



ARTS MATTER

"The Official Newsletter of the Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba"

FALL 2008

Chair's Report *By Phillip Duncan*

Good evening everyone and welcome to the annual general meeting of the Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba. My name is Phillip Duncan, Chair of the Alliance. I have had the pleasure of serving the AAEM for four terms and have considered it a privilege to serve as the Chair for the last two years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for coming to the Manitoba Theatre for Young People for tonight's meeting and celebration. It is with great pride that we are able to hold our AGM at this location which adds to our list of unique local arts venues such as last year's AGM at the Broadway Community Centre and Art City, and previously at the Urban Shaman Gallery and the beautiful St. Boniface Museum. MTYP is dedicated to providing students across this community and the province of Manitoba with opportunities to express themselves and explore the world around them through Theatre. By opening MTYP doors to us, it is an indication of another confident partner in support of arts education for each and every student in Manitoba.

What an action packed year this volunteer board has engaged in. We began last September by putting together a multifaceted advocacy campaign. First, we published two full page ads in the *Winnipeg Free Press* promoting the value of education in and through the arts in all of our schools. This advocacy campaign was a 'call to action' for all arts education supporters across the province; a call to action that encouraged everyone to talk to politicians, school trustees, administrators, teachers and other parents to ensure a quality arts education. I would like to thank Jey Thibedeau Silver and Doowah Designs for their superior work on this successful project. These full page ads were then resized into posters and delivered to all schools across the province, because of the generous assistance of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

In conjunction with this initiative, the redevelopment of our website became the hub of the campaign outlining what all of our constituents can do to make a difference for our cause—a 'how to' list on what each of us can do to make an impact. It looks fabulous and I would like to thank Barbara Warrack for her tireless work on this redevelopment and re-launch of our website.

Further to this advocacy campaign, the Alliance developed a series of Public Service Announcements that can be used by the media and arts education advocacy supporters to further the cause. These PSA's can be viewed on our website and I would like to thank Red Sky Films for their participation in the creation of these effective commercials.

One of the most exciting events over the course of the last year was the release of the first wave of curriculum documents on arts education in our early years schools. The province's dedication to the development of this document and interactive website speaks positively to MECY's appreciation of arts education. The department continues to develop both the Middle Years and Senior Years arts curriculum framework documents for the province, all of which are highly anticipated. This achievement leads directly into our very successful arts conference this February at the Caboto Centre entitled: *Taking Flight: Arts Educators in Action*. At this conference we had the privilege of hearing Mr. John Abbott speak on EDUCATION FOR A LIFE WORTH LIVING.

Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba

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Joe Halas, Arts Curriculum Consultant for MECY and fellow board member, also gave us a general overview/presentation on both the new K - 4 arts curriculum and interactive website. Dr. Francine Morin, also fellow board member, gave us a summary report of key preliminary findings for the study of arts education in Manitoba schools. This study will give educators an excellent overview of the status of arts education in our province. Both Joe and Francine did a great job and provided us all with a lot of valuable information. The afternoon of the conference consisted of an excellent variety of workshops and a leadership symposium all of which were very well attended. I would like to thank the entire conference committee, chaired by Joe Halas, who did a superior job.

The last significant event in this past year was the awarding of infrastructure money from the Manitoba Arts Council which led to the hiring of our first Executive Director, Sue Hemphill. MAC awarded us a very significant amount of infrastructure money for the continued development of our organization. This is extremely important considering that MAC stopped infrastructure spending over a decade ago, which makes this award a big departure from past policy. This new funding speaks directly to the importance of AAEM's continued work and the Manitoba Arts Council's belief in that work. Moving from a volunteer board to the hiring of a part time ED is an unbelievably exciting step forward for our organization and we are already experiencing the benefits of having someone in such a valuable position.

In conclusion, I would like to again thank the AAEM board for their continued work and support. It is with great pleasure that I continue to experience the dedication of all of our members and constituents in the development of our important work—ARTS EDUCATION AND CELEBRATION FOR EVERY STUDENT!

Thank you.

Welcome to Our New Executive Director

Sue Hemphill brings over twenty years of experience working in the non-profit sector (social service/ social justice agencies and arts and cultural groups and organizations), education system, and government. Some of the organizations she has worked for include: Winnipeg School Division, New Directions, Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, Manitoba Human Rights Commission, Mediation Services, and Manitoba Arts Council.

Sue is an experienced leader; having developed numerous innovative programs and community projects and events, as well as acting as an outside resource person developing staff and organizational capacity in many organizations and institutions in our community. Sue has specialized training and extensive experience in a number of key roles: mediator, trainer, facilitator, program developer, advocate, promoter, and manager. Equity, diversity, access and human rights are the main issues that Sue has worked directly with throughout her career.

In 2006 – 07 Sue acted as Executive Director of West Broadway Development Corporation for the period of a year stabilizing and guiding the organization through a challenging time of transition and consolidation. For the past year, Sue has been working free lance in many arts and cultural organizations as well as educational institutions. She is a sessional instructor at the University of Winnipeg in the Degree of Conflict Resolution at Menno Simons College.

Sue has worked on a variety of key initiatives and events with AAEM since its' inception and she is very excited to build on the work relationship established to date. In addition to the skills and experience she brings, Sue is passionate about arts education and has a vision for the organization. While at the Manitoba Arts Council she designed and managed two new grant programs, both related to arts education. She co-authored the book *Toolkit for Artist and Community Collaborations* and offers an extensive knowledge and network of arts education in community settings.

Our first operational grant from MAC will enable us to contract Sue on a part time basis. The first priority for Sue and the Board will be to continue to fundraise to reach the minimum financial level set

by the Board. These funds will enable the transition from mostly a project-based organization to one that has staff and the resources to help us move forward with new programming and projects.

The next year is going to be a very exciting one for all of us involved with AAEM and we look forward to the contribution that we believe that Sue can make along with our volunteer Board of Directors.

Welcome Sue!

A First in Arts Education for Manitoba Schools

By Jackie Duhard and Francine Morin

Study shows that Manitoba schools are working hard to offer a rich and varied range of arts programs for students at all levels.

Dr. Francine Morin, a Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba researcher, and head of the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (CTL) Department in partnership with Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) conducted a “first of its kind” provincial study in Canada on the *Study of Arts Education in Manitoba Schools: 2006-2007*. The preliminary findings were released at “Taking Flight: Arts Educators in Action” an arts education conference that included a leadership symposium held on February 21st, 2008 that was well attended by teachers and administrators at all levels, as well as leaders of arts organizations and school trustees.

The *Study of Arts Education in Manitoba Schools: 2006-2007* provides insight and a comprehensive understanding of arts education in our schools. This study presents data which the ministry and its partners in education can use to initiate and design action plans and outreach efforts in improving arts education for all students and teachers in Manitoba.

“In the research we find seeds of optimism. We are seeing strong connections between schools and the arts community, budgets and funding for school arts education are staying the same or increasing at both the school and divisional levels, and enrolment trends are up,” explains Dr. Francine Morin. “There is also a positive upward trend towards hiring arts specialists which is encouraging as they are critical to providing instructional leadership for the arts, and champion its causes.”

As arts programs grow in Manitoba schools (dance, drama, music, and visual arts), so will the need for policy development and professional development opportunities for the teachers on the front lines. Dr. Morin identifies needs for new arts curriculum documents and support for building the teaching capacity of generalist teachers, and acknowledges that room exists for policy to be developed in the arts.

Overall this unique study shows that programming trends in arts education are positive and encouraging. There are strong indicators that students have an increased interest in learning the arts, parents and caregivers support the arts and encourage their children’s participation in the arts, and that schools are responding by increasing their arts education offerings.

For those interested in the preliminary findings, please contact Dr. Francine Morin at fmorin@cc.umanitoba.ca

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REGGIO EMILIA

An Approach to Early Education

By Pat Stefanchuk and Francine Morin

In 2007 a group of Manitoba educators interested in learning more about an innovative approach to early education formed a steering committee to discuss the unique pedagogical practices inspired by the principles of Reggio Emilia. These educators represent university professors, college instructors, early education teachers, child care professionals, superintendents, school administrators, consultants, and members of the arts community who share a common belief about how children learn.

The first initiative of this group involved a Think Tank session held in October 2007. Approximately fifty stakeholders attended the Think Tank held at James Nisbet Community School in Seven Oaks School Division. The main initiative of this ad hoc group is to plan and stage a major conference to explore the Reggio Emilia approach. This conference will be hosted from May 6-9, 2009 by the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Following the May Conference a Summer Institute will be held at the Faculty of Education in July, 2009 with Dr. Carol Anne Wien as scholar-in-residence. The institute will provide participants with the opportunity to study, more intensely, the foundational and theoretical aspects of the Reggio Emilia vision. In addition, participants will be immersed in multi-literate learning experiences and the interaction between theory and practice. Through seminar-discussions, professional reading, workshop experience, curriculum planning, and so on, participants will gain insight into how children learn and grow through exploration, inquiry and creative problem-solving.

A poster advertising the conference has been sent to all schools in Manitoba. The conference registration package is now available.



Reggio Emilia Conference



Early Education
Pre-School to Grade 4

May 6 - 9, 2009
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Followed by:
Reggio Summer Institute with scholar
in residence and professional development
support in the fall.

'We believe that the learning environment is co-constructed through the insights, wonderings, reflections, questions, experiences and understandings of both children and adults in community.'

For more information contact: Pat Stefanchuk pstefanchuk@hotmail.com

Looking Back on the TAKING FLIGHT: ARTS EDUCATORS IN ACTION Conference



On February 21, 2008, over three hundred educators and arts community members packed the Caboto Centre in Winnipeg for “*Taking Flight: Arts Educators in Action*,” an exciting day of learning and sharing of ideas related to arts education.

Taking Flight was presented by the Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba in collaboration with Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY), and featured a range of stimulating speakers, student performers, discussion, and hands-on workshops in dance, drama, music, visual arts, and integrated arts and technology. As well, several Winnipeg arts groups and businesses provided sponsorship allowing organizers to give out wonderful prizes of books, concert tickets and gift certificates. (See list of sponsors, inset).

The day began with **AAEM president Phillip Duncan** welcoming everyone and introducing **Education Minister Peter Bjornson** who, in turn, offered greetings on behalf of MECY. The minister outlined a variety of departmental initiatives that support arts education, including two which were the focus of the conference: the ongoing development of new arts curricula, and the *Study of Arts Education in Manitoba Schools* research project, implemented by MECY in partnership with the University of Manitoba. He also congratulated the AAEM for their efforts at infusing the conference with quality student performances, as these were “far and away the most profound and persuasive statements on the value of quality arts education.”

The first such statement was given through a stunning modern dance performance by students of the **Royal Winnipeg Ballet School – Recreational Division** using music by contemporary African musician **Rokia Traore**. The students embodied the music beautifully, and provided the first of several opportunities for the audience to be imaginatively transported to unexpected destinations. As the day progressed, powerful dramatic performances by students **Allison Hall** of **St. Mary’s Academy** and **Tomasz Maciejewski** of **Westwood Collegiate**, a goose-bump-inducing choral set by the sixty voices of the **Winnipeg School Division Junior Honour Choir**, and a swingin’ lunch time concert by the red hot **Vincent Massey Jazz Band**, ensured that the conference truly did take flight.

THANK YOU TO SPONSORS

- Children’s Festival
- The School of Contemporary Dancers
- The Manitoba Writers’ Guild Inc.
- Cinematheque
- Children’s Museum
- Manitoba Association of Playwrights
- Prairie Theatre Exchange
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- Jazz Winnipeg Inc.
- WOW Entertainment – Celebrations
- Royal Winnipeg Ballet
- Manitoba Chamber Orchestra
- Manitoba Theatre Centre
- Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra
- Winnipeg Art Gallery
- Theatre Projects Manitoba
- Quest Musique



And to add a participatory component in the morning’s proceedings, teacher and Alliance board member **Alana Chernecki** led the 300+ audience in a mini dance workshop which was, on one hand, great fun, and on the other, a chance for all to taste a little success while experiencing some basic dance education processes and elements.

The student performances created a rich backdrop for the ideas of the conference speakers, including keynote presenter, **John Abbott**. Mr. Abbott is president of the 21st Century Learning Initiative, a transnational educational forum which seeks to synthesize emerging research from various disciplines such

as neurobiology, cognitive science, evolutionary psychology, systems theory, pedagogy, psychology, and economics. In a talk entitled "*Education for a Life Worth Living*," Mr. Abbott challenged the audience to think about the purpose of education, the nature of learning, and the needs of students growing up in a time of rapid, constant and profound change.

Mr. Abbott made a compelling case for the urgency of change to a system wherein students are "overschooled but undereducated," and encouraged his audience to find solutions, some of which are embedded in practices of quality arts education. (For further information and links to articles by John Abbott, visit www.21learn.org).

Rounding out the line-up of morning speakers were MECY Arts Education Consultant, **Joe Halas**, who presented an update and overview of the Arts Education curriculum renewal process in Manitoba, and **Dr. Francine Morin**, principal researcher for the Study of Arts Education in Manitoba Schools, who provided a summary of key points from the study. Dr. Morin then facilitated an afternoon symposium in which educators, administrators, and representatives of the arts community had an opportunity to study and



respond to her report.

The afternoon research symposium was one of fourteen breakout options that took place as part of *Taking Flight*. A large space in the Caboto centre, normally used as an indoor Bocce court,

was transformed into a multi-centre visual arts workshop space, and included displays, learning

centres and a depot for free recycled art supplies provided by volunteers of **ArtsJunktion** (learn more at their website: www.artsjunktion.mb.ca). As well, a wide variety of concurrent sessions on various topics related to education in dance, drama, music, the arts as multi-literacies, and technology integration took place on that very busy and exciting afternoon.

At the end of the conference, one participant wrote, "Today I expected a day full of creativity, fun, imagination and possibility. I received exactly what I expected. I value the arts in my teaching, learning and every day life, my experience today only made my values stronger. In future I would love to have some of my students experience a day like this with me."

The AAEM wishes to thank all who participated!

Comments from participants:

Today I received...

- valuable information and some great arts performance by students.
- inspiring ideas and exciting new challenges.
- new ideas from qualified specialists. What a terrific experience!
- confirmation that what I do is valued. I also feel confident that there are enough qualified, intelligent people all working toward bringing the arts to the level of importance it needs to be in Manitoba.
- a re-ignoration and reminder of commitment to arts education, a wake-up call about what more work needs to be done to help implement the curriculum.
- big ideas about why we teach the arts. Small ideas for practical ideas, materials to work with, connections with other teachers.
- inspiration around the significance/necessity of the arts to a complete education.

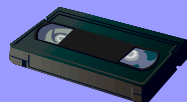
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"Learning for Life: Why the Arts Matter"

is a video that celebrates dance, music, art and drama and informs the viewers of the many benefits of an education rich in the arts - \$15.00/copy. E-mail Sylvie Cotee at scottee_AAEM@shaw.ca.