Part III

ART EDUCATION
IN THE PALO ALTO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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1. SUMMARY

Palo Alto is an upper middle class suburban community located about 30 miles south of San Francisco. Adjacent to Stanford University, the Palo Alto Unified School District serves not only the Palo Alto community but the communities of Los Altos Hills, Stanford, and Barron Park. The school district has a reputation for excellence: 90 percent of its high school graduates attend colleges and universities. Their performance on standardized achievement and aptitude tests is usually around the 85th percentile nationally. The community has very high expectations for its schools, and its schools meet these expectations.

The district has three types of schools: 11 elementary schools (K-6), two middle schools (7-8), and two high schools (9-12).

The district employs no full-time art teachers at the elementary level but has three full-time art teachers at the middle school level and seven full-time secondary school art teachers. Unlike the vast majority of the 11,000 school districts in California, the Palo Alto Unified School District employs a full-time art consultant and has for over 20 years. It also has a one-year fine arts requirement for high school graduation, a requirement that exists in less than 3 percent of the school districts in the nation.

One aspect of the elementary school art program that is of signal importance to its well-being is attributable to the efforts of its art consultant, Kay Alexander, who has been remarkably effective in maintaining a high profile for the art program within the state. The art consultant has taken the initiative for securing outside financial support for the program by preparing proposals for the funding of programs she believes will be useful in the district. Several of her proposals to foundations and to the State of California have been successful. She has developed a small but loyal lay constituency by providing opportunities for members of the community to teach and in other ways actively support art education within the Palo Alto schools. She has maintained especially close contact with state and national developments affecting art education. These contacts have provided an awareness of targets of opportunity that she has exploited to enhance art education in the district. She has developed programs that inform the community about art education in the district. The annual “Art Thing Wing Ding,” an art fair for art education, is one example.

The program that perhaps best exemplifies the art consultant’s initiative is the SPECTRA (Special Teacher Resources for Art), designed to prepare elementary school classroom teachers to teach the productive, critical, and historical aspects of art. This program, funded by the state of California, employs 18 members of the Palo Alto community who have a background or professional training in art and who use a curriculum developed by the art consultant to teach art once each week to about 80 percent of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in the Palo Alto Schools. One important feature of the program is the expectation that classroom teachers observe the SPECTRA artists, as they are called, so that they can take over when program funding terminates. Hence, the students receive the benefits of the instruction provided by the SPECTRA artist, and the elementary school teacher has the benefit of a direct, observational in-service program.

As promising as the SPECTRA program is, it could benefit from modification. First, the in-service program provided by the art consultant to the SPECTRA artists could be deepened so that SPECTRA artists better understood the larger educational uses of the art curriculum. Second, the curriculum itself could be modified so that more continuity was provided across
lessons. At present, each lesson is completed in one session and in our view provides too little continuity and sequential development. Third, greater participation in the SPECTRA curriculum by the general classroom teacher could be encouraged so that he or she develops the skills needed to use the curriculum and instructional materials before program funding terminated.

The SPECTRA program has great potential for school districts in communities where individuals with a background in art and art education reside who would welcome opportunities to teach art part-time. However, modifications of aspects of the program should occur before such diffusion takes place.

The middle school art program is taught by teachers trained in art education, yet in some ways the middle school program is the least coherent. Like many art programs taught by specialists in art education, there is a strong tendency for art teachers to want to develop their own curriculum in art, thus diminishing the likelihood of coherence across programs within or between schools. When the teacher is strong, the program is excellent. When the teacher is weak, there is no well-developed curriculum to compensate. In Palo Alto’s middle schools the quality of instruction varies widely, partly because of differences in background and experience, as well as personality, among the teachers.

The status of art as perceived by middle school students is low; although they indicate they enjoy art, they do not believe that it is a subject in which they learn a great deal, nor do they believe it to be highly important in the academic pecking order.

Middle school art teachers also believe art has a low status among the subjects in the curriculum, though they themselves believe the benefits of art education to students to be extremely important. Art teachers at the middle school level have a broad view of art, including in their conception not only those objects and events typically regarded as works of art but, for example, “the ways in which life is led.”

Instruction in the critical and historical aspects of art is most often related to the productive activities that are the central focus of the middle school art curriculum. This instruction is provided when teachers prepare students for an art project and when they talk directly with students about the quality of the work they have produced. No courses are devoted exclusively to the teaching of art history or art criticism.

At the secondary level art is taught by seven art teachers working in Palo Alto’s two secondary schools. The program can for practical purposes be divided into two segments. SPECTRUM is a basic art program for beginning secondary school students. Its aims are to acquaint students with a range of projects, materials, and techniques and to build upon the work in art that they might have had before coming to high school. (Approximately 50 percent of all entering freshmen have had at least one semester of art at the middle school level; about 20 percent have had one year of art.)

The second segment of the secondary art program consists of advanced classes in studio art and in art history. Like the middle school art program, the curriculum at the secondary school level is defined in quite general terms, affording each art teacher the opportunity to meet program aims in ways that are congenial to his inclinations. Palo Alto secondary school art teachers have succeeded in creating a supportive, informal, yet serious environment for students. Students move around at will, are free to use the resources they need to get on with their work, and are permitted to converse with each other and to comment on the work of their classmates. But, in general, a studio environment prevails. Clear expectations are set by the teachers, students are aware of them, and the intensity and the quality of their work is high.

The art history curriculum benefits from a special room for this purpose at Palo Alto High School, but it is available as a course of study at both schools. Students are expected to
become knowledgeable about styles of art and the work of particular artists, they have practice in talking about art, and they are expected to write essays about problems in art and art history. They attain levels of sophistication that are rare at both the secondary and college levels, in part because in most secondary schools art history is not available and because their general educational level is higher than average. Nevertheless, they achieve a great deal in their courses, particularly in art history, largely, but not exclusively, because of the competence and professional skill of their art teachers, professionals who take their work seriously and who expect their students to do so.

The art program in Palo Alto high schools indicates that when skilled art teachers have a general curriculum structure and various teaching skills, they are able to offer students many opportunities to learn in the visual arts. What makes the program work in these schools are teachers who are dedicated to their teaching, serious about what they do, and who have high expectations for their students. When combined with an informal yet serious atmosphere these features create conditions in which considerable learning in art can occur.

Unlike the program at the elementary school level, the secondary art program does not have an active lay constituency. In Palo Alto the public’s engagement in the art program is at the elementary school level, because the art consultant devotes her efforts to the elementary school art program and because, like so many other secondary school teachers, the art teachers in the Palo Alto schools tend to be independent professionals who focus more upon what they do in their own classes than what they might do with the community in which they work.¹

¹For more information about the Palo Alto art program, contact Mrs. Kay Alexander, Art Consultant, Palo Alto Unified School District, 25 Churchill Avenue, Palo Alto, California 94306.
2. ART EDUCATION IN THE PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

THE COMMUNITY AND ITS SCHOOLS

Palo Alto is not a typical suburban community. Adjacent to Stanford University, but not in its shadow, it has the reputation of being an enlightened, forward-looking, cultured place in which to live, a place that real estate agents point out to prospective clients as having one of the state's outstanding school systems. The Palo Alto Schools have long had a reputation for excellence: Students regularly perform in the 85th percentile on the California Test of Basic Skills; the average Scholastic Aptitude Test score in 1982 for 77 percent of the high school seniors who took the test is 555 and 493 in the mathematics and verbal sections respectively; and 90 percent of graduating seniors attend colleges or universities, many of them at highly selective institutions.

The parents of Palo Alto students would have it no other way. A substantial portion of them are themselves college educated and their expectations for their children are very high indeed. They expect the schools to perform, and performance, at minimum, means that on standardized achievement tests students in the district will be at the highest levels of achievement on national norms. Slipping from that standard would surely jeopardize the position of an elementary or secondary school principal or the superintendent of the district.

High parental expectations also mean that schools are orderly, that discipline problems are quickly managed, and that a respectable array of elective courses is available for students who wish to enroll in them.

The Palo Alto Unified School District serves about 8400 students in its eleven elementary, two middle, and two senior high schools. Since about 1963, the population of the district has decreased by about 40 percent and, like other districts in the state, it has had to close some of its schools.

But these are physical changes. There have been changes in educational philosophy as well and in the way in which the schools function. Perhaps the most important of these is the notion that once existed that the Palo Alto schools were lighthouses for other school districts within the state—even the nation. The schools of the district once made a major effort to develop their own curriculum materials, to employ innovative and often "progressive" educational practices, and to share what they were doing with other school districts. But the national educational climate for schools has changed from what it was in 1963. Innovation, a term that had much currency during the 1960s, is one of the last words one is likely to hear from school superintendents or school board members today. Today's educational climate is one of standards, discipline, basics, and homework. The current prescriptions for quality education do not focus much upon the processes of educational practice but upon those aspects of schooling that can be more easily monitored: a longer school day and an extended school year, increased course requirements in mathematics and science, and something called computer literacy. The arts simply are not on the national agenda. Indeed, on the most recent Gallup Poll of the American public regarding the importance of study in fine arts for college and non-college bound seniors, the arts were ranked 15 and 16 out of a list of 15 and 16 subjects.
Parents tend to believe what they are told about the quality of American schools; they have precious little else to use to appraise them. And they assign educational priorities to those subjects that they are told are necessary for educational and economic mobility. Their view of education is essentially instrumental. Even the report of the Commission on Excellence, entitled *A Nation at Risk*, emphasizes an economic justification for bringing excellence to American schools; we must not, we are told, “lose our competitive edge.”

Yet despite the prevailing climate, the communities served by the Palo Alto Schools have not forsaken the fine arts. First, it is one of the few school districts in California employing a full-time art consultant. Second, it is one of the few school districts in America that has a high school graduation requirement of one year in the fine arts. Parents in the Palo Alto community are an educated group. They recognize that the fine arts ought to have a place in the curriculum. The Palo Alto community is riddled with art galleries, an art museum, a crafts center, a cultural center, three theater groups, a community orchestra, and an active arts commission. The fine arts are a part of the fabric of life for many Palo Alto residents. Besides, it is a matter of self-respect for the upper middle class to give at least a nod to “culture.”

Yet the fine arts in Palo Alto schools are in an ambivalent position. Parents want the schools to provide art experiences for their children, they want the high schools to offer art courses for those who wish them, especially advanced placement courses in art for the college bound student. Yet the fine arts are not considered as important as either the sciences or the social studies. The community seems to want a place for the arts within the school but it does not seem to want them to have too substantial a place. It would not, for example, consider that the arts, like the sciences, be required for two years of study.

In this view of the place of the arts in education Palo Alto is unexceptional. Most upper-middle and lower-upper class suburban school districts have the same ambivalence. The basic view seems to be that the major mission of the school is to enable students to succeed in the competitive world. That world, they are reminded almost daily, requires skills in math, science, and knowledge of computer technology. Parents listen to what the prestigious universities tell them is important for admission to college. In that race the arts are, as Broudy aptly put it, “Nice, but not necessary.” The University of California, for example, informs parents of middle school students that “education is serious business” and that the child should enroll in academic courses, among which the fine arts receive only a mention. Stanford University did likewise a few years ago but its message was sent to 10,000 secondary schools throughout the United States. The Commission on Excellence includes the fine arts in its list of desirable subjects students should study, but fine arts is not a part of the five “new basics” it claims are essential. Test scores are not provided in the fine arts; there is a longstanding belief that the arts are good for those who work best with their hands or as a relief from the really tough tasks of schooling and it is the rare parent who will encourage his or her child to do substantial work in the arts.

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3 It is currently estimated that there are about 30 art consultants in the more than 1000 school districts in the state of California.

4 Both Stanford University and the University of California have conveyed, through letters and brochures, what they expect students to study if they wish to be admitted. The fine arts are among the electives, not the required subjects.


6 See the letter in Appendix A from the University of California dated October 30, 1981, to parents in the state of California.
The ambivalence within the community and the climate that sustains it must be understood in order to appreciate the position and function of the visual arts program in the Palo Alto schools. The community is sophisticated, well schooled, and economically well off; and parents expect their schools to prepare their children so they too can be successful. Parents correctly assess the rites of passage through which their children will move and use their perceptions of those rites to appraise the quality of the schools and the adequacy of the programs they provide. If Stanford University or the University of California suddenly required skill in lute playing as a significant asset for purposes of admission, the Palo Alto schools would no doubt take decisive steps to ensure that lute playing was an important part of their educational program.

In commenting about the schools and the community, our intention is not to disparage either. Parents, teachers, school administrators, and school board members are well intentioned. They want what they think is best for their children. Furthermore, in the short term, their assessments of priorities are realistic. Their children do score high. They are, in general, successful in their academic bid to selective colleges and universities.

But what parents and the community are not now able to do well is to appreciate the educational benefits of an effective fine arts program for students. Even in well-educated, affluent communities few people possess the ability to respond to art in a sophisticated manner. The idea that the arts have intrinsic value is difficult to grasp for people who don't feel that way, except desultorily or symbolically. Their paucity of real engagement in the fine arts combined with their own experiences in elementary and secondary schools, where courses more likely than not were superficial and undemanding, make their views and educational priorities readily understandable.

**LEADERSHIP AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN THE ART PROGRAM**

The Palo Alto School District is governed by one school board and one school administration, which, in turn, administers elementary, middle, and secondary schools. The district employs a full-time music consultant as well as a full-time visual arts consultant. It is the district's visual arts program that is the focus of this report.

The art program in the Palo Alto schools has, like the district of which it is a part, a statewide reputation for excellence. This reputation is in large measure attributable to the skill with which the district's art consultant, Kay Alexander, has given it statewide visibility. This visibility is only partially due to the aura that the district itself contributes to programs within its aegis: People expect programs in Palo Alto schools to be excellent just as they would for programs in the schools of Beverly Hills or Hillsborough. But not all programs in the Palo Alto schools have the very high positive regard that Palo Alto's art education program enjoys. The art consultant has been singularly effective in achieving this aim.

Kay Alexander came to the Palo Alto schools in 1967 after having served as art consultant for the Anaheim Public Schools. The major focus of her work within the district and the formal definition of her responsibilities is for elementary school programs, but she provides some attention to the middle school program and provides "moral support" to the secondary school program.

Mrs. Alexander has a deep-seated commitment to the importance of the visual arts in a child's education. She believes a balanced curriculum is a part of the birthright of every child and that children should have an opportunity to explore materials and develop their imagina-
tions. She believes elementary school programs should use the visual arts to foster not only an appreciation of art, but children's general intellectual development as well.

Kay Alexander does not wait to be invited to participate in state or national conventions in art education; she is frequently a member of the planning committee. She does not wait for programs to be suggested by others, she conceives of them herself and follows through to secure the support needed for them. She does not wait for parents to volunteer their services to the art programs of the Palo Alto schools, she actively recruits their services.

In 1982 she served on a state task force to review and revise recommendations to the University of California regarding fine arts requirements for purposes of admission. Mrs. Alexander has been markedly successful in securing funding from foundations in the Bay Area to help support the programs she wants to implement. The acquisition of these funds from the Peninsula Foundation, the Whitney Education Foundation, and the State of California have contributed to the stature and legitimacy of the art education program in the Palo Alto schools. Foundations tend not to support programs they perceive to be weak. As a result of her efforts, in 1983 she was named California's "Art Educator of the Year."

Perhaps the most important source of support that Kay Alexander engenders resides in the staff of volunteers and paid aides that she has been able to organize.

Palo Alto is blessed with a large group of able, educated, and willing women who make important contributions to the maintenance and operation of the art education program. These individuals are not only associated with the schools, they support the arts in the community. The arts are a part of their own value system and an important aspect of their own education. Hence, Palo Alto has the Palo Alto Parents for Art, CAPPA, an active membership in the Palo Alto Arts Club, and 1200 members of the Stanford Committee for Art.

The community's interest in art provides a resource from which Kay Alexander has secured support. For example, the Palo Alto School District's after-school art program was taught by community volunteers. The art program offered during lunchtime in several Palo Alto elementary schools is managed and taught by volunteers. The staff of the SPECTRA program is made up of paid staff whose training and interest is in art and art education. In 1972 Palo Alto's art consultant first organized an annual event called the "Art Thing Wing Ding," a daylong festival in the arts and art education that annually attracts over 2500 residents who learn of the activities and accomplishments of art education in the Palo Alto schools. In 1982 over 3000 people participated in this annual event: parents, teachers, artists, craftsmen, school board members, school administrators, and students. Collectively these structures for participation have contributed greatly to the security as well as to the visibility of the Palo Alto arts program.

Kay Alexander occasionally writes for professional journals and newsletters in which these events and programs are described. The fact that her programs have been funded by foundations is to many further verification of their excellence. Hence, when there is a possible threat to the art program, there is a committed constituency (and it need not be a large one to be effective) ready and able to provide support.

Finally, the presence of the graduate program in art education at Stanford and Elliot Eisner's own presence in the community have been a source of support for art education in the Palo Alto schools. Newman Walker, the district's Superintendent, once introduced Eisner to the staff of the district as "art education's guardian angel." Eisner has been able to articulate to the board and the community through lectures and presentations something of the significance of the arts in education and the need for a commitment to them in the Palo Alto schools.
STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE ART PROGRAM

There are several distinct art programs in the Palo Alto schools, each with its own features. The elementary schools of the district, which include kindergarten through sixth grade, provide both a "typical" generalist classroom teacher teaching art as part of his or her responsibilities and the SPECTRA program. It is the SPECTRA program that will be the focus of this report at the elementary school level.

At the middle school level one program is provided. That is, there are no formalized alternatives in which students can enroll, except those due to differences among middle school art teachers. Unlike the program at the elementary school level, all except one of the art classes in the two Palo Alto middle schools are taught by teachers who are specialists in art education.

At the two secondary schools, grades 9 through 12, three programs are in operation. First, the basic introductory art program is available to all students electing art during their four-year high school experience. This program is called SPECTRUM. Second, students can enroll in specialized courses in specific studio areas such as ceramics, painting, or sculpture. Third, there are advanced placement courses in both studio art and art history.

In analyzing the art programs in the Palo Alto schools the following questions will serve as conceptual hubs around which the analyses will be made.

1. What are the characteristics of the curriculum and the quality of teaching?
2. What are the outcomes of the program?
3. What view of art underlies the program?
4. What view of the learner and of learning is used to guide planning and practice?
5. What methods are used to evaluate the program and student performances?
6. What organizational features and support elements, inside and outside of the school district, contribute to its effectiveness?
3. SPECTRA—AN EFFORT TO PRACTICE WHAT IS PREACHED

The SPECTRA (Special Teacher Resources for Art) program is, at base, an in-service program in art education for teachers in the Palo Alto schools who work with children in grades 3 through 6. We say "at base" because unlike most in-service programs that teach teachers outside of the classroom, SPECTRA operates in classes, providing in-service education to generalist elementary school teachers and direct art education to those teachers' students.

The SPECTRA program is based upon the belief that elementary school children should have an art program that not only gives them opportunities to create visually expressive images, but that also helps them learn how to see and respond to works of art. It assumes that children, even in the elementary school, can understand that works of art exist within a culture, were produced at a particular time within that culture, and were made by someone who was influenced by that culture. The SPECTRA program is self-consciously developed along productive, critical, and historical dimensions.

This program, developed by Kay Alexander, consists of three units of curriculum material. SPECTRA I, titled *Line, Shape, Color, Space, Form, and Texture*, consists of 57 lessons to be taught over a three-semester period. SPECTRA II is devoted to American art and is divided into two historical periods, 1620 to 1900 and 1850 to present. It contains 36 lessons to be taught over two semesters. A third unit, titled *A World of Art*, has two parts. Part I focuses upon ancient, medieval, renaissance, and baroque art, and Part II focuses upon the period of 1650 to the present and now contains 18 of the 36 lessons it will have when completed.

As the program has been developed, each lesson is to be taught as an entity during a single classroom period of from forty minutes to somewhat over an hour. Every lesson has at least three parts. One part consists of a presentation and display by the SPECTRA teacher of one or more works of art dealing with the work of a particular artist, a particular period or style, or some aspect of history that is clarified or enriched by understanding a piece of art. The teacher introduces the lesson to the class, displays the visuals that accompany each lesson and, more often than not, uses the written notes provided in the curriculum guide as the source of her comments. Students might or might not raise questions or make comments or otherwise discuss what the SPECTRA teacher presents and displays.

The second part of the lesson consists of a productive activity related to the theme or content that the teacher presented. Thus, if a lesson is about the New York School of Abstract Expressionism or about Surrealism, students will be introduced to a productive activity in which they work on a problem or task similar to those dealt with by the Abstract Expressionists or Surrealists. If a lesson is about the cave painters and the images on the walls of the Lascaux Caves, students will have an opportunity to work in the style of the cave painters using materials and techniques that have similar effects.

Following the productive phase of the lesson, the SPECTRA teacher asks students to display the work that they have created and to participate in a kind of supportive, constructive critique of the work. Children are asked, for example, to select the work that they like best and to tell what they respond to in it. This segment in each of these SPECTRA lessons is intended to expose students to the work of their peers and to help them become accustomed to the critiquing process and thus expand their own visual sensitivities and their ability to talk
about visual form. All three phases of a single SPECTRA lesson are to be completed within 40 to 60 minutes, although occasionally some lessons extend beyond an hour.

Another important feature of the SPECTRA program is that the teachers of these lessons are not classroom teachers but "SPECTRA artists," as they are sometimes called, who have been hired by the school district under the guidance of the art consultant. The SPECTRA program depends upon resources beyond those normally provided by the district. Here is one of several examples in which the art consultant played the primary role in securing funds to make this program possible.

In the spring of 1981, SPECTRA was funded for a three-year period, primarily by monies from Senate Bill 1735. During the spring of that year, SPECTRA was introduced into 39 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms in 14 Palo Alto elementary schools. In the fall of 1982, 54 teachers were enrolled in the program and by the spring of 1983, 59 teachers, or about 80 percent of all fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers in the district.
The classroom teachers who use the SPECTRA program elect to do so. To be eligible for the program, the classroom teacher agrees to remain in the class when, each week, the SPECTRA artist comes to teach a lesson. The classroom teacher agrees to participate with the children in the lesson the SPECTRA artist provides, and the classroom teacher understands that the long range intent of the program is to enable him or her to teach the SPECTRA lessons when the SPECTRA artist leaves or when the funding for the program terminates. SPECTRA is not a released time program for classroom teachers. It has been made clear to them that their role is one of learner: They can learn something about art, and even more important, they can learn how to teach art using a curriculum that focuses on more than expressive art activities.

All 18 SPECTRA artists are women, all live in the Palo Alto community, all have a background or interest in art, art history, or art education. Virtually all were known to the art consultant before the program was funded and have demonstrated the qualities that she believed important for them to be successful.

Many of them had art history in their background, productive art, commercial art, graphics of some sort. They are all comfortable with children. That is the other aspect of it. I don’t care how good they are as an artist, if they can’t communicate with kids it’s not going to work. (Interview with Kay Alexander, May 18, 1982.)

Four of the SPECTRA artists are self-taught, nine have bachelor’s degrees in art history, painting, drawing and graphics, and design. Three of this group of nine have teaching credentials in art. Four have no art background of a formal kind, although two of these four have teaching credentials in fields other than art.

In one sense what Kay Alexander has done is to multiply her supervisory contributions to teachers by the 18 SPECTRA teachers. Although she still offers in-service education to teachers at her district art office, she has brought the mountain to Mohammed. It is often the weakest and least confident elementary school teachers who are the last to attend in-service education workshops. If one is really weak in art, music, creative writing, drama, and other fields that are not formally tested, it is difficult even to be aware of the need for in-service education. By being able to offer teachers active help in teaching art, indeed, by having the SPECTRA staff teach art for them, even the most reluctant teachers have become an eager audience.

In summary, SPECTRA is an in-service program for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classroom teachers, taught mainly by paid lay persons having a background in art who visit the teacher’s class each week for a semester or two to teach students, using a curriculum that emphasizes the productive, the critical, and the historical aspect of learning in art. The program is funded by a grant from the state of California. The curriculum was written by Palo Alto’s art consultant and consists of three units of material containing 120 lessons, each of which is to be taught during a single class session. The SPECTRA staff was selected by the art consultant who provided its members with in-service training before they were to use the curriculum in the Palo Alto schools.

THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM

According to the art consultant, the SPECTRA curriculum provides “planned sequential art instruction” that is consonant with the recommendations for art education in the California
State Framework for the Arts. Kay Alexander elaborated on the origin and development of the SPECTRA curriculum model:

It is pretty mainstream art education. First of all, we wanted to consider the structure of art to teach the teachers as well as the students what art is all about. Our first units were involved with line, shape, color, space, texture, those sorts of things. They were actually built around those concepts from each of those areas as the core of the lesson and then because traditionally I had been doing a lot of art history anyhow, I was integrating it with their lessons. That became a model for the individual lessons in the SPECTRA series. Each lesson would include a concept about the structure of art, something about art heritage, and that always dealt with skill in making art. Because we used a lot of visuals, it had something to do with perception. So we were covering all four areas of a good basic art curriculum. (Interview with Kay Alexander, May 28, 1983.)

What is reflected in these comments is Mrs. Alexander's awareness of "mainstream art education." She is correct in pointing out that the content and materials that she has created reflect ideas about appropriate content for art curriculum promoted in the literature of the field for two decades but seldom operationalized, either in the classroom or in curriculum materials. Yet, despite her best intentions there are serious, if remediable, problems with the curriculum that has been developed. First, some of the structural problems.

As the curriculum is now conceptualized each lesson is to be taught in a single session. A classroom session lasts for about 45 minutes to a little over an hour; in a few exceptional cases it might last as long as two hours. The SPECTRA teacher must introduce the lesson, distribute the materials with which students are to work, teach the students how to work with those materials, and then organize the critique session after students have had about 30 minutes to use the materials. Such abbreviated time, and more important, the conception underlying such a curriculum structure, almost inevitably leads to a superficial review of the content. Students, even nine-year-olds, need more than excursions into the processes and content of art. It is difficult to provide for more than an excursion when a SPECTRA teacher works on the assumption that each lesson has a duration of about one hour.

Another structural problem in the curriculum deals with the lack of educational continuity across the lessons that constitute a unit. As already indicated, one unit of work contains from 36 to 72 lessons. One unit in the SPECTRA curricula is organized along formal elements of visual form—line, shape, color, and so forth. Other units deal with American art and with art history. Within these units is examined the work of particular artists such as Edward Hopper, Ruth Asawa, and David Smith. The style within which they work serves largely as the focus of the lesson; they are the exemplars. The problem that emerges deals with what it is that provides continuity across the lessons. The general themes are in some sense envelopes to house those artists and their styles of work, but the continuation of specific ideas or skills is not, as far as we can tell, emphasized or developed. As the curriculum is now written each lesson is treated largely as an independent entity and started and completed in one session. Given the variety of activities that are built into the curriculum, the use of a single 40 minute lesson to cover all of the material is a liability to the kind of in-depth learning that might otherwise occur.

One of the reasons for the single lesson approach to the curriculum is that the materials accompanying the written syllabus are limited; hence, SPECTRA teachers must share their

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resources. If a teacher was to use these materials for two or three lessons, other SPECTRA teachers wishing to teach that particular unit would not have the materials. Yet this problem is essentially a matter of funding, something that could easily be remedied with modest resources. The more serious problem is the structure of the curriculum itself. It is now conceptualized and developed as a set of independent elements. These lessons appear to be the umbrella for a general theme, but they do not intentionally carry over ideas or skills from one lesson to the other so that the development or refinement of those skills and ideas is optimized. Such development may indeed take place for some children, but it is likely to be fortuitous.

The structure of the curriculum does have some quite positive features. First, Kay Alexander has created a curriculum guide that is clearly formulated; the way in which the information is provided is appropriately lean and easy to read. This is not a trivial accomplishment; many guides are difficult to follow and provide either too little information or swamp teachers in information they do not want, do not need, and cannot use. Second, the guide contains activities not only directly related to the content to be taught, but also material designed to help teachers relate that content to other subjects in the curriculum. The SPECTRA curriculum guide suggests ways to integrate or correlate what it is designed to teach with other fields, something not common in art guides.

It should also be recognized that the SPECTRA guide, like the program itself, is the product of Kay Alexander's efforts. She single-handedly produced the materials that the teachers use. Much of the work was done on her own time.

I haven't had a leave to do it in, and summer vacations have been kind of hectic and so it is one of those things that gets done consistently through the year, and it means a lot of extra work because there are a lot of restrictions. I am learning a lot, but it is a very hard job to go home after working actively during the day and fix dinner and get cleaned up and then sit down and do writing. (Interview with Kay Alexander, May 18, 1983.)

Curriculum development does not typically receive the kind of commitment from teachers or administrators that such an effort represents.

The sources of the content of the guide, according to the art consultant, were Janson's History of Art, Barbara Rose's American Contemporary Art, "a half dozen or so assorted paperbacks," and Art News and Art in America. In addition to writing the SPECTRA curriculum, Kay Alexander maintains a library of art resource materials to be used in conjunction with the guide; assigns, schedules, and evaluates the SPECTRA teachers; provides in-service education to the SPECTRA teachers; talks with classroom teachers; and dispenses a large portion of the reproductions used in the program. These duties, which are directly related to SPECTRA, are in addition to those she provides to non-SPECTRA classrooms and teachers in the Palo Alto Unified School District. When one adds to this list that keeping abreast of state and national developments affecting art education is still another aspect of her position, as well as writing proposals to secure funds for programs such as SPECTRA, the magnitude of Kay Alexander's efforts becomes clear.

THE QUALITY OF THE TEACHING—THE CURRICULUM IN ACTION

The SPECTRA teachers share the materials used in the program by operating the curriculum on a "rotational" basis. This means that the resource materials for each lesson are rotated weekly among the SPECTRA instructors. There are 18 lessons and 18 SPECTRA
teachers; each teacher starts the semester with a different lesson assigned alphabetically according to last names. In other words, if a SPECTRA teacher’s last name begins with an “A” they would open the semester with the last half of the nineteenth century, or with “The Expatriates: American Artists in Europe,” and so forth. This system requires that the teacher pick up and return to the district art office each week a new portfolio of resource materials prepared by the art consultant.

The SPECTRA teacher is responsible for all aspects of the lesson. She must bring to class both the resource materials and the art materials necessary to teach the lesson. She is responsible both for setting up the lesson and cleaning up after it, and she decides what part of each lesson will be spent on art heritage, art production, and art criticism. While the classroom teacher is aware that the SPECTRA program presupposes that the regular teacher will participate in some aspect of the lesson, specific formal requirements for the classroom teacher are not provided. Some teachers routinely help with setup and cleanup and do little with the substantive content of the lesson, while others try the art activity themselves or attempt to help children in the lesson. Still others spend some time grading papers or talking with other teachers, choosing to use the SPECTRA art hour as “prep” time for themselves. At the present time classroom teachers are informally expected to teach at least one SPECTRA lesson per semester.

The quality of any intended art curriculum can be no higher than the way in which it is put into action in the classroom. The operational curriculum as contrasted with the intended curriculum defines the kind of educational opportunities children will have. The SPECTRA curriculum as operationalized is something of a mixed bag, as one might expect when 18 individuals are responsible for teaching it.

One of the weaknesses of the teaching that we see is that much of it, especially in the first phase of the lesson, tends to be didactic and “canned” in character. SPECTRA teachers

What is wanted in art classrooms is active learners. Too often, art history has a “canned” tone.
tell students about an artist and his or her work in a manner not unlike a docent. The children listen. They may even ask polite, approval-seeking questions.

The general tone of teaching at this phase of the lesson is one of exposure to information. While the historical material is often filled with exciting biographical detail—the artists come alive through vivid descriptions of their physical appearance, their personal tastes, and working habits—rarely does art history become problematic, a challenging puzzle to the child’s mind.

This, too, is remediable. What one wants in classrooms are active learners. Some didactic information is necessary to provide a background from which inquiry and problem-solving can occur, but the kind of learning that becomes internalized, a part of the child’s repertoire, comes from those sources that challenge the student to think. As the curriculum materials are now structured, SPECTRA teachers do not raise the kinds of questions or provide the kinds of tasks in Phase I of the SPECTRA lessons that provide this challenge. Instead, they tend to provide what has been provided to them, a body of interesting information that students are to consume.

In addition to the didactic character of this information, the curriculum possesses one other feature that could be strengthened. The material presented too seldom provides the reasons why certain effects are created in the works students encounter. Why does an Edward Hopper evoke a “deep sense of loneliness”? What features in their own environment create such feelings? What are the reasons for differences between a Marc Chagall and, say, a painting by de Kooning?

Such questions and the kind of teaching they would require are sophisticated in character. They seldom occur in elementary classrooms. Indeed, what the SPECTRA curriculum provides—even with its shortcomings—is rarely offered in the name of art education in American elementary schools. The children of the Palo Alto schools are being given an opportunity to become familiar with art that very few children of their age have access to. Yet the quality of that program could be improved by modifying the structure of both the curriculum syllabus and the quality of the teaching that is provided.

As the program now functions, in-service education for SPECTRA teachers is provided by Kay Alexander. We observed the in-service sessions that were given in June of 1983 in preparation for the 1983–1984 school year. The art consultant has a warm and supportive relationship with SPECTRA teachers. Cake and coffee were waiting for them when they arrived at Mrs. Alexander’s office for the three-day in-service education they were to receive. A feeling of community among all present was apparent, there was much chatting, they obviously were happy to see each other, and they had much to say.

During the three-day period, this group of 18 SPECTRA teachers “went through” each of the lessons that they would be teaching during the coming year—six lessons each day, about one hour for each lesson, six hours for each of the three days. This in-service education program was clearly a run-through. The art consultant apparently believes that the educational uses of the materials need not be discussed in depth, that the SPECTRA teachers have the experience to understand these uses, and that what they really need is to become familiar with the contents of the lessons and the materials that accompany them. Yet we are less than sure that their educational understanding is sufficient to exploit the potential of these materials.

Given our observations, there are grounds for doubt. Only a minority of the SPECTRA teachers are certified as teachers, and only four of those are certified to teach art. Although they do have a very good relationship with the students they teach, it is less clear that they know how to exploit the deeper educational potential of what they teach. In some ways this run-through of the lessons within the SPECTRA curriculum was a mini-version in both pace
and level of the way the teachers teach. It would be far better, in our view, to have focused on three or four lessons and demonstrated how these lessons might be used in depth, the kinds of questions that might have been put to the children, the kind of connections that might have been made, than to have provided practice in each of the eighteen lessons of the new unit.

Again, it must be emphasized that what is being provided in this curriculum by the SPECTRA teachers is a large improvement over what the typical calendar-centered approach to elementary school art education usually offers. Elementary school children seldom have the opportunity to see the work of Jasper Johns, Edward Hopper, Mark Rothko, and so forth. They seldom learn about the New York School of Abstract Expressionism or about the immigration of refugees such as Hans Hoffman to the United States in the late 1930s. They are being given access—exposure if you will—to important artists and their work. The need is to provide more challenge to what they see and do with the work that they encounter.

The productive phase of the SPECTRA lessons is in some ways more challenging. In this aspect of the lesson the child must cope with the problem of creating something that functions or has particular effects within a given set of parameters. If the lesson focused upon the Persian miniatures and the art of Islam, the child will be asked to choose a story or fable, perhaps one from the Arabian Nights, and to paint a small picture with tempera paints using "Islamic perspective" to illustrate that story. If the class is being introduced to the work of Rembrandt, they will work with pastels to create a chiaroscuro portrait of a model illuminated by a single spotlight or floor lamp. The students attempt to create the visual features of the work they study and while such tasks are, of course, far removed from the artist's experience and motives, engagement in them can deepen the child's appreciation of that work. Unfortunately the opportunity to cope with the visual problem is extremely brief. A new problem is introduced each week; hence, there is little opportunity for the child to develop mastery over any technique. But in our view, like other aspects of the SPECTRA program, this can be changed.

The third phase of the lesson in the SPECTRA curriculum guide focuses upon evaluation. This section of the lesson is the least well articulated in the guide and is the least attended to in practice. The guide provides evaluation criteria and procedures to the SPECTRA teacher only in the most general terms. It would be difficult to try to prescribe specific criteria and detailed procedures for SPECTRA teachers to use in this area. The competent evaluation of children's art requires a sensitive appreciation of both educational and aesthetic or artistic considerations; such considerations are very difficult to specify in detail. Perhaps as a result, perhaps because evaluation comes at the end of the lesson when time is limited, perhaps because of the low priority that evaluation activities are given relative to those in the critical and productive domains, SPECTRA teachers do not attend much to evaluation.

There has always been a tension between the kind of supportive environment, especially in art, that teachers believe children need in order to "freely" express themselves and the need to give them critical feedback. In art, an area where openness and "free" expression has historically been given much prominence, critical evaluation has been especially scarce. Evaluation took place in about one-fifth of the lessons we observed. Only one SPECTRA teacher out of ten interviewed said that evaluation was an integral part of the lesson. Most said they rarely had time for the evaluative aspect of the lesson.

When the evaluation did take place, the usual procedure was the following:

The SPECTRA teacher, and sometimes the children with the help of the regular teacher, hung the drawings on the blackboard. The SPECTRA teacher identified the children's paintings and commented on each. Here is a typical collection of remarks: "That turned out nicely." "Isn't it neat?" "A nice screen." "Aren't you pleased with it, Anna?" "This is
interesting." "A real nice arrangement of colors on that one." "I love that one." "A neat little picture just like you—a neat little girl."

Sometimes the SPECTRA teacher asked the children to pick out their favorite and explain why they liked it. ("I like the colors." "It fills the page." "It looks happy.")

During our observations children were seldom asked what made it a nice arrangement of color, what made the picture interesting, or why Anna should be pleased with it. As in the art history section of the lesson, preferences were taken as ultimates. Seldom were preferences justified. Children did not discuss or criticize art or connect their likes and dislikes to the visual qualities to which they were referenced.

The decision not to evaluate was, we believe, connected to generally held views that there is no "bad" art, that art cannot be judged and therefore it cannot be criticized. This attitude is reflected in the following statement, which, in one form or another, was made by more than one SPECTRA teacher: "I don’t do evaluations; there is no good or bad art." Another SPECTRA teacher said that she did not evaluate because children might feel insecure with their paintings hanging on the wall for everyone to see and criticize and acknowledged that she herself felt insecure with her drawings exposed.

Yet, despite empathy, critical analysis of children’s own work, particularly in relation to the type of art they have been attempting to emulate, could be an extremely important source of learning for the child. Such evaluation need not be destructive, quite the contrary. SPECTRA teachers, we believe, emphasize in their teaching what they know best, and what they know best is production, not criticism or evaluation. The evaluation process, as previously indicated, is an extremely complex activity. Most of the SPECTRA teachers do not, we believe, have the necessary skills to carry off this aspect of the lesson effectively.

For an art education program to be optimally effective, teachers need to have an understanding of the educational possibilities of art.
The quality of the teaching in the program is widely mixed for various reasons. First, there are the inevitable differences in pedagogical talents among the 18 individuals who constitute the SPECTRA staff. This is to be expected.

Second, some of what the SPECTRA teachers are asked to do they do not know how to do well. They do not, it appears to us, often go beyond the most general aspects of the content they teach. Their conception of its educational potential is limited because, we believe, their understanding of what art education can be for children 9 to 12 years of age is limited.

Third, we believe that they see their task as taking children through a lesson as contrasted with using a lesson to help children learn something important and then to use what they learn as a building block for learning things to come. This disposition is in part a result of how the lessons are structured and also in part because the rotational procedures for the use of instructional materials preclude a psychologically sequenced order to the lessons that are taught.

Fourth, and of great importance, is that few of the SPECTRA teachers are trained in art education. Most are individuals who have a deep interest in art, have some skills as artists, and are warm and supportive to children. These are important qualities. Indeed, it is a pleasure to see the enthusiastic, friendly ways in which they relate to the children they teach. Yet, as important as such qualities are, something else is needed for an art education program to be optimally effective (a goal never reached in practice, anywhere). That something else is teachers who have a deep understanding of the educational possibilities of art. These possibilities are numerous and important, they relate to the ways in which children see the world as well as to the insights and satisfactions they learn to get from art. They relate to the child’s grasp of history and culture and to the role that art plays in shaping that culture. These educational outcomes are sequentially achieved. They happen all too rarely in most classrooms. They may in fact be occurring in some of the SPECTRA classes in some of the schools, but from what we have seen they need to be more consciously attended to. Such attention by a teacher requires, as we have suggested, a deeper understanding of art education than we believe most SPECTRA teachers now possess.

Yet the quality of any program is a function of many factors. One must remember that SPECTRA is a fairly new program. It was developed through the efforts of a single individual. The director employs the best people she can find, given the level of funding. Teaching quality is mixed, but it would be unrealistic to expect that it would not be. We are optimistic about the SPECTRA program, believing that its weaknesses can be remedied.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS
IN THE SPECTRA PROGRAM

In some ways the part of the SPECTRA program that causes the greatest concern is its primary aim: the in-service education of the classroom teachers. The major aim of the SPECTRA program is to provide generalist classroom teachers with an opportunity to learn how to use the SPECTRA curriculum by observing SPECTRA artists working with the children in their classrooms. The artists are employed, a curriculum is written, the artists are trained to use it, and a schedule of classroom visits once per week is arranged in which the classroom teacher who has elected to use the program is to observe and learn.

With very few exceptions, the classroom teacher is present when the SPECTRA teacher visits the classroom. In many cases the classroom teacher helps prepare the class for the SPECTRA teacher. Yet, during our observations, only about one-third of the classroom teach-
ers actively participated in the lessons, distributed materials, commented on children's work or worked with the materials themselves. A full two-thirds of the teachers did not participate in any way. Instead, they read books or corrected papers, sometimes went out for a while, or sat and drank coffee. Most helped when discipline problems arose, but such problems were rare and not severe, as is generally true in the Palo Alto schools.

We found that classroom teachers influenced the class even when they did not intervene directly; when they were occupied at correcting papers, class concentration was lower than when they participated and displayed interest. This is understandable if we take into account that the SPECTRA teacher is a once-a-week visitor, not a regular teacher.

During the semester the regular teachers were expected to teach one lesson of SPECTRA art. Out of the five times we asked permission to observe these lessons, we were permitted to observe once. The lesson was on Walt Disney and was taught by two regular teachers to their two classrooms (58 students) simultaneously.

John and Jim, the regular teachers of these fifth and sixth grade classes, have long worked together and occasionally jointly teach lessons in the social studies and in other subjects. Both teachers know the children from both classrooms well from previous activities. In this lesson, Jim was responsible for the art history while John was responsible for the development of skills. Jim evidently knew the written material well and chose a “ping pong” dialogue between himself and the class. Here is an example of the dialogue.

Jim shows a picture of Mickey Mouse. “Who painted it? Did I paint this?”

The children laughing: “No, it’s Walt Disney.”

Jim: “What else did he do?”

Several children in the class: “Donald Duck...”

Jim: “How do you call this?”

Children: “Animation.”

Jim: “Where does it come from?”

Children: “Animals.”

Jim: “In 1921—what year is now?”

Class: “1983.”

Jim: “In 1921 Disney began drawing cartoons in Kansas City. Then he went to Hollywood to join his brother at one of the movie studios. Do you think he became famous?”

All the children emphatically: “Yes.”

Jim: “In 1928 came the first Mickey Mouse film with sound.”

This lesson, only partially described, is nevertheless typical of some of the weaknesses in the program. No attention is given to the development of aesthetic principles or to previously learned skills.

What is troublesome and even more important is that the funding of the program is scheduled to cease in January of 1984. The classroom teacher is supposed to take over the program. Our concerns are multiple in this area. We are concerned about the extent to which the classroom teacher will be sufficiently skilled to teach what SPECTRA provides in an educationally significant way. And we are concerned that the climate for academic achievement that pervades the Palo Alto Unified School District will gradually erode the attention that classroom teachers will devote to the program.
The first problem can be solved by structuring the involvement of the classroom teachers more explicitly and more actively in the teaching of the curriculum. They are currently expected to teach only one lesson per semester. This could be gradually increased. The second problem could be ameliorated if the classroom teacher receives support for the teaching of SPECTRA from the principal of the school. Principals, however, are under even more pressure than the teachers for their school to perform on academic criteria to the high standards expected. This problem is more difficult to resolve. Ultimately it is a matter of building a knowledgeable and supportive educational community that recognizes the educational significance of the arts. Even in Palo Alto much progress needs to be made in this area.

CONCEPTIONS OF ART AND THE LEARNING PROCESS

The SPECTRA program presents no manifesto concerning its view of the nature of art or of the learning process in art. Few curriculum guides do, at least in terms that are not uselessly global. The conception of art in the program must be inferred from the way in which the curriculum is developed, the content that it emphasizes, and the activities that it formulates. We learn of the operational conception of art by studying what people do in classrooms and what the materials they use explicitly or implicitly encourages them to do.

First, given the sources of the content for SPECTRA—the writings of art historians such as Barbara Rose and H. W. Janson—it is reasonable to say that the conception of art within the program is largely those objects produced by men and women believed to have important aesthetic and cultural significance to those other men and women who have cultivated an understanding of them. What this definition or conception excludes is the popular arts: the commercial arts, advertising graphics, product design, the architecture of local filling stations, shopping centers, and the like. The dominant emphasis in SPECTRA is upon what most art critics would call “works of art.” One aim of the program is derived from the tacit belief that in the world in which we live there are some very special objects. These objects are the products of both the unique talents of individual men and women and the culture in which they live. It is important from an educational point of view to help students experience and understand these important works. They are as much a part of our cultural capital as Newton’s third law or Darwin’s theory of evolution. Art, therefore, is conceived of as a special and valuable object, something whose form has been shaped by the vision and sensibilities of specially talented individuals. The SPECTRA program is intended to provide children with access to these works.

It is believed that access can be achieved through instruction. The development of a curriculum, particularly of the type provided by Kay Alexander, is an explicit recognition that teachers can help children learn.

Now such a statement would not sound in any way surprising if it were stated in the context of mathematics or reading: We expect teachers to teach in these areas and students to learn. When they do not, drastic steps are taken to correct the situation. In the field of art education, particularly at the elementary level, another view has been popular. Art, many believe, is not something you learn, it is something you do. Art for children is a natural form of expression and the best thing the teacher can do is to stimulate the child and then get out of the way. The teacher is to be a support, a motivator, a dispenser of materials—but above all, not a teacher. The view held by the art consultant and the view of learning implicit in the SPECTRA art curriculum rejects such a naive conception of what art education can provide. To the art consultant’s credit, she has taken an active view of both the child as a learner and the adult as teacher.
Yet SPECTRA teachers do not fully embrace the view of art and learning that Kay Alexander operates from and from which the curriculum was developed. When interviewed regarding their conception of art, most SPECTRA teachers placed self-expression as most important.

Most of the SPECTRA teachers stressed the element of fun, the joy of doing art: "The most important thing is to enjoy what you are doing." (That statement was in response to what was considered most important in art for this SPECTRA teacher.) Several SPECTRA teachers said that art could not be judged, that there was no bad or good art. This might perhaps be closely related to the "self-expression" and "fun" notion. If a painting was primarily self-expression, teachers, especially nurturing and sympathetic as the SPECTRA teachers are, could not justifiably critique the painting. Criticism could imply that something was not good (especially since the evaluations consisted mainly of preferences and adjectives rather than more searching analyses) and being criticized was contradictory to the idea that art was fun.

One of the questions we asked the SPECTRA teachers was: Which one of the following subjects in the curriculum would be rated most important to least important by school administrators and parents. The subjects were reading, music, math, social sciences, art, and physical education. All the SPECTRA teachers assumed that both administrators and parents would rate reading and math as most important, and music and art as least important. "You need math to survive, to earn a living," said one teacher.

Teachers, even those steeped in art, hold what might be called a romantic view of art. We believe that is why the evaluation aspect of the lessons is given so little attention. Somehow these teachers are unable to transfer what they must know about their own learning in art—the amount of effort in time, thought, and emotion that went into it—and what they apparently believe children can learn from art. These views of art and the conditions that bring it into being must, we believe, play a role in their teaching as well as in their efforts (or lack thereof) in evaluation. If art is not really a centrally important aspect of a child's cognitive and cultural development, it cannot be worth the effort that must be devoted to those subjects that are. We recognize the paradox that seems to exist here, but life is not without its paradoxes.

It is our view that although many of the SPECTRA teachers have a deep interest in art, most do not have a deep understanding, especially of art's role in education. Their in-service experience in SPECTRA did not focus on such "abstract" issues and, therefore, except for a few teachers, it is not likely that they would have much opportunity to acquire more sophisticated views.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE SPECTRA PROGRAM?

For art programs there are no norm-referenced nationally standardized tests that can be used to measure the outcomes of a program. (We do not regard this as a liability for reasons that would go beyond the scope of this report.)

The outcomes of the SPECTRA program, like the outcomes of the other programs in this report, have been assessed mainly through classroom observation and by appraising the work the students produced. We also asked students to talk about works of art that we provided. The assessment of students and teachers in these circumstances rely upon the sophistication of the observers or judges. In art, where uniqueness rather than convention is a virtue, there can be no standardized, mechanically applied scale to evaluate correct or incorrect responses to tasks having one correct answer. In the fine arts, as in teaching, the perception of nuance is extremely important. Hence we appraise what we are able to see or notice.
From our perception, the outcomes of the SPECTRA program are mixed. There is no question that children are being exposed to ideas about art and to reproductions of works of art that are altogether too rarely encountered in elementary school classrooms. Students are being introduced to periods and styles of art, to the ways in which artists work, to their motives and backgrounds, and to their human qualities. They are seeing examples of a wide array of works of art, not only from the Western world, but from the Middle East and the East.

In addition, children are being given a limited opportunity to comment upon what they see. Elementary school art curricula that give more than lip service to the critical and historical aspects of the art curricula are very difficult to find. The SPECTRA curriculum is providing what the vast majority of elementary school art programs does not provide. On that basis the SPECTRA program is an important step forward.

As the perceptive reader will have already gathered, however, the level at which the students are helped to see, discuss, and produce visual images is substantially lower than what it might be. There is little formal evaluation of the performance of the students, even though there is an evaluation section in the SPECTRA curriculum. It may very well be that children are picking up information that will later—perhaps a year or two later—emerge in their observations and comments. What we know now is based on what we observed in class: the ease with which the students comment about their work and the work of others, the skill with which they go about their own productive activity, the eagerness with which they receive the SPECTRA teacher, and the level of engagement they display as they go about their work. We have also been informed by the comments students have made on works of art we have shown to them.

Their engagement in class is high in general, although it is also true that children in Palo Alto schools are typically accommodating and well mannered. They do appear to enjoy working with art materials and they have come to expect that information about works of art will be a normal part of their art program. In this, their views of what art education can be is expanding.

Weaknesses in the evaluation of the program exist because of the lack of adequate feedback to SPECTRA teachers on how they are working with the students in their classes. This is because of, in part, the very positive, upbeat, and supportive disposition of the art consultant. She believes that strong positive morale and a good image are very important—the art consultant is correct in this. Yet, we do not believe that the SPECTRA teachers are sufficiently aware of what they do that needs improvement. As a result we believe they do not have a professionally critical grasp on the quality of their own teaching. The classroom teachers are happy the SPECTRA teachers are there; they themselves do not have a substantive background in art necessary for appraising what is and what might have been done with the lesson. In this respect, the visibility of the SPECTRA program and the fact of its outside funding have generated an attitude that is more complacent than is warranted. It is a very promising start, but it still has a distance to travel to achieve its potential.
4. ART EDUCATION AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

There is no common, specified curriculum accompanied by resource materials at the middle school level. At the two middle schools the three full-time teachers are specialists in art education. The two part-time middle school art teachers also have a background in art or art education. As in most school districts, art teachers tend to want to develop their own programs according to their own particular preferences. There is, of course, a general curriculum statement pointing out that students will have access to two and three dimensional projects, but the particular projects are selected by the teacher and are related to his or her interests and capabilities.

Almost 1600 students in the Palo Alto schools spend their seventh and eighth grades in the Jordan or Wilbur Middle Schools. Art is not a required subject, yet the art teachers estimate that about 70 percent of the students enroll in at least one semester (out of four) of art and that 30 percent enroll in two or more semesters during the middle school years. About 14 art classes are offered each semester, with an average enrollment of about 25 students.

The three full-time teachers are veteran teachers. All have masters degrees, one in art and two in education.

For art at the middle school level in the Palo Alto schools is a group of experienced teachers using a general districtwide curriculum statement that allows them maximum freedom to provide to their students what the teachers believe the students should have. The relationship of the district’s art consultant to middle school teachers is warm, but not one in which she feels a heavy administrative or supervisory responsibility. She was hired to provide supervision and consultation to generalist elementary school teachers who have little or no background in art education. Middle school and secondary art teachers are specialists, hence it is believed that they need less—if any—supervision.

THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM

There is a great deal of variation in the quality of curriculum and instruction at the middle school level. The teaching styles and abilities of the teachers are far from uniform. The productive aspect of the art curriculum receives by far the lion’s share of attention. The sequential character of the curriculum is largely an internal, within-project affair, rather than something planned across projects within a semester or between courses across semesters. Each of these observations needs explication.

Teaching skills are a product of several factors: motivation to do a job well, individual talent, training in one’s field, and so forth. At its best it is very good indeed. The most able middle school art teacher, in our view, sets high expectations for his students and conveys these to them in a sensitive but firm manner. He is knowledgeable about art, uses resources that are derived from fine art and art history to illustrate the qualities he wishes his students to attend to and then follows up his assignments by providing artistically relevant guidance. The program that he offers is of his own making, and because he is able to differentiate between the trivial and the significant, what he provides is of high quality. Students work on tasks that challenge their skills and require their attention. Comments to them in the context
of their work are designed to help them get over difficult problems with which they are struggling or to help them see and be more critical of what they have done.

What one sees upon entering such a teacher's classroom is a group of middle school students working diligently on various projects—seldom are all engaged in the same work. In one corner of the room a radio plays rock music; it is far from quiet. A teacher circulates among the students giving advice, providing materials students need, reminding them of the time they have left, and calming rambunctious students.

One of the attractive features about an art curriculum that differentiates it from many other school subjects is its flexibility. For example, almost any task from the creation of a mosaic to the making of a salad can be used to teach students about expressivity, form, and imagination. Virtually any task has the potential to be exploited by a really first-rate teacher to foster learning that is not educationally trivial. Students can deal with any task at different levels of competence: a range of solutions is possible in painting and sculpture, for example, that is not so possible in mathematics. When art is well taught in the middle schools in Palo Alto, such teaching does in fact occur.

When art is not well taught, the tasks for students are obligatory and undemanding. Students do them because they wish to comply, not because the curriculum and teaching has captured their imaginations. What one sees in such classes are children operating on three of the six cylinders they possess. Their work is completed, some of it is even good, but it is often uninspired or refined in the way in which it might be. Students take art in these classes, it is a respectable elective, but it is not as challenging to them as it might be. Art is one more of the several routines that constitute for many what it means to be in school.

Because there is no common curriculum in the middle schools of Palo Alto, it is difficult to identify specific strengths or weaknesses in a curriculum that is common across teachers. The program that is provided at the middle school level is essentially a product of each teacher's choices. That content and how it is mediated is essentially idiosyncratic. The quality that one finds is directly related to the qualities and competence of the teacher. Because this art-education situation is not rare in school districts across the country, it provides an opportunity to comment on what would enhance the teaching of art at this level, as well as at the secondary school level.

First, the curriculum that is now provided is something of a very full grab bag of projects. Following is a partial list of the projects offered in art during the spring semester of the 1983 academic year in the middle schools in Palo Alto.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marbleizing paper</th>
<th>Painting in the style of Rouault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stained glass</td>
<td>Soft sculpture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror etching</td>
<td>Cartoon strips and flip books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper enameling</td>
<td>Photograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linoleum block print sculptures</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etched jewelry</td>
<td>Watercolor animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slab, coil, and pinch pots</td>
<td>Cover design for literary magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpture</td>
<td>Styrofoam sculpture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acrylic landscapes</td>
<td>Lost wax casting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such lists are quite common at this level—essentially a list of projects or activities. It is a list of tasks students are to engage in, but the important focus for an art curriculum should deal with the skills, the ideas, and the sensibilities that are developed through activities. In many classrooms, and too often in the classrooms that we observed, the activity more than the
aesthetic or intellectual content, was the focus. Hence, students came away from their art classes with the idea that this is where they can do something, but not necessarily where they learn something. This outcome, incidentally, is not limited to art classes. Science classes often yield similar results: Students believe that science is about insects, weeds, and batteries rather than about structure and function, the relationship of form to survival, or about the sources and uses of energy. The activity becomes the end rather than the means for achieving the end.

Second, middle school art teachers like many teachers are professionally isolated. They “run their own show,” they seldom confer as a team on important, substantive curriculum matters, and, more often than not, the principal of the school is not trained to appraise the quality of what is being offered. Principals seldom have the necessary background and there are no standardized test scores to highlight weaknesses or to motivate a serious interest in what is going on in art classes. The art consultant in Palo Alto focuses her attention on those whom she believes need her assistance the most, the generalist elementary school teachers. This leaves the middle school teacher to his or her own resources. At one of the two middle schools in Palo Alto there will be only one full-time art teacher employed in 1983–84; no part-time teachers will be employed. This isolation does not provide the kind of critical dialogue or professional stimulation that is conducive to a strong districtwide program.

Third, in some cases it appears to us that the quality of the art teacher’s professional training in the field of art education has been shallow. Sound professional art education requires that one be able to reflect and plan for the educational uses of the visual arts. This requires one to think about art materials as educational media, not simply as materials for making things. Such forms of professional understanding appear to be neglected in many of the college and university art programs in which art teachers are trained. One source of neglect has to do with the number of courses in which art education students are permitted to enroll. Too often the operating rationale is that one is first an artist, then one is a teacher of art. Such a view seriously underestimates and, even more, misconceives the skills and forms of understanding a teacher of art needs.

A second source of neglect deals with the content of the art education courses that are offered. The theoretical and conceptual background that professional art teachers ought to have to be able to think through the curricular problems they will encounter are often treated superficially or not at all. Too many who teach art education courses to prospective teachers are themselves educationally naive when it comes to theory.

The sources of these problems clearly are multiple. Some emanate from a tradition that expects each art teacher to do pretty much what he or she likes. When the teacher is strong, the program is strong. Other problems are rooted in the absence of collegueship and the joint review of plans and teaching. Art teachers are, like many other teachers, an isolated lot. They receive little help in what they do and the leadership of the school and school district is not professionally prepared to appraise the quality of their work. They simply do not know what to look for. Still other sources are rooted in the art teacher’s own education. Art teachers suffer a painful ambivalence about whether they are artists who teach, or teachers who wish to be artists. This ambivalence is exacerbated in their professional socialization and affects the kind and number of courses in which they enroll. It ultimately affects their teaching and curriculum planning.

Regarding attention to the productive, critical, and historical domains in the art curriculum, the productive domain clearly is emphasized. A list of projects and activities already described would lead one to expect this even if it was not made explicit. However, in some of
the lessons (it varies for each of the teachers) the historical or cultural aspect of art does come into play: The cultural approaches to weaving are described to students in one class, Rouault is discussed in another, and the work of seventeenth century Dutch painters in another. The cultural and historical aspects of art are brought into the productive domain, usually when a project is introduced. We have not seen a class at the middle school level in which an entire period was devoted to art history or to the analysis of art.

The critical domain is attended to largely in relation to productive projects or activities. Much of this occurs when teachers talk on a one-to-one level with students. Yet in these discussions it is often the teacher rather than the student who is engaged in the criticism: “Your edge is too sharp.” “The color here is too light.” “The form is nicely developed.” Although these comments are not uncommon in art classes, they are much like the comments an art director in a commercial art studio might make to a journeyman commercial artist. The art director, in effect, makes the aesthetic judgment and the journeyman artist applies the skills. Some of that kind of dialogue occurs in the Palo Alto middle schools.

It should be said that twelve- and thirteen-year-olds have a conception of what an art class should be. In rare cases does it include serious, sustained attention to the historical and cultural aspects of art. Teachers, too, do what they know how to do best. The history of art and the critical analysis of art are less well-developed skills than the skills needed to introduce a project, in say plaster casting. Tradition, skills, and expectations help shape the actual curriculum occurring in classrooms.

When it comes to what Palo Alto art teachers believe is important to teach, there is consensus that skills are important as well as the appreciation of art. One teacher comments, “In each lesson there would be goals related to craftsmanship, how things get put together; and there would be goals related to the aesthetic considerations.”

Another says, “I try to give the kids a broad scope of different media and technique, and give them a foundation in art.”

Both the technical and the artistic or aesthetic are major aims for each of the three full-time middle school art teachers.

The presence of sequence in the curriculum, as we previously stated, is not apparent across courses. It is somewhat more apparent across projects within a course, and it is most apparent within individual lessons. “In a general presentation, you present information that you regard as extremely important that everyone can get,” remarked one teacher, explaining that more specific information and deeper understanding of the material came later from individualized instruction or from observing and talking with other students. Most of the teachers present lessons this way, progressing from basic to more complex instruction.

The predominant developmental sequence within lessons is that each unit teaches a hierarchy of skills or concepts. For example, jewelry making starts with a single etched ring (emphasis on line and initial exploration of the medium). Next, the students use a jigsaw to make a cutout form, emphasizing positive and negative space and increased control of tools. After that, students do two forms of copper enameling, again involving line, positive and negative space, and color, and adding the use of the kiln to their technical repertoire. Thus, they acquire increased complexity of conceptual and technical knowledge.

There is a developmental sequence within lessons in another sense also. Teachers often require students to complete a project in specified stages. One ceramics project involves the design and construction of a 15-inch coil pot. First, students draw several small pots and select one, which is then drawn life size. Next, students measure the large pot’s dimensions and make a pot to these specifications. When the pot is leather hard, it is refined, fired,
glazed, and refired. Students know the order of the steps necessary for completing the project. This is one example of sequential development, from idea to finished piece, rather than sequential development of skill per se.

Although sequence is important from an educational point of view, it is limited to the duration of the project on which the student works. Sequence, in a broader sense, refers to the growing complexity of skills; it is more likely to occur if projects are planned that make it possible for students to continue to use the skills they acquired on previous projects. Sequence, to be optimal, is developed not only within but across projects. As tasks change, so do most of the skills used. When a student must focus on the acquisition of a new set of skills, attention to aesthetic matters is likely to be limited.

CONCEPTIONS OF ART AND THE LEARNING PROCESS

How do the art teachers in the Palo Alto Middle Schools conceptualize art? What do they believe it to be? We interviewed four of the five art teachers to get answers to these questions and determine what they believed contributed to ability in art.

Although the answers to what they believed art to be were somewhat diverse, there was a generally held belief that it is an essential part of life and not limited to those objects or events called fine arts. Art is how one feels, it is the expression of one's inner feelings, it is the perception of beauty wherever it is found. One teacher when asked what she considered art to be said:

It is our whole universe. It is creation. The airplane, new designs, it just thrills me when I see something new that has been designed. I know that an artist has been there. My husband brought this little thing for chopping onions. For years we have been chopping onions with this little thing. He came home and just rolled over the onions with this little tool and it does it immediately in two or three seconds. So, art is improvement for life. It is sharing ideas. It is satisfaction. I can't imagine a world without it.

Another made the following comments:

Art in a broad and general way has a lot to do with seeing and understanding what you are seeing and making some sense out of what you are seeing and then appreciating what you are seeing. You can do this from actual participation in producing works of art or looking at what past artists have done and then just appreciate what they have done and why they have done it and how they have done it from just studying how different works of art were put together, but it is all on seeing and making some sense out of it and organization of something visual.

The teachers' views of the nature of art traverse a broad spectrum of ideas. In talking with them one senses a groping to put into words something that they feel, something that they know intuitively but find difficult to express verbally. They do not seem to have a grasp of the various views of art that have been developed by aestheticians; their own training probably did not afford them access to those ideas. Well-articulated views of art do not emerge from their statements, yet one feels that they want to say something more than they are able to articulate. What is clear is that their conceptions of art are not restricted to the objects housed in museums and galleries. Their general hope is to see the world as a whole, as a place in which art may be found, where art may be experienced.

During the course of our interviews we asked middle school teachers to rank six subjects in order of importance as they believed they would be ranked by school administrators and by students. (See also Appendix D.) We also asked students at each of the middle schools to
rank the same six subjects in terms of importance, learning, and enjoyment. Table 1 presents the results of these rankings.

As one can readily see, the teachers believe that school administrators—principals and central office administrators—would rank art as having the lowest level of educational importance among the six subjects. Art teachers perceive the work they are doing to be of less than central importance to the people to whom they are responsible. In this view, the teachers may be correct. In virtually all of the Gallup Polls that have been given on educational priorities held by Americans, including the latest poll, the importance of art and music courses for both college and noncollegiate bound secondary school students ranked last on a list of sixteen. What we have is a disjuncture between the values believed to exist for the arts as seen by art teachers and the values assigned to the arts by those who administer the schools.

The teachers’ perceptions of their students’ views of the importance of art is virtually the same as it is for the school administrators. One teacher comments, “The students don’t really think that it is a very important function in light of computer technology and all of the other really important things in their lives, but I think of all the subjects taught here (art) is the least important.”

Given the responses we received from the students, the art teachers’ perception of the students’ views of art is accurate. When students were asked to rank the importance of art in relation to other subjects, art was ranked last in one middle school and next to last in the other.

When students were asked to rank the same six subjects in terms of learning, art was ranked next to last in each of the schools. The students’ perspective is that art classes are not places where much learning occurs, at least not compared with their other classes.

This view can be explained in two ways. First, the students might be correct; they may not be learning much in art. Although they engage in many activities and projects, they in fact learn little. Second, and this view appears much more credible to us, the students’ conception of learning may be limited to what they think school learning consists of—something that is clear-cut, factual, measurable, and regarded as important by teachers and parents. Our culture has long regarded artistic performance as the consequence of talent rather than intelligence, something that flows from a “gift,” rather than something that one can learn to make or experience. Students simply may be reflecting these pervasive cultural views in their own statements.

Furthermore, it is much more difficult to recognize the refinement of one’s visual sensibilities or the ingenuity with which one works on problems than it is to know when one has learned how to do long division or to compute fractions. Aside from facts and skills, much learning in the arts is difficult to appreciate, especially for children. When one adds to this the generally held view by both children and adults that excellence in art is a matter of taste, that there are no standards, and that criteria for judgment really don’t exist, the difficulty of conceptualizing artistic development as a product of learning becomes even greater. One of the areas needing attention in art education is that of helping students come to understand how much they have actually learned. From our observations of the art classes at the middle school level in Palo Alto and the work that students produce in these classes it is clear that they are learning. It is important that the students themselves understand the extent to which this is so.

Students in each of the middle schools were again asked to rank order the same six subjects, but this time on the extent to which they provided enjoyment. Using this criterion art was ranked first in one school and second in the other. The two subjects ranked first and
Table 1

TEACHERS’ RANKING OF CLASSES IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, mean ranking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of view of ADMINISTRATION</th>
<th>Point of view of STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENTS’ RANKING OF CLASSES, Jordan Middle School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPORTANCE</th>
<th>LEARNING</th>
<th>ENJOYMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENTS’ RANKING OF CLASSES, Wilbur Middle School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPORTANCE</th>
<th>LEARNING</th>
<th>ENJOYMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
second in importance and in learning—namely English and mathematics—were with respect to enjoyment, ranked fourth and fifth in one school, and fifth and sixth in the other. Is this a matter of believing that important things require work and that something that is fun can be neither work nor important? When one reflects for a moment that in so many polls and national reports concerning the state of American education people expressed a desire that subjects in school be “harder,” it is not altogether surprising that art should be seen as enjoyable but not important.

Yet another factor may explain why art is not considered important by both school administrators and students. This may be a result of correctly reading the priority systems established by colleges and universities throughout the country. Parents and administrators, as well as students—even those at the middle school level—are informed about what it will take to get into the college of their choice. These messages are sent to them by counselors, by the newspapers, and by letters from universities. A letter sent to parents from the University of California makes its priorities quite clear—the arts are not a part of those priorities (see Appendix A). The President’s Committee on Excellence, which issued the widely publicized A Nation at Risk, makes its priorities clear—the arts are given a paragraph but are not considered one of the five basics. All around us we are told that what is important in education is science, mathematics, and computer literacy. In a school district near Silicon Valley having a parent population that seeks academic success for their children within the terms defined by those who manage the gateways to success, is it surprising that seventh and eighth graders should regard art of low priority in the academic scheme of things? We think not.

As for the teacher’s view of learning in art, each of them believes to some degree that students can learn in art, that what they do as teachers has something to do with that process, but that artistic ability is also, as one teacher put it, “a matter of genetics.”

Teachers were quick to point out that the kind of learning that occurs in art is personal and idiosyncratic. They emphasize the unique learning outcomes in art as contrasted with the considerably more standardized and conventional outcomes in the other school subjects. In addition, the range of educational aims to which these art teachers are committed is quite wide; from the enhancement of self-esteem, to the appreciation of art in everyday life, to the acquisition of skills in a particular medium, to the learning of a vocabulary for talking about art. Hence, not only does learning take place through teaching (none of the teachers embrace an “unfolding” view of artistic development), but the kind of learning that can and should occur is extremely broad in scope.

OUTCOMES OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL ART PROGRAM

To further assess the outcomes of the middle school art program as well as the elementary and secondary art programs we asked students to look at a set of six original works of art and to respond to questions about each. (See Appendix B.) The aim of this exercise was to determine the extent to which students who had enrolled in art classes, as contrasted with their peers who had not, were able to talk about the form, expressive content, style, and other aspects of visual art. The procedures used were as follows.

First, six original works of art were selected: a landscape painted in acrylic, a mono print landscape, an Oriental line drawing of men on horseback, an Eskimo print, an abstract expres-

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sionist pastel drawing, and a painting of a Chinese junk painted on black velvet. By sophisticated standards the last would not be regarded as having much artistic value.

Approximately eight students were selected at each level of schooling, four of whom had been enrolled in art classes and four of whom had not. In some cases students were selected by classroom teachers and in other cases they were randomly selected. What we were after was not a rigorous scientific study but impressions of what students at the elementary, middle, and secondary level were able to say about original works of art.

Each student was interviewed individually in a quiet room in which the six pictures were displayed. Each interview was tape recorded and required approximately 25 minutes to complete. Were students who were exposed to SPECTRA classes at the elementary level, art classes at the middle school level, SPECTRUM and art history classes at the secondary school level able to say more that was significant and subtle about these works than students who did not have these courses?

At the middle school level our impression is—and it is only an impression based upon the interviews and the opportunity to listen to the tapes—that students who had enrolled in art classes were marginally better able to comment upon the work that was before them than students who had no such courses. All students were able to respond to those features of the image that were most obvious: the abstract expressionist drawing in colored pastel has a very active surface. Virtually all students selected it as the most active. Similarly, virtually all students were able to identify the two works that had the calmest feeling. Students who had enrolled in art in the seventh year of the middle school (we interviewed only those students who were eighth year students in order to have students who had taken at least one year of middle school art) were, in general, better able to identify the medium that the artist had used and were somewhat more likely to attend to the formal aspects of the work that was displayed before them. Students who had no work in art at the middle school level were more likely to try to find recognizable images in, say, the abstract expressionist drawing.

All students were more articulate when a specific cue or focus was provided to them than when they were asked to say whatever they liked about a particular work. When a focus for their perception was supplied, they were able to respond moderately well.

There are two areas in which the responses made by students leave something to be desired. The first of these is the difficulty students have in supplying their own conceptual framework for analyzing and describing visual form. There is, of course, much that one could say about any painting, print, sculpture, or drawing. One could talk about formal elements such as line, color, shape, texture, value, intensity, and composition. One could comment about the style of the work. One might attend to the techniques or materials used to produce the work. One could, if one had the background, relate the particular work to other works like it or to its place in the historical scheme of things, and so on. In general, students were not able to do these things. They did not have at their command a set of categories that they could employ to respond to these works.

A second area that emerged was that the comments of both those students who had taken art courses and those who had not were not particularly incisive or subtle. They tended to see and respond to what was obvious. For example, in no case did any middle school student voluntarily comment upon compositional relationships. They most often would comment about color or about the mood of a picture. But composition, which requires attention to abstract relationships, was neglected.

Finally, for the last question students were told “If you were an art judge and were to give an award to the best work among these six, which one would you give it to and why?” The
work that was consistently rated best by middle school students, whether they had or had not enrolled in art classes, was the painting of the Chinese junk on black velvet, the painting that would be regarded by experts as having the least artistic value.

The general outcomes that have just been described for middle school students hold for students at the elementary school level as well. We found some differences in performance in favor of students in the SPECTRA program as we did for those middle school students who had enrolled in art, but these differences were not large. It seems to us that the reasons why these differences were not large are because students do not have much practice in discussing visual art or in learning about the frameworks or categories that they might use to perceive, describe, analyze, or appraise visual art. The main emphasis in their art classes is on the making of visual images. When critical comments are made about visual art, whether their own work or the work of others, it is the teacher, not the student who tends to make these comments. It seems to us that the small differences we have found in favor of students who enrolled in art classes is an optimistic sign that much could be done to help students develop the skills, both perceptual and linguistic, that they could use to deal with the visual world.
5. SECONDARY SCHOOL ART EDUCATION IN THE PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

THE SETTING

Palo Alto has two secondary schools, Palo Alto High School and Gunn High School. Paly, as it is called, the older of the two, has a population of about 1200 students. Located among large oak and eucalyptus trees, the Spanish style of Paly's original buildings contrasts sharply with the modern angularity of its new wing. Gunn High School, with a population of 1100, is an architectural gem. Designed by Paul Cump, it has won several awards for the woodsly yet sleek appearance of its low slung buildings with their covered passageways and large overhanging eaves. Both schools provide spacious and fairly well-equipped rooms and studios for the seven secondary art teachers in the school district.

During the 1982–83 academic year, three art teachers were assigned to Paly and four to Gunn. The academic achievement of the student populations of each of the schools is comparable. Like Palo Alto's elementary and middle school students, secondary students perform exceedingly well on virtually any academic measure one might choose to use.

THE CHARACTER OF THE CURRICULUM AND THE QUALITY OF THE TEACHING

The art curriculum of the Palo Alto secondary schools consists of a set of materials prepared by the secondary school art faculty. These materials define a set of instructional goals for each of the courses that is offered and provide a very brief description of course content. The implicit view reflected in these materials is that the teachers who developed the aims of these courses should be able to create the kind of activities appropriate for their achievement. For teachers who are pedagogically skilled, such a view, precisely because it is not restrictive, has some important assets. First, it allows the teacher to use activities that he believes to be most appropriate for the particular class with which he works: It provides teachers with flexibility. Second, because the curriculum guide is not prescriptive, teachers can keep themselves professionally alive by having opportunities to invent new activities for the aims the curriculum guides describe.

Fortunately, the general level of competence among the secondary school art teachers in Palo Alto is quite high. They have both the experience and the initiative to develop an array of curriculum activities that are educationally significant and challenging. In one class, for example, the art teacher asks students to create a picture in which the center of interest is clearly developed. He then asks them to add forms to the picture that will destroy the center of interest. Such a project is both educationally iconoclastic and artistically sophisticated. Most art teachers would approach the problem from one angle; they would ask students to create a picture in which there is a clear center of interest. Students would then attempt to achieve this goal and their efforts would be appraised by the extent to which they succeeded. It is the rare teacher that will turn the task around and have students destroy what they have created. Such a demand teaches students that their work is not precious and hence is more
likely to cultivate an experimental attitude. In the process it helps students understand what interferes with the clear center of interest as well as what produces one.

To be able to construct tasks of this sort—and we cite this one only as an example—requires that teachers think about curriculum activities from a psychological-educational perspective. What one must be able to do is to understand what students must think about in order to cope with such a problem and what they might learn as a result. The teacher’s orientation must, in short, be rooted in pedagogy.

Our observations of the curriculum at the secondary level indicates that much of what students do in their art activities has this character. A problem is presented and students are asked to solve it. A challenge is given—say that of creating a visual illusion—and students are asked to meet it. Negative space becomes the focus of a lesson and the student is asked to create a textured treatment of the spaces between three-dimensional forms. In the process another way of looking and making is explored.

The educational significance of a curriculum cannot be easily determined from an examination of what is in a curriculum guide. Curriculum syllabi provide a guide to practice, but never a script for teachers to follow. Even when these syllabi are detailed, as they are not in secondary art classes in Palo Alto, the actual curriculum is what goes on in the classroom. Assessments of the quality of the actual curriculum and the character and quality of teaching must be secured from direct observations of classroom processes.

There are several sources of evidence one can use to sustain judgments about the quality of practice in art education. One of these is the way in which students are engaged in what they are doing. To what extent are students interested in the tasks they undertake? What does their animation, their comportment, their facial expression say about the meaning that the work has for them? Such observations require an observer who is sensitive to nuance, who is not taken in by feigned enthusiasm, who can read the muted cues of social life. From our observations, on the whole, secondary art teachers in the Palo Alto Schools have succeeded in creating an informal yet serious environment in their classes. Although a radio might be playing while students are drawing or painting, the music is a sign of a relaxed atmosphere, not a desultory one. The students know what is expected of them. Expectations are often made explicit by the teacher, and students monitor their own behavior in a way that reflects a sense of personal responsibility. The general atmosphere of the studio art classes is characterized by low pressure by teachers, clear purposes and expectations, and opportunities for students to move about in order to use what they need to get on with their work. At times the student might be doing little, but rather than putting pressure on the student to “get back to work,” that form of behavior is often ignored unless it is clearly excessive; the student finishes what might be regarded as a cycle of withdrawal and returns refreshed to his or her work.

Unlike many academic classes, studio art classes have a greater feeling for the organic use of time. These classes tend to be more like studios than like places for formal instruction. The teachers typically circulate among students and comment on their work. Sometimes the teacher might “disappear” into his private office adjacent to the art classroom in order to work on administrative duties. The feeling is that students have work to do, they know what their work is and where the resources are, and a teacher need not always be present every minute the class is in session.

What one sees, therefore, are with few exceptions classrooms that are informal yet engaging. One observes an atmosphere in which students have mobility. One sees situations in which responsibility for the work undertaken resides with the student. The teacher, as often as not, serves as a consultant.
Another source that one can use to appraise the quality of art education is how the aims of the curriculum relate to the kinds of problems students address in their work. Setting out the task is an extremely important aspect of art teaching because it is here that parameters are defined within which students are to work. We have already commented on the features of one such task. These tasks, articulated by the teacher to the class as a whole, set the stage for subsequent work for the student. A problem that is well posed to a group of students can enable them to work independently for an extended period of time. There is at each of the secondary schools at least one art teacher who is masterful at posing problems.

One of these exemplary art teachers is John Robinson. Walking into his room is a delight for the senses. It is clear from the materials, displays, and other resources that hang throughout his room that attention has been paid to aesthetic interests. Some other rooms have little or no visual appeal, but students entering Robinson’s room encounter a variety of well-organized visual displays.

As students enter the classroom, without the teacher directing them they set up their drawing boards, find resources that they need, and begin their work. To be sure, not all of them proceed with swiftness; there is often a slow start with a gradual increase in activity level.

Robinson enters, allows the lingering conversations to continue and then at an appropriate moment says, “All right, you’ve had your time, now give me mine.” He then proceeds to talk to the entire class about the project on which they are working. “I want you to control the way the eye moves through the picture,” he comments loudly to one student and through his comments communicates to the rest. Robinson often speaks to the entire class while they are working, reminding them of things that they should pay attention to in their work.

Perhaps the most significant of his personal characteristics is that he is utterly serious and intent about his teaching. He speaks to students in an adult manner—there is no condescension whatsoever. They know unmistakably that this is not a Mickey Mouse course. He takes his work as a teacher seriously and although plenty of space is provided for them, students realize they are expected to produce. When things get out of hand, as they rarely do, Robinson has no hesitation in laying down the law and making the consequences clear. His class is a place in which to work. And although it is a place that provides no-pressure for overt conformity, the expectations are clearly set.

His classroom, like many excellent art classrooms in the Palo Alto Unified School District, is a place in which students can move about and can communicate with each other, where they are free from the sometimes stifling forms of behavioral control that exist in “academic” classrooms. One gets the sense of a no-pressure environment—at least with respect to behavior. This combination of allowing behavior patterns to be rather varied and open while making expectations clear and being serious about the importance of what students are asked to do provides an educational climate that we believe academic courses would do well to emulate.

During his comments to the class as a whole, technical vocabulary is provided. At times, although rarely, Robinson asks students to define terms in order to find out whether they understand the terms that are being used. The major mode of instruction, however, occurs through the comments he makes as he circulates through the class. It is here that the focus of attention is on the student’s work. It has a level of particularity that whole group instruction can never possess. In many ways it is a paradigm of individualization. It exemplifies individualized instruction on tasks that allow students to solve problems in ways that are themselves individual. The teacher’s comments are geared to these unique solutions, achievements,
problems, and failures. Such "individualized instruction" is personalized in a way that is absent from the more mechanical and linear approaches to prepackaged individualized materials, which, in reality, provide individualization only with respect to the rate at which a student might travel toward ends prescribed by others.

What comes through in the observation of art teachers using a general curriculum structure is that the quality of both the curriculum and the learning that occurs is, in the main, a function of the teacher's pedagogical skills. Where teachers are serious, intense, and purposeful in their teaching, where they enable students to understand the point of what it is that they are asking them to do, where the artistic content is substantive, the quality of art education is significant. Where these qualities are in short supply, the quality of art education diminishes precipitously.

Such considerations are not, of course, unique to the teaching of art. Nevertheless they do provide an important lesson: The improvement of art education must focus on the teacher and what actually occurs in the classroom. Prestructured curricula can be useful, adequate space and materials are important, but in the end it is the quality of educational life in the classroom, a quality influenced by the attitude and commitment of the teacher, that will affect what students learn in an art class.

Fortunately, the secondary school art education program in Palo Alto is taught by art teachers whose commitment is serious and whose artistic sophistication is of considerable magnitude. The results of these qualities are manifest in how the students operate in the classroom, the seriousness with which they work on their projects, and in the quality of the work that they produce. Where the programs could be strengthened is in the creation of a systematic effort to develop critical skills. At present, these skills, as well as historical forms of understanding, are developed in the context of productive work. Such a context tends to make learning less than systematic and to be treated opportunistically rather than as a significant and focused aspect of the art program.

We believe that the art faculty would do well to consider the development of curriculum units that increase student exposure to the critical and historical aspects of art. It is reassuring to know that steps in this direction are being undertaken for the 1984–1985 academic year. It is hoped that the good work now occurring in the productive domain will spread to the critical and historical domain more systematically than is now the case.

**SPECTRUM AND ART HISTORY**

The virtues that glow so brightly in the advanced art classes in the Palo Alto secondary schools are not quite as bright in the introductory art program. SPECTRUM, as it is called, attempts to cover all the bases, exposing beginning students to drawing, painting, crafts, design, sculpture, and ceramics. For most of the students who enroll in SPECTRUM, it will be their last encounter with art at the secondary school level. It is understandable that a program aiming to acquaint students with a range of media and art processes should be regarded as having educational value. Yet, we are less than sure that very broad exposure—particularly when the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to use materials as media for expression is limited—is in the best interests of the student. Clearly, a trade-off must be made. Is it better to provide in-depth experience in a limited number of media or is exposure to many media and processes more likely to stimulate and help students learn in the visual arts? We suggest that a compromise be drawn between these alternatives and that there be at least one medium or project that students work on in-depth, perhaps for as much as one-third the semester.
What we worry about is twofold: first, that the meta-lesson students receive is that art is “a piece of cake,” that art activities do not really demand much effort, that problems in art are not really difficult, and hence that art does not really challenge the intellect. Second, when skills are not developed and practiced, the materials with which students work never get converted into media for purposes of expression. To use a material as a medium, students need to be able to control it. Without adequate time for practice, achieving intimacy with a material is difficult. The SPECTRUM program only flirts with some of the concerns we have expressed.

Another area of concern that we have briefly mentioned needs re-emphasis. That has to do with the development of critical and historical forms of understanding in secondary art courses. One exemplary effort to foster such learning occurs in the art history course taught at Paly. Developed by art teacher Walt Buhler, the course is taught in a room especially designed for it.

The room is almost square, and an array of nicely displayed visuals populate the walls. These visuals relate to art history, to the elements of art, to current art exhibitions in the community, and to current events in the school that pertain to art. For example, an announcement of a spaghetti dinner at Buhler’s home is displayed for students who are or who wish to become members of Paly’s Art Club.

A slide projector is always in place, a white space on the wall ready to receive the projected images. Such rooms are surprisingly rare in secondary schools in the nation as a whole.

In this setting and with a formally defined and explicit focus on the perception, criticism, and understanding of art, students are offered more than casual opportunities for learning in the critical and historical realms of art. The discussions that Buhler’s students engage in demonstrate an impressive level of competence in looking at and discussing art. Indeed, they are able to perform at a level that would gladden the heart of most art history professors at the college level. There is a genuine comfort and confidence in their speaking manner. Their vocabulary is well-developed for their age, and they can go beneath the superficial and most obvious features of what they see. Although some of what they are able to do is a product of their home environment, their competence is sufficiently high to provide prima facie evidence of the effectiveness of the art history course they have taken.

There are two points that we wish to make concerning the development of critical skills and historical understanding in art education at the secondary school level. In principle such skills and understanding can be developed within the context of studio courses, if a teacher is sufficiently conscious of the opportunities to develop them. However, more practical and productive concerns dominate studio courses—as they probably must—and as a result, the critical and historical aspects of learning in art tend to be given a back seat or are treated opportunistically. When these opportunities are neglected, infrequent, or unnoticed, the probability of fostering such learning is diminished. An important strength of a focused art history course is that its clear mission encourages such learning, provided, of course, that the content of the course is well selected, the activities challenging, and it is well taught. At Paly, under Walt Buhler, such criteria are met.

OUTCOMES OF THE SECONDARY ART PROGRAM

With respect to the outcomes of the secondary school art program, outcomes dealing with critical skills were assessed through procedures that were identical to those used in the elementary and middle schools. Six original works of art were displayed and students were asked
individually to respond to a series of questions about them. These interviews took approximately 25 minutes to complete for each student.

With the exception of students enrolled in the art history course, the pattern of performance for secondary school students was much the same as it was for students at the elementary and middle school levels. Students enrolled in art classes were somewhat more informed about technical matters than those who were not and were less likely to concretize abstract forms. However, they did not have an easily accessible framework with which to talk about the works that were displayed. Secondary school students, whether or not they were enrolled in art courses, were significantly less likely to give their art award to the painting of the Chinese junk on black velvet.

What was also impressive, and confounding in our efforts to appraise the effects of art courses on students' perception of art, is that many of the secondary school students, whether they had enrolled in art courses or not, were particularly articulate about what they saw, and many of them were quite perceptive about the subtleties of the work displayed.

In Palo Alto and the surrounding communities, it cannot be assumed that students have little opportunity to see and talk about art outside of school. There are parents whose avocational interests include art and who encourage their children to talk about art at home. There are others who take their children to art museums. One middle school boy told us of his experience with his father in New York's Guggenheim Museum; a girl related that her mother was going to buy her a large drafting board for her to work on, and so on. Clearly, some of what students are able to see and describe is attributable to informal sources of learning at home. Thus for any individual it is difficult to isolate school effects from home effects. We had no intention of doing so. What we wanted was to see if we could discern any general trends. We believe we have.

A comment must be made about the incisiveness and clarity of students enrolled in Walt Buhler's art history course. Their ability to articulate what they see and their general comfort with art in historical context is genuinely impressive. Their performance revealed the results of a solid, serious course in the perception and analysis of art. Curriculum and teaching, when focused and competent, can make a substantial difference in what students learn in art education. The task is to broaden the curricular emphasis, develop the skills of art teachers so that they feel comfortable with such a broadened curriculum, and to implement such programs at the schools. There is good reason to believe that such goals can be accomplished within the existing structure of schooling at the secondary level.

CONCEPTIONS OF ART AND LEARNING

Secondary art teachers in Palo Alto view art as requiring a mix of technical skills, expressive desire, and problem-solving abilities. They emphasize technical skills because they believe that without them no expressive form is possible. They regard expressive desire or motivation as important because without something that one wants to convey, technical skills serve no useful artistic purpose. They think about artistic activity as a form of problem-solving mainly because they themselves know through their own artistic work that technical skills and the desire to express what one feels or imagines are inadequate for resolving a visual problem: Artistic work requires the use of intelligence.

Once one recognizes that art is not simply a cathartic event but something that depends upon the ability to think, it becomes easier to understand that teachers can offer students the opportunity to become skilled in how they think about artistic problems. Put another way,
given this view, not only can art be taught, art can be learned. One teacher expresses himself on this point in the following way.

If I did not believe that art could be learned, I should not be here as a teacher! Artistic ability can be learned sequentially. Students can learn that art is a very special type of experience that humans would like to communicate to other humans through one form or another. Art relates to men and the things humans create. Students learn in art by doing and by rational processes. It is a blend of the two. It takes a lot of time actually working with the materials. You can't learn to throw beautiful pots on the wheel just by talking about it. Yet, you can't develop very sophisticated ideas for expressing yourself by just working with your hands. You have to blend doing and rational processes in your curriculum.

To see results, though, you must have students for more than a year. We have a one-year requirement. However, a good many of our students stay with us for two or three years. Of course, the ones that are most interested stay all four years and sometimes with multiple classes in a given year. Plus, they have had earlier exposure all the way from preschool. I think you can really see learning taking place, especially with some students we have known since seventh or eighth grade. You can see how they have come along and matured with their skills and hand abilities. Also, the level of the ideas they wish to communicate becomes more sophisticated. When the learning is successful, I'm sure it all relates to what we try to get across in our teaching.

What comes through in this teacher's comments is an affirmation of the teacher's role in art education. This teacher wants more than a year with students. "To see results though, you must have students for more than a year." Artistic learning is not simply a casual affair; one must work at it, and the more time the better.

This teacher is not likely to receive the additional time he would like, at least for most students in Palo Alto high schools. Only a small fraction of students enroll in more than one year of the visual arts. Despite his commitment and those of his colleagues to the importance of the arts in the students' education, secondary school art teachers, like their counterparts in the middle school, know that art education is far from the top of the educational totem pole. Unlike their colleagues in English, math, and science, art teachers are educational underlings in the district's academic hierarchy.

One art teacher who has been with the district over 20 years says that principals and central office administrators have been supportive off and on over the years, are fairly supportive at present; and that such support "determines a lot of what goes into the hassles we have, and some of the quality of our performance when we know we have a safety net below."

A central office administrator comments:

I am convinced that the PAUSD can continue to guarantee a challenging arts education program by 1) maintaining a seven-period day; 2) being selective in the faculty chosen to provide arts instruction in the schools; 3) encouraging that teaching faculty to stay abreast of new developments in their field by attending professional meetings, participating in significant staff development activities, and so forth; and 4) funding and staffing these departments on a basis equal to that of other curricular areas.

And yet one cannot help but recognize the major priorities of the district. The t-shirts and sweatshirts worn by seven- through eighteen-year-olds display the names of colleges and universities (Stanford is quite popular) and attest to the core educational values of the district. That core is unambiguously academic. Yes, the arts are important educationally, but not of central importance. It is the energy of the art teachers, the initiative and ingenuity of the art consultant, and the support of a small but loyal constituency in the Palo Alto community that provides the assurance that the art program will be sustained.
One reason that art education in the Palo Alto schools is not given a place equal to science education has to do with the noncognitive view of art that most parents hold. What they need to understand is that judgments about visual form rely upon the exercise of mind, that perception is a cognitive event, and that the art class is one of the few places in the curriculum where ambiguity is courted and uncertainty a way of life. Most other courses are organized upon a linear format and have a right answer to each of the problems that students encounter. Yet the really difficult problems of life (which schools presumably are to help students deal with) are not problems in which there is a single correct answer. There is certainly no algorithm that can be employed to resolve problems dealing with where one should live, work, or vacation. There is no formula for selecting a mate, sharing intimacy, or speculating upon the future. The cognitive operations such problems require are probably better fostered within the well-taught art program than in most courses currently associated with the academic. Art educators have not been especially effective in getting across the message to the community that art is an intellectually demanding activity.

One important caveat must temper the foregoing. All that has been just said is predicated on the notion that art is well-taught. The arts can, of course, be well-taught as they are in some aspects of Palo Alto's art program. But the arts can be taught as poorly as any other subject in the school's curriculum. The subject alone is an inadequate indicator of the character of the curriculum that students will encounter.

What, then, can be concluded about the ways in which art and learning are viewed by the art teachers in Palo Alto secondary schools? First, they say that art is not regarded as a matter of "free" expression. Art requires technique, content, motive, and perhaps above all, serious thought. Palo Alto's secondary art teachers tend to design problems that develop the student's technical skills, that sensitize them to the formal qualities that constitute visual images, and that require a problem-solving attitude and the cognitive skills that go with such an attitude.

Second, they believe that their job as teachers is to teach. Art is not a mystical enterprise that can be experienced or made only by the talented few. Art can be taught and it can be learned.

Third, these art teachers are aware of the general position that art education holds in the academic high school. Yet, they are not willing to assign it a second-class status even though it is less than of central importance in the culture of Palo Alto schools.

Fourth, their rationale for the place of the arts in education is similar to the rationale expressed by a district administrator in Palo Alto. One art teacher expressed it as follows.

A good high school education is like a balanced diet. A balanced diet requires fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy products, and grains. To cut the arts out of a high school curriculum is similar to removing all fruits and vegetables from a diet. It is not good or healthy to do so. The arts are neither junk food nor dessert. They are just one of the necessary components in a good education.

Art teachers like this one realize what many in the community do not: You cannot provide a quality education for students without serious attention to the arts.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS BY TEACHERS

How is student learning evaluated in these two high school art departments? The main evaluation methods are the giving of grades, setting and clearly communicating expectations and consistently checking progress, formative evaluation of daily efforts, and critique sessions.
Grades are given in all art classes at the end of each semester. These grades are the standard "A" to "D" letter grades. District policy reserves an "F" for students who consistently miss class without excuse; students cannot fail if they attend class regularly. At the end of each semester students submit their finished work. These final portfolios along with a number of other factors are then reviewed to determine the final grade.

Each art teacher grades differently. However, some evaluation factors emerge as important for all faculty. Student effort, involvement, improvement, attendance, and craftsmanship weigh heavily. Student ability is regarded as a potential that has to be actualized through the above qualities. Two teachers maintain that grading should be done on the basis of effort, completion of work, and conduct only. They think that giving grades based on some absolute measure of artistic quality is inappropriate. One said: "It's ridiculous to give a cup a B+.

Drawing and painting teachers evaluated all of an individual student's work in conferences at the end of the year. One teacher allotted much of three full days to these conferences discussing the student's development, accomplishments, and future plans involving art.

Most of the day-to-day evaluation of student work was "formative evaluation" during the actual class period in the workshop. Teachers and students would have one-on-one conversations about the work in progress. Students felt comfortable asking questions. Teachers would comment on student work in easy, nonthreatening ways. The evaluation that could be seen and heard during these interactions was usually confined to technical and formal issues. Both teachers and students tended to evaluate the work along these lines. Critique sessions were already discussed in detail in the curriculum chapter. We concluded that these sessions could happen more frequently and include more practice for students in learning how to talk about art.

Teachers set specific objectives for student work. These objectives then become a part of the total project or problem to be completed or solved by the students. Students have a great deal of individual freedom and they respond in many different ways to the same assignments. A teacher explained his pedagogy:

I believe in letting students fail. In other words, I don't set up a situation so they can do something perfect the whole time. I give them a specific problem to solve. What they do is up to them. If they solve the problem, then that's how they are evaluated.

Another teacher stated:

I evaluate purely on an objective I want students to obtain. I'm very clear about what I'm going to look for—it's not what I like. If I'm asking for shading, idea, or theme—that has to be there. In other words, it has to communicate to someone—me. I ask: "Does it do it?" I always zero in on only one or two issues so it is not confusing to the students. Over the long term I will evaluate on every point but I don't try to do it on every assignment.

Students in both schools knew what their teachers expected from them by the end of the quarter or semester. A ceramics student said: "We know we have to do two large clay pieces or three small ones. We pick what we want to do after that." Students knew they would be evaluated on their work over the course of the entire semester, not on whether they worked hard on a particular day.

How did teachers evaluate their own progress? The best teachers talked the most about monitoring and evaluating their own pedagogical progress. One said that he taught differently each year because he was constantly modifying his curriculum according to what worked with differing students. Another teacher reviewed his classes, looked at the work produced, and asked himself:
Do the products reflect the skills I am trying to teach? Is there a development of these skills? Do I see thinking in the production of the work? How does the work relate to the curriculum? For example, if I teach a certain historical painting style, do I see students using these techniques appropriately in later lessons?

These questions reflect this teacher's understanding of important pedagogical issues and his concern for evaluating and improving his own teaching.

Students have the opportunity to evaluate their teachers and classes at the end of each course. The department chairs review these evaluations. These reports are not available to the administration. One chairman said that students took these evaluations seriously. He explained that he then used these evaluations for insights into the day-to-day experiences in the classes he could not observe personally.

How are the visual art programs evaluated within the school and district? In general, each department is responsible for itself. This autonomy is not the result of a policy of neglect from the school or district administrators. It is the result of a proven record of performance through the years.

Teachers said that the art consultant did not interfere with their departments, did not evaluate their day-to-day progress, and did not evaluate their curriculum. A department chairman summarized his relationships with the district art consultant: "She is great. She knows that we are all professionals and she lets us do our job. She works very very hard to give us the administrative support and resources we need."
6. GENERAL CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

What "lessons" might be learned from the study of the art education program of the Palo Alto Unified School District? From our vantage point five outcomes of this study have implications for those attempting to improve the teaching of art in America's schools.

1. The creation of structures for participation is a useful means for securing lay support for art education.

One of the important sources of lay support for art education in the Palo Alto schools is provided by those community residents who have been given an opportunity to contribute to the program within the district. These opportunities, referred to here as structures for participation, makes it possible for the talents of these individuals to be shared with students and, equally important, to secure their allegiance and support.

Probably most communities have individuals who wish to make a social contribution and who have an interest in the arts. These lay people, when given the opportunity to become a part of the team for art education, can exert an influence and provide political support that often exceeds that possessed by professionals in the district. School boards are often more likely to heed the demands of the lay community than the fervent but self-interested pleas of the school district's staff. One of the very high achievements of Palo Alto's art consultant has been to create such support by providing the vehicles within which the lay community could work.

2. A structured curriculum that can be used by either trained lay people or professionals in art education can increase the quality of art education at the elementary school level.

Although we have identified several areas of the SPECTRA program that could be strengthened, SPECTRA and programs like it have much potential in art education in their attempt to introduce elementary school students to the critical and cultural aspects of art learning as well as the productive aspects. SPECTRA makes generous use of visuals and it provides a brief but readable syllabus that lay people with a background in art can understand. In addition, it helps to define a specific period of time in the school week for instruction in art.

In many elementary school classrooms art is unavailable to children or is taught in such a manner that its value is questionable. We believe that with appropriate modification with respect to the training of SPECTRA teachers, the development of a sequential series of curriculum activities, and the gradual induction of the classroom teacher into an active role within the program, SPECTRA could be successfully disseminated and employed in other school districts.

3. The general neglect of the critical and historical aspects of learning in studio-oriented art courses undermines the student's ability to learn how to perceive and discuss visual art.

One of the most telling features of our observations of the art program in the Palo Alto schools is the consequence of the general neglect of both critical skills and the historical understanding of art. Although the aim of developing the student's visual sensibilities and
appreciation of art in historical context is an important aim for most teachers, in practice little attention is devoted to the achievement of this aim. At present this aim is developed, or attempted, within the context of studio activities. Often its development is happenstance. In addition, most of the critical activities in the classroom are to be found in teacher rather than student activities. Most students make little progress in their ability to perceive and discuss visual art.

Fortunately, the evidence indicates that where focused and sustained attention to the development of critical and historical skills occurs, students indeed learn: Those students who are exposed to such courses are more perceptive and articulate about what they see. It is recommended that courses whose major emphasis is on the critical and historical domains be developed and that where this is not possible substantial segments of existing studio courses be devoted to the development of such skills.

4. A studio atmosphere that combines informality with seriousness of purpose and clear expectations for performance is conducive to high quality art education in the studio area.

One of the impressive features that we observed in both middle and secondary art classes is the result of a combination of classroom qualities. One is an informality allowing students to listen to music, talk to each other, and move about; yet there are clear and high expectations for student work. This mixture of freedom and purpose reduces pressure on adolescents to conform to what are often unreasonably limiting classroom rules, while putting the responsibility for quality work on their shoulders.

From our perspective these classroom features are conducive to an atmosphere that maximizes high level performance in the visual arts. It relieves the teacher of the need to contain the energies of adolescents because it provides them with the space they need to function with comfort. At the same time, the clarity of purpose leaves no doubt that what students are doing in their art class is taken seriously. The features of such classroom atmosphere would, we believe, be quite appropriate for other classes in other fields.

5. The quality of the art teacher is, despite other important educational factors, the most important influence upon the quality of art education students receive.

The individual who mediates the curriculum, who monitors the class, who shapes the atmosphere of a classroom, who maintains the pace of lessons, who provides individual guidance to students, and who defines the parameters of a lesson is the teacher. Despite the presence or absence of facilities or materials, the teacher remains the key element in effective art education. We see this clearly as we observe different teachers working with the same facilities, the same schedule, the same students, yet with very different degrees of effectiveness. The differences are substantial. Hence, we conclude that the major vehicle through which the quality of art education in our schools can be improved is by improving the quality of the art teachers who work in the schools.

Teachers, like most people, do what they know how to do. They operate with the frameworks and attitudes that they have developed over time. Human behavior is, after all, adaptive. Teachers of art who have not developed the pedagogical skills necessary for helping students learn how to perceive, analyze, and describe visual form or who do not regard such activities as important aspects of learning in art are simply unable to provide such activities in their classrooms. This neglect has two consequences. First, students do not develop the varieties of learning in art that are educationally valuable; they do not learn to perceive and
discuss the subtle yet significant aspects of visual form. Second, because the teacher does not secure the practice needed to teach students how to engage in such activities, the teacher is less likely to develop the pedagogical skills that are necessary for doing this well. A kind of pathogenic cycle emerges: Teachers who do not give students access to certain kinds of content and skills in art education are less likely themselves to develop the skills necessary for doing so effectively. Because they lack the skills they need to teach in these areas effectively, they neglect them in the classroom.

When such teaching does occur, students learn. Students' comments display their competence. The development of teaching skills and the recognition of the need to attend to these generally neglected aspects of art education are of fundamental importance in the creation of a broadly based effective art education program in American schools. We believe that with institutes and other forms of teacher in-service and preservice education, the development of the necessary skills and attitudes can be achieved.
Appendix A

LETTER TO PARENTS ABOUT PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

October 30, 1981

Dear Parents,

As your son or daughter becomes a teenager and begins secondary school in earnest, it is time to plan ahead for high school graduation! We would like you to know of some ways in which you can give one of the best graduation gifts of all - a good preparation for the challenge beyond. This is especially important if you dream of a college education for your child; but even if your son or daughter prefers to take a job instead, you may find that these suggestions will help to make more jobs available to your graduate.

We faculty members of the University of California who have responsibility for admissions policies are concerned that many of our entering students are having problems doing college work. You probably know that scores on standardized tests of high school students have declined nationwide every year since 1962, but you may not be aware that more than half of the students who come to the University need a remedial course in writing. No student enjoys having to spend the first years at college restudying materials that could have been learned in high school.

Schools today have many problems because of budget pressures. Parents need to help guide their own youngsters in selecting a good course of study. Many students tell us that they would have welcomed more help from their parents in making decisions about courses to take in high school.

You need to help your teenager make wise choices. You should know that peer pressure is strong to take easy classes; that good students often find the idea of a senior "year off" attractive, when they should be working hard to "cement" and extend what they have already studied; that it is not always easy to set up an ideal schedule of classes at school without being a little aggressive!

One of the most important factors is to help your son or daughter keep career options open by taking the widest possible selection of academically challenging courses. These courses must encourage the use of writing and reasoning skills and development of good study habits. All of these skills require regular practice just like athletics or music.

To meet these needs, your son or daughter should be expected to enroll in an English class every semester of every year - one that requires written compositions. Most students should also be taking a math class every semester. There are very few careers in our modern society where good math skills are not needed. If possible, elementary mathematics should be reviewed from time to time. We find that an alarming number of entering University students fail on
quite simple math, even though they have taken "advanced" courses! Students who wish to have the option of going into any career related to science and engineering should take full year courses in chemistry, biology, and physics (yes, we do mean in all three!), since final career choices are often made while at college.

One way you can have a direct effect is to encourage study at home by finding a quiet place and time for students in your family to work. A young student needs at least one hour a day. Most college students have to put in more than three hours a day of "homework" just to keep up! A student needs practice to build up to that level, just as a jogger needs a great number of workouts before taking on a Marathon!

Our advice is meant to help no matter what college or university your child may one day enter. We hope that we have suggested some practical ideas that you and your child can use. If your son or daughter does come to the University of California, we feel sure that taking our suggestions and helping your youngster along will enable him or her to have an enjoyable and worthwhile college experience.

Sincerely yours,

Henry L. Alder
Henry L. Alder, Chair
Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools
University of California

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William D. Rohwer, Jr., Berkeley
Jonathan H. Sandoval, Davis
R. Michael Tanner, Santa Cruz
Appendix B

ART QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

<table>
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<th>Monoprint</th>
<th>Landscape</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>Velvet</th>
<th>Oriental Drawing</th>
<th>Eskimo Drawing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(E)</td>
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INTRODUCTION

- We will be looking at six different art works. We want to know what people in school have to say about pictures.

- You've never seen any of these works before.

- This is not a test where your name will be used, and it does not count at all in your grade.

- There is no one exactly right answer for any of these questions.

- We are really interested in what you see, what some of your feelings and thoughts are.

- This is a tape recorder.

- I'll be taping our talk today so that my partners can all listen later, and I don't have to take notes.

- Have you ever had your voice taped before?

- Let's try it out together and get it working properly.

- OK, let's start with comparing two of the pictures here - This will help us to get warmed up.

I. Comparison of (E) and (F)
Oriental and Eskimo drawings

Voice: Look at these two pictures, (E) and (F)

- Talk about what is similar and what is different about these two pictures.

- What do they have in common? In what ways are they not alike?

- For example, they are similar in that they are both in black and white.

Further prompts: What is same?/different?
What else different/same?

II. Discussion of one painting. Use (B) (colored landscape).

1. A. - Tell me about this picture. Say as much as you want to.

2. B. - Tell me what you see, what you feel, what you think.

III. Shorter answers to questions on any painting (A) to (F)

A. Let's look at (A) and (B).

1. What have the artists tried to paint in these pictures?

2. What would you say about the moods? (feelings) of these pictures?
   How did the artists create these moods?

3. What methods or techniques did the artists use to make these pictures?

4. Tell me about the difference in color values between these two pictures.
   What are the differences in the lightness and darkness of the colors used in these pictures.

B. Let's talk about this picture (C). (Abstract)

1. What style of art does this picture represent?
   Is there any artist you know that makes pictures like this?
   Are there any pictures like this in units you have studied.

2. What materials do you think the artist used?

3. Describe the colors that you see.

4. What feelings does this picture express to you?

5. What can you say about the way an artist's shapes are arranged in these pictures?

C. Use all six pictures - (A) to (F)
You will be choosing pictures that you think **best** fit the following descriptions:

Again, there is no one exactly right answer.

1. Choose two pictures. The one you think is flattest and the one that has the greatest depth. Why?

2. Choose the picture you think required the most and the least skill. Why?

3. Choose the picture you think is the most active and the most quiet and calm. Why?

4. Choose the picture or pictures you think come(s) from another culture. What culture?

**IV. Use all six pictures (A) to (F)**

1. Please give your art award to one of these pictures.

2. Tell me why you chose that picture.
Appendix C

ART INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. How do those things we call works of art get into the world? By works of art I mean things like paintings, drawings, sculpture, architecture and things of that sort.

2. What do you think is required for someone to produce a work of art or to do excellent or high quality work in art?

3. You are now studying a number of subjects in school. In terms of your own education what subjects do you think are most important and least important in school? Here are some cards with subjects on them. Would you put them in the order that you think would be from the most important to the least important within schooling?

4. People sometimes enjoy some subjects more than others. Here is the same deck of cards. Would you please put them in order from the ones that you enjoy the most to the ones that you enjoy the least?
Appendix D

ART INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. How do you decide what it is that you teach in art? What kind of plans if any do you make? Is there any written material or a curriculum guide that you use or follow? Can I see it?

2. The curriculum of the school in which you teach provides a range of subjects for students to study. Among these subjects which do you think would be rated as most important to least important by school administrators? I am going to give you a set of cards and would you please put them in the order of their importance as perceived by school administrators in your school district?

3. If you were to rank the order of the cards from the students point of view, how would you order them? Would you please do so?

4. I would like you to assume that you had only three weeks allocated to the teaching of art in a school year. What do you think you would emphasize or devote your attention and the attention of your students to and why? That is, what would you like to accomplish in those three weeks and what would you do?
5. I wonder if you might elaborate on what you believe to be the *educational* benefits of students working in the visual arts? What are the most important things that they can get from art education?

6. Are there any *unique* contributions that you believe the visual arts make to your students education? That is, are there contributions that you believe that art makes that other subjects do not make?

7. Do you think that art education should be taught primarily in relation to other subjects in the curriculum or do you think it should be taught as an independent study in its own right? Could you explain why you answered the way you have?

8. Do you use any aids or volunteers in your classroom in the area of art education? If so, in what ways are they used?

9. How do you go about evaluating the art education program in your classroom and how do you determine what students are getting out of it?

10. I wonder if you might think about your own training in art education. Could you tell me what kind of background in art education you have, starting from college. The training might be both formal and informal, that is
university courses or other kinds of courses or programs you might have been in, if any.

11. Students differ in their abilities in art as they do in other areas of the curriculum. What do you think accounts for the high level ability in the visual arts that some students have?

12. To what extent if any does the art program in the Palo Alto schools utilize community art resources to enhance the program?

13. One final question, art is a broad and often ambiguous term. I would like you to think about the meaning of art for a moment and then describe what you mean by art when you use the term. That is, what do you believe art to be?

14. Do you have a conception of how students learn in art? If so, what is it?