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## IMAGINATION, INQUIRY, & VOICE A Deweyan Approach to Education in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Urban high School

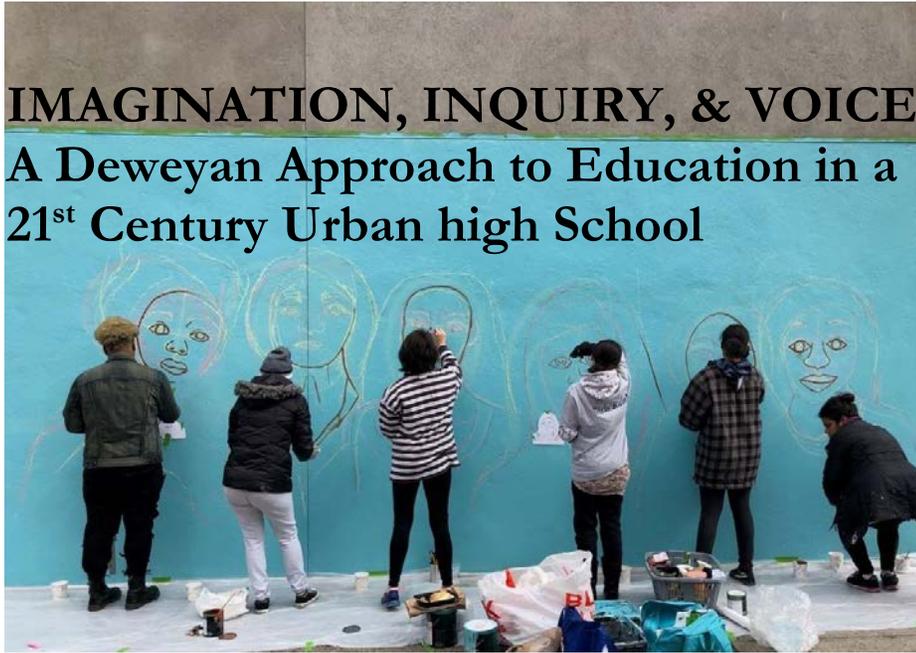


Figure 1. MGHS student ARTE Spring Mural. 2018. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.mghs.nyc/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=1111369&type=d&pREC\\_ID=1406371](https://www.mghs.nyc/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1111369&type=d&pREC_ID=1406371)

**Abstract:** We describe the ways in which the teachers and administrators at The Maxine Greene High School for Imaginative Inquiry (MGHS), an urban public high school named for the philosopher Maxine Greene, are working to embody Greene's and Dewey's notion of imagination in the context of a practice called "imaginative inquiry." Greene considered the role of the imagination in education as a call to action, for once one can imagine a better world, one is compelled to act. Following on and extending Dewey's work, she defined her philosophy of aesthetic education as signifying "an initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, moving...the nurture of a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out for meanings, a learning to learn" (p. 7). Imaginative inquiry, the vehicle for enacting an aesthetic education curriculum, is a practice that is fueled by curiosity by which the imagination interacts with the world to bring about multiple possible meanings and ways of understanding. We reflect upon the process by which we are currently working in collaboration with the teachers at MGHS to make the work of imaginative inquiry accessible to all students, and to provide resources to support the work of imaginative inquiry and aesthetic education in high schools.

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we describe the ways in which the teachers and administrators at The Maxine Greene High School for Imaginative Inquiry (MGHS), an urban public high school named for the philosopher Maxine Greene, are working to embody Greene's and Dewey's notion of imagination in the context of a practice called "imaginative inquiry." In attempting to define the imagination, Dewey describes a "way of seeing and feeling" which occurs at the "point where the mind comes in contact with the world" (p. 278). Greene considered the role of the imagination in education as a call to action, for once one can imagine a better world, one is compelled to act. Following on and extending Dewey's work, she defined her philosophy of aesthetic education as signifying "an initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, moving...the nurture of a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out for meanings, a learning to learn" (p. 7). Imaginative inquiry, the vehicle for enacting an aesthetic education curriculum, is a practice fueled by curiosity by which the imagination interacts with the world to bring about multiple possible meanings and ways of understanding.

This chapter reflects upon the process by which an Aesthetic Education professor and an English Education professor are currently working in collaboration with MGHS's principal, assistant principal, and teachers to make the work of imaginative inquiry accessible to all students, and to provide resources to support the work of imaginative inquiry and aesthetic education in high schools. The notion of imaginative inquiry is a constant touchstone that guides curriculum development at this school, as we consider the resources and approaches available to help design aesthetic experiences for students.

### THE MAXINE GREENE HIGH SCHOOL FOR IMAGINATIVE INQUIRY

When one first enters the lobby of the building that houses the MGHS, it appears to have a great deal in common with many other New York City public high schools. The five-story tall school building was once the Martin Luther King Jr., High School, but during the late 1990's and early 2000's New York City broke most of its large traditional high schools into smaller schools that shared the buildings, which became known as campuses. MGHS opened in 2005 and has occupied the third and fourth floors of the Martin Luther King Jr., Educational Campus since 2006. Cross the large, open plaza with the large sculpture in tribute to MLK, place your belongings on the conveyer belt and pass through the metal detector, register at the security desk, and you are inside a building containing six small high schools. The main floor houses a newly constructed state-of-the-art library. On the wall outside that library is a massive and stunning mural, *Homage to the Elements* (Balcells, 2009). The mural was donated to the school by the artist, in honor of the philosopher

Maxine Greene. The mural depicts the Periodic Table of the Elements rendered according to the color spectrum of each element. Next to the mural there is a metal plaque that reads:

*All the elements of the periodic table had their origin in the interior of a star.*

*By combining with each other they make up everything that exists.*

*Each element has its own name and a light spectrum that identifies it.*

*Light is the voice of matter.*

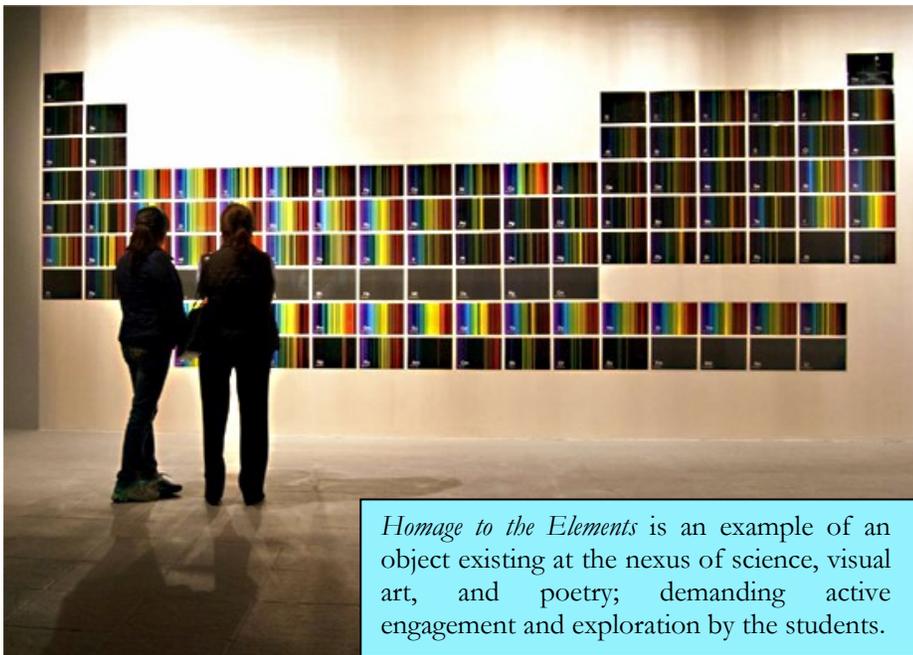


Figure 2. *Homage to the Elements*, 2009. Eugenia Balcells- artist. Photo: Clara Balcells.

The gift of this work of art to the school is significant in that it was given with the intention of being used as a teaching tool. Both Maxine Greene and John Dewey built their philosophies of teaching and learning around the notion of “aesthetic experiences,” insisting that the arts should be a central subject of study, and not placed on a pedestal, but actively engaged with. Dewey spoke of the need to “create (one’s) own experience” (p. 56). Greene further states that “aesthetic experiences require conscious participation in a work” (1995, p. 125).

Greene saw the arts as “integral to the development of persons—to their cognitive, perceptual, emotional, and imaginative development (2001, p. 7). Her philosophy is entwined with Dewey’s, as both understood the power of art to illuminate truths about the natural and built environments. “Dramatists and novelists,” Dewey noted, “construct characters that extricate the essential from the incidental” (p. 306). It is with this principle in mind that teachers our intention is to guide teachers at MGHS will to look to *Homage to the Elements* for the ways they might discover and understand some fundamental truths through aesthetic encounters with this artist’s rendition of the building blocks of the universe.

### MAXINE GREENE, LINCOLN CENTER INSTITUTE, AND TEACHING ARTISTS

From the beginning, Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) was a partner in establishing the role of teaching artists in classrooms at MGHS. LCI was established in 1975 by Mark Schubart, a good friend of Maxine’s and an administrator at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. She was a professor at Teachers College at the time teaching courses in educational philosophy, the arts and American education, and aesthetics in education. In the early 1970’s Greene had started a course there that she called aesthetic education. It was Schubart who had the idea to bring together a prominent philosopher of arts and education and a world class arts organization such as Lincoln Center. LCI was the result of this collaboration became dedicated to developing the possibilities the arts could offer in educational settings, to explore what “aesthetic education” might look like in K-12 classrooms. The goal, with the help of visionary administrators and what would come to be known as Teaching Artists (TAs) inspired by Maxine’s voice, was to develop a means, a methodology, by which her philosophy of aesthetic education could be brought to life. LCI was the first, and remained the only, arts organization to have an educational philosophy and a philosopher-in-residence, a role in which Greene served until the end of her life.

Greene (2001) insisted that this practice at LCI include personal transactions with actual works of art and that, to develop in our role as aesthetic educators we must “cultivate and stimulate the sensory life, the embodied life, the perceptual life of the young”. (p. 71). Like Dewey, she insisted that learners actively engage in transactions with works of art. In her preface to *Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute’s Lectures on Aesthetic Education* (2001), she says:

I celebrate the ways in which what is called ‘active learning’ is nourished and stimulated by the involvement (and integration) of body, mind, and emotion in the work with the teaching artists at the Institute workshops...I celebrate, as well, the growing concern for the centrality of imagination, for

the work being done to clarify the relationship between imagination and embodiment, between imagination and the pursuit of what John Dewey called ‘intellectual possibility’. 2001, p. X.)

In this series of lectures delivered to educators at LCI from 1980-2000, Greene (2001) explicates Dewey’s enduring relevance. Her notion of “wide-awakeness,” which appears throughout this book and her other writings and lectures, builds upon his observations about the meaning and importance of aesthetics in making education meaningful to both students and teachers:

Throughout (this book) I have recalled Dewey’s view that the opposite of ‘aesthetic’ is “anesthetic. Anesthesia, for me, implies numbness, an emotional incapacity, and thus immobilized, prevent people from questioning, from meeting challenges of being in and naming and (perhaps) transforming the world. (2001, p. x)

What Greene helped the LCI community of administrators, teaching artists and K-12 educators to experience in the three week long “Summer Sessions” was a completely novel and challenging approach to arts education. This approach was informed by Deweyan principles of education as well as by other thinkers that had great influence upon Greene including existentialist philosophers such as Sartre and Camus and phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty and Shutz. Each in their own way stressed the active role of learners, which Greene expressed thusly: “Aesthetic experiences require conscious participation in a work... an ability to notice what there is to be noticed” (1995, p. 125). The primary job, then, of the educator using this approach is to help students to attend, take notice, to perceive and then give voice, language, gesture or brushstroke to what has caught their attention. An important distinction of aesthetic education, as Greene saw it, was that it is not a skills-based approach to arts education nor simply a way to integrate the arts into the classroom curriculum nor simply a form of art appreciation. The arts, not only with making art but engaging with works of art, are critical in this process of attending, of becoming alert to one’s own perceptions, of developing one’s own capacity to experience the world. Greene felt strongly that the arts works-could and should be primary resources, texts, in the educational setting and that teachers, with the support of trained TAs, would be able to incorporate selected art works into their curriculum in meaningful ways that honored these texts as the significant, rich sources of human imagination they were intended to be. Like Dewey, Greene (1987) also understood that in order to fully engage with works of art students needed an apprenticeship in order to fully appreciate the languages of the various arts:

Of course, we need to introduce students to the symbol systems associated with the various arts, but we want to do so (or so I believe) to enhance their capacity to see, to hear, to read, to imagine- not simply to conceptualize, or to join the great 'conversation' going on over time. (p. 20)

Nor did Greene associate the arts with morality, as something that would make the world a better, more cheerful place or that the young artist would be a wiser, more disciplined or cultured person. The arts could not be counted on to liberate or insure freedom. They could, however, provoke, or, in her words, "release" imagination, as she states in her 1995 book on that subject: "The role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected." (p. 28).

Schubart in his defense of aesthetic education in the K-12 classroom, argued that introducing works of art in meaningful ways would enhance the school environment, help to introduce students to the world of the arts, and, perhaps most importantly, engage students in their schooling. Both he and Greene (in Greene, 2001), were convinced that the inclusion of works of art would help schools to become truly educative.

(T)he learning provoked by what we call aesthetic education is paradigmatic for the learning many of us would like to see: learning stimulated by the desire to explore, to find out, to go in search. This is the learning that goes beyond teaching-the only significant learning, I believe. (p. 46-47)

The role of TAs at LCI were as the purveyors of this approach to aesthetic education and as such, were carefully selected and trained. Greene had a special relationship with teaching artists, believed deeply in the role they could play in the success of aesthetic education and deeply appreciated their dedication and understanding of their art-forms (theater, music, dance, and visual arts). In her own teaching Greene focused on literature as the art form that most suited her expertise as a writer as well as her passion for the medium. In addition to adjusting their teaching strategies and re-think their pedagogical approach to teaching with and through their art-form, teaching artists came to appreciate the power of the arts to address issues of social justice and the importance of employing inquiry and imagination into their approach to teaching with and through their art form. For teaching artists, the importance and value of teaching to a work of art was novel.

During the 1990's the training of TAs at LCI took on a new degree of sophistication. Greater emphasis was put on the development of a practice, a methodology that mirrored Greene's philosophy and approach to aesthetic education. This on-going training with the TA "faculty" included discussions of

aesthetic theory, teaching strategies and pedagogy and classroom practice. Although TAs always taught to works of art in their art form, to a degree the LCI TA became expert in Greene’s approach to aesthetic education. Four key elements were identified to be at the core of this practice: Art Making, Inquiry, Reflection and Contextual rmation.

By the time the high school dedicated to Maxine Greene came into being teaching artists had been practicing aesthetic education for over twenty years and were considered an essential to in developing the practice in the school. What had not been as developed at LCI was the ability for teachers themselves to practice aesthetic education on their own without partnership with a TA.

#### THE HISTORY OF MAXINE GREENE, LCI, AND MGHS

MGHS was developed as one of the new small schools created in the early 2000’s through unique partnerships with cultural organizations and the New York City Department of Education. MGHS opened as the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry (HSAIL) September 2005, by Stephen M. Noonan, Founding Principal, in partnership with LCI and a team of educators committed to the idea of creating a school where every student had comprehensive and immersive experiences with works of art. It was hoped that this practice at HSAIL would integrate intensive, interdisciplinary studies of works of art in partnership with LCI TAs throughout the academic year and the ongoing exploration of the instructional methodologies related to imaginative learning in accordance with the philosophical tradition of Maxine Greene.

Through all phases of planning and development of the school, beginning in 2004, until Greene’s death in 2014, she remained an involved partner in the life of the school. On July 1, 2017, HSAIL was renamed The Maxine Greene High School for Imaginative Inquiry. Maxine Greene was the founding philosopher of our school and MGHS is the first school in the nation named to honor her vision for aesthetic education and social imagination.

#### INITIAL IDEAS BEHIND THE SCHOOL

In chapter two, Imagination, Community, and the School, of *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (1995), Greene asks, “If we can link imagination to our sense of possibility and our ability to respond to other human beings, can we link it to the making of community as well?” (p. 38).

She concludes the chapter with a description of classrooms which she states,

...ought to be nurturing and thoughtful and just all at once; they ulsate with multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive. They ought to resound with the voices of articulate young people in dialogues always incomplete because there is always more to be discovered and more to be said. We must want our students to achieve friendship as each one stirs to wide-awakeness, to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility.  
(p. 43)

The goal in the founding of this new, small school was to create a place of possibility with an atmosphere of academic and imaginative excellence where students are challenged and prepared for higher education, entrance into the work force, and community involvement. It is believed that a small, nurturing school environment allows students to be known as individuals and ideally educated in a rigorous, compassionate, and empowering way in the type of classrooms Greene described. Teachers, LCI staff and teaching artists were provided ongoing opportunities to work collaboratively to design lessons and units of study in which works of art were fully integrated into coursework and across the curriculum.

By creating a community that would allow for imaginative thinking it was the mission of the school to ensure that an aesthetic experience would be available to students across the curriculum. It was understood by LCI that all too often the experience that allows for imaginative thinking exists in a solitary classroom or department of a school. The hope in founding HSAAI was that was a school committed to ensuring that all classrooms would be engaged in aspects of imaginative inquiry, teachers would be able to support a community of learners which thoughtfully aligns to intentional academic excellence as defined by the both state and national standards through a lens of imaginative inquiry

Enacting the philosophy of aesthetic education in a school environment that imposes a variety of constraints on the practices that comprise real life application of that philosophy presents multiple challenges as well as multiple possibilities.

In *Variations On A Blue Guitar* (2001). Greene defines aesthetic education as,

an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. When this happens, new connections are made in experience: new patterns are formed, new vistas are opened. (p. 6)

MGHS is a community dedicated to making sure that every student graduates from high school fully prepared to achieve excellence in all post-secondary experiences. This is true even though the school has always accepted a large number of students who live with poverty, learning disabilities or delays, and other extreme challenges. The priority at MGHS is to educate young people to be prepared to fully participate in democracy, not just to pass standardized tests. The demands of meeting federal and state academic compliance criteria can be detrimental when founding a school based on a philosophy that is more concerned about the nature of students' learning experiences than test scores and bench marks, although obligated to meet those as well. Maxine Greene begins the very first lecture in her seminal text *Variations on a Blue Guitar* by stating: "We are interested in education here, not in schooling" (2001, p. 7). To design a school whose goals exceed those of mere "schooling," is to understand the transformative power of students being fully and actively engaged in their own learning, driven by curiosity and intrinsically motivated to succeed. Both Dewey and Greene understood the potential of aesthetic engagement with works of art. Through such aesthetic engagement, according to Dewey, "knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than the knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience" (p. 302). There is no standardized exam that can quantify this kind of learning, so it is often given a low priority by policymakers. This is always the challenge when valuing learning as a transformative experience rather than as a series of tasks that can be assessed on a rubric.

To quantify a philosophical approach to education is challenging. Teachers are often constrained by the mundane tasks of routine and ritual that comprise the average class period. It is the rare teacher who has the skill to tap into the lives of the students and meaningfully differentiate the instruction so that each student is able to access and master what is taught. The aspects of the aesthetic experience in the classroom that allow for creative interaction naturally provides the multiple points of entry in a diverse classroom and allows for multiple responses. The way that these challenges are being addressed at MGHS are through the creation of a pedagogy that allows teachers to nurture the types of experiences with academic topics in ways similar to the experiences that students have with works of art.

#### DEFINING IMAGINATIVE INQUIRY: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the spring of 2017 Principal Noonan established an advisory committee to write the new mission statement for the MGHS that included members of the faculty and members of The Maxine Greene Institute (MGI), a newly established community partner.

The Maxine Greene High School for Imaginative Inquiry is a learning community in which deep engagement with works of art enhances the intellectual rigor and imaginative capacity of all student. This approach to inquiry-based learning is rooted in the philosophy of Dr. Maxine Greene which fosters a sense of self-worth, curiosity, and empathy. MGHS empowers this diverse community to work towards a more just, humane, and vibrant world.

In developing the curriculum and designing the professional development required to launch this newly named school it was imperative to Noonan that Greene's legacy and thought be made manifest and that both faculty and students be made aware of who she was and why the school was named after her. Quotes of Greene's adorn the walls alongside bulletin boards displaying students' inquiry projects that integrate works of art into math, English, science, and social studies.

The school is a work in progress. Noonan decided from the very beginning to reject the offer to be a "screened school" that could be selective about which students they admitted. In keeping with the principles of social justice and the social imagination, MGHS is an open admission school. This means many of their students read far below their grade level, many have special needs, and quite a few are English Language learners, some who are designated as SIFE (students with interrupted formal education). According to the website 82% receive free or reduced price lunch, 25% have learning disabilities, and 11% are classified as English language learners . This is not a rarified atmosphere in which privileged students study the arts. This is a lively, imperfect New York City public school, which makes the possibilities presented by a curriculum rich with hands-on art experiences and student choice all the more critical for the opportunities it offers to have the experience of being "fully alive," with a view of the future that is "not ominous but a promise" (Dewey, p. 17). This idea that aesthetic education might awaken young people who face multiple challenges to a sense of hope for the future is one of the guiding beliefs about the social imagination. In Maxine Greene's words, the arts awaken us "not only to see, not only to feel, but to hold someone's hand and act" (1998). Supporting students with a broad range of learning and social-emotional issues has always been an important part of the school's mission.

In the initial retreat with the Leadership Team (and members of the MGI Board) it was established that key concepts of imaginative inquiry be introduced in all subject areas. To this end, each part of the curriculum introduces a philosophic question related to aesthetic education as Greene articulated it so that they could see the world around them with new eyes and "imagine things as if they could be otherwise," (Greene, 2001). The goal is that each student would be able to articulate

their own philosophic question to pursue into senior year. These questions might include:

- How might the arts create social change?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- What is social imagination?
- What is the role of school in creating social change?

The following ideas surfaced in these early retreats that helped to shape the professional development agenda in the year to come:

- Experiences with works of art would be encouraged in every classroom at every grade.
- Long term Imaginative Inquiry protocols would be developed to help guide faculty and students. This would include helping the MGHS community to develop an aesthetic, inquiry-based, reflective stance.
- Schedule fieldtrips for each grade throughout the year related to long-term goals of Imaginative Inquiry.
- Have common texts, experiences (performance, etc.) and vocabulary that the MGHS community could share.
- Start e-portfolios in 9<sup>th</sup> grade that would be carried through to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.



Figure 3. Student field trip to *Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity*- A Ping Chong & Co. Production. Photo: Adan Nadel

In February 2018, an offer was made to donate a work of art to MGHS and by February, 2019, *Homage to the Elements* (Balcells, 2009) (See Figure #1) was installed in the MLK Campus lobby dedicated to Maxine Greene. In March, 2019, The Ping Chong Company came to the MLK Campus auditorium to perform *Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XktjcpGnacM>) for MGHS seniors and seniors from four other High Schools on the MLK Campus (See figure ?).

Students that attended this performance had been prepared for the engagement with this work of art by faculty and a theater teaching artist trained in aesthetic education. The TA, Taryn Matusik, gave two workshops in the classroom prior to the performance that entailed a discussion about identity and an interview that followed the format of the one used by Ping Chong during his interview with the young Muslim cast members for this production. Once the students had gathered information and a text in this way in small groups they created short scripts that they then presented to one another in a similar manner to the way in which they would see in the *Beyond Sacred* production.



Figure 4. Professional development field trip to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. Aug. 2018. Photo: Holly Fairbank, author.

The faculty professional development in 2018-2019 included readings and discussions related to aesthetic education, Greene and Dewey's philosophy, and inquiry-based practice. In each session works of art were introduced, and trips were taken to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Langston Hughes House in Harlem.

By mid-year faculty were asked to identify and include works of art that were meaningfully connected to their performance tasks in each subject area (as described by the New York City Department of Education). The goal was to help and encourage teachers to connect works of art, writing assignments and real-life scenarios that would enhance imaginative inquiry. The teachers seemed open to the



Figure 5. Faculty workshop Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 before trip to Langston Hughes House. Photo: Holly Fairbank, author.



Figure 6. Teachers arrive at Langston Hughes House. Photo: Holly Fairbank, author

ject and our guidance in identifying works of art and strategies suited to their curriculum and performance tasks. Some found support for this project directly from their colleagues in discipline as some teachers were either more familiar with aesthetic education or with the arts in general.

In fall of 2018 there began a series of ongoing conversations between Principal Noonan and Holly Fairbank and Amanda Gulla of the Maxine Greene Institute about the role of writing in inquiry-based learning. The principal began discussions with the New York City Writing Project (NYCWP) to provide a series of workshops in imaginative writing, as it was conceived as a primary tool for imaginative inquiry. The NYCWP believes in professional development designed and led by practicing teachers. Beginning in the spring of 2019 and continuing into the following school year, Gulla teamed with Molly Sherman, an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher at Harvest Collegiate High School and consultant with the NYCWP. The two have been developing and leading workshops for the MGHS faculty designed to explore the use of writing as a tool for inquiry.

Some of the professional development sessions led by Fairbank and Gulla around works of art and writings by Greene were

guided by questions such as:

- Who is Maxine Greene?
- What is Aesthetic Education?
- What is Imaginative Inquiry? What does Imaginative Inquiry look like across disciplines?
- What is aesthetic literacy?
- How might engagements with works of art through inquiry and experiential art making and writing be meaningfully integrated into a high school curriculum?
- What can be discovered in these works that resonate with our own lived lives as well as a high school curriculum?

The faculty have been eagerly engaged in exploring these ongoing questions from the very beginning and have expressed enthusiasm for the possibilities they can see in imaginative inquiry creating the opportunity for greater student agency and engagement.



Figure 7. Teacher writing workshop in the Langston Hughes House. Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Photo: Holly Fairbank, author

#### TEACHER ENGAGEMENT WITH IMAGINATIVE INQUIRY

As a direct result of the whole staff retreat in January 2019 (“Imaginative Inquiry-connection to subject areas and performance tasks”) Bob Kue, ninth and tenth grade algebra teacher, introduced photography into a unit for ninth graders on Systems of Linear Equations and Inequalities. The skill this assignment was focusing on was graphing equations. Mr. Kue gave students the option to use some well-known artworks that had been used in our professional development session or a picture of their choice from the internet. Many choose otographs of the artist Banksy’s public art work. He then asked them to identify what part of the image was significant to

them and where they wanted the viewer to focus (they were to imagine that they were working for YouTube in the marketing department). The students were then asked to place a transparency on top of the image and draw a graph and lines that focused the viewer's eye on the most meaningful portion of the image from their



Figure 8. *Girl with the Balloon*. Banksy, 2002. Image of Spray-painted graffiti series covered with acetate grid in school project. Photo: Holly Fairbank, 2019. Banksy image. Public Domain. Image by LYDIA and her SALAD DAYS - Flickr: BANKSY: LONDON, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19378748>

you like the viewers to focus on and what do you expect the viewer to feel, think or do?" What was so surprising was that this idea came from a fairly new math teacher with no prior experience with aesthetic education who was able to so thoughtfully merge the experiences and conversations that had been presented throughout the year around aesthetics, inquiry, imagination and reflection with the content material being taught.

This assignment effort (suited and aligned with the algebra curriculum and the performance task he was being asked to address. Mr. Kue felt that his students were

point of view. The question the equation aimed to answer was what particular area of detail seemed to be the most meaningful in the image. For example, one image by the artist Banksy was of a little girl seen sideways looking up at a red balloon in the shape of a heart called *Girl with Balloon*. It is a stenciled image that began appearing spray painted on walls on buildings around the UK in 2002. The point identified of greatest meaning by the student was the empty space between the girl and the balloon, a space located directly in front of the girl's chest where her heart would be. The classmate looking at this final image with the grid and the intersecting arrows was then required to write the equation of the lines on the graph ( $y > x - 2 = 2y > x/2 - 1$ ).

Finally, the students were asked to reflect on their work by addressing such questions as, "Why did you choose this artwork? What would

more motivated to do this assignment and were more thorough in their work. When asked if he felt that other kinds of art such as dance might be applicable to perhaps a study in polynomials, he was very optimistic and said he would like to try it.

By the end of this first year exploring Imaginative Inquiry with the faculty the hope is to go deeper in coming years with curriculum inclusive on the aesthetic experience, aesthetic engagement around works of art through experiential learning, and writing. Meeting with the teachers at least every month, and sometimes more frequently in department meetings, will allow opportunities to explore and develop practices and procedures whereby they will be supported in these initiatives. Noonan has committed the school to this investigation as a community and to become, as Maxine Greene suggests, “the kind of community in the making John Dewey called democracy” (1997, p. 3) around this notion of Imaginative Inquiry.

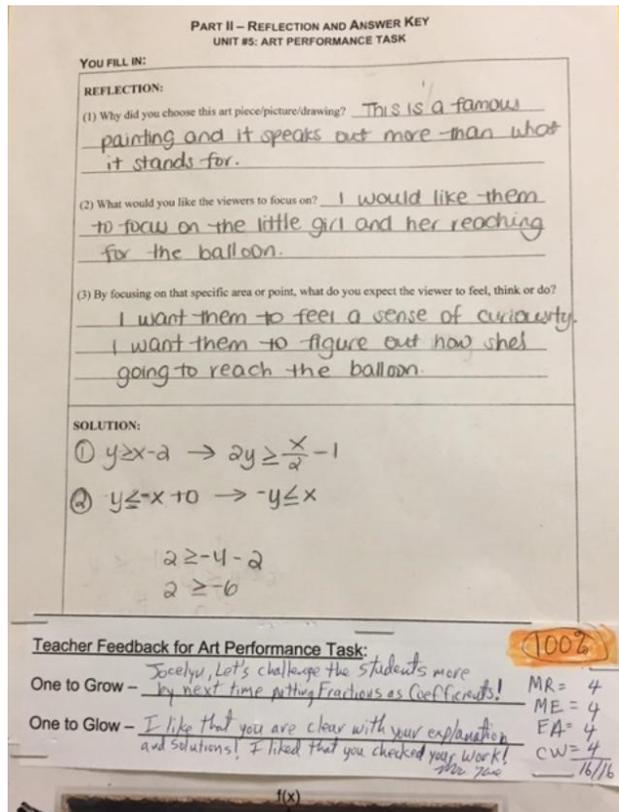


Figure 9. An example of a student's reflection on her art graph for Algebra class. March, 2019. Photo: Holly Fairbank

Over the next three to five years we will continue to evaluate data in order to measure the efficacy of the aesthetic approach to learning by comparing rates of student retention, attendance, promotion and graduation. In addition to the regularly evaluated data sets used to measure progress by the state and city, we will survey both students and teachers in order to gauge the impact of the aesthetic experience on the learning environment. In this new community instructional differentiation will be created through the ways that both teachers and students engage with content, which we believe will create the kind of learning community that meaningfully supports student learning and achievement.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND RESOURCE 

Questioning and discussion are an essential part of the aesthetic education process. Consider the type of questions you use to facilitate a discussion and how best to keep them open-ended and inclusive. How can you use open-ended questioning to get students to go deeper in their observations and their thinking? (See "The Art of Questioning" by Wolff, 1987.)

*Works of Art*

Consider working with works of art as texts to support your curriculum and deepen the discussions on key themes. If possible, it is best to have a live experience with a work of art, taking students to a museum to see the work as it actually is. Sometimes we may choose to study a work of art that we do not have easy access to. Here are a few artists whose work has lent itself to rich experiences in aesthetic education. Their work is easily accessible on the internet.

Painters and Sculptors

Frida Kahlo  
Romare Bearden  
Jacob Lawrence  
Pierre Bonnard  
Alexander Calder

Photographers

Jacob Riis  
Gordon Parks  
Helen Levitt  
Dorothea Lange

Poets and Songwriters

Langston Hughes  
Pablo Neruda  
Nina Simone  
Patti Smith  
Bob Dylan

*Guiding Questions*

- How can aesthetic experiences and art-making be brought authentically and meaningfully into your curriculum? What tools and support do you need to make this happen and why might it be valuable to do so?

- What potential challenges would you have to address in order to implement an aesthetic education approach in your school?
- When creating aesthetic education lessons how can you align them with your school system's academic standards?
- What is needed to help teachers and administrators in your school understand how aesthetic education can enhance learning across the curriculum?

### *Suggested Readings*

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