

2-20-03 SPEECH: Opening remarks on the first day of CAPE's two-day strategic planning conference

-Arnold Aprill, February, 2003

Arts integration is the interweaving of arts learning and other academic learning to create more powerful teaching and learning in all the subjects involved, including the arts. This is not an alternative to teaching in the arts for themselves. We believe in both/and, not either/or. CAPE's job is to set the standard for what high quality arts integration looks like in this continuum from arts-as-a-segregated-subject-area to arts-integrated-into-all-learning.

Arts integration catalyzes three capacities in our children, and those are:

- The capacity **to make creative choices**
- The capacity **to take action in the world**
- The capacity **to take responsibility for those actions.**

The stakes are very high. Our children really are our only future. Really, really, really. I don't know if we always get that through our heads. CAPE's work is to set a **high standard** for teaching and learning that develops those capacities in students, teachers, and artists through arts integration. I want to call attention to those phrases "high stakes" and "high standards", because we need to reclaim language that has been drained of its meaning, and gets used in ways counter to our core values.

CAPE's "service population" is students, but CAPE's intervention is about **new roles and new relationships** between the world of educators and the world of the arts- building new, sustainable capacities for collaboration between professional teachers and professional artists. This is professional development in the best sense of the word. This is not about short-term arts experiences; this is not about the residency model- what some people call "drive by culture." I've been a residency artist, its great, but it's a competitive model between artist knowledge and school knowledge. This is about creating a demilitarized zone. An exotic terrain. An **environment** in which rich learning is possible for all students.

If we want better teaching, and our young people to have meaningful access to the special knowledge of practicing artists, we need more than a service delivery model.

Now, speaking of language that has been drained of its meaning, I actually hate the term "service population"- because it implies that learners are passive. Kids are not passive. Learning is not passive. Engagement with the arts is not passive.

We've had lots of successes with teachers and artists and principals and parents and students over the last ten years.

Ten years!

How different the environment was ten years ago!

CAPE has helped change the field!

10 years ago- there was very little arts integration, very few partnerships, very little

publishing and very little research.

We've done exhibitions of arts integrated student work that are at the top of the field

We've help forge the connection between school reform and arts education

We have these great relationships with institutions of higher learning- a nut we were told could not be cracked.

We've been replicated in fifteen cities around the world.

We do not just provide programs, but work to push forward the field, as colleagues with lead thinkers in the field.

We never have a shortage of ideas. In lean times, we need to prioritize our work, especially when many others have, as we hoped, incorporated concepts of arts integration and partnership that we helped pioneer. Our areas of leadership are shifting.

We have an incredible base from which to launch our next five years of work.

We are skilled at supporting teacher change and school change— at changing the thinking and culture of schools and arts organizations.

We are skilled at encouraging artists to stop seeing themselves as “victimized elites”- to find their own civic leadership and to start really listening to teachers.

We are developing high quality arts integrated curriculum

We are skilled at developing exhibitions of student work that make student learning visible. This is cutting edge practice that needs to be properly positioned in our programming and in our fundraising.

We are skilled at making sure that the integrity of the academics and the integrity of the arts are enacted in arts integrated curriculum.

We've created really good art by kids, really good art by adult artists in authentic collaboration with students, and really good teaching. We have had transformative impact on teachers, artists, and kids.

We need to redesign our model for the next five years of work:

We have a network of schools and arts organizations in which we have profound working relationships with individual teachers and artists who are creating exemplary arts integrated curriculum, and who are leaders in their schools and arts organizations. **We need to document, showcase, and honor that cutting edge work, including the use of multimedia technologies.**

We have created cross partnership exhibitions that have created the professional community we strive for. **We need to build that practice into sustainable structures.**

We have developed innovative relationships with higher education. **We need to formalize and expand those relationships.**

We have rich national and international relationships, and rich relationships with researchers and lead thinkers in the field. **We need to connect those relationships more strongly to local practitioners.**

We've written **Renaissance in the Classroom**- one of the only books in the field written in the voice of practitioners. **We need to set up structures to support the writing and**

dissemination of our emerging insights into our work.

We need to further articulate our commitment to urban schools, to school improvement, and to educational equity.

We need to continue to support leadership by Black and Latino teachers and artists.

We need to explore how our in-school programs can connect with after-school programs.

We have a great story to tell. We need to become more proactive at telling it.

We call on you to form a serious but joyful community over the next two days to apply our collective and diverse wisdom and knowledge to address our dearest goals.

We live in challenging times—especially challenging for not-for-profits- but challenging for everyone. We are living in an atmosphere of anxiety- where Americans are stockpiling water, duct tape, and offshore accounting procedures- worrying about the economy and the possibility of a war. One can become paralyzed by fear, by a feeling of helplessness. For this very reason, it becomes essential for us to re-commit to the essential value of our work together—supporting learners, young and old, in knowing themselves as capable of creative choices, and of taking responsibility for creative action. The arts are one of the primary ways for us to know ourselves as agents of our own destiny. This is about recommitting to life, not fear. In soberness and joy, let us begin our work together.”

[Click here to see the Strategic Plan that was developed after this speech](#)