic conditions proved indicative to lower standardized test performance. The opponents of the charter school movement seemed to state the exact opposite. Public school supporters declared that the charter-market attracts educationally compassionate parents and high performing students; therefore skewing the ranking on the AFT’s national report card to withhold true indications of the public schools systems student demographic.

To make sense of the contradictory claims of this argument Buckley and Schneider (2005) attempted to solve the discrepancy through a critical eye in researching methods of the AFT and related research. Student educability was based on three domains: free or reduced lunch eligibility, students with special needs, and students that were learning the English language. Among all of these domains, complex statistical formulas were used to show variances and flexibility in the results of his research findings. Surprisingly, the findings Buckley and Schneider concluded do not sway to either end of charter school student educability. Though strong indications between students’ peer groups and academics proved more severe within charter schools, the debate between supporters and opponents of charter school systems continued to swell, including the differing perspectives of those active in the school itself. An example of this debate will be discussed below through the discussion of an unresolved lawsuit between a school board and its management company: *Hope Academy Broadway, et. al. v. White Hat Management, LLC, et. al.*
Deeper Dimensions: A School System in Legal Dispute

Metropolitan education has experienced a series of recent reforms in regards to alternative education and the onset of PCS Systems. My own experience within this type of educational setting sparked an inquiry to discover the political and policy basis through legislation in Ohio over the past 10 plus years, to gain an improved understanding of the circumstances surrounding potential participants in this study. While collecting data, a public docket was found filed in Franklin County, Ohio that provided not only information regarding legislation and policy but insight into a legal dispute between PCS buildings and their CMC (Hope Academy Broadway, et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC, et. al., 2010). Themes interpreted from this document were broken into the following topics: The onset of legal dispute; claims of the school board; answers to the complaint; and the implication and instability of pursuing alternative sponsorship. The information collected from this docket will prove helpful in the recognition of political affairs within the Profit-Charter phenomenon during the time of this study.

Onset of Legal Dispute

What causes a school system to sue itself? In traditional school systems, both charter and public, a founding group of individuals would organize themselves as an active school board. This board would then seek out sponsorship from a corporate management company whose charter negotiations best fit the mission of its founding members. However in the cause of White Hat Management this process was done in reverse. The management company created the aliases of the school buildings it was to
manage and hand picked its school board from within the company. Thus making the executive board of the school buildings powerless to establish criteria for hiring, firing and compensating educators and support staff (Ohio Federation of Teachers, 2008).

Given that the charter agreement between the school board and the corporate management company ended in June of 2010, the school board has voiced its opinion of the state of their influence in the workings of White Hat Management’s many school buildings. This voice came in way of a massive lawsuit involving ten White Hat managed schools. On May 17th, 2010 a lawsuit was filed in Franklin County, Ohio where the school board of many Hope Academies sought for financial relief from their CMC: White Hat Management. Interesting dynamics of this case revolved around the definitions of Plaintiff and Defendant. White Hat Management actually operated, managed and created the Hope Academy entity. Therefore the school buildings filing suit were also named as defendants on the docket. The complaint filed by the Plaintiff included allegations of fiscal irresponsibility, breach of charter management agreement and disabling the chartered school buildings from seeking alternative sponsorship (*Hope Academy Broadway, et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC*, et. al., 2010).

Educational vouchers from the EdChoice program were distributed directly to the specific school buildings enrolling students voluntarily elected into the program. As written in the five-year management agreement between the two parties in 2005, 96% of these funds are given to White Hat Management by Hope Academies to create a system of checks and balances to ensure fiscal accuracy and responsibility of public funds. In return the management company is to operate the school, purchase real property such as fixtures and educational equipment, lease the school building, handle all human resource
responsibilities and balance annual budgets. At the end of this agreement the PCS buildings were invited to renegotiate or renew their relationship with the corporate management company. In this case specifically, the agreement cited that if the school board does not wish to renew contract, the board must purchase all real property for the remaining cost (Hope Academy Broadway, et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC, et. al., 2010).

The complaints of the school board revolved around financial conspiracy, deceitful business practices and breach of contract. Hope Academies claimed that White Hat Management used funds and grants not in accordance with their proper purpose. Their evidence of these allegations came from the withholding of quarterly reports, mandated in management agreement, from the company to the school board in reference to budget and items purchased for the use of the school. Other accusations reside in the company’s refusal to renegotiate management agreements with firmer financial reporting mandates; and the monopoly White Hat Management has created in disabling the school board from seeking alternative corporate sponsorship by withholding necessary financial reports. The school board cited their responsibilities to abide by the Ohio Department of Education’s guidelines. These guidelines included: EdChoice monetary liability and satisfactory performance on the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA). The school board claims that financial responsibility cannot be truthfully confirmed without quarterly audit (Ohio Department of Education, 1998). The school board also attributed the lack of satisfactory performance on the Ohio Achievement Assessment to instability within the corporate executive positions and the failure to provide building security regarding physical resources. Allegations were also made of withholding educational equipment by
the CMC in unapproved venues in Florida without resolution and restitution. Hope Academies claimed that White Hat Management would cripple the school system, disabling the school system to legally operate as a community school within the state of Ohio (Hope Academy Broadway, et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC, et. al., 2010).

*Answer to the Complaint*

There are two sides to this story, as true in many proceedings in litigation. White Hat Management concisely responded to its school board by filing a response to the complaints and allegations presented. White Hat Management confirmed the registration of all its Hope Academy campuses as Nevada profit based entities operating as governing educational authorities in Ohio. Most allegations dealing with operations and management deficiencies within the company were denied. Financial charges were refuted with the following explanation: “Plaintiffs are not entitled to demand or obtain the confidential or proprietary information that they seek.” (Hope Academy Broadway, et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC, et. al., 2010, p. 8). The defendant also went to defend lack of reporting the means for which physical property was obtained as irrelevant, as they are a private company, despite the management agreement of 2005. Allegations involving corporate executive turnover and standardized assessment achievement were asked for dismissal due to the irrelevance to the case. Renegotiation of the management agreement were offered to the school board as a duplicate renewal, and admitted to the non-approval of contractual amendments. White Hat Management’s defense to fiscal and managerial irresponsibility involved blatant denial and requested that private fiscal data
be legally denied for review (Hope Academy Broadway, et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC, et. al., 2010).

Pursuing Alternative Sponsorship: Implications and Instability

Though the document reviewed in the above two sections, are filled with legal jargon and information outside of my experience as an art educator, the premise of this case were evident of controversy and dissatisfaction of the capabilities of a CMC to ethically provide supervision and guidance for multiple campuses across the state of Ohio. The purpose of investigating this case was to gain basic knowledge of an example of the political and legislative workings of a PCS System. Though the encounters of the specific school board were presented in a negative light, information regarding the formation and regulations of the school system, as well as the potential for contractual difficulties between the two entities assisted in better understanding the premise of this phenomenon. The potential outcomes of this litigation may prove detrimental to the stability of educators’ careers, student education, and parental choice in the future.

Summary

Reviewing related literature and research recounts the depiction of art education in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS Systems revealed the realms of: vouchers and metropolitan students; metropolitan stressors and its effect on At-Risk youth; and the dimensions of a school in legal dispute. Acknowledging these factors assisted in the positioning of the course of this study to be grounded in the abovementioned areas. Many different approaches and methods have been researched to provide the clearest answers to the research questions. Though the information collected in this chapter is not
comprehensive or inclusive to all situations within the PCS, it is hoped to further assist in
the analysis, examination, and interpretation of future findings of this thesis. In order to
achieve these goals, a detailed explanation of research methodology must be made clear
and will be described in detail in the following chapter.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter provides a summary of the methodology that was executed in order to better comprehend the depictions of art education in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS. Both the general research paradigm and design are explained and established. The data sources include: introduction to the sites and participants, the process of data collection and interview questions, and discussion of the data analysis. A brief section devoted to bias prefaces the indicators of rigor to conclude the chapter.

Research Paradigm

This study is based upon a qualitative research paradigm. Fraenkel and Wallen (1990) describe qualitative research as being unwilling to tamper with naturally occurring phenomenon. They also prefer this method to quantitative when the full hypothesis emerges as the study develops. Stake (1995), offers a potential goal for qualitative case studies to investigate the context of data to create an experiential understanding, and embrace multiple realities within the phenomenon in question. Eisner (1991) characterizes six main aspects in qualitative case studies specifically. The aim is to construct descriptions of the context by being: field focused, using the self as an instrument, interpretive in nature, expressive in language, attentive to particulars, and persuasive. These characteristics are used to identify, illustrate and better understand the specifics and qualities of an experience. Using Stake and Eisner as a guide, the goal for this qualitative research study was to offer more information, by the way of participant
voice and experience, through the perceptions of art educators within Ohio’s metropolitan PCS.

Research Design

This research study will be conducted by means of qualitative methods in the form of case study. Stake (1995) defines a case study as “…a study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, to understand it within important circumstances” (p. xi). This examination included a case study of six art teachers from a variety of metropolitan cities in Ohio. Though their specific campuses and environments differ, all buildings are connected through the same CMC. The individual stories residing in each of their experiences were considered. The similarities and differences represented by each of the participants were investigated individually as well as in their entirety. Stake (1995) refers to the bigger picture of case study as being instrumental to understanding something larger than the individual studies themselves. Being instrumental while in the field as a researcher will allow the effects of the individuals to be studied and interpreted. Through the multiple realities and individual voices of the participants, larger areas of categorization assisted in the understanding and subsequent discussion of themes that emerged. The participants’ responses to interview questions were filled with emotional stories, and showed similarities as well as difference to one another.

Stake (1995) referred to “Progressive Focusing” as the fluid act of the researcher in the field. For the purposes of this study progressive focusing was used to lessen control of the research in impacting the direction of the interview. Clarifying questions and focus were shifted as new information of related situations presented themselves
during interview. This allowed for a more authentic and detailed understanding of each participant’s specific context and situation. Focusing on experiences of art education within Ohio’s metropolitan PCS systems, this research design purposed to inquire and investigate the empowering and discouraging aspects of the teachers’ careers in reference to their school venue. The use of in-depth interview was implemented to provide honest, emotional and detailed accounts of those involved in the art education within Ohio’s metropolitan PCS systems. These individuals provide first-hand accounts of encounters varying in experience from one to five years within PCS. When relevant, my own personal narratives in the form of vignettes were entwined within the data to offer an additional perspective.

Chapter II has shown that many themes and situations exist for the PCS art educator in metropolis beyond the art room. These factors reveal both satisfying and challenging circumstances teachers face when attempting to achieve their curricular goals: teaching at-risk youth, the social economics of the inner city, the politics of parental choice and what it means for retention and stability in student enrollment, the instability of teaching for a company in constant legal dispute and the discouraging amount of administrative and parental support for their respective programs. After the review of related literature, this case study therefore explored the problematic and unique areas to explain the multiple realities that exist in the voices of individual art teachers reacting to a business-based education system.
Data Sources

Introduction to the Sites

A corporate management company (CMC) sponsors the PCS system (PCS). The choice to focus this research on participants affiliated with the same CMC was purposeful. As the researcher, I personally believe that this schools system offers the most inconsistent and unorganized educational experience for its teachers, students and parents in comparison to its public, religious and non-profit alternatives. Though I am certain that other management companies existing for-profit in regards to state educational funding exist within the surrounding communities of the schools, these specific buildings were chosen due to my past personal involvement in the school as an art teacher. I maintain that the PCS buildings that operate in a variety of metropolitan cities within Ohio served as a prime venue to study and evaluate the experiences of the individual art educators. This CMC operates the largest system of PCS buildings in the state. Thus, the variety in realities of individuals were expected and proved to be extremely diverse.

The PCS does not reside in one specific building or entity. Each art teacher interviewed represents a different school building in differing metropolitan cities in Ohio. The CMC of each school is the same. The company manages and has created multiple aliases that operate as smaller school systems across the state. The Ohio Commission of Community Schools (OCCS) and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) require that schools operating under a charter belong to a management company, especially if operating as different school systems or buildings. The management companies and the school systems may come to negotiation and contract to create a working relationship in
which both parties agree to terms. The cost of tuition for parents wishing to enroll their children in alternatives to school systems non-performing above academic watch or emergency, as assessed by the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA), is paid by ODE in the form of the educational vouchers as noted in *EdChoice Scholarship Program* (1998).

Though each school building is considered a separate non-profit Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), the management companies are not required to hold that status. The educational voucher dollars, given by the *EdChoice Scholarship Program* (1998), are distributed first to each school campus within the PCS and then dispersed to the CMC, to manage and maintain a running budget for each building sponsored.

Participants in this study come from the following Metropolitan cities: Canton, Youngstown, Akron and Cleveland, Ohio. The same management company owns all the school systems in which they teach. Though the geographic settings of the school buildings are different, all have a similar economic, racial and social makeup. All of the selected metropolitan areas were economically depressed, primarily African American and experience similar inner-city obstacles. While experiences from the participants may be different and similar is various aspects, each situation is unique and will be discussed from the personal voices of the art educators in regards to their programs and experiences.

Due to the profit status of the CMC, the PCS buildings that operate in its sponsorship are under frequent scrutiny and debate. These deliberations exist in the newspapers, online blogs and even inside the courtroom. The major contention that opponents cite is the lack of resources the PCS actually receive from the CMC, and the poor performance of the school systems academically as assessed by yearly OAA results.
The CMC has gone through multiple reforms and reorganizations of its administration while retaining a public projection of progress and improvement whether validated or not.

*The Six Participants*

The following background information is derived directly from the interviews collected for this study. Within this group of art educators, three have been in the field for a minimum of three years. Two of them are still currently teaching inside a PCS; while one has moved on to teach at a non-profit charter school in the same metropolitan area. The three remaining participants are first-year art teachers with no more than one year of experience. I purposely chose to interview an equal number of current educators within their first year in the PCS, and three who exemplified two or more years within the same building. The goal was to collect data from more than one experience that alluded to the experiences of those new to the field, and those with more longevity to present data that could be conclusive comparatively to each individual as well as to these two groups. The brief biographies of each participant are outlined below. Information was gathered during interview, prior to research questions regarding their professional teacher profile thus far in their careers. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to protect their anonymity. Asterisks suffix each alias as it pertains to the individual.

*Elizabeth*: Current PCS art teacher with 5 years experience

Elizabeth very bluntly describes herself as a “fifth-year teacher in a PCS on the west side of Cleveland.” She teaches in a K-8 building and is close to completing her Master’s degree in art education as well. Her initial experience within the PCS was one
of a traveling art educator, with no classroom of her own. The past two academic years, she cites the reorganizing of one less kindergarten, which opened up a classroom space on the stage of the gymnasium. Though a visit to her classroom was not available, she describes it as a dirty cramped space constantly battling with the noise from the gymnasium, which also acts as the school cafeteria. All five of her teaching years have been spent within the same PCS building.

*Frankie*: Current PCS art teacher with 4 years experience

Frankie candidly refers to herself as a “…32 year old art teacher.” She teaches art in a K-8 building in a PCS in Canton, Ohio. When visiting her classroom, I was invited to an approximately 900 square foot classroom with much natural light from ten large picture windows on the first floor of the building. Students sat at personal desks perpendicular to a large chalkboard at the front of the room. She spoke with me from behind her desk as she divulged details about her professional profile. Her previous experience included two years in a non-profit charter school in Akron, Ohio followed by two years of higher education in pursuit of her master’s degree, where she served as a teaching assistant. She is currently in her first year within a PCS.

*Casey*: Previous PCS art teacher with 5 years experience

Casey finds herself with a slightly complex professional profile. She is currently in her 30s, graduating from a University in Ohio with an art education degree in 2002. She took some time off from education, returning to the field in 2004. She acted as a substitute teacher for a couple years in a local public school district and took a long-term substitute position in art for half of an academic year. She then found herself employed
at a PCS in Cleveland, Ohio for three years. She taught as a traveling art teacher in a K-8 building before leaving and is now teaching the same grade levels in a non-profit charter school in Akron, Ohio.

_Terry*: First year PCS art teacher_

Terry’s story is one of a non-traditional adult student. She recently described changing careers. She is in her mid-forties and has two children in their teens. While raising her children she recalled, “I had so many people telling me ‘You should be a teacher, you should a teacher.’” When asked about her original goals, she included aspirations of going into advertising. When asked her about her decision to teach art she explained, “When you’re younger you have different goals… Now my husband works and I got to go back to school, and so far it’s worked out well for me.” The building she teaches in consists of grades 4-8 with an enrollment of 150 students. An invitation to her classroom unveiled a 700 square foot room on the second floor equipped with two sinks, a digital projector, four computers and two large chalkboards. Terry is currently in her first year within a PCS in Cleveland, Ohio.

_Kari*: Previous PCS art teacher with one-year experience_

As a K-8 art teacher in Cleveland, Ohio, Kari initially felt very at home in her position. During her time in secondary school, she attended a specialized magnet school in Cleveland focusing on the visual arts. When speaking of what brought her to her current career she recalled, “My high school was primarily for the arts, so I already had a large art background. I loved it and wanted to continue to teach it.” An interesting coincidence was discovered during my interview with her. She was the teacher who was
replaced by Terry for the current academic year. The school building had been
rearranged after her absence, as she described the cold dark basement art room. Other
than substitute teaching, her time within the PCS was her first teaching job. She stayed
for one academic year in the PCS in Cleveland, Ohio and left to achieve the goal of
obtaining employment in a public suburban setting.

*Linda*: First-year PCS art teacher

Linda initially expressed her extreme excitement for landing an art teaching
position as being “… fantastic!” While communicating her professional profile she
claimed to have a spiritual connection to her chosen career field. “I always knew I
wanted to teach, and always was artistic and a light bulb went off that this is what I
should be teaching.” She received her undergraduate degree in Ohio, and during her time
there took special interest into the potential of transferability between art and the different
skills needed in students’ general education. She advocated art education as promoting
her students’ ability to “…learn in a different way and it seems that their memory and
understanding is better.” Her building consists of grades K-8 and is located in
Youngstown, Ohio. She is currently in her first-year within a PCS.

The participants’ professional and brief personal profiles provided a variety in
circumstance and experience at the time of interviews. Diversity in the voice of this
study was intended; thus, allowing for a diverse glance of the depiction of art education
in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS.
Data Collection

Interviews in which primary data were retrieved lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length. Interviews between principle investigator and participants were audio-recorded. Each teacher was given a participant and audio recording consent form. All participants were also encouraged to read and comment upon the accuracy of their interview’s transcript. Interviews between participants were not shared to respect anonymity of each participant involved. I held observation and field notes, written by myself during time of interview to document my thoughts during the responses from each participant that assisted in the coding and interpretation process of this research. The purposes of the interviews were to illustrate the depiction of art education in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS through the eyes of its must influential members, the art educators.

Research was conducted over a three-week period, to allow for ample scheduling and travel time with each willing participant. Individual interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner for clarity and supplemental questioning. All data were categorized by pseudonym of participants as well as date and time of data collection. All precautionary measures possible were fully exhausted during the course of this study to protect the rights of anonymity of the participants.

Because each interview took place with a single art educator in separate buildings from the other participants, I took into consideration that there were limitations posed in the research design. The reports from individuals may be influenced by specific workings of their buildings as well as the personal bias and emotions of the participants, perhaps resulting in a slightly skewed view of the CMC and PCS as a whole. The participants in this study were not informed of the focus of my investigation, beyond the
realities that existed in their experiences as metropolitan PCS art teachers. This was in anticipation that all responses to interview questions would be honest and raw in their emotional content. The pace and supplemental contexts of the interviews were driven by the replies of participants to allow for emergence of a truly authentic conversation.

**Interview Questions**

The formats of interview questions were divided into two main sections: primary and secondary research questions (as described in chapter one). The primary research questions included the following three themes: the depiction of art education in a PCS system through the eyes of its instructors; the empowering aspects of the art teachers to achieve their curricular goals; and the discouraging portions of their employment in which they met challenges in achieving the same goals.

The secondary research questions were more specific and individualized to each participant. The issues contained the following: the impact of metropolitan economics and how it relates to the art room; the contact between administrative and parental support in relation to the art program; the domestic and social risk factors facing students and their effect on their visual arts performance; the perceived opinion of parental choice and its relation to involvement in the art curriculum; and the level of satisfaction participants felt involving teacher morale and projections for the future of the school and their employment. Seidman (1998) encourages researchers to only ask open-ended questions to their participants, as it can establish the theme to be explained while still slowing for the participants to direct the response in the more honest and candid manner. He suggests a participants-driven interview process, where the goal is not to ask the
questions but to learn what the researcher wants to know. This model was adapted to best elicit participant responses to questions regarding positive and negative aspects of their experience. All members of this study were responsible to fulfill the same job requirements. Therefore only one model of interview question structure was needed.

Questions of inquiry for all six-art teachers, former and current, included the following:

♦ How would you describe your art education program?
♦ Would you take me through what a typical school day consists of for you?
♦ How do you feel that any domestic or social risk factors impact your students’ art performance?
♦ What are some of the most satisfying aspects of your career inside a PCS?
♦ Consequently what do you feel are some of the more unsatisfying aspects of your career inside a PCS?
♦ How have your feelings changed at all since the beginning of your employment there? Why or Why not?
♦ How do you foresee any of these aspects changing in the future?
♦ What are some of the goals you have for your art education program?
♦ How do you go about achieving these goals?
♦ What challenges do you face while attempting to meet these goals?
♦ How do you feel you are supported in succeeding in your goals?
♦ How do you feel restricted in succeeding in your goals?
♦ What part does the idea of parental choice play into the level of parental involvement you have within your art program?
Would you say your personal teacher morale is up or down based on your experiences? What caused this?

During interview all six participants were asked to reflect upon their experiences in past, present and future tense; whichever deemed appropriate relative to the situation of the individuals. It is the hope of this study, that documenting the experiences of the art educators will influence the understanding of their respective situation into a richer meaning. Each interview was unique in the variance of emergent themes and clarifying or supplemental questions. The importance of certain aspects of their career and experiences dictated the direction of the data collected.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) introduce data analysis as working with content of a study to organize, deconstruct, thematically code, synthesize and search for patterns within the information obtained. In order to transform collected data into findings, meaningful interpretation strategies must be applied throughout data analysis. Data were collected from voluntary participants by means of verbal interview, audio recording and direct transcription. All six transcripts were interpreted and compared to reveal common and differing themes in their experiences and responses to questions, a method of analysis developed by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), to code qualitative data into categories. The responses of the participants were compared to other participants as well as differences within their own responses to questions answered during separate interview sessions. Themes and categories exposed were researched for literature review to compare cohesion or discrepancy in trends of the field of art education.
In my research of depicting art education in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS, the consistency and patterns that Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested were utilized to develop coding categories. Excerpts from interview transcriptions were used to develop coding categories dependent upon their frequency and relation to each participant. The reoccurrence or lapse of specific topics that arose during discussions assisted in the interpretation of the goal of this study. Each individual’s responses to inquiry were studied through the gaze of art educators within Ohio’s metropolitan PCS—in regards to the empowering and discouraging aspects of their careers. The goal of the EdChoice program, thoroughly discussed in Chapter II, was to supplement the public school systems in metropolitan areas where academic achievement warranted a sense of emergency. The question remains, are the perceptions of art educators within the PCS conducive or contradictory to the mission of the legislation?

Bias

Bias, as mentioned in Chapter I, was of utmost concern during the path of this research project. My own experiences as an art educator in a metropolitan PCS have left me with negative memories and experiences. I possess many feelings of doubt and concern for the mission and philosophy of the CMC, that aim to profit from the educational voucher program funded by state tax dollars. Also the teachers selected for this study are all members of the same PCS System. Each participant represents a separate building within the school system, but employed by the same corporation. Though not the sole provider of PCS sponsorship in Ohio, the CMC prides itself on operating the largest number of metropolitan charter schools in the state.
My first-hand experiences and relationships with the school system were precisely the reason for choosing this area of research. It is my opinion that passion and curiosity are characteristics imperative for qualitative research. In methodologically examining the experiences and depictions of PCS art educators, I sought to investigate other stories besides my own to better understand its dynamics. Certain recollections of the participants echo a familiar sentiment to my own experience, while many other accounts were unexpected and offered an array of perspectives I had not imagined. These factors were monitored and taken into deep consideration when addressing potential judgmental responses, analysis, and interpretations. Participants were not sought out for their level of alignment with my own perspectives and biased opinions. Positive or satisfying moments were also not discouraged from this research study. An honest, credible and dependable depiction of the unique experiences of six educators within the PCS remains my goal in this research project.

**Indicators of Rigor**

Guba and Lincoln (1985), define rigor as the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of a qualitative researcher during case study. These terms are preferred to the attributes of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, which are considered not suitable for qualitative research and are applicable in the quantitative research paradigm. The favored language encompasses the four criteria to ascertain a level of trust within a specific study.
Credibility

To address the first criterion, credibility was addressed in this case study through various means. Triangulation was achieved through a variety of methods. Several participants were invited to provide data in attempts to present multiple realities and circumstances in a PCS setting. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim, to authenticate the conversations. The participants were also given the opportunity to review, refine, or elaborate on the transcriptions of the representation of their responses as mentioned above.

Transferability

Transferability was considered in this case study as an alternative to the quantitative goal of external validity. Qualitative research does not claim to solely generalize its findings, though they may be pertinent and legitimate to do so. The goal instead is to transfer knowledge acquired during the course of the study to those who may be less knowledgeable of its themes or topics. Transferability allows others to interpret or investigate this study to exceed the bounds of its current status in this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The appendix of this thesis includes data analysis documents in the form of interview question transcripts to encourage the conveyance of my interpretations into the broader scope of the research field.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability of this study is substantiated by the method in which data was received. Interviews were conducted with several participants involved in similar circumstances relative to the research study. The sequence of questions asked during
dialogue between all individuals were consciously asked in a semi-structured chronological manner to get the most consistent and dependable responses for analysis and interpretation.

To develop the level of trustworthiness of this study, any subjectivity used to synthesize, dissect and compare the data was confirmed by an outside source, not affiliated with study. Two sources were asked to confirm or contest the conclusions drawn during analysis and interpretation: an art education professor with several years of experience in teaching, theory and research experience as well as a current graduate student with five years of art education experience in metropolitan cities in Ohio. Peer debriefing was utilized to confirm and question the areas of research design, bias, interpretation and analysis. The sources were versed in qualitative research methods and completed a confirmability audit to assure accuracy of data. Both parties are considered to be experienced, competent and professional in the realm of qualitative research within the field of art education.

Summary

The research methodology employed in this case study was devised in order to further investigate the perceptions and experiences of art educators within the PCS of metropolitan cities in Ohio. Factors contributing to the satisfaction, discouragement and overall morale of the teachers questioned were retrieved for analysis and interpretation. The main purpose of this study was to gain access to honest and uncensored recollections and situations affecting this niche of art education. In addition personal portrayals of my role as an art educator within the PCS, the conclusions and projections are intended for
insight into both the current state and future of the visual arts within this realm of metropolitan PCS in Ohio. The following chapter will discuss the data retrieved from participants in extreme detail. The themes presented will include the empowering and discouraging aspects of six Ohio metropolitan PCS art educators’ careers as well as disparities in data and the realities of teaching within a management company.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Overview

After implementing the research design discussed in the previous Chapter, the findings portion presented data that were collected for this case study. The research questions are examined as they relate to the findings from the interviews of six participants: three art teachers formerly employed in a PCS in the past 3 years, two art teachers currently in their first year in a PCS and one art teacher in her fifth active year in this type of setting. Narrative voice from my own experience as an art teacher in a PCS during the same timeframe are intertwined in order to provide personal researcher perspective through the form of narrative and reflective vignette. These areas will be noted, prefacing certain headings. Some sections within this chapter may coincide, as they contain similar stories and experiences through different eyes.

In order to preserve anonymity, the identities of the specific school buildings and participant names have been changed. For the purposes of this study the school buildings will be referred to as Profit-Charter School (PCS) and the Corporate Management Company of these schools will be known as the (CMC). Also, any reference made to a particular person, student or place that may compromise the anonymity of the school, student, participant or individual have been excluded from analysis. Pseudonyms have been chosen to take the place of these specific identifiers. An asterisk will preface next to the name of any such identifying noun. With the exception of these changes, excerpts and vignettes from the interview transcripts have been kept intact and verbatim.
Emphasis added by the participants verbally is indicated by italicization. Only the transcripts of the interview questions have been included in the appendix. This qualitative study relies heavily on the voice of its participants. Therefore large portions of the transcripts are utilized in the form of direct quotation and vignettes to best reveal the unique perspectives of those participants. The following data analysis interprets the interviews of the participants. A brief background of the metropolitan workings of PCS as well as small bios of participants will be discussed.

**Reminder for Readers**

*Figure 1. Professional Profiles of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>Gymnasium stage / traveling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankie</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>Traveling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>Classroom with updated technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kari</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>Two classrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 2. Data Themes and Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Themes (Below)</th>
<th>Participants (Right)</th>
<th>Casey</th>
<th>Kari</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Frankie</th>
<th>Terry</th>
<th>Elizabeth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empowering Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated by Student Need</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of Employment</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by Building Community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Teacher Morale (High)</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Parental and Building Support</td>
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<td><strong>Disparities in Data</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eager Educator / Continued Optimism</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Compensation as a Money Motivator</td>
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<td><strong>Realities in Management</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental Choice as Negative</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Choice as Positive / Indifferent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X</td>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dim Outlook on Future of PCS</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
December 2007

She turned the key in two thrusting motions, and kicked the door with steel-toed boots. “Here you are! Welcome to Hope Academy!” I thanked her with uncertainty as I took two steps into the slim bent metal fire door. A pale robin egg blue covered the walls and was peeling from the cabinets, falling on the floor as the door slammed behind me. Three glass block windows were my only view to the street above me. I saw tables on their side; boxes stacked five high with labels of ‘BINGO BALLS’ written with a faded permanent marker. I moved about thirty boxes into the hallway, so I could see the concrete floor that had been stained with coffee and cigarette butts. I dusted off my new ‘teacher’ khakis and thought for a second. This old bingo hall was about to get a rude awakening. I was going to teach art in this room.

Later that week, Ms. D took me up to the attic. I followed her brown boots up four flights of stairs as she instructed me to climb up a fire escape ladder. “Poke your head in there and see if I need to go get some traps.” I smiled and chuckled, until I realized she wasn’t joking. I poked my head in and she handed me up a small green flashlight.

“Looks okay from here!” I said wobbling with one arm wrapped around the rusted ladder. Normally I would have been up for this adventure out of pure pleasure, but today was different. This was the day I had been waiting for, to dig out all of my art supplies. I rubbed my hands together with anticipation as a small coffee can next to a stack of magazines caught her attention. She handed me 20 artist magazines and laid the coffee can on top, with the rust barely touching my chin. Inside the can were three paintbrushes with about ten hairs left in the ferrule. I asked if I needed to grab a few students to help with the rest. She laughed and shut the attic access door above us.

“That’s it!” My jaw almost dropped with shock. I was to teach 500 students the next day, with not even a piece of paper to pass out. I walked down to the office with the magazines and coffee can closely clutched to my body. The can loudly clunked on the desk of the secretary as I asked to speak with Ms. W. This was not the agreement prior to my arrival. But one contract signed the morning before said it was my problem now. Ms. W invited me into her office, as she smiled and laughed.

“It seems as though our art supplies need an upgrade.” I inquired about a working budget for the room. I got a simple and serious response.

“I can’t let you spend more than $150 per school year.” Whatever else you need you will have to send a supply list home.

I left her office feeling defeated, as I looked at the kindergarten class walking by the office, some with no shoelaces, others with dirty polo shirts and ripped uniform pants. How was I going to get the parents of these children to buy scissors and glue, when they obviously can’t afford to wash their clothes?
This vignette exemplifies my own personal familiarity as a beginning art teacher in a PCS. During two academic years of employment, numerous journals were kept and many stories were written that reenacted my experiences as a beginning PCS art teacher in Cleveland. Though some experiences were not overly positive, personal bias in the form of narratives proceeded through the different portions of this study to help separate personal viewpoints from the voices of the participants.

Perceived Dis/Empowering Factors: Curriculum and Teaching

Based upon interviews with the participants, two large discussions arose from the data regarding the empowering and disempowering factors in their recollection of experience. Empowering factors are those in which the participants felt satisfied and motivated to fulfill their personal teaching philosophies and visions for their art education programs. Within the empowering realm five factors will be investigated: motivation by student needs, appreciation for employment, the building community, personal teacher morale and hope for the future. This section answers the research question: “What empowers teachers to achieve their goals in art education within metropolitan PCS?”

Disempowering factors are those areas of concern that participants found as challenges and obstacles in fulfilling their goals. Likewise, five disempowering aspects of the events during their careers include: lack of planning, lack of resources and facilities, lack of parental and administrative support and the realities of teaching at-risk metropolitan youth. Through the course of the interviews, some issues may stray into a variety of themes, dependent on the voice of the individual. These perceptions are
presented here. The research question: “What discourages teachers to achieve their goals in art education within metropolitan PCS?” is answered further in this chapter.

**Empowering Factors: Motivated by Student Needs**

Motivation by student need alludes to the personal commitment participants felt towards their students. Many had made personal connections and professional relationships with students that encourage the educators’ artistic mission. There are many reasons for choosing a career in education; this is no different for those in the low employment rate of specialized art educators. All six participants during interview vowed their devotion to the students they teach. When asked about the most satisfying aspect of her employment Elizabeth immediately responded, “I would have to say seeing my students grow. It’s probably the best part of being a specials teacher because we see the same kids over and over…seeing them grow and getting to know them and the people they’ve become is really cool.” She described memories of students that were in second grade during her first year, that are now in the junior high section of her school building. Being in the same building for five years gave her a sense of pride in “…bring(ing) some sort of stability in their life.”

Casey’s three years in the same building was the second longest experience among all the participants. She stayed with her students for three consecutive years and had a difficult time in choosing to move on to a non-profit charter school in a different urban city. “I left that job in the summer and I cried and was upset and I felt so bad that I didn’t get any closer to the kids… regardless if you’re in a good situation or a bad one, the kids are why you’re there.” Aside from her obstacles as a traveling art teacher she
stated a clear and concise mission: “I didn’t deal with the snow and the commute and the parents for the money or the glory. I was there because they needed me and making the decision to leave was hard.”

In Terry’s expression of student commitment she referred to a fond memory of personal teacher compassion and gratification. “An eighth-grader made a huge mistake in her three-dimensional project—but I got her to work with her mistake and her artwork turned out to be so beautiful. That was really rewarding for me.” She continued speaking of the joy in watching them work through something they’ve never done before. Thus propelling her into staying eager and focused in her new career.

Appreciation of Employment

Appreciation of employment refers to the general attitude of participants towards their current positions. Some responses include specific circumstances that participants encountered that inadvertently brought them to teach in their respective PCS buildings. Many of the participants were in different stages in their employment. Some were in the beginnings of a brand new career while others were coming into their own and exuded more confidence in their expectations in their employment. One underlying tone seemed to be prevalent in most of their responses in how they viewed their career. Terry never expected to actually be hired. Her application to her Cleveland PCS was based on. “…I wanted a job, but I had no experience. When they offered me the job, I took it.” Her expectation for the interview was to gain experience to hone skills in best representing herself.
Casey insisted that during her entire course of employment she “…worked hard to keep (her) job…” She articulated the current art education market as “…few and far between…” As she gained experience and confidence in her abilities as art educator she slowly realized a new perspective on her work ethic, which didn’t fully develop until her decision to leave. “Which is funny because now that I look back at it I think, who would really want my job?”

Elizabeth shared in this sentiment by describing the evolution of her perspectives since being hired. “I’m no longer the fresh shiny brand new art teacher coming in; Oh! This is great, I have a job and I don’t have sub(stitute teach) anymore!” Even though she claimed to not be as jubilant about her appreciation for her position, she ended her response to the question with a very definitive response. “I don’t want to do anything else.”

Frankie was the least emotional of all the participants. Her reaction to the chain of events that brought her to the PCS was, “I basically was brought here because I needed a job. There aren’t very many out there.” The opinions and experiences above suggest that the participants arbitrarily landed in their positions with little control over where they were hired. All participants seemed appreciative and grateful to be employed in their content areas.

Building Community

Building community encompasses the level of perceived belonging or collegiate bonding experienced within solitary campuses inside PCS school systems. This includes the degree in which other teachers, staff members, parents and administration received
their program. The teachers interviewed portrayed the identity of belonging to a school building in different lights. A new project-based initiative has recently swept through the management company that employed all of the participants. The Project-based approach curriculum was intended to incorporate the curriculum of homeroom teachers and standardized testing preparations into the art room. Terry depicts this new program as an impressive measure based on communication and collaboration, as well as an instance of community building. Though prior to its implementation, she stated that integration was important to her, that “…the teacher’s realize that it’s not just scissors and glue in here. It’s really nice and refreshing.”

Linda also finds it difficult to grant merit to her program in the eyes of the homeroom teachers. Though her overall feelings regarding her school building brought her to say, “I think the atmosphere of my school is pretty amazing!” She expressed her confidence in her art program by being aware that her peers do not always value what she does. “I’m realistic that not everyone is going to understand the point… It’s okay for them to think that, but I know the truth.” This indicates a contrast in how Linda experiences the feeling of community. She feels that she is well received by the members of her building staff, only outside of the relevance of her program to other areas of their education.

Elizabeth described a slightly different experience. When asked about the level of camaraderie between herself and the school community she replied, “I would say I’m supported by most teachers. The staff is great and I’ve come to be close with a lot of people and they are always supportive of whatever I need.” In the realm of the project-based initiative she paints a picture of teamwork. Her class times are 37 minutes long,
which doesn’t leave her much time for integration, but she recounts many times that she may “…need the kids to be prepped with something to read beforehand if we’re doing something cross-curricular.” This implied that a level of cooperation exists between the art and core classrooms.

Camaraderie seemed to be easier when art teachers have a designated space to hold class. In the case of Casey, while traveling to homerooms to fulfill their art classes she asserted that “Homeroom teachers are very picky and want things pristine and perfect when you leave, and when you’re teaching collage and there is paper all over the floor—they don’t really appreciate that.” She ended her response to the question by stating that “…some teachers were supportive and understanding but most of them were very protective over their classroom space.” The sense of community she described is less productive and tenser compared to that of Elizabeth. The implied hierarchy facing Casey as a traveling art teacher, places her to a lesser sense of belonging and entitlement in her curriculum.

**Personal Teacher Morale**

A secondary research question of this research project attempts to answer: “*How does the experience of teaching art in a metropolitan PCS influence the morale and satisfaction of its instructors?*” Related to but distinct from building community, teaching morale described a more introspective inquiry into the teaching spirit of the participants alone, without the influence of other staff members and classrooms. The morale of a teacher is comprised of the drive of teachers to continue executing their original vision. Within this drive also live different levels of motivation and attitude towards the tasks at
hand. Morale can be a very personal and fluid thought. Each participant had a slightly different take on where their morale stands in their experience in a PCS. Those in their first year of their careers claimed that in order to stay positive they had to readjust. Terry explains “…I get up every morning and try to think of it as a new day. I have stopped coming home from school saying that I had a bad or terrible day. Instead I say today was challenging.” Linda felt that the first few weeks were spent adapting to the specific needs and duties of her new role as an art educator in a PCS. Everything she had planned was reduced down to a single lesson plan. Her first few weeks were, “…Overwhelming because they are so much lower than I thought they’d be.” The state standards and benchmarks she initially taught to, were much higher than the students' abilities, past experiences and know-how allowed.

By the end of the school year Kari had a unique response about her morale. “Oddly I would kind of say it was on the up. I’m not sure if it was because I was excited to be at the end of the school year or what.” A niche had been found as she “…had finally gotten through to some of the students and they were really helpful.” This implies that as different teaching approaches were attempted she began to better cater to the different learning styles of her students. They slowly began to appreciate and enjoy the curriculum offered.

Those participants with a more matured level of experience were not as optimistic. Elizabeth noted her morale, “ at this point, I would say that I’m at the down. I think it’s unfortunate.” She blames the recent understaffing of her building as stretching the teachers too thin. “Everyone at my building is really feeling it this year.” Frankie concurred this mood of being on a downward path as being. “…half way through the
school year, we’re dragging.” All comments suggest an adaptation and recreation of their original goals in their respective programs. The consensus points to an evolution of evaluation within their curricular approaches to implement the best results for enjoyment, education and productivity in the art room.

**Hope for the Future**

Hope for the future is categorized as an umbrella term for the way in which participants foresee the satisfying and challenging aspects of their careers in the years to come. During interview the participants were asked if they foresaw anything changes in the future for their respective PCS. Some pictured themselves remaining within the system. Linda projected that “…if I were there for the next 8 years and I had a full group of kids that I’ve had for that length of time, I think I would really be able to build them up. I don’t feel it’s an impossible challenge.” Some participants responded to the question by imagining themselves somewhere else professionally. Casey interpreted the question to be answered about the management company in general. “I think that the school will stay in tact because of what it is. It is a business dealing with a demographic that wants instant gratification.” She described the nature of the school as being very transient in a way that is profitable for the management company of her PCS. “The beauty of it is, there is always a parent who’s willing to go to another school.” This referred to the notion of parental choice, and unsatisfied parents of any school system were a threat to the school in which they are enrolled. At any point in the school year, children can be transferred from one educational venue to another regardless of the level of progress their child makes academically. Kari refers to this concept as “… a vicious
circle. Unless any kind of foundation is turned, it’s just going to keep going.” These factors affect the participants’ hope for the future in regards to student retention and the political framework laid for the PCS in enrollment recruitment.

**Disempowering Factors: Lack of Planning**

In contrast to the previous section of hope for the future, this area described the aspects of PCS art teaching that discouraged the participants’ from achieving their curricular goals at the time of interview. All participants saw lack of planning as a challenge to best fulfilling their duties to their curriculum. In many instances PCS art teachers found themselves to be scrounging for adequate time outside of teaching to devote to their planning of curriculum and student learning. Kari claimed that her designated planning time was “… supposedly an hour each morning but they usually had that packed with meetings.” She described her school day as being “Pretty full, pretty busy. A lot of times being an escort to students during my downtime. I had about four classes a day with a lot of duties in between.”

Terry and Linda echoed Kari’s sentiment of a hectic workday. Terry was “very busy, I rarely actually find time to do my planning at school. If I am not teaching then I’m helping in other areas.” Some of her duties included lunchtime detentions and dismissal duties. Linda claimed that most of her time was spent assisting in the preparation of standardized testing. “I have a group of specific kids that I made OAA books for to go through. That is a big chunk of my time. I almost do that as much as I teach. It’s dead even, my tutoring time is equivalent to my teaching time.” During the remainder of the interview, Linda was adamant that her skills in the art room would better
assist in OAA preparation if she were able to fully integrate her curriculum with vocabulary and tangible learning. This revealed very disempowering responses to the participants’ experiences related to the multiple roles they represent throughout the school day.

Two participants recalled duties that had absolutely no correlation to teaching at all. Elizabeth outlined her day as “Hav(ing) three classes and a myriad of lunch duties. Then class changes, my lunch and three classes in the afternoon. I have class right until dismissal then I have dismissal duty.” Casey’s duties were compiled during the first meal of the school day. “…all three years I was blessed with breakfast duty. So I got there and started with the chaos of breakfast. Then I moved on to two Direct Instruction reading groups, then I would have my planning then my art classes.” In all cases the art teaching of all participants was in constant competition with staffing the building in other areas.

*Lack of Resources and Facilities*

Lack of resources and facilities was a discouraging reality facing all participants in depressed economic areas. Art teachers were no exception as expendable materials were often a necessity to creating and presenting art to students. Four of the six participants cited discouraging reasons in their responses to questions involving material resources and classroom venues. Frankie places the blame not on the geographical location of her school building, or even on the management of the building as a whole. Instead she says, “I do have a problem with classroom resources, and it’s not my principal’s fault. It’s the administration up high, who delves out the money. I mean we
have a lot more money than what they say we have. But they won’t give anymore to the arts program.” She candidly concluded her response with “We don’t have much of a budget.”

Kari spoke of challenges with the placement of her classroom. Her room was located in the basement whose original use was acting as the neighboring church’s bingo hall. She explained that her room was “…down the hall from the gym and the lunchroom, it was very difficult to hear when I had the younger kids.” Though Kari did reside in her own four walls, her biggest complaint was her room “…no sinks. In fact we ended up having a flood from one of the pipes in the street.” Lack of the most basic resource of water stopped her from actively pursuing painting lessons with her students.

The biggest obstacles facing Casey’s curriculum were the roadblocks of existing as a traveling art teacher without a classroom of her own. “Some of the biggest challenges I can remember were not knowing who had rearranged their room each week. In my mind I would set up for a painting project knowing that last week they were in groups of six—but this week they are separated into single desks. I had no control over setup of the classroom.” She spoke of a single classroom item that would have eased her frustrations: “…I didn’t have a drying rack. Anything I wanted to do with glue we had to use the top of the lockers to dry their work. Then the janitors would scream because they’d go behind the lockers.” Casey’s only retreat, her office, was introduced to her on her second interview. She refers to her space as “…a tragic disaster of a mess--of a five-foot wide by 16 foot long closet.” Clearly, inadequate resources and facilities, including cramped professional spaces, are problematic. Lack of control in their physical environments was a continuous source of frustration identified by the participants.
Elizabeth harmonized Casey’s frustration by expressing the most discouraging portion of her traveling art career. Though she now had access to an art space she epitomized her frustrations “…where I just walk up on the stage to teach. I look around and see the cramped desks and the room that hasn’t been cleaned because I’m not a priority. There are no supplies and I think ‘really this is my life, my career, what I went to school for?’ I love my kids though, but the facilities are probably the worst part.” She repeatedly refers to her place in the hierarchy of the building as the “…bottom of the totem pole.” Though there was one positive thing to be said about the buildings upgrades to her stage: “…Just last year they built an actual wall, instead of just partition dividers between myself and the gym. So I am no longer getting hit with gym class paraphernalia.”

Only two of the four participants spoke of their facilities in an absolute positive light. Terry boasted on her “…brand new digital projector and smart board. I have four computers; I didn’t think it would be like this. I’ve heard it wasn’t like this. It has come in really handy.” On the flip side she spoke of never being informed of a budget or discouraged from ordering supplies.

Concerning facilities and resources, Linda also described a unique situation in her building that was recently acquired by the CMC. “I actually got two art rooms that are now mine. One used to be for the upper grades and one was for the lower grades… They had tons of supplies. I did a semester’s worth of work without ordering a thing. I had a lot of stuff.” Her conclusions to discussion of her classroom faculties’ effect on her curriculum was, “I’m able to do whatever I want. I have freedom that way.” The fact that participants described such different situations in reference to classroom resources
implies inconsistency between the school buildings that operate under the same CMC. Whether the level of resources is scarce or abundant, the importance of materials and classroom venue greatly influence the opinions of participants.

**Lack of Parental and Administrative Support**

Lack of parental and administrative support alludes to the challenges faced by the participants in finding encouragement from potential beneficial relationships with building administration and parental figures in the lives of their students. Secondary research questions, involve these themes directly: *How does administrative support and classroom resources affect the success of art educators’ classroom goals?* Elizabeth spoke of inconsistency within her building that lead to the breakdown of stability in her sense of belonging. “We’ve had three different principals in five years and four different vice principals.” She was unsure of the reasoning behind so many administrative changes but described the personal effects as “I feel like I’m at the bottom of the totem pole.” Parental involvement and encouragement for her art program was sparse. She described the response to her efforts as, “A lot of times it doesn’t seem that the parents see it as important. We have showcases a couple times a year, and I spend hours and hours putting their work together to display and they just walk in and that’s it, then they walk out.”

Kari’s experience with her administration proved to be the most detrimental. When asked about what her breaking point was in deciding to end her career with the PCS she angrily told the story of her Entry Year Teacher (EYT) status. “…my EYT status was void. I was under the impression that my principal didn’t send in the
paperwork that was due by a certain day. I fell through the cracks and now the process has changed and instead of a one year mentorship I would have to complete a five year mentorship program.” She claimed that she was robbed of her EYT status, which would have allowed her to mentor and take the Praxis III for Ohio that would have made her eligible to obtain her professional teacher’s license. She is still currently operating on a provisional license. The lack of administrative and parental support felt by the participants’ influences the amount of pride they felt in exhibiting student work, amount of stability felt towards their administration and the amount of respect given by parents towards their program.

The Realities of Teaching At-Risk Metropolitan Youth

In large part, At-Risk metropolitan youth are those who are in danger of future events. In economically depressed metropolitan areas these events can range from teenage promiscuity, illegal drug use and abuse, undereducated families that perpetuate lower family incomes, and the inability to cope with an accumulation of the above mentioned stressors that may affect self-esteem and the gravitation to destructive peer groups and a lack of interest in education (Camilleri, Rodgers, & Dennis, 2007). The number of realities and challenges for PCS metropolitan art teachers reside in identifying these risk factors and learning to accommodate these students to promote the best art experience possible. Throughout all six interviews participants identified three direct challenges when teaching at-risk youth: extreme poverty, learned helplessness and a lack of positive role models. The secondary research question will be answered below: How
does the fluxing economic status of metropolitan school districts relate to art programs present in its PCS?

Frankie spoke of a specific student who “…is in a special education classroom because he has trouble with his reading. He lives in a homeless shelter with his mom.” She spoke of trying to stay in close communication with his mother to get him involved in her martial arts extra-curricular before and after school. The majority of her other students were described by Frankie as “…so stressed out from their home life that they can’t focus.” Others include Linda who acknowledged the challenges of At-Risk youth and was able to give a specific example in her student body. “One kid, we’ve been watching because he’s been like cutting his arms and stuff. He just changed households. It’s sort of been an issue.” With her younger elementary students the only indication of their stress level is “…more physical shutdown. There was a kid that I corrected, and he responded by calling me a fucking bitch.” Terry also spoke of the physical and verbal signs of what their domestic life is like. She illustrated many class periods where “…you have to catch the cues and you just sit and wait. You hear about the uncles that do drugs and sing funny songs. You have to really watch what they’re talking about… I try to keep my themes open but if you’re too open it will be like my fourth grader who draws guns everywhere.” This suggested that domestic and social risk factors in children of metropolitan areas are common within the PCS.

Three participants stated an unexpected reality of teaching At-Risk students. The consensus is that some of the students they encounter have a problem with completing classroom assignments and projects as well as a lack of confidence concerning the work. Frankie claims “… a lot of the time they get in the way of their own progress because
they’re afraid. They try to make everything botched before you can get anywhere—that way they don’t ever have to fail. They won’t ever admit that, I don’t think they even realize they’re doing it.” She continued by saying, “They are so defeated, and they have this learned helplessness that they don’t even try. They don’t have the confidence to do a whole lot of anything. They feel like they will fail.”

Linda proposed a personal theory on the matter revolving around social assistance and the lack of positive role models in her students’ lives:

I think that they are given everything. They are given a free breakfast, and lunch. They don’t have much accountability at home. There is no value in school because they don’t see anyone successful. There aren’t people around them that show them this. You can call home anytime of the day, and their parents are there. They don’t see professional people getting ready for work... I hope that if the kids were somewhere else and they saw progress and profession and people achieving that they could lead by example.

As harsh and broad as this statement is, there is no complete data to verify this proclamation; however, Linda is entitled to her own interpretations of the reality she feels to experience in her situation. Therefore the abovementioned quote should not be dismissed. Overwhelmingly, the perceptions of educating at-risk youth in the visual arts were a challenge that had no definitive solution. Participants chose to deal with domestic and social stressors in the lives of their students by means that they were comfortable with, such as involvement in extra curricular activities and avoiding triggers that may bring inappropriate or unwanted content into the classroom.

February 2008

*I sat at my desk once again, twisting my chair forcefully with my feet. How do they expect me to do my job to the best of my ability? It seems that the financial department is obviously knowledgeable of how much items costs, yet clueless to the value of an investment. Is this the way they also feel about the students that inhabit their classrooms? They will go through the motions for 5 or*
6 years, and be gone to high school. The quality of instruction does not seem to resonate in cooperation with classroom materials and teacher motivation. Last week at a staff meeting, the Principal told us to keep passing students.

“Corporate offices have found that student grades, are not coinciding with their standardized test scores. But we have to keep those parents happy!” They have no respect for the children whose seats they fill. I see these students everyday, fighting back against the system. They are tired. They are stressed. They are desperate for a chance, a glimpse of hope. I wonder how this classroom would appear differently to them; crumpled dollar bills in place of bright young minds. They’d rather stack the bills up to be placed in their pocket than invest a cent into their education.

I wish I could help them all.

Disparities in Data

This section is an attempt to categorize and make sense of themes presented by participant responses; those that are aligned and those that seem to be obviously different from the majority. There are four realms of disparity that will assist in adding individualized perspectives to explain the differences amongst the perceptions of the participants. The realms are as follows: Experience: Eager Educators and the Evolution of Higher Expectations; School System Disconnect: Different Feelings in Different Buildings; Compensation as a Motivator; and The Question of the Status Quo. This section attempts to answer the research question: “How does the experience of teaching art in a metropolitan PCS influence the morale and satisfaction of its instructors?

Experience: Eager Educators and the Evolution of Higher Expectations

It can be deduced that differences in perceptions and expectations of the participants can be attributed in part to the wide range in experience within a PCS. Five of the six participants cite the PCS as being their first teaching experience. Three participants are within their first year within this type of educational infrastructure and
the other three, ranging in experience from 2-5 years, cite higher expectations from their school system as they grow in experience.

The first year teachers in the PCS noted an adjustment period. Casey described being “…overwhelmed, completely overwhelmed. I did not have a curriculum for K-8.” She felt ill prepared and was given no resources or expectation for her course of study. Terry spoke of tears during the first weeks of her new position. “There were a few weeks where I got nothing done in the art room and I just did a lot of talking… I was a mess the first few weeks.” The reasons stated for difficulties in adapting to a complicated educational demographic proved to be a battle of wills in completing the planning of a course curriculum.

Kari and Casey discussed their difficulties in mapping the milestone projects for their students. Kari resorted to generic standards-focused lesson planning “…being a first year teacher I was really just trying to get all my ideas together and make sure I coincided with the standards from the state.” Casey chose to progress her focus by grade level and the building off of prior knowledge: “Making those connecting lines between grade levels and trying to build the best curriculum for the first time, first year teacher in a crappy school system.” The differences in planning approaches may have led to differences in student motivation, classroom management and teacher morale.

The idea of teacher accountability and energy is also an idea that proved to be present in first year teacher Linda. Her defensive attitude towards her school building was presented as “You have to have your standards and benchmarks present and why you’re teaching—Again it’s my first year, so I don’t see a lot of negative things that the company is doing… I think teachers should be held accountable. It seems too easy not to
be.” She does not however seem ignorant to the idea that motivation and energy of teachers may decline in the future. She admittedly stated, “Obviously, I’m just out of college, I’m still very current about what is going on and my passion hasn’t been squandered yet.”

Frankie presented an example of experience being dominant over the type of school system. Though she was currently in her first year in the PCS, her previous experience helped to form her feelings of helplessness in her situation. “… everything is money, the kids are a commodity. The choices that are made up at the top are not made for the kids. They are made for their own pockets. That’s one of the things I regret about this school. I have a hard time keeping my mouth shut about it, because I’m all for the kids.” Thus, it would seem that differing perspectives of teachers in varying times in their careers caused discrepancies in responses to interview questions.

January 2008

I sat at my desk, scrolling through corporate emails about budget and classroom spending. "Cut back!" "No Lamination", "1 ream of paper per month" were all titles to last weeks’ emails. I was looking for a particular email. Two weeks prior I had written a proposal to receive a second hand digital projector for my art room. I explained that if I was able to project my visuals and lessons, that I would more than cut my paper and lamination use in half, and that if they would invest $200 into my art program, that it would pay for itself by the end of the school. Ah-ha! … an email from the director of human resources.

"Dear Ms. Boyd,

The management company will not be purchasing the technology requested. Though if you would like to purchase the projector yourself, you may use it as a tax-deductible educator expense.

Sincerely, Mrs. C."

School System Disconnect: Different Feelings in Different Buildings

The answers of participants regarding their building community, administrative support, classroom resources, and facilities show a large disconnect in the different school buildings operated by the same CMC. It is the consensus of the participants’ stories that show a different emphasis on the visual arts. This most definitely plays a large part in the disparities between perceptions of the participants. Elizabeth discusses the uncertainty of her administrative goals due to a high turnover of staff. She has grown more assertive in her expectations of planning time. She does not seem to be optimistic about any changes to her situation. She says, “There has been talk of trying to obtain the building next to us. But I’m not sure that would change my situation at all.”

Casey was a traveling art teacher for the entire duration of her employment with the PCS. However her biggest complaint regarding her school building was not solely based on her classroom facilities, or lack thereof. She strongly spoke of the tone that her administration took with its staff. “… We were asked to clock in and clock out. We were highlighted if we were a minute late.” She went on to describe the demeaning connotation such a small act made on her teacher morale: “Are you kidding me? I am legally fingerprinted and allowed to be around children and educate them, but you don’t trust me to get my butt to work on time?” Henry Giroux discusses this demeaning role that teachers are subject to in school environments as a “deskilling” of their role in creating and implementing meaningful curriculum. He claims that reducing the role that teachers play in the actual creation and execution of their curriculum transforms self-evaluating educators into obedient technicians regurgitating pre-packaged curriculum that
proves to be ineffective to standardized test scores and academic achievement (Giroux, 1988).

The situation of Terry and Linda are the most unique in regards to disparities in school buildings. Terry has little negative to say about her experience in the first half on the school year. But she is also provided with the largest and technologically advanced classrooms among the six participants. Linda is in a similar situation, but at times is seen to be contradictory on her thoughts regarding her school building. She has no immediate issues with the classroom but does speak of the reception of her program by teachers in the building. “My classroom is still seen as somewhat of a break for teachers, and not that they’re getting something important.” But later during her response she spoke the feeling of her building as “I think the atmosphere of my school is pretty amazing.” In order to decipher which perspective was true to her experience the possibility of both positive and negative experiences being present in different context must not be ignored.

Frankie helped to clarify this point with humor. She honestly spoke, “It’s funny. It’s a case-by-case basis—if your administrator is behind you, then you get what you need. If they’re not then you don’t. Each building in this company is different.”

**Compensation as a Money Motivator**

Related to different feelings in different buildings, compensation in terms of the experiences of the participants refers to financial incentives given or withheld to art educators in the PCS setting. Though the actual dollar amount of their salaries was not solicited, participants differed in their thoughts of money motivating their career goals within the PCS. One of the major disparities revolved around the longevity of their
affiliation with the school. A compensation issue had not yet affected the teachers with less than one-year experience. Linda seemed to be aware of the potential problems of less compensation by saying, “… it’s hard to keep the right people. We get paid less; we have to work harder and get 25 minutes for lunch.” It will be interesting to see if money acts as a motivating factor in the future of her employment with the CMC.

Casey cites building administrative issues regarding compensation within extracurricular activities. She compares her past experience in the PCS with her current position in a non-profit metropolitan charter school by explaining, “… here it’s different. They give you stipends and appreciate the extra work that you do. But back then they would say ‘Here. Can you do this? If not, you don’t have to, but it will be on your evaluation that you chose not to.’”

Elizabeth explained her compensation perspective with a rationale that speaks of an experienced professional. “As I grow, not only my salary should grow with me, which is doesn’t; but my opportunities should grow as well, but they don’t. That’s disappointing. It’s hard to talk about.” She claimed the difficulty in expressing this concern comes from her original vision and purpose for her career. She reveals, “I don’t care about the money, but inflation doesn’t stop. The big part of it was I went in starting and was excited because I’d never had a job that paid this much before. But then 5 years later I’m still making the same amount. The economy has totally changed and I’m getting older and have a lot more responsibilities.” The data disclosed the notion that teachers with more experience in the PCS began to show signs of annoyance and frustration with the lack of salary offered by the CMC.
When crosschecking this mentality with another experienced educator, I got an honest response from Frankie. She proved to be an invaluable perspective due to her overall teaching experience of four years, but only experiencing her first in the PCS. The question was asked if she thought the money motivators of the corporate office would keep her from staying in the PCS long term. She responded, “ Likely yes. I’m looking for somewhere where I will have a stable job.” Only time will tell how long teachers will stay without being compensated more on a yearly basis.

The Question of the Status Quo

The question of the status quo refers to the open-ended conclusion of issues in compensation, facilities and support. Towards the end of each interview, the inquiry was posed, if the participants would stay in their current position, are actively looking for other sources of employment, or if they would ever return to a PCS environment. The response was a complete draw. The two teachers in their current first year, with no prior experience claimed to stay and would only leave if finding work in a more stable or closer proximity school district to their home. Specifically, Terry’s response to the questions if she would return next school year was, “I am planning on it. I’ve had days when I’ve thought that I can’t do it. No way. I should get the résumé back up and out and start over. But then I have some days that I feel that I’m betraying them if I don’t come back.”

Linda described feelings of difficulty and uncertainty when responding to a similar question. “If I can get a job closer to where I live, I’ll leave. But it’d be hard to leave. I would go back there.” Down the road she claimed to consider another PCS if the
opportunity arose, but notes the amount of effort it has taken to be comfortable where she was. “I would hesitate to do it again. I worked really hard to set up what I have, physically and emotionally with these kids. It was a lot of work, I would like to enjoy it a little bit longer before I just leave.”

Kari had a completely different approach to her answer. The answer included, “Probably not. The experience was not very pleasant. I don’t feel that the students were the priority. It’s one thing to push me around as a teacher but when the kids aren’t getting what they need, I don’t really see the point of being part of something like that. I feel like I’m contributing to it if I stay.” She started subbing in a local public school district after deciding to leave the school and wishes to land employment in more of a suburban school in which she believes better parental involvement is the norm.

Casey, though she has moved on to a different school setting does not doubt the positive effects the experience has had on her ability to appreciate other school venues. “It taught me a lot. I get here and people were complaining about this, and I was taken back. Even two years later, I realize how good I have it here. You have NOTHING to complain about.” The short experience differences between all of the participants, shows an accelerated perspective on the larger goals of an art education career and the personal choices that must be made on a yearly basis. All of the abovementioned factors drastically affect the context in which individual differences must be remembered.

December 2009

I continued the familiar drive from Akron to Cleveland along highway 77 North. I was going to return to my students, to help a colleague with a winter program. Memories flooded my thoughts as I tried to remember as many names as possible before arriving at my destination. I slowly drove through two yellow cement gateposts careful to watch my passenger mirrors. I slowly pulled into a
parking space with help from the school police officer. It was currently recess and the students had grown accustomed to playing four-square with the yellow lines of the parking lot. It seemed to be third grade, as I calculated how many years had passed since my teaching in the building. One student drops her jump rope as we lock eyes for a moment. She screamed my name, which started a waterfall of children attacking my car. I rolled down my window and greeted them graciously, most by name. An immediate rush of reunited energy came over me, like a mother separated from her children. I got out of the car and listened intently as they tried desperately to fill me in on the last two years of their artistic lives. I glanced up multiple times as three familiar faculty members had congregated at the corner of the parking lot smiling and waving sweetly. A small child gently tugged at my pocket and asked with a sense of entitlement, “Why did you leave us?” My heart could have instantaneously combusted. I realized that he were completely unaware of his situation. He had no idea of the aristocrats, the politics, the money or any realities of the adult perspective. I began to question my motives, as I had considered myself a pioneer, to fully understand the education infrastructure aimed to exploit their entire demographic. Yet in this small child’s eyes, I was the one who had forsaken him. Had I made the right decision?

Realities of Management

This section addressed the more generalized perceptions of teaching art in a PCS through the eyes of the participants—the realities of management as they experienced it. Questions posed revolved around the political atmosphere of the CMC, the impact of the metropolitan voucher system and how these items affect how they feel towards their educational mission and career. During interviews all six-art teachers were asked to share their general feelings and experiences with broader areas of the PCS. These areas included parental choice, the implications of a school in lawsuit and the erosion of teacher morale and dim outlooks. This section attempts to answer the research question: 

What is the depiction of art education in PCS through the eyes of its instructors?
Parental Choice is a term that is often presented alongside charter school systems and educational vouchers. It specifically refers to the idea that parents of students living in an educational area offering vouchers have a choice as to which school their children attend. The option of attending schools other than the publicly zoned school districts is a service provided at no additional cost to the parent. The funds entitled to support each individual student are calculated and taken from the educational tax reserve. Instead of dispersing the money to the public school district it is sent to any school system public or private that a parent chooses. In the case of charter school systems profit or non, the funds are handled by the CMC and distributed to the school buildings based on previously negotiated agreements. The section attempts to answer the secondary research question: *How does parental choice influence parental involvement in a metropolitan PCS art program?*

The framework of charter schools is based on a commercialized educational marketplace. Schools must compete and retain students. In some cases parents turn into customers that must be satisfied and appeased. Elizabeth discussed her frustration with the metropolitan educational marketplace as, “It’s supposed to be their choice. It’s supposed to beat public schools but there are definitely those parents who call and complain all the time and aren’t happy.” The unhappy parents represent lost voucher money if the parent chooses to change the enrollment of their children. Frankie spoke of the transient nature of her students, in the light of some children being expelled from previous school systems. “We’re their last shot. Home schooling is it after this. The
kids know that. But they also know that we need numbers, so the chances of us expelling
someone are low.”

Regarding the affect of parental choice on involvement is the participants’
curriculum. Kari and Linda had experienced bouts of parental apathy and lack of
communication in their school buildings. Kari expressed feelings of disappointment
during her parent teacher conferences. She quoted that a few would come down to the art
room, “But the parents who never came in, never knew. I just thought they didn’t care.
If some of the artwork were in the hallways more parents would just look right past it.”
Linda simply stated a similar statement in saying, “The parents that come in are not the
ones you need to see.”

An exceptional sentiment from Casey revealed the idea that parents may be
ignorant to the discrepancies between the CMC facilities and the PCS. She reflected on a
visit to the corporate office in Akron, Ohio where she was required to display student
work on a bulletin board:

My first experience was my first year there. I went there twice. They had an idea
that all the art teachers were going to go to the corporate office and create a
bulletin board each month. That was my first year, and I had one of the first
months to do a bulletin board. I remember going there and looking at the marble
floors and the carpet and all the phones. There weren’t even people at some of
the desks that were equipped with phones—trashcans and pencil sharpeners and
pens. How funny is that? In the hierarchy of this corporation the funds are not
getting transferred down. If I wanted to make a phone call, I had to go to a room
with a classroom in it or use my cell phone. You just get to the point where
you’re like ‘I’ll just use my cell phone.’ I just remember thinking about the
oriental rugs in the office, and knowing that it is a corporate office, I realize that
the office needs to be dressed like a corporate office but c’mon. The delineation
is abundantly clear where the priorities are lying… It was hilarious to me because
the teachers and students aren’t receiving this. I think if the parents saw this, they
would be perturbed.
Clarifying questions were asked to relate this to her art program, but Casey always referred back to the bigger picture. At one point she equated the idea of parental choice and the PCS phenomenon to the idea of democratic America. “I think that parents would be irritated by it (the disconnection between the management company and the school buildings) and I think the connection would be made. But at the same time I think we are a society that no longer questions things. We are a country of trillions of dollars of debt and none of us go to the oval office to look at its furnishings. I think that in an urban setting, that philosophy is even tougher to break. I don’t feel that parents would even feel comfortable there.”

*Implications of a School in Lawsuit*

Information from two participants emerged with a theme of a little-discussed legal situation that was investigated in more detail in Chapter II. Apparently the leaders of the PCS School buildings are unsatisfied with the way the CMC handles the money from the metropolitan voucher program. Because the PCS buildings are non-profit entities that are technically owned by the CMC, a lawsuit between the two has slowly turned into an educational civil war as seen in Hope Academy Broadway et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC, et. al. (2010). The teachers in the building were kept out of the loop, as four participants were not aware of the legal proceedings. Kari recalls the moment in which she found out, “I don’t know the basis, but I know how I found out about it. I was getting ready for work to go to school and I hear on the radio that my school was suing our management company. So I go into work and didn’t say anything and other people were coming in asking if I’d heard about it. Of course I did! I heard it on the radio!” She
continued to express her frustration with the lack of knowledge of what the lawsuit meant for her future with the PCS. The conclusion to her thoughts about the matter was very blunt in saying, “A great way to tell me my job may be in danger.”

Elizabeth’s knowledge seems to be more in depth. “The company with the board of education is in a giant lawsuit over the past year. The board is not happy that the management company owns as much as they do. They own all the equipment and the teachers. The board is fighting for more power and say, regarding money.” Further inquiry into the relationship between the PCS board and the CMC she responded with, “Unfortunately if it comes down to the board winning and deciding they want to go with a different management company, the employees are technically part of the company. Then we could all lose our jobs. The prognosis for the end of these proceedings is unclear, but Elizabeth explained that, “I think it’s very possible that the schools could close down…We don’t know when that’s all going to be resolved. We get different stories from each side.” This illuminates the tenuous and stressful situation facing participants within the PCS regarding their employment and future within the company.

The following section discusses a related area that results apparently from such conditions as lawsuits and undisclosed legal information involving the entire PCS community.

Erosion of Teacher Morale and Dim Outlooks

Erosion of Teacher morale and dim outlooks discussed the dispositional evolution throughout the course of the experiences of the participants. The reactions were split between two moods. Two participants within the first year of their teaching careers
appeared to stay positive about their situation, employment and mission to their students. Terry maintained that she was, “…doing what I can. We all hope it will change. To say it wouldn’t, then there would be no purpose to be here.” Linda took a more empathetic route in her response stating that, “These kids are used to people leaving and quitting on them. So I think that’s one of the biggest things I could do to get them interested in what I’m doing—is to just show up.”

The remaining four participants seemed to exude a more exhausted and dimmed outlook regarding their place in the PCS and the future of its existence. Casey affirmatively and metaphorically was quoted in voicing, “It’s a machine and will continue to exist… the business will stay in tact, because they are always going to have kids coming in. Keeping people happy isn’t really the objective. It’s keeping their kids happy enough that they don’t leave, and if they do, oh well. There is another one that’s leaving from somewhere else, and we’ll plop ‘em right in their spot.” Frankie seemed to come to terms with her perception of the importance of her position by asserting, “They don’t care how good of a teacher you are.” The theory still remains that the perception of an art educator’s place within the PCS is relative to the teacher, building and community it serves.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings that were discovered through the course of interviews with six participants: Elizabeth, Frankie, Casey, Terry, Kari and Linda. The brief synopsis of the PCS buildings and the individual perceptions, stories and experiences of the participants, who had first-hand experience with the workings of the
school system, were comprised of findings that emerged as related to relative theory and research examined in the study. The key topics presented were not limited to but consisted of: The empowering and disempowering factors of curriculum and teaching, disparities in data and the realities of teaching within a management company. The empowering and disempowering aspects included: motivation by student need, appreciation of employment, the building community, teacher morale, lack of planning, lack of support, lack of resources, lack of facilities, and teaching at-risk metropolitan youth, disparities in data regarding experience, disconnect between PCS buildings, evolution of teacher expectations, compensation as a money motivator, the question of the status quo, realities of management including the idea of parental choice, the impact of a school in lawsuit, and the erosion of teacher morale. With the findings exemplified in this chapter a subsequent process of interpretation, including the discussion of research question, conclusions and implication in light of inquiry, and possible recommendations for future research is necessary.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The previous chapter articulated the data retrieved during interviews with six participants in this case study. This chapter will communicate the conclusions of this thesis, implications and recommendations for further research and a brief summary. Through the course of this study, six art educators teaching in metropolitan PCS were interviewed. It was the goal of this research to acquire more knowledge of the individual stories relative to their positions and experience within the visual arts departments of the school systems. An investigation of the empowering and discouraging factors affecting the classroom, the multiple realities and challenges of executing the visions for their classrooms, the disparities in data as well as the social and political atmospheres surrounding metropolitan PCS are presented in this chapter. Due to the recent legislation that has allowed PCS systems to exist, information regarding art education in conjunction within this educational venue is sparse. The dedication and details of this research will optimistically allow for further investigation and inspiration into this niche subject matter for further research in the field of art education.

Discussion

Since the onset of the EdChoice Scholarship Program in Cleveland, Ohio, the amendments allowing private businesses to sponsor, create, and manage charter schools while claiming a profit has become the object of much political and media debate (EdChoice Scholarship Program, 1998). It was the goal of this research to seek out and
understand the realities of teaching art in this type of school system through the eyes of the instructors. To achieve this, the primary research questions investigated were: What is the depiction of art education in PCS through the eyes of its instructors; What empowers teachers to achieve their goals in art education within metropolitan PCS; What discourages teachers to achieve their goals in art education within metropolitan PCS? Secondary research questions were developed to better analyze and interpret the disposition of the participants’ individual experiences in facilitating their art education departments within the school system. These questions were as follows:

♦ How does the fluxing economic status of metropolitan school districts relate to art programs present in its PCS systems?
♦ How does administrative support and classroom resources affect the success of art educators’ classroom goals?
♦ How does parental choice influence parental involvement in a metropolitan PCS art program?
♦ How does the experience of teaching art in a metropolitan PCS influence the morale and satisfaction of its instructors?

A Depiction of Art Education in Ohio’s Metropolitan PCS Systems

This chapter synthesizes the results of case studies with six art educators from Ohio’s metropolitan PCS. Participant responses are categorized with consideration to the coding used in Chapter four’s interpretation of findings and supplemented with commentary from the principal investigator. Themes and conclusions that align directly to outside research will be substantiated as such below.
Perceived Empowering and Discouraging Factors: Curriculum and Teaching

Two of the research questions asked: What empowers or discourages teachers to achieve their goals in art education within metropolitan PCS? According to six participants, recollections of both positive and negative aspects of their experiences were exposed. Below are the generalizations of data presented chronologically as they appeared in chapter four, along with research interpretations of the rationale of their commentary.

Sense of Purpose in Motivating Students

As a group, the participants expressed great amounts of empathy for their students. Some felt that the students were the entire reason for their career and were extremely motivated to build trust through participation in the visual arts. Others became emotionally involved, and took the time to communicate specific students’ situations and accomplishments in the classroom. The importance of this information correlates directly to the functionality of classroom management and student motivation.

Despite the political or professional happenings of a school system, the purpose of becoming an educator is to instruct and guide student learning to fulfill their highest potential. If compassion for student needs and nurturing for development of young minds is absent from a curriculum, the outcomes will be devastating and unnecessarily so. This sentiment is supported by the research of Hamre and Pianta (2005), who conducted a study of 910 first-graders that academic achievement drastically improved in nurturing and emotional present classrooms. They concluded, “Students who experience sensitive, and positive interactions with teachers perceive (the instructors) as more supportive and
(the students) are more motivated to learn” (p. 951). This can also be seen true to this case study as teachers who presented less emotional attachments to students, found more difficulty and longer periods of adaptation to establish a trusting and productive learning environment in the art room. Kari in particular noted feelings of disenchantment in regards to challenges in classroom management and building student trust as a culmination of negative experiences overtime.

Appreciation for Employment

All active educators, whether their involvement in a PCS was in the past or present, cite an arbitrary course that brought them to their positions. Many claim that they had no preference on whether the school was urban or profit-centered, but were appreciative to be working in their career field in any educational setting. They attributed their appreciative demeanor to the poor market for art educators in Ohio and the need for experience in the classroom. All began their experience within the school as being eager and enthusiastic about the potential for their influence on the lives within their school buildings.

Speculations rise in regards to the longevity of the participants’ appreciation for their employment over the next five years. Five of the six participants in this study claimed that their experiences in PCS environments were their first teaching encounter. Colbert & Wolff (1992) explain that 50% of beginning teachers in urban schools leave the field within the first five-years. There may be a multitude of reasons for this; Shann (1998) correlated job satisfaction in educators directly to their retention and involvement
in school achievement. In urban school systems specifically teachers did not stay due to their lack of involvement in curricular and school decisions.

Teaching art in a PCS represents unique circumstances in regards to the content area and educational venue. Though the participants did not encounter strict guidelines when implementing art curriculum, job satisfaction affected by other areas such as the availability of resources and facilities in the PCS may have caused a recent turnover in art educators within the school buildings. Therefore, the reason so many first-year art teachers within the PCS were found for this study is a direct result of the loss of art educators from the year prior. The question remains as to how long the educators studied for this research will claim to be appreciative to be merely employed?

The Building Community

The responses from participants regarding the amount of support and camaraderie received from other staff members within their building were non-exclusive. Two participants spoke of feeling completely supported and understood in the realm of importance and mission of visual arts education. Others spoke of similar relationships with staff members outside of the classroom but described minor difficulties in regards to defending their programs’ relevance and merit to administration, homeroom teachers, and janitorial personnel.

The relationships that occur between teachers are of particular concern in underachieving school districts (Shann, 1998). Due to the chaotic managerial status of the PCS school buildings many participants felt that they were left to their own devices in regards to collaboration in the project-based initiatives set forth by the CMC. The lack of
administrative supervision and support in implementing integrative curriculum has caused a strain on resources and relationships within school buildings. Participants without formal classrooms were uneasy to introduce lessons that may disturb or annoy homeroom teachers’ environments, while others saw limited initiatives by homeroom teachers to ask for assistance in any integration. The lack of effective leadership in building strong community ties amongst teachers contributes to the risk of teacher turnover within school buildings.

*Personal Teacher Morale*

Participants who started their teaching careers within a PCS claimed that the level of their morale inside the classroom was dependent on their ability and timeliness to adjust their teaching styles and curriculum to meet the unique needs of their students. Berry (2009) recorded examples of needs as discussed by educator Tim Rollins as being sensitive to the circumstances of students’ environments. This knowledge will assist in empowering At-Risk youth to reclaim their neighborhoods by becoming literate and active visual members of society in attempts to reconstruct the realities of metropolitan areas that were meant to deter them as artists and citizens. The participants of this study who took longer and found more difficulty in this sentiment expressed that their interest and passion had decreased from their initial enthusiasm at the beginnings of their careers, due to a lack of relationship between themselves and their students. While those timely in their adaptations felt they had learned to cope with classroom stressors and made attempts to stay positive each day. These participants were also able to refer back to their
initial motivators as a continuous inspiration in advancing in experience and capabilities within their careers.

Hope for the Future

Though minimal time was spent with participants relative to the entirety of their experiences, responses to the future of their programs in a PCS System were documented in two ways. Linda was very optimistic about her ambition to remain in the school long enough to have taught each grade from kindergarten. This was based off a model of an inspirational teacher within her building. The longevity and trust building potential of her career drove her aspirations for the prospective academic years. All other participants spoke of subsequent school years as placing themselves in the past tense, referring to intentions of teaching elsewhere or the admittance of foreseeing no improvement or change for educational circumstances placed upon them by the building, administration or corporate management company.

A Teacher’s Vision – Realities and Challenges

Contrary to the empowering factors effecting art educators in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS, the following discussions and conclusions contributed to the research question inquiring about the aspects that discouraged the participants from achieving the goals of their art education programs at time of interview.

Lack of Planning

The sentiment expressed by all participants concludes that the lack of planning during the school day made a hindering effect on their curricular goals. The need for
support staff during school hours dictated art educators in many roles. These aspects of participants experience are speculated to be true in many other educational venues outside of the PCS. These included monitoring duties such as breakfast, lunch, detention, hall monitoring and dismissal. Three of the participants discussed their involvement in supplemental instructional activities such as direct instruction reading groups and Ohio Achievement Assessment tutoring. For these educators their responsibilities outside of the classroom were equal to their time instructing and preparing for their content area, thus creating stress and overwhelming feelings in achieving their classroom goals.

Time is the first variable cited by Mims and Lankford (1995) in defining American art education. When attempting to profile the average elementary art teacher, the researchers found that most have little planning time, feel undervalued in their programs and are slowly losing contact time with students. As a result many art teachers are not able to meet curricular goals by proper grade level. Art educators in secondary school systems are implementing remedial instruction to their students due to a lack of support for the visual arts in early elementary education. Lack of planning and instructional time was cited by all six participants in this study as discouraging aspects of their careers. The implications that arise from lack of planning and teaching will follow the potential artistic achievements of students throughout their education as the highest quality of art education that teachers wish to provide, is not legitimately attainable by proper planning and preparation of teaching time during the school day.
Lack of Resources and Facilities

Due to the individual buildings and enrollment of each school building inhabited by the teachers interviewed, very diverse responses to their classroom resources and facilities were found. The majority of participants expressed a lack of resources and facilities. Two teachers with no physical classroom performed their instruction in the venue of the homeroom classroom. Two others described a need for resources such as water, walls and worktables for student projects. Only the two remaining instructors described facilities and access to material resources as sufficient or exceeding their needs.

Money is the second variable factor that Mims and Lankford (1995) define in American art education. When asking elementary art teachers whether they would professionally benefit from higher wages or higher classroom support including budget and class time, 71% replied that they would rather be supported with additional resources and time. The inconsistency in art teacher support in this case study still seems consistent to Mims & Lankford’s findings that nationwide the average elementary art teacher’s budget can range from 20 cents to 20 dollars per student. It seems somewhat ridiculous that such discrepancies would be present amongst teachers employed by the same CMC. The lack of precedent in supporting the arts within this PCS in regards to budget and facilities is a direct result of the undervalued nature of visual arts education in school buildings that the participants represent; again acting as a detriment to any student wishes to pursue interest in the visual arts in leisure or potential careers.
Lack of Parental and Administrative Support

Aside from feelings of support or inadequacy within the building community, participants were asked to discuss their feelings within the realm of administrative and parental support. No explanation was completely positive or negative, but unique to each case investigated. In situations where support was lacking from either source, the effects were extremely detrimental to the educators’ morale and confidence within their career.

In relation to administration two themes from interviews were prevalent in the effects of low support: turnover and helplessness. Many participants spoke of numerous changes in principal and vice principals, causing inconsistency in building operations each year. This instability was also described as the root of differing budgets and duties each school year. Two participants felt a lack of confidence in building management regarding the perceived value of their programs and capabilities of administration in handling licensure progression paperwork. At least once voice in this study projected the issues of administrative support to the corporate management company, defending her principal as being helpless to the issues surrounding the art room.

Another support system affecting the art educators was the parents of the students taught within their program. Three participants observed apathy and lack of involvement or recognition by parents, including the unimportance of the grades received, indifference to issues in classroom behavior as well as a lack of interest in extra curricular art shows or exhibitions. The three educators that did not share exactly in this opinion did not share stories in direct opposition; but had also not experienced instances of direct apathy or disinterest. Neither cluster of responses spoke highly of the amount of parental involvement or interest in their programs, to make a significantly positive experience.
Teaching Students At-Risk

The most conclusive information regarding the discouraging or challenging experiences of art educators in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS resides in the social and domestic risk factors that surround the student demographic in which they teach. Unanimously each interview resulted in the direct involvement of At-Risk youth as an extreme challenge in the achievement of teacher goals in attempting to transcend poverty, the assumption of learned helplessness, and lack of positive role models. A number of participants took an active interest in gaining knowledge of students’ home lives, and claimed that being a positive role model was important to their personal teaching philosophies. Others chose to adapt curriculum based on passive observation of student artwork and peer conversations; meaning a lack of emotional involvement, which seemed to affect trust building between teachers and students. In all cases, understanding the realities and challenges of teaching metropolitan students was seen as a vital to maintaining teacher morale and curriculum development.

Children At-Risk for dangerous future events can be characterized in two ways: demographics regarding socio-economic status and parental support; and problematic behavior in school functions, such as behavior, attention and social interactions with teachers and peers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Though the role of art educators in the lives of At-Risk youth may seem daunting and limited, the importance for empathetic and positive learning experiences in the classroom has never been more imperative for the success of these students both in and outside of their academic careers. A collaboration of experiences and relationships between students and teachers must be thought of as an investment into the emotional capital that fuels student motivation and teacher
satisfaction in succeeding in classroom goals. This seems even more so the case for students within the PCS.

Disparities in Data

No conclusion can be made indefinitely when generalizing the findings of this study, due to the individualized nature that the interviews placed upon personalized responses and narrative accounts of experience. However, categorizing the participants by experience and longevity within the PCS System assisted in the decoding of information to find common or differing themes revealed through the voices of the instructors. The topics presented below involve the differences in content regarding: experience, inconsistencies in school buildings, compensation and the will to stay or leave.

Experience

Though participants of this study vary in the amount of experience, five of six instructors claimed that their position within a PCS was the first job attained in their careers. These five also candidly spoke about periods of hopelessness and adjustment when attempting to orchestrate a curriculum based on student need. As they became more comfortable and confident in their roles, three teachers with more than one-year experience claimed to expect more from their school buildings. The requests were centered on compensation, material resources and classroom facilities. The other two first-year teachers had no requests or increase of expectations. The question remains if Ohio’s PCS art educators simply feel entitled to more as they grow in experience, or if they are ignorant to the needs of their curriculum in the beginnings of their careers? I
suspect that as educators become more experienced and confident in their classroom and curricular skills as they gain experience, and feel that the improvement in their performance should be reflected in their salaries and classroom budgets.

School System Disconnect: Different Feelings in Different Buildings

Each educator interviewed represented a different school building within the PCS. However, even though the identical CMC manages them all, the facilities described by the teachers were polar opposites. Two of the participants described traveling art curriculums, where all of their instruction happened in the homeroom. Difficulties expressed with this system were the lack of control over classroom setup, feelings of inferiority with respect to classroom teachers and janitorial staff, as well as curriculum stifling as teachers were not able to execute lessons and projects that could have been accomplished with a designated art room.

The opposition of this sentiment painted a more optimistic and positive picture of their classroom facilities. Terry was given many computers, projectors, materials and access to a classroom sink. Linda actually had access to two art rooms, with enough supplies to withhold ordering for most of the academic year. Conclusions can be speculated by the variance in resources and facilities noted within the PCS. When the participants were asked about their resources in reference to other teachers in the system, no explanation could be given or guessed. Why are art educators not given similar treatment in regards to their physical environments and budgets?
Compensation as a Money Motivator

The issues of compensation align closely with the responses to the variance in career experience. Participants with more than one-year experience were more forthcoming with information regarding their salaries. Elizabeth claimed to have not received a pay-raise for the past 3 academic years. Other experienced teachers shared this outlook. Casey expressed a bitter attitude regarding money as a motivating factor, as the time clock personally offended the late hours she kept after school, while not being compensated. All participants that cited money as a motivating factor are actively looking for more stable employment where financial growth is compensated with experience and classroom performance. The data predicts that the first-year teachers interviewed will evolve to expect more money for their longevity and improved classroom performance. This is disconcerting considering the active and tacit wish for alternate employment, and reflects teacher retention within the PCS negatively.

Lankford, Loeb and Wykoff (2002) warn that the ignorance of the teacher labor market and employee compensation will drastically decrease the level of academic achievement in metropolitan cities. There is no dispute that an experienced educator has many advantages over those just beginning in the field, especially if the teacher has remained in the same school system for a number of years. When teachers are in constant flux of staying and leaving within the same school district there is a lack of advancement due to the learning curve and curricular adaptation. This is also true in the art room, as participants with more than one year within the PCS described improvement in their curriculum and lessons based off of trial and error in the classroom. So it can be assumed that PCS buildings that retain art teachers for less than five years are constantly
reinventing the wheel in its approach to art education; leaving the students frustrated and unlikely to show exceptional amounts of motivation if their prior knowledge is not being utilized, or simply repeated year to year. It can then be assumed that the quality of art education program in PCS is inevitably suffering and cannot fully evolve.

The Question of the Status Quo

Each participant recalled empowering and discouraging factors to their employment within the PCS. But when asked the tough question if they would return to their school building, four of the six replied that they would not. Even the two that claimed they would stay, were actively looking for more stable employment due to the inconsistency of positions available year to year. The contracts for this PCS are one academic year in length, and give little notice when positions are terminated, or performance dictates a non-renewal of employment contract. It can be speculated that the organization and retention patterns of the school system are not conducive to staff retention or confidence in their worth within the school in regards to teacher contracts, and trust in management by the staff.

The ratio that four out of six teachers are willing to stay in the PCS after a maximum of five years experience, speaks higher than the 50% retention rate of Colbert & Wolff (1992). A unique perspective on the retention of urban teachers was researched by Lankford, Loeb and Wykoff (2002), regarding the quality of educators drawn to inner city schools and the quality of teachers needed by metropolitan student demographics. The researchers claim that urban school districts attract the least qualified teachers due to their lack of marketability and willingness to work for less than competitive wages. The
dilemma that arises in this discovery is that inner city children are some of the most difficult students to teach because of their At-Risk status. Therefore the trends in metropolitan educators retention and credentials may not be matched for optimal academic achievement. This mismatching of credentials and student demographic is speculated to expand the achievement gap between school systems in poverty and affluent school districts. It is apparent that PCS and the CMC administrators need to focus energy on quality recruitment of teachers as well as instilling motivating incentives to retain high performing educators to see any longevity in academic success of its students.

Realities of Management

Outside of the art room, circumstances surround Ohio’s PCS art educators. These situations involve the broader political and workings of the school system. The participants were asked to share their feelings and understandings of these systems that directly or indirectly impact the empowering or discouraging aspects of their careers. Interview questions revealed the following themes: parental choice; implications of a school in lawsuit; and erosion of teacher morale and dim outlooks. The responses from participants relate to the broader research question: “What is the depiction of art education in PCS Systems through the eyes of its instructors?”

Parental Choice

Parental choice is sometimes used as an umbrella term to describe an educational climate that invites parents to take an active role in deciding the type of school system that best fits their children’s needs. In educationally “voucheered” areas, the parents may
have an array of choices spanning from private religious-based schools to public districts and profit and non-profit public charter schools. With so many choices available to metropolitan parents in Ohio, participants expressed an environment centered on a consumerist approach to education. In all interviews, the onset of parental apathy was identified as either a risk or reality for the educators. The lack of parental involvement or recognition for the arts programs was seen as offensive and demoralizing to some teachers. One participant in particular discussed the disconnection between the corporate management company and the individual school buildings. The marketing and recruitment actions of the management company seemed to paint an optimistic and misleading perception of the school’s performance and financial means; thus creating false hope and higher expectations placed on educators. The conclusions drawn from data, present parental choice in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS as commercialized and disconnected from parental needs and interests.

*Implications of a School in Lawsuit*

The complex nature of legal dispute between the PCS System and their management company was discussed in detail in chapter two. Many of the participants were unaware of any disagreements between the two, and did not seem phased by its potentially negative outcomes. Both participants that shared little knowledge of the incident in their interview seemed terrified by the results in relation to their job stability. The unnerving aspects of this dispute, is the management company’s withholding of information to its employees. There is no good outcome for the educators in this system. The financial accusations of the school board could divorce the buildings from their
management company and leave the entities of the school buildings barren from employees, buildings, students and state charter status. If the management company is able to withhold financial records due to proprietary protection as cited in Hope Academy Broadway et. al. v. White Hat Management LLC, et. al. (2010), the students and staff members of the buildings may encounter a dim future of in terms of financial stability in their educational careers. When staff and students are made unaware of the financial workings of the educational venue in which they are affiliated, a lack of trust and satisfaction will result—leading to lack of student enrollment and teacher retention.

**Erosion of Teacher Morale and Dim Outlooks**

The erosion of teacher morale in relation to the participants, discussed the evolution of change in career outlooks through the duration of their employment. There was a clear correlation between the longevity of educators and the positive outlooks for their future within the company. Two participants within their first academic year were very eager to continue teaching in their current buildings, and have already started planning to improve their programs. The remaining four participants were split in their response; two had already left their buildings to move on to teach in other venues, while the two that remain within the PCS are actively seeking other employment for the next school year. Despite the variance in morale and motivation to stay within their schools, all participants do not discount the insecurity of their employment and are unsure if the buildings will remain open due to lawsuit or poor academic achievement. All participants were filling out Résumés and applications as a safety net to their livelihoods within PCS systems in metropolitan Ohio cities.
Finding Hope amidst the Hoax:

In depicting the personal and professional profiles of six art educators in metropolitan cities in Ohio, it has become clear that the sometimes struggling attempts of the visual arts programs are not enough to make a considerable difference in the lives of children At-Risk. In order for arts education to operate at its highest qualities the concerns of the participants must be addressed on a larger-political scale. The separation that occurs between the PCS and other non-profit charter school systems is the financial exploitation of a city’s demographics. I feel that it is completely demoralizing and unethical to possess a school system in a resource poor area that is innately concerned more with diverting public educational funds than supporting its teachers and students to achieve a higher expectation for academic success. This section of chapter five will be devoted to illustrating a highly successful model of metropolitan charter education as well as the potential of art education within the metropolitan demographic to exceed the highest expectations for student accomplishment.

Combating Parental Apathy

As seen from the thematic data of this case study, many participants were greatly influenced by the lack of parental support for their programs within the PCS. This discouraging aspect of their career involved, lack of parent interest regarding behavioral issues and student artwork accomplishments; lack of communication or interaction during the majority of academic years; and feelings of hopelessness regarding accountability of parents to become involved in their scholastic and artistic development.
When looking for inspiration to overcome a problematic situation, those suitable for consideration are actively overcoming obstacles that are seen as detrimental to success. Eichna (2010), depicted one way Dr. Moskowitz combats the presence of inactive parents is by holding the adults liable for student success. Parents of her students are required to read six books each week with their children, to create higher level of literacy within the schools. If students are late or unexcused in absence both the parent and student are required to attend the usually voluntary school sessions on Saturdays. Dr. Moskowitz’s philosophy revolves around the greater responsibilities of parents by never blaming children for not learning. She claims that if a five-year old is not completing required coursework, it is primarily the fault of the adult. As a result, parents who do not comply with the contractual agreements of involvement are not permitted to continue in the school system. This type of commitment to student learning has made the Harlem Success Academy in extreme demand; as its applicants outnumber available seats seven to one, consistently.

What can be learned from this type of parental infrastructure? Ohio’s PCS systems, as perceived by its art instructors in this study, are apathetic to the potential roles parents play in their students’ learning. Many participants cited disconnections between their students’ home lives and school expectations and felt undervalued in their attempts to reach curricular goals. If parents were held to a higher standard, educators would not bear the brunt of consequences for lower performing academic achievement and a more community based approach to learning could offer more collaboration than the current apathetic or combative relationships that exist between parents, students and
teachers. Parents account for the most influential role models in a child’s life, and therefore should be expected to fulfill that role to the highest potential possible.

Security in Teacher Retention

When analyzing the profiles of participants in this case study the lack of longevity of teachers was very compelling. Over half of those interviewed were in the very beginnings of their careers. Second to parents, the educators of At-Risk youth are an extremely important aspect to the continued success of any school system. Due to the lack of longevity of the art teachers within Ohio’s metropolitan PCS, job satisfaction and teacher retention are of great concern. The lack of motivating factors within Ohio’s metropolitan PCS regarding parental and administrative support as well as compensation may be seen as the cause to high turnover regarding its art educators.

Harlem Success Academy maintains their commitment to a high quality teacher recruitment process as well as a tremendous amount of teacher support through resources, time and scheduling. As seen in the documentary produced by Ashman-Kipervaser, Lawler, and Sackler (2010), Dr. Moskowitz prides herself in surpassing the accommodations and motivators of traditional public teachers’ unions by offering paid maternity leave to female employees as well as competitive above-average salary infrastructures. Teachers are compensated for multiple planning periods per day, time spent after school, transportation vouchers, and company provided cell phones, as well as unlimited emotional support by administration on a daily basis. In 2010, all teachers offered a position within her school systems returned with no less than a 97% retention rate in any of the seven buildings. The consistency of teachers being able to build on
their skills and confidence in a single school building helps to establish trust with parents as well as students to assist in emotional support while learning.

This type of support for educators is unheard of in Ohio’s metropolitan PCS. The mentality of the CMC is to treat the entity of urban schooling as a business. The teachers are to act as salesmen to the consumerist-viewed parents of At-Risk youth, and if a sale falls through, resulting in parents and students being unhappy with the educational ‘product’ provided, the fault is of the salesman—not the CMC brand. Due to information researched in the financial allegations of White Hat Management, it seems that the biggest investment to Ohio’s PCS is in the company itself, not the educators or students engulfed with the pressures of learning in a poor social climate. Lankford, Loeb and Wykoff (2002), claimed that ignorance of teachers’ motivation towards compensation would not retain teachers that may be suited for the metropolitan demographic. This is true for Ohio’s PCS, and has proven detrimental to the academic achievement of its students.

**Student Accountability**

After discussing the potential roles that parents and educators play in the success of metropolitan education, the last instrument of change is inherent in the students themselves. All participants in this studied cited an extreme mission to their students’ needs and life situations, but again were discouraged in their attempts to initiate change in the students’ world through the arts. A lack of confidence and accountability were common themes amongst the participants in this study.
Through life coaching and high expectations, Harlem Success Academy does not
discount the social stressors and situations affecting her students, but strives to make the
positive aspirations of their students a reality. In a interview with Eichna (2010),
Moskowitz was quoted in describing her students as “… kids in domestic violence
shelters, lots of homeless kids, we have kids whose mothers and fathers are getting
incarcerated during the school year.” (p.1). Her response to their unique and
extraordinary situations is continuous life coaching towards academic success.
Throughout their education of Harlem Success Academy, students are constantly referred
to as future college graduates. Life coaching in terms of potential career paths and eight-
week academic assessments make the students, parents and teachers regularly aware of
their abilities and achievements throughout the school year. Tutoring as well as
scaffolding across grade levels creates a collaborative learning environment that expects
the highest levels of motivation, behavior and commitment on the part of the student.

To see the difference between the Harlem Success Academy and Ohio’s PCS, a
question arises about the reason behind such differences in student behavior and
motivation: How do they achieve such a lofty but important goal? The answer resides in
Harlem Success Academy’s zero-tolerance philosophy. They have created an
educational environment that is so successful and in demand, that there is no room for
insubordinate behaviors or attitudes. Ohio’s metropolitan PCS systems are lacking a key
component to its approach towards students’ achievement and esteem: an ill diverted
mission to aligning student goals with that of its school system, and raising the
expectations of its students to achieve in education and life satisfaction. Ohio’s At-Risk
youth have the capacity to become productive, educated and successful members of society, if they are believed in and coached above their circumstances.

Teaching Beyond the Tests

Standardized testing is more than likely not seen as an enjoyable task for elementary students. In Ohio’s metropolitan PCS systems the emphasis of standardized testing and preparation has forced many educators, such as those featured in this study, to divert from their content areas in the art room to being simply tutors and proctors to multiple choice questions. Though in many school systems, enormous amounts of time and pressure are placed on teaching students how to take these types of tests to obtain perceived academic achievement.

Dr. Moskowitz offers another dimension to standardized testing, considering their lack of higher order thinking skills. Ashman-Kipervaser, Lawler, and Sackler (2009) portray educational as well as extracurricular activities as encouraged to develop metropolitan minds into critically thinking-enjoyable academics. Programs that are aimed to achieving this goal are chess, music, sports, and the visual arts. Much time and effort is spent into developing these programs to appeal to a diversified student body with a multitude of talents and interests. Eichna (2010) quoted Moskowitz’s philosophy as, “If a child loves being in school, they will love to learn.” (p. 1). This mentality has elevated the dismal expectations of New York City’s demographic to the 32nd of 3500 highest rank school systems in the entire state.

It is somewhat disheartening that our nation’s educational assessment tools have made it possible for a single person’s belief in critical thinking skills to offer a renewed
lease on academic achievement. The PCS and CMC of Ohio’s cities have seemingly forgotten the importance of tactile learning, self-reflection and expression, societal awareness and the value of being literate in a fast paced world. Though I would not place the blame entirely on the Ohio PCS, but on the assumptions made by the nature of the tests themselves. The nature in which children are tested is simply rewarded with a pass or fail—or a nominal statistic on a state report card. Businessmen that operate PCS systems in this state have wrongly assumed that the proper way to educate a child is not based in what they can learn from experience, but what they can regurgitate on a bubble sheet with a number two pencil. Perhaps if the standard practice for evaluating student success was more centered on the context of individual strengths and interests of students, the report cards would be a more accurate depiction of student accomplishment.

Implications for Further Research

There have been significant amounts of research related to areas of charter school education in metropolitan areas. However, a hole exists in the specific realm of art education studies within the profit-sectors of charter school education. The hopes exceeding the completion of this case study is to expose the need to close the gap in art education research. My personal recommendations for further research on this topic specifically will be mentioned in this section. They will be described in more detail in reference to expansion of research, blending qualitative and quantitative methods, and an idealistic outline of continuations in this research area.
Expansion of Research

The purpose of this study was to lay the foundation for further research in regards to Ohio’s metropolitan art educators. After the comprehension of this study, areas not specifically focused in this research will need to be researched to deeply examine the PCS phenomenon in reference to art education in Ohio. Logical subsequent research questions would be best utilized in answering questions unanswered in this specific compilation of experiences.

- How do the experiences of PCS art educators in Ohio metropolitan cities equate to those of public, non-profit, private and religious school sectors?
- Would the experiences noted by participants reflect similar themes if direct observations of their circumstances was documented?
- How do the parents, homeroom teachers and administrators perceive the realities of art education in Ohio’s metropolitan cities?
- Would the responses of participants be repeated if they were studied over the course of many school years? How would their curricular goals and emotions change with more experience within the PCS?
- What is a current depiction of PCS art education in metropolitan cities in other states?
- What circumstances will change preceding the lawsuit between a PCS and its CMC for Ohio’s metropolitan art educators?
- How can the pre-service training of teachers better prepare art educators to better identify and tend to the specific needs of metropolitan At-Risk youth?
Qualitative and Quantitative: Blending for an Authentic Statistical Profile

Qualitative research methods for depicting experiences of individual art educators was appropriate for the smaller scale of participants interviewed. However in order to see the impact of PCS environments on the field of art education, research on a much larger scale would prove to be invaluable to the themes of this study. If simplified questioning in the form of surveys of demographic statistics were used, the relation of certain metropolitan cities could be recorded to interpret the dynamics affecting different areas of art education in distinctive areas of the nation. The high number of negative or discouraging experiences presented by this study’s participants would substantiate or even devalue their results in terms of content if researched on a larger scale. Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods in this field of study has the potential to illustrate the concerns of this study in both a statistical and unique manner.

Idealistic Research Aspirations

Many factors can restrict an attempt to research the passionate subjects of investigators, including time, resources, IRB/human subject clearance and support. The need to improve or expand on the realizations of research is innate and to be expected of any avid investigator. Considering these factors, the following depicts personal aspirations to continue this area of study in ideal conditions.

Initial thoughts of expansion of this research topic revolved around a visual description of the data, as well as increased commentary. One invigorating and exhilarating avenue to achieve these goals would be through the production of a documentary. The potentials of this film would expose a real-time dimension to the
experience of art educators within the PCS of metropolitan Ohio. Candid and authentic commentary through motion picture would quickly convey the profiles of prominent individuals involved. Included in these profiles would include the illusive executive officers of White Hat Management LLC, in attempts to add depth to the perceptions currently presented. This aspiration comes from the inspirational documentaries recently made available via the Internet and DVD. Multimedia investigations are quickly becoming the social norm for receiving information to mass populations. The voices of those experiencing the variable dynamics of the PCS art programs are worthy of critical exposure, to ignite positive social change in a shadowed corner of American art education.

A more academic premise for further research would be based in the pre-service teaching training programs of art educators as they pertain to At-Risk youth. Haberman (1990) explained that many undergraduate programs training teachers do not cater to the complexities and discouraging lifestyles of metropolitan children. As a continuation to this allegation, I would like to further investigate art educators across the nation to gain knowledge of the concentrations of their degrees prior to obtaining teaching licensure. From this data, I hope to inspire a new wave of curricular development in higher education in attempts to combat the struggles and difficulties cited by participants in this study; thus preparing future art educators for success in their influence on children At-Risk.

Summary

Throughout the many layers described in the five chapters of literature review, research, interpretation and recommendations there are many big ideas that can be
synopsized in terms of the original research question: *What is the depiction of art education in PCS through the eyes of its instructors?* The experiences of six participants paint a picture of resilient teachers in turmoil. Throughout the conflicting empowering and discouraging factors affecting the successful achievement of curricular goals, PCS art educators are motivated by a genuine compassion for the success of their students; combat a lack of resources and support from parents, administration, and questionable budgets; and are terrified by the threat of a lawsuit terminating their affiliation with the programs they have passionately constructed. They are committed to their content areas and attempt to improve the level of trust that exists between teacher and student. They are aware of the detriments of their CMC and express an array of opinions regarding the competence and future of the schools’ operations. Beneath the brief statements above are reflections and experiences much more unique and complex than research can divulge.

The informative and emotional journey of this research project has left me with strong opinions regarding the nature of PCS. Personal experience within the system as well as corroborating stories from individuals in similar circumstances has led myself to be an avid advocate for the needs of At-Risk children to achieve academic success, regardless of their physical geography or demographic. Though personal commentary may speak less than positively of the environment from which the participants reside at times, there are certain issues that I do not oppose. I am not against the ideals of community schooling, parental choice or even an educational business model. However, in the sake of the students helpless to exceed their circumstances alone, I am strongly against what the three abovementioned terms represent for profiteering companies such as White Hat Management: the exploitation of metropolitan at-risk youth without regard
to the potential benefits of producing urban intellectuals in the sake of financial gain.

Offering At-Risk metropolitan students education in the visual arts can prepare them as young artists to deal and conquer a world that is betting against them. However, it is my conclusion from the data collected in this study that there are needs within the politics of PCS art education that are not being met. Educators beginning in the field within such an environment will have to overcome and prepare for obstacles in order to focus on the quality of art instruction within their curriculum. These issues involve the risk of inadequate resources and support, difficult live situations of potential students and a work environment that may not provide monetary motivation. If these complications can be conquered with a strong instrumentalist aesthetic; lessons that are based on issues that surround their living realities of students; and a mission to adapt failing teaching styles to improve the quality of art instruction, then and only then will metropolitan PCS art educators be able to be truly student and art centered in their curricular goals. If politicians, parents, teachers and profiteers cannot agree on educational quality over financial gain to drive consumerism and competition in metropolitan schools, then the presence of the visual arts will begin to severely lack in quality or become extinct due to lack of utilization.
APPENDIX

Transcripts of Interview Questions

Elizabeth: Current Fifth-Year PCS Art Educator

Q: Would you briefly describe to me who you are professionally, that brought you to where you are in your career today?

Q: How would you describe your art education thus far?

Q: Do you take a specific aesthetic stance when creating your lessons?

Q: Is the administration aware that your situation is not ideal?

Q: When attempting to gain the interest of your students, is visual or pop culture a tactic that is used?

Q: What would an average school day for you consist of?

Q: Do you feel that you have adequate planning time in your day?

Q: Do you think that the life your students lead outside of school, whether there is any domestic and social risk factors affect their art performance?

Q: Does anything come out in their artwork that may allude to their life outside of school?

Q: What do you feel are some of the most satisfying aspects of your career?

Q: What do you feel are some of the unsatisfying aspects of your career in the profit charter school?

Q: With everything you see happening in the building and the company, do you ever feel like you should receive more for your program?

Q: Have you had the same administrator the entire time you’ve been at this school?

Q: Do you have any idea why that happened?

Q: Do you think that you’ve changed since the beginning of your employment?

Q: Funny you say that, because during my interviews I have met a lot of first year teachers that are indeed very happy where they are. What do you think changes
that make you so excited to be teaching art, to when you start expecting more from your school?

Q: Do you foresee any of these situations changing in the future?

Q: What are some of the goals of your art education program?

Q: How do you go about achieving some of your goals?

Q: What challenges do you face when achieving your goals?

Q: How do you feel that you are supported and/or restricted when trying to achieve your goals?

Q: Do you have a running budget for your classroom?

Q: For what your space dictates you can do, do you have enough supplies?”

Q: How do you feel that parental choice affects the involvement of parents in your art program?

Q: Do you have any problems with parents at all?

Q: Would you say that your personal teacher morale is up or down?

Q: If the school remains open would you stay?

Q: Are you actively looking?

Q: Would you ever consider going back to another PCS?

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Casey: Former PCS Art Educator

Q: Casey, could you tell me a little about your background professionally?

Q: Have all of these schools been in metropolitan settings?

Q: Could you briefly describe your art program in specifically the PCS system?

Q: Could you take me there was an average school day was like?

Q: Do you think your duties were given fairly?
Q: Do you think that the domestic or social risk factors that your students were exposed to impacted their art performance?

Q: Were there any points where a domestic stressor or life risk came out through a student’s artwork?

Q: Are you able to do more of that now?

Q: What was the most satisfying aspect of your career in those three years?

Q: What were some of the more unsatisfying aspects?

Q: Did your outlook change from when you were first hired, to when you decided to leave?

Q: Do you foresee the situation changing in that school?

Q: What were some of the goals of your art program? I know you touched on some of this earlier, but what was your big umbrella outlook on what you wanted to achieve?

Q: How do you feel you were supported or restricted in achieving your program’s goals?

Q: Was there a breaking point for you, in reference to teacher morale?

Q: Well do you think that these staff members could be those types of leaders?

Q: What was your personal feeling about the corporate office?

Q: That brings up a good point; do you think the parents would not be so eager to enroll, if they were able to connect the dots between the corporation and the school system itself?

Q: In the future, if you found yourself looking for employment would you be conscious of whether the school system was profit or non?

Kari: Former PCS Art Educator, One-Year Experience

Q: Would you briefly describe yourself professionally, and what brought you to your career in a PCS system?

Q: How would you describe your art education program in this setting?
Q: How would you describe your average school day?

Q: Do you feel that the duties were given out fairly?

Q: What was the physical environment that you were in?

Q: Do you think that the life your students led outside of school, whether it is domestic or social risk factors affecting your students’ art performance?

Q: What were some of the most satisfying aspects of your time there?

Q: What were some of the more unsatisfying aspects?

Q: Did you attitude change at all throughout the school year?

Q: Do you foresee anything changing in the future?

Q: What were some of the goals you had for your art program?

Q: How did you go about achieving these goals?

Q: What challenges did you face when trying to achieve these goals?

Q: At any point did you realize that they were bringing in or creating imagery that alluded to their life outside of school?

Q: How do you feel you were supported in achieving your goals?

Q: Did you have a classroom budget?

Q: Were there any instances where you felt restricted?

Q: How do you feel parental choice affected the amount of parental involvement you had in your program?

Q: By the end of the school year was your teacher morale on an up or down scale?

Q: What was your breaking point?

Q: Do you think they could have done more for you?

Q: Would you ever teach again?

Q: Would you ever consider teaching in a PCS again?
Q: Is there anything else you’d like to add?

_Frankie: Current First-Year PCS Art Educator_

Q: How would you describe yourself professionally and what brought you to where you are now in your career?

Q: How would you describe your art program in this school setting?

Q: What kinds of kids do you have?

Q: Well how would you describe an average school day for you in this environment?

Q: Is that something that most teachers are asked to do?

Q: How do you think that the domestic or social risk factors affect their art performance?

Q: Do you have a specific example that you could give me?

Q: With all things considered, what do you think are the most satisfying aspect of your job in this setting?

Q: What are some of the most unsatisfying parts of your job?

Q: Has your attitude changed at all, inside this type of PCS system?

Q: Do you think the money motivators of the corporate office, will keep you from staying here long term?

Q: Do you foresee the situation changing at all in the future?

Q: Well what are some of the goals of your program specifically?

Q: How do you achieve these goals?

Q: What challenges do you have when reaching your goals?

Q: With everything considered how would you describe your teacher morale?

Q: Why do you think that is?
Q: What are you feelings about parental choice and how that plays into your communication or involvement with parents in your program?

Q: Where is your breaking point?

Q: Do you have a budget that you’re working with?

Terry: Current PCS Art Educator

Q: Would you mind telling me briefly about who you are professionally, and what brought you to where you are now in your career?

Q: So now that you’re teaching 4-8 arts in this building, how would you describe your art education in this PCS?

Q: Is there a specific aesthetic approach that you are taking in your classroom?

Q: How would you describe the routine of your average school day?

Q: Would you say that these things are expected from all staff members?

Q: Being that we are downtown, do you see any of the social or life risk factors make their way into the art room?

Q: What are some of the satisfying and unsatisfying aspects of your job?

Q: Has your mood or morale changed from the beginning of the school year?

Q: Do you see anything changing in the future, in reference to the unsatisfying moments you described?

Q: How do you go about achieving your goals in the classroom?

Q: Could you better explain those “ah-ha” moments, when you learned to do something better than you were before?

Q: How do you feel you are supported by administration and your corporate management company?

Q: Do you ever feel stifled or restricted in achieving your goals?

Q: Do you have a running budget?

Q: One more thing that I wanted to touch on, was whether or not you feel that parental choice affects the level of involvement you have in your art program?
Q: Will you come back next year?

Q: If a situation arose where you were looking for employment again, would you work in another PCS?

Linda: Former PCS Art Educator, One-Year Experience

Q: Would you briefly describe yourself professionally?

Q: How would you describe the area in which you teach?

Q: What is your school like?

Q: Could you describe what your average school day entails?

Q: Do you feel that this balance of time is indicative to each teacher in the building?

Q: You said that your school was taken over by a profit management company, was that recently?

Q: Are there any differences you can tell or hear about how things work?

Q: Do you see that the domestic and social risk factors of where your school is located, affecting their art performance?

Q: Do you think that where your school is located affects that at all?

Q: Do you see yourself or the teachers trying to present yourselves as role models?

Q: Well with that being said, what are some of the more satisfying aspects of your career thus far?

Q: Would that qualify as one of the more unsatisfying aspects of your job?

Q: Has your attitude towards your job changed since the beginning of the school year?

Q: Do you foresee any of the challenges you mentioned changing in the future?

Q: So do you think you have a high teacher turnover rate at your school?

Q: What are some of the goals that you have for your art education program?

Q: What are some of the restrictions or challenges that you foresee when trying to achieve these goals?
Q: Is this how you feel you are supported in meeting your goals?

Q: Are parents active in the school and your program?

Q: Do you see your personal teacher morale going up and down as the year progresses—are you afraid of burnout?

Q: Are you planning on staying then?
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