THE EDUCATIONAL VISION OF DBAE

Definition of Discipline-Based Art Education

Discipline-based art education (DBAE) is a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning in the visual arts, developed primarily for K-12 schooling but also useful in art museums and adult education. It features systematic and sequential learning experiences in four distinctive domains of art to help students create, understand, and appreciate art, artists, artistic processes, and the roles of art in cultures and societies. DBAE draws its content primarily from these basic art disciplines, each of which enables students to have broad and rich experiences with works of art:

1. By creating works of art, through the skillful application of both experience and ideas, with tools and techniques in various media (art making).
2. By describing, interpreting, evaluating, and theorizing about works of art for the purposes of increasing understanding and appreciation of works of art and clarifying the functions of art in society (art criticism).
3. By inquiring into the historical, social, and cultural contexts of art objects by focusing upon aspects of time, place, tradition, functions, and styles to better understand the human condition (art history).
4. By raising and examining questions about the nature, meaning, and value of art, which lead to insights as to what distinguishes art from other kinds of phenomena, the issues that such differences give rise to, and the development of criteria for judging and evaluating works of art (aesthetics).

Rationale for Art in the Curriculum

DBAE regards art as an indispensable component of a quality general education. Thus, art shares with other subject matters the basic school missions, among others, of building minds,
of creating problem solvers, and of transmitting cultural heritage. Art contributes to all of these
general goals of education and to others as well. In fact, art has historically sought to justify its
place in the curriculum by its contributions to such student needs as language development or
personality and social development. But whereas the general educational goals are important,
they only furnish an instrumental or contextualist rationale, not one based on what only art can
indispensably provide.

There is justification for art as well in its indigenous and unique contributions, unrelated
to its service to nonart goals. Art is a distinctive form of human experience, and the study of
it in schools ought to focus on what other subject fields do not. For example, shaping form to
possess aesthetic character, and understanding types of aesthetic experience (in DBAE’s case
that of visual images), is not a goal of any other subject in the school curriculum. Idiosyncratic
frames of reference such as the aesthetic are ways of knowing which are not addressed in the
typical school program. DBAE teaches the specialness of art. It does so to introduce and sustain
forms of experience which can enhance the lives of students who encounter and experience it.

The Interdisciplinary Approach

As a comprehensive approach the scope of DBAE is as broad as that of the four key domains
of art experience. It assumes that works of art are multidimensional, and that to apprehend
and understand them successfully involves a broad exposure and extensive examination that
generally exceeds what has been traditionally provided by educational programs. The four
foundational disciplines of art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics embrace the
knowledge base; characteristic tools of inquiry; and specialized vocabulary for perceiving,
understanding, and making works of art. Each of the disciplines is a lens through which one
might experience art from different perspectives.

But DBAE is more than learning about four art disciplines. It is a partnership among
those domains designed to work together in an integrated fashion so as to maximize learning
opportunities. Thus, DBAE is a form of interdisciplinary study, with the disciplines each
contributing to the awakening and development of student awareness of art and its capacity
to influence our lives. This partnership among the art disciplines naturally leads to a more
holistic experience of art than when the curriculum is based on a single discipline, such as art
making. In that circumstance, which reflects a paradigm that long held sway in art education,
the student became a maker of objects without the benefit of tutorial by the great traditions
of artistry and history which have created cultural artifacts of great power and meaning. Each
of the disciplines offers a valuable and informative individual or “field-centric” perspective.
However, in DBAE their effectiveness comes from their coordination and unity.

Policy Implications

DBAE defines the character of the art classroom experience by treating art as a substantive,
complex subject matter, one with a large knowledge base, a wide assortment of inquiry skills,
and rich traditions. This has policy implications for teaching and learning, as DBAE’s claim
to instructional time is based on its essential character and status as a valuable subject matter.
DBAE, thus, has consequences, among other things, for teacher training, curriculum develop-
ment, instructional resources, research, and evaluation. Accordingly, each effort to establish
DBAE necessarily addresses a wide range of issues.

For example, a school district that chooses to adopt DBAE must create a support system for
the classroom teacher for which there is almost no precedent in the history of art education. No
other approach or paradigm has ever required as much of schools as does DBAE, whether it be
professional development activities for the teaching staff, allotment of instructional time and
budget, or the ongoing interest and “buy-in” of administrators. The requisite changes in attitude needed to develop such a supportive professional infrastructure and policies must be patiently but steadily cultivated and reinforced. Administrative advocacy from the school board down to the individual principal is required to make DBAE adoption and implementation meaningful, successful, and enduring.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND PRECURSORS OF DBAE

Jerome Bruner’s “Process of Education”

The discipline-centered conception of art flowed initially from the influence of educator Jerome Bruner, whose “structure of the disciplines” was a seed concept for DBAE in the 1960s. He endorsed studying the structure of a field rather than just facts about it. This in turn could be learned by studying the practitioners who are the source of knowledge about a field. To know and understand, say, architecture, one would consult architects and determine what, why, and how they do what they do. The process of education is about assimilating the knowledge, skills, and traditions of the master craftsmen who in effect define the field. Such an inquiry would reveal the “structure” of the discipline, including its basic organization and principles, challenging issues, characteristic tools, and technical vocabulary. These ideas entered art education principally through the influence of Manuel Barkan of Ohio State, who featured them at the 1965 Penn State Seminar in Art Education where a variety of new ideas and reforms were discussed.

The implications for art are clear: The studio artist, the art critic, the art historian, and the aesthete are the paradigm practitioners of the four art disciplines. They demonstrate how their respective disciplines shape and influence their work, and how the discipline provides a field or arena of artistic inquiry and experience. But studying only a single discipline or even several of them is insufficient to provide a comprehensive picture. Thus, Bruner’s model is one in which the integrated character of DBAE is anticipated by several decades.

Seminar for Research in Art Education

Also in the 1960s a special interest group formed within the National Art Education Association. These art educators came from diverse fields, including in addition to the foundational disciplines of art other disciplines with related interests, such as philosophy; psychology and cognitive science; anthropology; and cultural studies, linguistics, sociology, and information science. A common interest in building an academic research agenda for art education led to the creation of the seminar and publication of Studies in Art Education early in the decade. Later journals like the Journal of Aesthetic Education, Visual Arts Research, Arts Education Policy Review, and Journal of Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Research in Art Education would also contribute to a growing milieu of research and systematic study in art education in the final third of the 20th century. This would help feed practice and stimulate interest in art education in more complex and ambitious curricula and teaching strategies.

The investment of professionals in art education in empirical and other types of research was not a brand new development in art education, which had featured studies of children’s drawings, visual perception, and other inquiries of early psychologists going back to the 19th century. Pioneer educational researchers had sought to demonstrate the utility of research for determining questions of curriculum and instruction. By and large, most art teachers were indifferent to such investigations which generally took place in the universities, distant from school classrooms.
The emergence a little more than a generation ago of heightened research interests and the attraction to the field of people with related interests to those of art educators was the first time that experimental research was widely incorporated in the professional priorities and training programs of the field. Professors and doctoral students began to pursue serious, academic quality research focused on learning in art and the enhancement of pedagogy. Crossing boundaries by drawing on different disciplines became commonplace, another anticipation of DBAE.

This turn to empirical research (philosophical and historical research has been addressed as well) had strong consequences for shaping the field. In addition to leading to conferences and publications, it helped ground the field in substantive inquiry about art education, offering an alternative to those who preferred the appeal to “creativity,” “the mystique of art,” and attractive romantic but unproven conceptions of the child as artist. Research to standards furnished a basis for increasing the credibility of art education as a subject matter that merited a place in the curriculum.

Kettering Project at Stanford

One of the significant precursors to the concept of disciplines in DBAE was a curriculum project in elementary art, sponsored by the Kettering Foundation and developed at Stanford University from 1967 under the leadership of Elliot Eisner. The Kettering project sought to demonstrate that even younger children could apprehend concepts in different domains of art, and that their own art work could benefit from guided inquiry and experience in production, criticism, and historical curricular activities.

Kettering assumed that in most situations the classroom teacher in elementary grades is not an art specialist and has no more than a minimum of professional training in teaching art. Therefore the art education was as much about the teacher as the student. Kettering provided extensive instructional support for the teacher, including a “Kettering Box” filled with materials designed to facilitate learning in the productive, critical, and historical domains of art. In these classrooms children learned about art as well as produced it. Kettering anticipated the use of the art disciplines and included activities with a family resemblance to those that would take place in DBAE classrooms 20 years later.

Providing training and support for the teacher, including a written curriculum and an assortment of instructional resources, was also a feature of Kettering that would become important for organizing tenets of discipline-based art education. Finally, Kettering placed a premium on evaluation of the learning experience to ascertain what impacts it made on children’s knowledge and on the understanding of art. Here too the value placed on assessment linked Kettering to DBAE.

R&D Activity in Government Labs

Still another historical piece that led to the development of DBAE was the establishment in the 1960s, as a result of a massive Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed by Congress, of a network of research laboratories which became the headquarters for many government-sponsored research and demonstration projects, including some in art. Thus, federal dollars helped support a burgeoning research ethos throughout the subject areas of schooling, including art.

At their peak, the federal R&D laboratories and centers numbered more than a dozen and over the years spent hundreds of millions of dollars inquiring into virtually every facet of American education. Most of the labs, established at or affiliated with research universities, took on specialized interests. Two of these with interests in art were CEMREL, the Central Midwestern Regional Laboratory; and CAREL, the Central Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory.
CEMREL eventually developed a series of curriculum packages and materials (“kits”) in various art forms, including visual art, music, theater, and dance. These were multidimensional in character, offering information and ideas, learning activities, instructional resources, and procedures for assessment. CAREL’s principal product was the creation of a catalog or dictionary of statements about the various art forms, expressed in terms of the information students ought to learn about art. These were intended to establish a knowledge base for students in experiencing each of the respective art forms.

The R&D laboratories which focused on the arts were important because they not only supported research and tried to address the arts in a comprehensive fashion that was unprecedented in the field but also represented the claim of American education on the federal government to invest in the arts as a significant subject matter for schools. By virtue of such support, art education began growing in credibility during the decades prior to the emergence of DBAE. Progressive developments included the adoption by the National Art Education Association of a broad and ambitious set of general aims for art education (which closely prefigure the multidisciplinary approach) and the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts with its support of art education in schools through the “Artists in Schools” programs.

DBAE & IDEOLOGICAL CHOICE IN ART EDUCATION

DBAE Versus Creativity/Self-Expression Paradigm

Discipline-based art education is based on a paradigm different from that which had dominated the field of art education for more than 50 years. The “creativity/self-expression” paradigm took root in the early 20th century based on the work of Franz Cizek and other European and American educators who endorsed art for its value as relief from the rigors of the academic curriculum, its presumed capacity for nurturing the expressive life of children, and the opportunities offered in art for “making” and creative work. These goals were absent elsewhere in the curriculum, so it fell to art. But these goals of recreation and play and self-enrichment were not necessarily valued by schools, as shown by the marginal role of art in most school programs.

By midcentury, the leadership of the psychologist Viktor Lowenfeld focused art educators almost exclusively on “creative and mental growth.” Art was a tool for socialization and personality development. Creativity and self-expression theory cherished the untutored and naive emanations of child art, which many art specialists believed would be contaminated by even talking about student work. Art’s capacity to provide unique contacts with and learning about the works of art of mature artists was subordinated to art’s capacity to reinforce the goals of child development. Few efforts were made to utilize the vast heritage of world art for such learning tasks as understanding its role in human history; nor were questions of aesthetic content or import raised with children lest art be “intellectualized.” A bias against reading or talking about art (basically against anything that seemed “academic” or made art resemble other subjects) caused defenders of the paradigm to retreat to soft stances regarding the mystique of art and its essentially nonacademic character.

Subject Field-Centered Versus Student-Centered Rationale

Discipline-based art education basically challenged the creativity/self-expression paradigm by putting the work of art, rather than the student, at the center of the art lesson. Student self-discovery as the chief goal of art is replaced in DBAE with the acquisition of competence in
art as a field of study and engagement. The DBAE-educated young person is able to view and talk about works of art, how they are made, and what they mean. He or she can analyze the contents of an image and situate it in an historical and/or cultural context. The DBAE student can handle questions of value and purpose in works of art. None of these subject-centered abilities are priorities for the creativity/self-expression paradigm.

However, it would be a mistake to entirely diminish the importance of works of art created by students themselves in a DBAE setting. The conception, design, and execution of student works of art are the goals of the art-making or art production discipline. But rather than view those works as being primarily of service to students’ personal and social development, DBAE considers such works as having been shaped and influenced in positive fashion by the exposure and input of the other disciplines.

General Classroom Teachers Versus Art Specialists

Perhaps the most controversial feature of DBAE programs is its appeal and utility to the general classroom teacher who has had little or no professional preparation in art. Yet in thousands of classrooms across America, such teachers in the elementary grades are expected to teach art, despite their lack of training. Some classrooms may enjoy a periodic and limited visit by an art specialist, but in many places even those are lacking. Budget priorities have eviscerated the art specialist profession in some states, such as California.

Art specialists who teach in elementary schools have described their apprehension about training classroom teachers to teach art. Art specialists in junior and senior high schools have sometimes also opposed DBAE because they feared that training classroom teachers was a step backwards, and that more art specialists should be retained to do that job in grade schools. DBAE recognizes the special professional contributions of art specialists who have so much to offer to students at all levels. But the reality is that in thousands of elementary classrooms throughout the country the students will have little or no art instruction at all unless their classroom teachers are trained and motivated to teach it. At the same time, DBAE offers even the art specialists the opportunity to broaden their approach to art with their students in secondary schools, many of which are wedded to the creativity/self-expression paradigm.

Pluralism in Art Education

Art education is a field in which individual differences count, reflecting the values of idiosyncrasy and boundary breaking in fashioning, knowing about, understanding, and appreciating works of art. DBAE offers a flexible approach that acknowledges the differences among students, teachers, administrators, school districts, facilities, community resources, budgets, and curricular opportunities. In fact, during the development of DBAE in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of training institutions and theoreticians in art education traveled their own paths, guided by the general axioms of DBAE (foundational art disciplines, written sequential curriculum, engagement with works of art, etc.) but leaving many decisions to choice based on local circumstance, energy, and intention.

This pluralism is entirely consistent with discipline-based art education, which acts as an umbrella or central locus for related explorations which take art seriously as a subject matter, and which build a knowledge base in students that will help equip them for their own experience. DBAE is not a specific curriculum, but rather an approach to pluralism in art.
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DBAE

Balanced Content From Four Foundational Art Disciplines

Discipline-based art education draws its substance, its content, from the four foundational art disciplines of artmaking, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. Knowledge, skills, and tools from other disciplines also furnish potential resources for DBAE, which embrace concepts from anthropology, cognitive science, linguistics, philosophy, cultural studies, and other disciplines. The proportions of instructional time and attention allocated to the individual art disciplines may vary with the nature and scope of the individual lesson and local circumstance, such as the training and interests of the teacher, or availability of resources such as art reproductions or an art museum in the community. There is no formula that dictates the extent or proportion of the input from individual disciplines, only that the lesson be “balanced” to reflect the multiple interests involved, that alternative perspectives be available, and that a variety of resources might be utilized.

Systematic and Sequential Written Curriculum

One of the ways in which DBAE considers art to be like other academic subject matters is in the requirement for a written, sequential curriculum. This helps ensure that students move along grade-level and age-appropriate learning tracks in which lessons are reinforced but not repeated, and which incrementally build the knowledge, skills, and understandings that are the overall goals of the process. The written curriculum for a DBAE lesson will feature certain characteristics, including a clear statement of the learning idea or behavior on which the lesson is focused, a rationale that describes the significance of what is to be learned, basic questions that might be asked about it, and alternative learning activities to fulfill the lesson.

A written curriculum will also specify instructional materials required (such as art images or media), provide readings or references to additional background information (such as about an artist, an era, a style, etc.), and delineate an assessment procedure or mechanism that helps teachers and students ascertain what has been learned. Other features of a written curriculum might include tapes and questions for discussion, compact disks, games, posters, and so forth.

Developmentally Suitable and Age-Appropriate Activities

Although DBAE does not hold the personal and social development of the child to be the principal purpose of the art lesson, as it is for many followers of the creativity/self-expression paradigm, DBAE does recognize the importance of devising developmentally suitable and age-appropriate activities for students in the elementary grades. This issue has arisen in part because some critics fear that the hands-on emphasis of the traditional studio art approach will be displaced by an emphasis in DBAE on verbal analysis of works of art, an “intellectualizing” or “academicizing” of the learning experience in art which replaces doing and making with talking about it.

In fact, there may be at least initial limitations that may flow from teachers’ and students’ general unfamiliarity with using words (instead of paint or clay) to express one’s ideas and feelings about visual images, especially when technical vocabulary is utilized. Part of the agenda in DBAE is to build student competence to express and share one’s perceptions, and to become informed from listening to those of other people about the capacities of art works for eliciting a variety of divergent reactions.

A second impediment for some is DBAE’s embrace of aesthetics, the discipline which of the four foundational art disciplines is likely to be the most unfamiliar to adults and children
alike. To include aesthetics or philosophy of art in the basic art education regime is considered
by some to be “inappropriate,” but tweed-jacketed British philosophers are not the only ones
interested in questions about the value and meaning of art. In fact, even young children can
address basic aesthetic questions when these are couched in developmentally suitable and
age-appropriate language. Why are some works of art “pretty” and others are “ugly”? Why do
some works of art make us happy and others make us sad? Can you make a beautiful picture
of something that isn’t beautiful?

Engagement With Works of Art
A critical feature of discipline-based art education is engagement with works of art by mature
artists. Although students’ own works of art are valued by DBAE as significant personal
statements, it is the works of accomplished adult artists that best reflect the lessons about art that
are taught in DBAE. An enormous inventory of works of art suitable for reproduction exists in
various formats (book illustrations, posters, slides, videos, compact disks, etc.). Improvements
in color printing technology and access to Internet resources make it easier than ever for
instructors to acquire the images they need to teach and talk about art.

An additional advantage of drawing on established works of art is that they provide exam-
ples of the range of art across different world civilizations and cultures. One consequence of
“globalization” is the immediacy of cultural diversity, which is expressed most vividly in the
American melting pot. Cultural diversity in art is routinely embraced by DBAE. A salutary
development during the 1990s was the decision by commercial publishers to publish and make
available art reproductions and other media of non-Western art. Of course, every effort needs
to be made by the teacher of DBAE to give students opportunities to view original works of art.
These are available in museums and galleries, and in the community (architecture, sculpture in
public places, etc.). It is always preferable to view original works of art; but in their absence,
the high-quality art reproductions now available are generally adequate for classroom use.

THE ROLE OF THE GETTY EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Getty’s Interest in DBAE
Discipline-based art education enjoyed a singular champion and catalyst for almost 20 years,
the Getty Center for Education in the Arts (later renamed the Getty Education Institute), a
program of the J. Paul Getty Trust of Los Angeles. No organization in the history of American
philanthropy ever attempted a more ambitious program of support for art education in the public
schools than did “The Getty.” The Trust, originally established to administer the Graeco-Roman
Getty Museum in Malibu, California, diversified in the early 1980s into related areas, including
art education. Under the leadership of President Harold Williams and Program Director Leilani
Lattin Duke, the Getty Center became the leading exponent of the DBAE approach and its major
funder in universities where it was developed and in school districts where it was implemented
throughout the United States.

The Getty Center in its early days canvassed the thinkers and doers in the field and gathered
a long list of ideas for potential philanthropic investment. The Getty leadership decided to
address the low status and uneven quality of art education in the public schools. A search for
the type of program that Getty might undertake focused on the comprehensive approach that
would be subsequently named (in 1984) “discipline-based art education.” Support for such an
approach existed in the antecedents of Jerome Bruner, the Kettering Project at Stanford, and
the R&D efforts in the regional laboratories.
It also followed as an outcome of a national report commissioned by Getty from the RAND Corporation. They evaluated seven school districts around the United States that featured exemplary programs in art. Successful projects were found, unsurprisingly, to exhibit such characteristics as strong administrative support, opportunities for professional development, and links with the community. These and other progressive factors were echoed in the Getty Center’s inaugural publication, *Beyond Creating: The Place for Art in America’s Schools* (1985). This became the clarion call for DBAE and for change in art education.

**Private Philanthropy in Partnership With Public Schools**

Getty’s approach to disseminating DBAE was ambitious and deliberate. Its activities spanned the arenas of advocacy, theory development, professional training, curriculum studies, model programs, and assessment. Between the early 1980s and the late 1990s, the Center sponsored workshops, seminars, and major national conferences; developed major summer in-service training programs in a half-dozen states; and sponsored preservice pilot programs in more than a dozen universities where teachers are trained.

The Getty Center also commissioned dozens of scholarly papers and monographs; supported development of new instructional resources, such as the Multicultural Art Print Series; ran a fellowship program for doctoral students; and formed alliances and networks with more than three dozen national “cooperating organizations,” such as the Parent Teachers Association, National School Boards Association, and the National Endowment for the Arts. They supported curriculum research and development of model lessons; launched a broad program of publications and created art education’s first national Web site; ran retreats for school administrators such as principals, superintendents, and school board members; and, explored the school-to-career options for students interested in art. The central theme of all of these activities was discipline-based art education.

**Facilitating Change in Art Education**

The Getty Trust’s intervention in the field of art education was unprecedented in American education and American philanthropy, but the magnitude of the challenge to improve the status and quality of the field required no less. Art education has been generally far behind its subject matter cohorts in the curriculum when it comes to public understanding, administrative support, financial resources, and instructional time.

Due to Getty’s continuing promotion of the issues, many reforms were achieved, including the upgrading of art as a high school graduation requirement in many states, the bolstering of a number of university preservice programs, and the public expression of support for art by major figures including the Secretary of Education, chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, and other community leaders. Getty was open about its motives for its involvement in art education: It was even rather logical for the Getty Trust, which operated one of America’s best known and richest museums, to help ensure that museum audiences of the future would be better prepared to understand and enjoy what was available for visitors. Improving art education in schools might have a positive impact on the citizenry, whose children could become informed and appreciative museum goers.

But Getty did more than bankroll the effort: It provided leadership, energy, forums, programs, and enterprise. In one sense, DBAE was itself a huge research experiment, looking at what it was feasible for one private organization to accomplish. Harold Williams and Lani Duke’s strategy was to create alliances and networks so that Getty, which obviously could not do it all alone, would have plenty of assistance and support from its partners. Furthermore, Getty set out directly to facilitate major change, not to just study the problem, create task forces,
and issue reports. Like the J. Paul Getty Trust itself, which as an operating foundation staffs and runs its own programs, the Getty Center for Education in the Arts played a pro-active, front-line position on the team.

Of course, it did cost large sums to pay for summer institutes, conferences, publications, and a host of other initiatives. The financial commitment was obviously millions of dollars a year. But whatever the outcomes of its efforts, even critics could agree that the Getty Center never wavered in its support of DBAE (which itself was evolving over the entire duration). Throughout its existence the Center sought to shift the field toward the more rationalistic, academically oriented DBAE, and away from the creative/self-expression approach, which many felt was responsible for art education’s low estate in schools. The Getty Center sought to build commitment to a successor paradigm that would galvanize the field and help shape the profession of art teachers over coming decades.

Sponsoring Theory and Practice

The Getty Center understood that DBAE needed to be built on a solid foundation of theory and practice, so it invested in both. On the theory side, the Getty Center commissioned a major monograph about the theoretical premises and underpinnings of DBAE and invited 100 art educators to meet and critique it. Monographs were also written by major educational figures, such as Gestalt psychologist Rudolf Arnheim, philosopher Harry Broudy, cognitive scientist Howard Gardner, and Stanford professor Elliot Eisner.

On the practical side, Getty invested in far more than professorial scholarship. Major commitments to professional training were made in the Los Angeles Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts (1983–1989), six Regional Institutes; and a plethora of smaller projects in school districts, colleges and universities, state departments of education, national organizations, art museums, and community organizations.

Special task forces or working groups were also established to focus on advocacy for art, on curriculum ideas, on multicultural diversity in instructional materials, and on assessment. Model and demonstration programs were funded. Art educators attending regional and national conferences heard a multitude of reports from the field about both the practical and the theoretical work taking place under the auspices of the Getty Center.

Building the Art Education Infrastructure

The Getty Center worked with the people and organizations who held the authority, power, and opportunity to change the direction of the field. The National Art Education Association, art education’s national professional guild, became a major partner of the Getty, co-sponsoring projects and providing a visible venue for tracking and reporting on DBAE’s progress. A significant portion of the program at each of the annual conferences of the NAEA was devoted to discipline-based art education, which had aroused the consciousness of the field.

Perhaps the most astute initiative of the Getty was to attempt to create an infrastructure for DBAE within the many schools and school districts to which Getty had access by virtue of the Regional Institutes or other Getty-sponsored programs. That infrastructure included a “lighthouse person” or team within each school whose responsibility was to provide leadership, model commitment, and work for the steady implementation of a permanent DBAE program. In one place, that might be a teacher; in another, a supervisor; in still another, a principal. Even superintendents and school board members were cultivated by the Center to contribute their interest and energy to the team establishing the DBAE paradigm, which usually began with putting an in-service training program in place. Getty cultivated administrators, school board
members, and community policymakers and other influential figures (i.e., museum directors, art critics, artists) to participate.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DBAE

Professional Training

Successful learning may be predicated on successful teaching. A priority for discipline-based art education from its inception was its focus on professional development. Preservice preparation in the training institutions, the colleges and universities where school teachers obtain their degrees and teaching credentials, closely mirrors the values and belief systems of the deans and senior professors who run such institutions. Some senior figures in art education, heavily invested in the creativity/self-expression paradigm after decades of professional work in the field, might be less open to the idea of a paradigm shift than would a younger faculty member who attended college in the 1970s or 1980s when integrated and interdisciplinary studies cut a wide swath across the nation’s campuses.

Inservice programs received the greater share of the Getty Center’s attention because of the obvious need to work with teachers who were already on faculties and teaching art in the classroom. Literally thousands of workshops were held during the Getty era, primarily in schools, to address the needs of staff for training in art. DBAE had to first be taught to and understood by the teachers who would be charged with its exercise, and only then might it be conveyed to students. This was a formidable research project, to determine what training strategies might work best when teachers were working with a subject area in which they generally had little training and were usually unfamiliar with domains like aesthetics and art criticism.

Of course, the Getty constantly worried about the fate of the inservice professional development programs which were established and facilitated by the foundation’s grants and contracts. Who would take up the cause if Getty were to withdraw from the scene? At a time when the Nation at Risk report (1983) revealed a crisis in American schools, what was the long-term viability of the Getty interventions? No one could say.

Curriculum and Instructional Materials

No single program ever received the imprimatur of being “The DBAE Curriculum.” Rather, diversity of pedagogical tactics, instructional resources, choice of art images, and opportunities for connecting to the general curriculum was encouraged. Adherence to well-known basic principles (i.e., balanced content from the four art disciplines, engagement with works of art, integration where feasible with nonart subject matter, rigorous assessment, etc.) created a family resemblance among a number of different DBAE-styled programs across the country.

An important threshold was reached in the mid-1980s when the commercial publishers that supplied textbooks and curriculum “kits” to art specialists noticed the growing interest in DBAE. They came up with their own DBAE-like curricula packages, which were advertised in art education publications and featured at the national conferences. It became clear that the vendors were listening to the buzz about DBAE and to their customers who were asking for multidisciplinary, comprehensive materials. Vendors offered their written curriculum in handsomely designed binders with supporting videos, compact disks, and other media.

Soon there were abundant new choices for DBAE users, including reproductions of works of art, new historical information about familiar masterpieces, thematic presentations uniting works in common support of a central social or cultural concept, and gender and culturally
sensitive materials. The advent of the Internet would bring even more art resources to the teacher’s doorstep.

Administrative and Political Support

Ultimately the success of DBAE implementation relied on the sympathetic interest and support of the administrators: principals, district art curriculum supervisors, superintendents, school board members, state directors of education, and even higher government functionaries (such as members of Congress who support the National Endowment for the Arts, which since the 1960s gave grants for art education initiatives). Efforts to involve administrators in DBAE were intense in the recent decades of the 20th century, perhaps more so than at any time in the history of art education. A steady flow of information about new DBAE art programs was paired with special retreats to focus on the indispensable contributions of administrative support to successful DBAE teams.

Principals, superintendents, and school board members were courted and involved. Some became the leading voices for art education in their respective district or region. State directors of art also were convened by Getty and encouraged to work together on such issues as state frameworks, curriculum guidelines, graduation requirements, assessment protocols, and teacher certification standards.

Community Relationships

Discipline-based art education connects with and draws upon the community in several ways. First, it identifies the local sources where students might view original works of art: museums, art galleries, art in public spaces. Second, it includes people resources, such as practitioners of the four foundational art disciplines (i.e., the artist who has been commissioned by the local arts council to create a work for a public place, or the art critic who writes for the local newspaper). One of the singular experiences for students in DBAE is to have the opportunity to be visited by or to go to the workplace of an artist, critic, historian, or philosopher (aesthete). Third, DBAE reaches out to parents of the students to inform them and help them better understand what is at stake and what is being accomplished in their children’s art lesson, something most parents have paid little attention to beyond affixing youthful art work to the refrigerator.

DBAE AND EDUCATION REFORM

The Basic Education Movement

Discipline-based art education was a reform movement itself when it appeared on the art education scene in the early 1980s. It proposed overturning or replacing the old paradigm of creativity/self-expression with a new approach that would be academically respectable and actually teach children about works of art in a stimulating and effective manner. In a sense, the DBAE movement in art education resembled the “back to basics” movement, as it was promoted by organizations like the Council for Basic Education (a Getty “cooperating organization”), which valued a return to educational fundamentals.

These were the courses that instilled in students the basic skills they would need to make their way in the society, including verbal and number skills. For example, art education was perceived to sharpen perception, which in turn enabled students to make fine-grained distinctions that nurtured linguistic abilities. DBAE would also equip students with the basic skills they needed to function as intelligent observers, consumers, and makers of art.
Basic education focused on “core” subjects; favored discarding what it considered curricular effluvia, such as topical offerings, which were filling up the high school curriculum (i.e., “family life” and “consumer education”); and, strongly emphasized good reading and writing skills. DBAE itself also pursued a traditional approach, offering a comprehensive education in basic art. This resemblance in objectives helped gain a seat at the table of school improvement for art educators.

State Frameworks

The Constitution reserves to the States the responsibility and authority to provide for public education. Although there exists a federal Office of Education, it does not set specific standards or requirements for schools in all of the states. Decisions as to what subjects students study, how much of the subject is taught, and other pedagogical and curricular questions are made by the individual states, which determine graduation requirements for high schools and other curriculum-controlling issues. Although local school boards ultimately govern and adopt basic requirements for district schools, the state departments of education play a substantial role in educational decision making at both the curricular and the budgetary levels. Course requirements are set forth in the state frameworks, documents that list goals and describe the learning program intended to fulfill them, including courses, student competences and behaviors, and other variables. These are sometimes complemented by a separate document furnishing specific curriculum guidelines.

DBAE advocates worked hard, state by state, to make their voices heard on the framework committees, which periodically review and revise such documents. In the absence of a curriculum-controlling central educational authority, such as exists in such other countries as Japan, frameworks come as close to being a set of normative requirements as anything promulgated. In most states, the creativity/self-expression approach had been enshrined in state frameworks since the 1950s or even earlier, but toward the end of the century the old paradigm was being supplanted by variants of discipline-based art education.

A major achievement of DBAE has been to alter perceptions at the state level as to what constitutes an adequate art education. Policy changes usually follow an extended period of debate and discussion, and in many states the replacement of a mainly studio-oriented curriculum in art with a broader approach did not occur overnight. However, by the late 1990s the majority of the states featured new or recently revised frameworks that elucidated the principles of a comprehensive education in art for K-12 schools. The adoption of such frameworks gave important credibility to the efforts of DBAE advocates statewide. For example, the California Framework for the Visual Arts (1972, revised 1990) describes four cornerstones of a quality art education: artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context, and aesthetic valuing. Although the nomenclature varies, the basic curricular structure of the four foundational disciplines is adopted. Similar goals and organizing concepts are to be found in the documents of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and other states.

National Standards

DBAE’s efforts to improve the status and quality of art education also benefited from the interest in and trend towards developing national standards for subject matters and for teacher certification. The National Standards for Art Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts (1994) sets up voluntary standards for educators, policymakers, and the general public. This effort to develop a common point of departure for improving arts education in America’s schools shows the significant influence of DBAE in the formulation of reasonable expectations of K-12 students educated in art. Similar progress in
developing national standards occurred in teacher certification, for which the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) issued guidelines (1995).

Accountability Within Art Education

The determination of general progress in the field on a national scale falls to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a government-sponsored program that rotates its attention to subject matters. Every few years it assesses students’ knowledge and understanding in art. It is of course difficult to describe with confidence a connection between student performance on a national examination and the adoption of a particular approach to the teaching of art. Discipline-based art education would have to be much more widely implemented in thousands of additional school districts for there to be any likelihood of its impacts showing up short term on the National Assessment.

Complicating the picture is the fact that assessment has not always been a priority for art educators. Under the creative/self-expression paradigm, objective or standardized instruments were disregarded because their application was deemed inconsistent with the personal and expressive outcomes presumably produced by the curriculum. To evaluate performance in the art classroom was conceived to be a violation of the integrity and individuated character of student art.

Discipline-based art education holds to the practical standard of an assessment that provides useful feedback to teacher and student alike. There is simply no other way to ascertain whether the DBAE approach is achieving its objectives than to take a searching, neutral look at how, if at all, student performance is affected in the DBAE classroom. Failing to find out leaves DBAE’s most avid proponents grasping for explanations of performance, whether salutary or not. So DBAE commands assessment efforts, although few art educators have specific training or competence in application of the highly specialized tools and procedures of qualitative and quantitative assessment. One might examine such factors as student interest in art, ability to apply critical concepts, acquisition of social and cultural understandings, the use of technical vocabulary, explorations in various media, and awareness of the philosophical issues raised by art.

RESEARCH IN AND THROUGH DBAE

Cognitive Science as a Resource for DBAE

Research in art education began in the late 19th and early 20th century when psychologists examined children’s drawings for clues to their personality and expressive/affective character. The influence of Freud and Jung reinforced the notion that children’s art might be a door or mirror to their inner lives. Educators like Walter Sargent at Chicago and Earl Barnes at Stanford conceived of art as a language, and found that perceptions of the forms of that language constitute an important type of literacy (which was later named “visual literacy”). By the middle of the 20th century, influential psychologist/educators included Rudolf Arnheim, whose studies of perception resulted in his conviction that art is a form of “visual thinking,” and Viktor Lowenfeld, who taught that art stimulated “creative and mental growth” and development.

By the 1980s, Howard Gardner was exploring the concept of visual intelligence, and how artists manifest this specific form of intellectual functioning, in his books such as Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983). At Harvard Project Zero, cognitive scientists like David Perkins explored the relationship between artistic creativity and intellectual development. Art education drew strength and credibility from the links established...
by cognitive studies between visual imagery and the formation of ideas and concepts. This was important because it tied art education’s fortunes to the major purposes of schooling. If art education helped students become more efficient problem solvers, perhaps that might help justify an expanded role in the curriculum. Actually, art educators such as Kenneth Lansing and Brent and Marjorie Wilson had demonstrated in their research since the 1960s the links among artistic perception, language, and critical understanding.

The linkages between art and mind have been explored throughout the recent history of research in art education. Such research demonstrates the contributions that art education can make to general education, a goal of discipline-based art education. Furthermore, the embrace of such cognitively related functions as talking and reading about art, as part of the study of art, reinforces the notion that art can share with other subject matters the responsibility for helping students in concept formation and problem solving.

**Models of Professional Training**

Because professional development plays such a key role in the DBAE approach, research related to both preservice and inservice training programs became an important source of validation and verification for advocates. The central role of teacher preparation also occupied many of the stakeholders, including school districts, educational policymakers, teacher training institutions, art education professional organizations, and funders.

By far the most extensive and searching examination of DBAE professional development programs was the 7-year effort (1983–1989) sponsored by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts relating to the Los Angeles Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts, and the Regional Institutes in the states of California, Florida, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas. Each of these was a major initiative to experiment with varying models of DBAE and their concomitant specifications for teacher training.

Probably no other initiative of the Getty Center had more direct consequence in classrooms than its R&D in professional development. These programs reached thousands of students and teachers in the seven states where core projects existed, and in many others as well. Substantial resources were devoted to ongoing and rigorous assessment of these programs to ascertain what worked and what did not. Under Brent Wilson’s leadership, a wealth of solid research data resulted from years of careful study and documentation. *The Quiet Evolution: Changing the Face of Art Education* (Wilson, 1997) is the evaluative report of a large research experiment in discipline-based art education. The report also charts the progress of the Regional Institutes in transforming the teaching of art in American schools. DBAE’s links to the larger picture of school change and the reform process are elucidated. One of the major findings in Wilson’s report is that the arts can move from the margins of the curriculum to the center and may even facilitate school renewal.

**Focus on the Art Disciplines**

During the most influential period of DBAE’s tenure (early 1980s through the late 1990s) many related areas of concern attracted research interest, including the aforementioned cognitive studies and professional development. Another source of rich ideas for DBAE in classrooms was mined through philosophical, historical, curricular, and empirical research in the four foundational art disciplines. Much of this research resulted from the ongoing development of the respective disciplines, each of which was undergoing its own spirited professional dialog. For example, the College Art Association was ridden with controversies over feminism and other special interests in art history even while DBAE advocates worked to establish the theory and practice of art history (with or without a feminist orientation) in schools. Because
content for DBAE was drawn from those disciplines in a certain flux, the journals that reported research and the conferences that debated the issues at hand became more significant than ever before for art educators.

Again the Getty Center was responsible for creating multiple linkages between art educators and theorists and practitioners in the four art disciplines. Artists, art critics, art historians, and aestheticians were invited to conferences where they described the changes occurring within their respective domains the research such process might lead to. In various publications, the Getty, National Art Education Association, state departments of education, and other national organizations gave visibility and value to the professional work of the discipline specialists, including their research interests. The artist, perhaps the only one of the four whose inquiries do not regularly result in writing and publication, is perceived in DBAE as conducting “qualitative research” by exploring possibilities and resolving problems in media.

Moving From Theory to Practice

Classroom teachers and art specialists are less likely than professors and teacher trainers to read research journals or attend research seminars. But well-trained teachers ought to possess the most current ideological resources to assist in their advocacy and pursuit of DBAE. Professional inservice development programs should provide instructors with a steady stream of selected studies which translate theory to practice. As a practical matter many teachers learn their craft on the job. It is important to retain their interest in professional improvement, and the research literature is one principal way to remain current. At the same time, policies affecting art education might take root in the faculty lunchroom as much as they might issue from research findings or the decisions of school boards.

Furthermore, different functions fall to different roles in the field. Theorists, usually professors and writers in the colleges and universities, formulate theory and disseminate their ideas at professional meetings and through publications. Practitioners, usually working in classrooms in schools, carry out their teaching assignments informed or not about the latest theories and research findings. The lack of control groups makes it difficult to compare experimental treatments (i.e., a DBAE curriculum) across classrooms.

THE LEGACY OF DBAE

Facilitating Interdisciplinary Studies

The nature of DBAE, drawing content from four art disciplines, makes it by definition “interdisciplinary,” and a model for interdisciplinary studies. The approach provides an example of unity and convergence in a subject field, and among different but related subject areas in school curricula beset by fragmentation. By emphasizing the relationships among the four art disciplines, as well as their connections to knowledge from other domains, an opportunity is created to integrate and consolidate a student’s education around comprehensive ideas, broad themes, and holistic practices. DBAE is largely about discovering and exploring those connections. The art disciplines do not exist in completely independent fashion, but actually relate to one another at many levels. Thus, a student encountering a work of art might address it through the view or perspective of any one of, or even all of, the disciplinary lens furnished by DBAE.

At one point the Getty Center and the College Board co-sponsored a national integration project with the title The Roles of the Arts in Unifying the High School Curriculum (1995). The project envisioned art playing a central role in an integrated approach to secondary learning. Following DBAE’s lead, art might be productively studied in connection with language and
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literature, history, social and cultural studies, and even science. Some might call DBAE a “humanities approach” to education.

Adoption by Other Art Forms and Subject Fields

The model of the four art disciplines might be plausibly applied to other art areas as well. Although DBAE was initially developed for teaching and learning in the visual arts, there is no impediment to its application in other art forms. In fact, since its inception, discipline-based art education has attracted the interest of performing arts educators, especially music educators, and of the Music Educators National Conference, which was headed for a time by a former head of the National Art Education Association.

Some music educators, such as Bennet Reimer, have taken the lead in discussing DBAE (with “A” = arts) as a conceptual framework. Music educators are often partial to the importance of music history, and to a lesser extent criticism, as components of a comprehensive music education. DBAE as an organizing construct for the performing arts has also been the subject of speculation and discussion in theater and dance education. Members of the American Association for Theater Education also have shown interest, attending DBAE conferences and writing for publications. Perhaps most significant, funders other than Getty have invested in establishing the Southeast Center for Education in the Arts at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga and the South Carolina Center for Dance Education.

The relevance of DBAE to other subject areas beyond the arts has not yet attracted much research or advocacy enthusiasm. This may be because curricular areas tend to experience their respective internal reformations idiosyncratically. Perhaps practitioners of other disciplines or school subject areas are reluctant to borrow a model from art because they are unaware of the connections that bind art to the larger purposes of school life, nor are they familiar with art’s unique contributions to student learning.

Impacts of Electronic Technologies

Like every part of the curriculum, the rapid emergence of the computer and electronic communications over the last 2 decades has profoundly affected schooling. The first manifestation of this in art education occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, when computer graphics programs began to be established in art and design (sometimes art education) departments in American universities. For example, The Ohio State University was one of the pioneers in art education, developing programs for graphic artists which offered previously unimaginable capacities for practically instant graphic design. These students would help create a computer culture in art education, one which is consonant with the DBAE platform which endorses a far-ranging search for interesting and appropriate images and ideas. Using every technological advantage available to expand and enhance students’ art experience is good DBAE practice.

Students of all ages now have immediate access to extraordinary resources. Ideas and data flow in unending profusion from the Internet. The ability to explore art is unprecedented, from downloading images of works of art in museums all over the world to encyclopedic entries on artists, art styles, and issues in both historical and contemporary art. Simply finding the time to review such abundant resources (much less connect them to one’s situation) is a logistical challenge for teacher and student alike.

The National Art Education Association and the Getty Center were the first to utilize the Internet for national art education Web sites. Getty’s ArtsEdNet.com carried basic program and project information intended to disseminate good ideas, such as curricular practices evolving out of the Regional Institutes. Resources posted to the site included reproductions of works of art, information about artists and art movements, suggestions for classroom topics and
treatments, updates on pending federal and state legislation affecting art education, texts of important speeches delivered at professional conferences, and other items.

The likelihood is that Internet improvements will continue to increase access for learning in art. The development of recent wireless technologies will enable students to fold a laptop computer into their backpacks and with such devices gain entree at their convenience to museums and galleries, artist’s studios, public art sites, scholarship, and other art-related information from around the world.

The Future of DBAE in Schools

Discipline-based art education set out to transform the face of American art education, and its report card after more than 20 years reveals achievement as well as disappointment. Notwithstanding the substantial professional talent, material resources, and energy expended in the movement to establish and implement DBAE, it must be admitted that the process of change has proved to be more complicated and problematic than anyone imagined.

DBAE advocates are justified in the satisfaction they can take in having created a more substantive, academically respectable approach to K-12 art education. This has included some significant accomplishments, including advocacy strategies, theory development, professional training programs, curriculum units, instructional materials, and tools for evaluation. Such positive developments as the adoption of standards for teacher performance in art instruction are also significant advances which benefit DBAE. But these and most other commitments are only voluntary. Survival beyond being a trend, and perpetuation as a permanent legacy in schools, will depend on how successful DBAE advocates are in altering perceptions about teaching and learning art. The change process is incremental over time, and reform of schools as well as the subject matters taught within them is probably a multi-generational task. A key requirement for programs that become part of the school’s cultural bedrock and core curriculum is identifying those “lighthouse” people and their successors, so that the comprehensive approach to art (and other subjects) endures.

A large disappointment for DBAE practitioners has been the abrupt withdrawal from the field of art education by the Getty Education Institute, the primary patron and promoter of discipline-based art education since the term was coined in 1984. When Harold Williams stepped down in 1998 as president of the Getty Trust, the program became vulnerable and was shortly thereafter eliminated by his successor. This occurred despite the widespread evidence that Getty’s program had indeed made a difference in one way or the other in the lives of thousands of students and teachers in hundreds of schools around the country.

A plethora of firsthand accounts by teachers who were associated with DBAE programs at different levels testified to the impact it had on many teachers’ lives and careers. In addition, DBAE was responsible for a myriad of ways in which the field of art education was galvanized and supported over the approach’s almost 20-year run. However, the movement could not overcome the disappearance of its champion, and the Getty’s surprising (and unexplained) abandonment of its own progeny remains a mystery.

Meanwhile, although the central fiscal source for so many DBAE-related projects and activities has disappeared, the professional commitment to DBAE lives on in many places: in the concept of a substantive, academically rigorous, and multifaceted comprehensive art education, a goal which continues to be worthwhile and has many adherents; in textbooks and scholarly materials which advocates of the comprehensive approach continue to produce; and, in the posture and perspective of the teachers, art supervisors, professors, researchers, and sympathetic administrators who joined in the great effort to transform the face of art education and who remain committed to its development, with or without a major private philanthropic patron.
At its base DBAE owes allegiance to a humanistic philosophy that holds that art has limitless power to sustain and enhance human life, and to reveal and enable us to better appreciate the human condition. These are reasons enough for the inclusion of discipline-based art education in school programs. The final chapter is far from written.

REFERENCES


31. DISCIPLINE-BASED ART EDUCATION


INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES


