

K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Consultation Report

2009 (DRAFT)

Government of Alberta ■
Education

ALBERTA EDUCATION CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Copyright ©2009, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education. Alberta Education, Curriculum Branch, 44 Capital Boulevard, 10044 – 108 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T5J 5E6.

Every effort has been made to provide proper acknowledgement of original sources. If cases are identified where this has not been done, please notify Alberta Education so appropriate corrective action can be taken.

Permission is given by the copyright owner to reproduce this document for educational purposes and on a nonprofit basis, with the exception of materials cited for which Alberta Education does not own copyright

K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Consultation Report

Background	1
Demographics	2
Current Status of Fine Arts Programs in Schools	3
What’s Working and Success Stories	3
Challenges	5
Hopes for a New Curriculum	7
A New Program with a New Name	9
<i>Education</i> Is a Thumbs Up	9
Those in Favour	9
Those Opposed	10
Alternative Names	10
The Arts and 21 st Century Learning.....	11
Theme: Globalization.....	11
Theme: Information and Technology	11
Theme: The Complex Learner	12
Dreams and Visions for the Future of Arts Education.....	13
Identifying Key Concepts and Structural Models	13
Model A:	14
Model B:	15
Model C:	16
Model D:	17
Model E:	18
Model F:	19
Model G:	20
Model H:	21
Model I:	22
Model J:	23
Model K:	24
Model L:	25
Model M:	26
Model N:	27
Model O:	28
Recommendations	29
Recommendation for Core Learnings.....	29
Recommendation for Teacher Development and Certification	29
Recommendation for Curriculum Acquisition Feasibility.....	29
Recommendation for Middle Years – Complementary Programs Collaboration.....	30
Recommendation for Next Steps	30

Background

Existing fine arts programs require revision to represent current research, promising practice, cultural diversity and technological infusion in response to Alberta's needs. Alberta Education has initiated a project plan for the review and revision of fine arts programs in Alberta. Curriculum Branch and French Language Services Branch have seconded Arts Education Program Managers to codevelop these programs.

As part of the curriculum review process, a number of strategies were used to determine the vision for a new Arts Education curriculum in Alberta. Focus groups represent one strategy for curriculum review. Throughout 2008, focused discussions with diverse stakeholders informed the development of a *Draft K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Framework*. Stakeholder groups included teachers, administrators, artists and community leaders in the arts, including representation from Francophone, French Immersion, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) communities.

Four goals guided the initial focus group discussion in Arts Education.

The first goal was to collect information regarding the current status of fine arts programs in schools. There was a need to learn about the success stories in fine arts in schools and what was working well with the programs. There was also a need to learn about the challenges of providing quality fine arts programs in schools and to ask for stakeholder hopes for a new curriculum in Arts Education.

The second goal was to ask focus group participants to consider a change in program terminology. The current programs of study are named *Fine Arts Programs*. New research and pedagogy uses the term *Arts Education* to broaden the concept of the fine arts to include learning in, through, and about the arts. If Alberta is going to change the name of its programs of study and the philosophical shift that goes along with a name change, Ministry staff needed to ask stakeholders to consider the implications of a change in program name.

The third goal required the focus group to consider why the arts are important in the 21st century and the role of Arts Education in 21st century learning. There have been many changes in our world since the current curriculum was designed. In order to create a curriculum that is relevant and serves the needs of Alberta's students into the future, Ministry staff needed to define the rationale and relevance of a new Arts Education program.

The final and most important goal assigned to the focus groups was to envision the key components of an Arts Education program. As individuals, group participants were asked to use arts processes to communicate the kinds of experiences they would like Alberta's students to have in the arts. Then they came together to determine the similarities and differences among the visions to determine key concepts. Groups were asked to use a graphic organizer to represent their key concepts for Arts Education programming and the relationship among these elements. Ministry staff's hope was to find commonalities and some consensus among the focus groups' visions in order to inform development of a *Draft K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Framework*.

Demographics

In January 2008, six K–12 Arts Education focus groups were established to consult with teachers of the arts, district consultants and practicing artists, as well as representatives from arts organizations and post-secondary programs. Two groups were held in Calgary, one group in Lethbridge, and three groups in Edmonton. In total, 63 participants engaged in the discussions.

School authority superintendents were invited to nominate four teachers from each district. Thirty-one school authorities from across the province responded to the call for nominations. At least one staff member from each school authority was selected. In order to ensure diversity in perspective, the teacher selection process considered the following factors: variety in grade level(s) and fine arts disciplines taught, generalist/specialist training, and teaching experience. The teacher sample included representatives from two Francophone school authorities and several French Immersion schools. Also included in this group of fine arts teachers were two school administrators, one from an arts-focused school in a city centre and another from a K–12 school in rural Alberta. School-based involvement totalled 38 participants.

The Program Development and Standards Division both facilitated and participated in the discussion on behalf of the Ministry of Education. Curriculum Branch and French Language Services Branch each had two representatives leading/involved in the discussions, for a total of four Ministry representatives. Cross-ministry collaboration included a representative from the Arts Branch, Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit. Government involvement totalled five participants.

Mount Royal College, the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge and Grant MacEwan College were represented. Post-secondary involvement totalled four participants.

Fine arts consultants at the school authority level represented Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Separate School District and Foothills School District. This selection process included school authorities with specialized arts consultants and general curriculum consultants with a background in teaching the arts. Arts consultant involvement totalled eight participants.

Practicing artists and those involved in arts organizations were included in the discussions. Many of these artists wore two hats, often representing the perspective of an arts organization as well. Artists and arts organization involvement totalled eight participants.

Current Status of Fine Arts Programs in Schools

What's Working and Success Stories

Passion and Enthusiasm

In response to the question, “What’s working in fine arts in schools today?” focus group participants were quick to respond. Student enthusiasm for the fine arts was identified strongly. Program success was attributed almost completely to teacher passion, commitment and expertise. Many identified that the teacher *is* the program. Teacher participants identified that successful school programs were also the result of supportive school administrators and central office staff.

Career Options and Employable Skills

Focus groups felt that the public is realizing that career opportunities are growing in the fine arts. In fact, business analysts are saying that fine arts graduates are valuable human resources. As a result, many students want to continue their study of the arts at the post-secondary level.

There was pride in the fact that our school system is developing future teachers of the arts and working/practicing artists. Even if students do not choose to continue with the arts in their post-secondary choices and career plans, participation in the arts develops employability skills such as improvisation, commitment, organization and problem solving. Participation in the arts develops interests and talents that will improve students’ quality of life on whatever paths they choose.

Arts for the Whole Child and Every Child

The groups felt a strong camaraderie around the arts and fine arts programs in schools. Although they were tired of having to “justify their existence,” they recognized the need to champion the arts as essential to nurturing, caring for and developing the whole child.

Group participants were encouraged that the arts still exist and that the arts are still taught as discrete disciplines. There was great joy surrounding the idea that the arts were valued as an important measure of student success. All students have talents and abilities, and our school system honours many ways of knowing and being. The arts develop confidence in students and also promote empathy and healing. Other discussion referred to students with special needs achieving success in the arts.

High School Completion

The groups told many good-news stories about students who were able to stay in school and achieve success as a result of their involvement in the arts. The arts addressed student interest and accommodated learning differences and learning preferences. Many students need the arts to be able to learn and demonstrate their learning at school. Many described arts programs as therapeutic for students at risk. Arts teachers were successful at saving students from the cruelty of individual circumstances through safe, accepting arts communities and the expression of emotion. The arts were identified as critical in giving students a sense of belonging and voice.

Creativity and Thinking Skills

Participants felt that there was growing recognition of the importance of fine arts for cognitive development, resulting in increased support for quality arts programs in Alberta's schools. Arts disciplines foster creativity, problem-solving skills and the expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas. Participants identified that the need to imagine and create is visceral. This need is especially nurtured in the arts and must be encouraged in our school system through Arts Education.

Influence of the Media

Also mentioned was the influence of the media in drawing attention to the importance of the arts in our schools. Participants felt that television programs like *So You Think You Can Dance* and *American/Canadian Idol* help to elevate the profile of the arts and inspire students to participate in the arts.

The Arts are Programs of Choice

Arts-focused schools are becoming more common. There is an increase in demand for arts programs, and the fine arts are becoming a popular program of choice. In one large school district, 68 schools are now arts-centred schools. Although Alberta does not have a provincial dance program, school districts are seeing increasing interest and demand for locally developed courses (LDCs) and extra-curricular programs in dance. Group participants were proud of the experiences that students were having in the arts as a result of LDCs. Many teachers were unaware of the LDCs that had been developed, and they expressed a desire to have easier access to LDCs across school authorities.

Cultural Identity and Global Community

The celebration of cultural identity and the understanding of global community were key themes in the discussions of what's working. Students involved in the arts had a strong sense of identity and belonging in their school communities, and the arts programs are often the hub of the school. Many stories were told of how students from different cultures found common ground in the arts.

There was some frustration about English as a Second Language (ESL) students being “pulled out” of their fine arts options for English language instruction, when clearly, the language of the arts was a successful form of communication for these students.

There was mention of the arts building support for schools within communities. Often, fine arts events bring together school staff, students, parents and community members in celebration.

Curriculum

Ironically, many participants stated that the flaws in the curriculum worked to their advantage. Many liked the flexibility of having to “invent” or “make do” without arts curriculums because it allowed for creativity, flexibility and variety in programming. Teachers also appreciated that the arts allowed for work in both process and product.

Challenges

Curriculum

Group participants were frustrated with the lack of continuity between the elementary, junior high and senior high levels. Because junior high fine arts courses are optional and senior high courses require no prerequisites, student knowledge and skill in Grade 10 fine arts courses can fall anywhere on a continuum from novice to advanced.

Arts Infusion/Integration

While most participants were excited about the opportunities to integrate and infuse the arts into other subject areas, there was considerable concern that the integrity of individual arts disciplines could be compromised if integration/infusion were to become a curriculum focus.

Participants were encouraged about the value placed on the arts when district results and AISI projects highlighted increased academic success as a result of arts integration. However, there were concerns about losing the intrinsic value of the arts when schools focus on “using” the arts for academic gains.

Professional Development

Professional development was also identified as both a success and a challenge. Arts specialists are very interested in keeping their craft up-to-date and their skills sharp. However, in many school districts, arts educators often felt isolated, excluded from professional learning communities and “on their own.” Elementary generalists stated that they lacked confidence in teaching the arts and needed support. The Internet was identified as an excellent resource for teachers to share lessons and get information to fill their skill gaps. The Internet also helps teachers cope with a lack of resources.

Focus group participants had mixed emotions regarding artist-in-residence programs. While many artists in residence were well trained and fit into classrooms seamlessly, some teachers had experiences with artists who they felt were not qualified to be in the classroom.

Space and Facilities

Space and facilities were consistently identified as challenges to providing quality Arts Education programs for Alberta’s students. Focus group participants hoped for a commitment to the arts in schools that includes adequate facilities.

Participants felt that school administrators are struggling to find teaching spaces to meet Class Size Initiative (CSI) targets. As a result, music, drama and art classrooms are often the first to be compromised.

Proper facilities for the arts present challenges as well. Big-ticket items such as instruments, mirrors and proper ventilation were not covered by the school system. Fundraising or “going without” has become common practice. Storage space is at a premium in schools, and the arts require large and often expensive items that need proper storage facilities. Without proper space and equipment, the quality of student experience in the arts diminishes.

Time

Elementary teachers had much concern about fitting “everything” into an elementary program. Even though music and art are core programs at the K–6 level, the arts are often seen as a “frill” and fall by the wayside in a teacher’s best effort to meet all curriculum outcomes.

At the junior high level, there was no consistency in the amount of time allocated for fine arts courses. Many teachers were unaware of the 75-hour recommendation for instructional time for fine arts courses, as mentioned in the programs of study.

Senior high school graduation requirements pose a challenge for the arts. Student timetables are very full, and many students who want to participate in the arts simply cannot “fit it in” or are forced to make course selections where the arts are in competition with academics and/or other options.

Administration is Key

The relationship between the fine arts teacher and the school administrator was identified as both a challenge and a gift. On one hand, many participants felt that the arts were “used” by school administrators as wallpaper and entertainment when there was a special occasion or a public relations opportunity—that value was not placed on arts processes and the intrinsic benefit of the arts. On the contrary, some administrators understood the needs of fine arts programs and prioritized time for the fine arts in the school’s timetable or accommodated creative scheduling to allow students to participate in fine arts courses.

Staffing

There was group consensus that passionate, talented, knowledgeable educators in the fine arts are the cornerstone of successful programs. It is a constant challenge to recruit and retain quality staff.

While it was clear from the groups that arts specialists were preferred, there was recognition that it was difficult to staff arts specialists, especially in rural areas.

Teacher exhaustion in the arts is common. When the focus of fine arts programs is showcase and production, art educators often have demanding extra-curricular schedules. In addition, arts teachers often end up teaching “what’s left over” on the timetable: subjects that are not in their area of expertise or passion. Consequently, many arts educators leave the teaching profession feeling unappreciated and “burned out.”

There was also concern that passionate arts educators who are deeply involved in their disciplines do not pursue school administration or positions where they are able to have some influence on arts programming. Hence, many leaders making decisions about the arts have a limited understanding of the importance of the arts or what is required to achieve successful programming.

Hopes for a New Curriculum

Many focus group participants were encouraged that the arts curriculum was finally being addressed by Alberta Education and excited that “help is on the way.” All participants were extremely excited and grateful to be included in the curriculum review process and expressed a desire to stay in touch with new developments.

Integrity of Discipline

There was a strong consensus for maintaining the integrity of individual fine art disciplines. The groups wanted to ensure that each discipline’s language, history, tools, skills and processes were honoured. The term *Arts Education* conjured fears of a single program of studies for the arts. There was a clear message from the groups that they did not want to see a new curriculum erode the rigor of individual disciplines.

Dance Program

All focus groups were strong advocates for a provincial dance program. While dance is included in the physical education program, the focus is on physical activity and not on creative expression. There was some discussion about the need to expand the range of disciplines in the arts to include emerging and interdisciplinary arts opportunities.

Curriculum

The groups expressed hopes that Alberta Education would create K–12 programs with unity between fine arts disciplines and levels. There was a desire for the programs to share core goals based on current research and promising practice. While there would be overarching goals for all arts programs, teachers asked for clearly stated specific outcomes at each grade level.

Groups also hoped that Alberta Education would reduce the number of curriculum outcomes to allow for student and teacher creativity and in-depth exploration of key concepts. The elementary music curriculum was singled out as an example of a content-heavy curriculum; even experienced teachers found it difficult to achieve all elementary music outcomes. It was suggested that the Arts Education curriculum allow time and space for student and teacher creativity and flexibility.

There was some openness among participants to explore interdisciplinary possibilities where several arts disciplines could be combined.

Teachers would like to see instructional ideas embedded within a curriculum document. They would also appreciate the integration of up-to-date technology that is specific to the arts.

Generalist Friendly

Participants acknowledged that programs of study often sit on the shelf because they use language that is difficult for the generalist to understand. For example, art curriculum at the elementary level is often taught by the classroom teacher, and it is one of the most difficult programs of studies to understand. As a result, classroom teachers end up teaching “arts and crafts” instead of visual art. Both generalists and specialists expressed a desire for less technical, more accessible user-friendly documents.

Resources at the Ready

The lack of resources was consistently identified as a concern. Group participants were hopeful about having up-to-date, authorized and available resources in the arts. Many were hopeful that the resources would be focused on key concepts that could be achieved through project work. Teachers would like support materials, including digital and visual examples of how to achieve curriculum outcomes.

Online/digital material, blogs and share sites were another example of resource support needs. Teachers would like the opportunity to share their project and lesson ideas with one another and create a community of online support as the new curriculum is implemented.

Teachers were interested in a resource list of suppliers and contacts in the arts industry. Many beginning teachers in the arts were unaware of how to develop contacts to purchase equipment and supplies.

Arts as Core

Many participants hoped that the arts would continue to be “core curriculum” at the elementary level and that there would be some consideration to extending mandatory fine arts instruction beyond Grade 6. There was a belief that all students should be exposed to the fine arts as participants and as spectators. Future curriculum should help students build skills as both producers and appreciators of the arts.

Implementation Support

Participants expressed their hope that sufficient implementation support would arrive with a new curriculum. Excitement over Arts Education professional learning communities, in-servicing and mentorship dominated these discussions.

Participants believed that a revitalization of the arts would breathe new life into the arts and into schools. Many saw an opportunity for the arts to be honoured as an important component in students’ development. Participants felt that if the arts were recognized as important and worthwhile, then funding for materials, professional development, facilities and equipment would be considered as part of the review process.

There were hopes that curriculum implementation would break down barriers and allow for more sharing across the province; i.e., access to locally developed courses across the province.

Link to Assessment

The assessment landscape has changed in the past 20 years, and fine arts teachers are struggling to find assessment tools that represent current research and promising practices. Much of the assessment in the arts has focused on student production or performance. There is a need to provide assessment strategies and exemplars that honour the creative processes of the arts, encourage risk-taking and promote adaptive/improvisational thinking.

Simultaneous Implementation of French Programs

Teachers from French Immersion and Francophone schools expressed a desire to have French programs of study and resources developed and implemented simultaneously with English programs.

A New Program with a New Name

While a few participants were ambivalent, most recognized that the naming of the new program was important. Some thought that Alberta should “get on board” with the rest of the world and use the new term *Arts Education*. Others felt that Alberta did not have to be consistent with programs in other provinces or places in the world.

Education Is a Thumbs Up

There was consensus that including the term *Education* within a new name was positive.

- ✓ *Arts Education* implies that the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the arts can be learned and accomplished by ALL students. In contrast, the term *Fine Arts* might imply that it is reserved for professionals or those few who are considered to have talent.
- ✓ *Arts Education* implies that there is room for student growth.
- ☒ The only objection to using the term *Arts Education* was that it might be associated with the academic study of the arts, and as a result become less focused on participation in the arts.

Those in Favour

Those in favour of the term *Arts Education* felt that the term spoke to broad-based opportunities for students to learn in the arts, through the arts and about the arts.

- ✓ *Arts Education* is about process and product, while *fine arts* is associated with performance and/or production only.
- ✓ *Arts Education* is a more accessible, non-threatening term for educators, especially generalists.
- ✓ *Arts Education* is less elitist than *fine arts*.
- ✓ *Arts Education* implies a focus on creative, critical thinking and the use of the imagination.
- ✓ *Arts Education* gives the arts credibility in the education system: it sounds more “core.”
- ✓ *Arts Education* allows for more cross-curricular connections. Learning *through* the arts would address students’ multiple intelligences, learning styles and preferences. This would also allow students and teachers to explore bringing emotion, intuition and creative processes into other subject areas.
- ✓ *Arts Education* could expand interdisciplinary possibilities to combine two or more art forms.

Those Opposed

Those opposing the term *Arts Education* expressed fears that the term is a misnomer for what arts educators are trying to accomplish with students and would be misunderstood by our stakeholders.

- ☒ *Arts Education* is strongly associated with *visual art*.
- ☒ *Arts Education* is associated with *liberal arts* and includes subjects/topics such as literature, creative writing, history and sociology.
- ☒ Education stakeholders have an understanding of the term *fine arts* and it would be difficult to communicate a change in terminology.
- ☒ *Arts Education* is too broad a term, and therefore has no meaning.
- ☒ *Arts Education* is an administrative tactic to diminish the arts, to reduce them into one course or category, instead of allowing music, art, drama and dance to take the space that they require.
- ☒ *Arts Education* erodes or “waters down” individual disciplines. We must maintain the integrity of each discipline and not have them disappear into one term.
- ☒ The term *fine arts* honours specialized skill development.

Alternative Names

Alternative names for the program were also suggested.

These included:

- *Fine Arts Education*
- *Visual and Performing Arts Education*
- *THE ARTS*
- *Creative Arts*
- *The ARTS are FINE*
- *Education in the Arts*
- *Performing, Visual and Creative Arts*
- *Creative Disciplines*
- *Aesthetic Education*.

There was consensus that whatever a new program is named, there was both a responsibility and an opportunity to communicate the purpose and vision of the arts in Alberta’s schools. A change in program name, vision and philosophy would require a communication strategy for educating students, teachers, parents, administrators and the public. While many participants were frustrated with constantly having to “justify their existence” as arts educators, the excitement of a new curriculum renewed a camaraderie in “taking up the cause” of arts advocacy once again.

The Arts and 21st Century Learning

Focus groups were asked to identify key themes in 21st Century learning and the role of the arts within 21st Century learning.

Theme: Globalization

Globalization	The Role of Arts Education
Alberta's schools are becoming more culturally diverse. Classrooms require cultural literacy and opportunities for cultural celebration.	Focus group participants told stories of students celebrating cultural diversity through visual art, dance, drama and music. The arts are the tools of cultural expression and can transcend the barriers of language. Arts Education helps students understand their local and global community. In schools with vibrant arts programs, teachers identified increased respect for differences in culture, history and perspective.
A global community requires evolution from a competition-based society to a cooperation-based society.	The arts bring people together locally and globally.
The world has many problems – environmental, financial and political.	Creative thinking and empathy are requirements for a hopeful future.
The world is becoming increasingly violent. The future is uncertain.	The arts allow students to be introspective and reflective. The arts can be a way for students and society to explore powerful ideas and emotions in a non-violent manner.

Theme: Information and Technology

Information and Technology	The Role of Arts Education
The speed and quantity of information is increasing.	The arts develop critical and creative thinking that is needed for students to thrive in changing contexts. Students need to be able to look at massive amounts of information and think critically to analyze what is relevant and what is important.
It is a world of instant gratification.	The processes of the arts afford time for reflection. Students experience delayed gratification and pride in their accomplishments that develop over time. Students are able to lose themselves in their work for long periods of time.
It is an increasingly visual and virtual world.	The arts provide holistic balance to the visual, virtual world through opportunities for tactile, kinesthetic experiences. The arts also help students communicate in a variety of media.

Theme: The Complex Learner

The Complex Learner	The Role of Arts Education
Students have complex emotional needs. There seems to be consensus that the education system is asking “more” from our students. Society has high expectations and there is more stress and pressure put onto students.	The arts honour the emotional life that is at the core of our beings. The arts fortify students and foster emotional wellness. Society and schools are demanding more from students, and as a result, students are experiencing increased stress. The arts allow for exploration of self and give students a voice for their most important feelings and ideas. The arts can have a healing effect on all students, from those who are experiencing regular emotional “growing pains” to those who are in emotional crisis.
Social needs	The arts allow time for play and creativity. They require social interaction and cooperation among students and provide opportunities for leadership and collaboration. The arts give students a strong sense of belonging and build community in schools.
Individual student success	All students can achieve success in the arts. There are opportunities for individual and group success. Many teachers told stories of students with special needs who thrive in the fine arts environment. The flexible nature of assessment in the arts allows for continuous feedback and encourages students to continuously improve artistic processes and output.
Development of the whole child	The arts develop the whole person: mind, body and spirit. Group participants felt strongly that creativity is inherent in human nature and we must create learning environments in our school system that nurture student creativity.
Learning styles and preferences	The arts help students find learning that “fits.” Research on brain development, multiple intelligences, and differentiated instruction all advocate for learning in, through and about the arts. Assessment strategies have evolved towards an increase in formative tasks in which students demonstrate their learning in a variety of media.
Employable skills	The arts develop problem-solving skills, critical and creative thinking. The arts also provide opportunities for students to lead and help others.

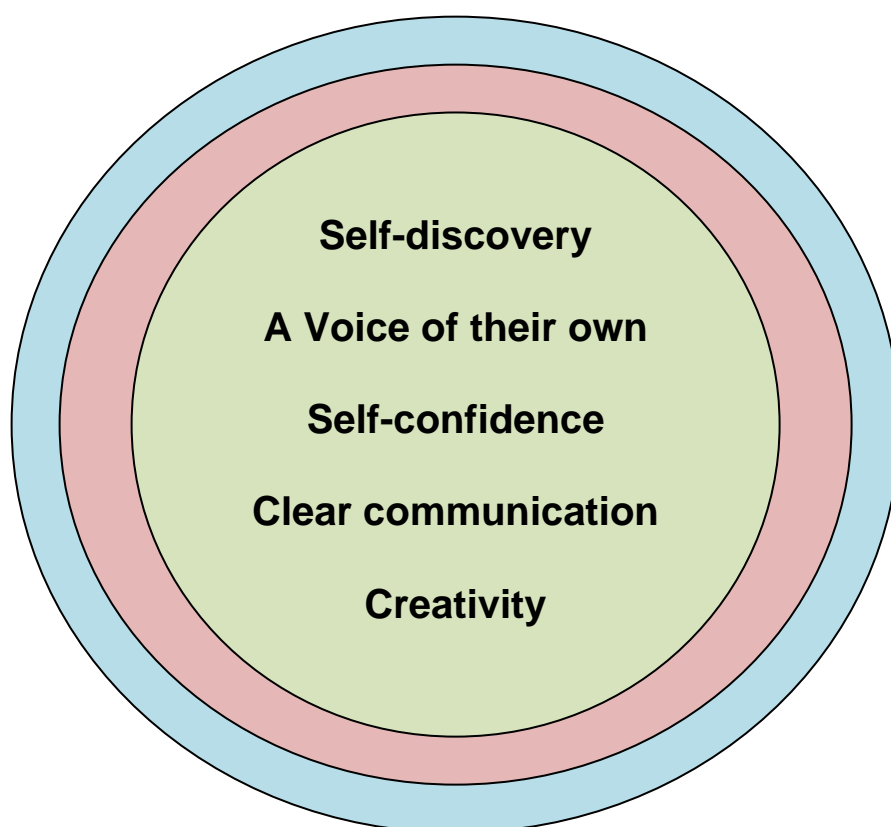
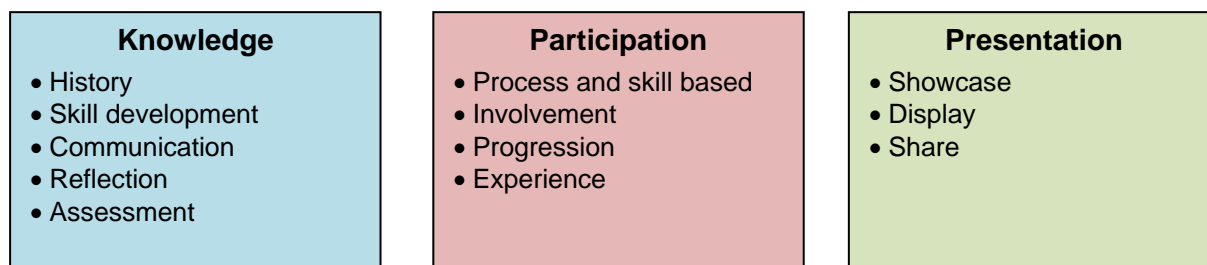
Dreams and Visions for the Future of Arts Education

Participants were asked to express their dreams and visions for the arts by using artistic processes. While the means for communicating ideas differed among the participants, there were commonalities among their hopes for the future. Representations for the future of Arts Education overwhelmingly demonstrated optimism, passion and joy. Students were usually represented holistically (mind, body and spirit) with the arts nurturing the students in their discovery of self. Most often, a student was in the centre of the representations, with the arts presented as foundational or core to the student's well-being. Another common theme was that the student was surrounded by interconnections or pathways to other people, communities and cultures. The building of relationships through the arts was a consistent theme.

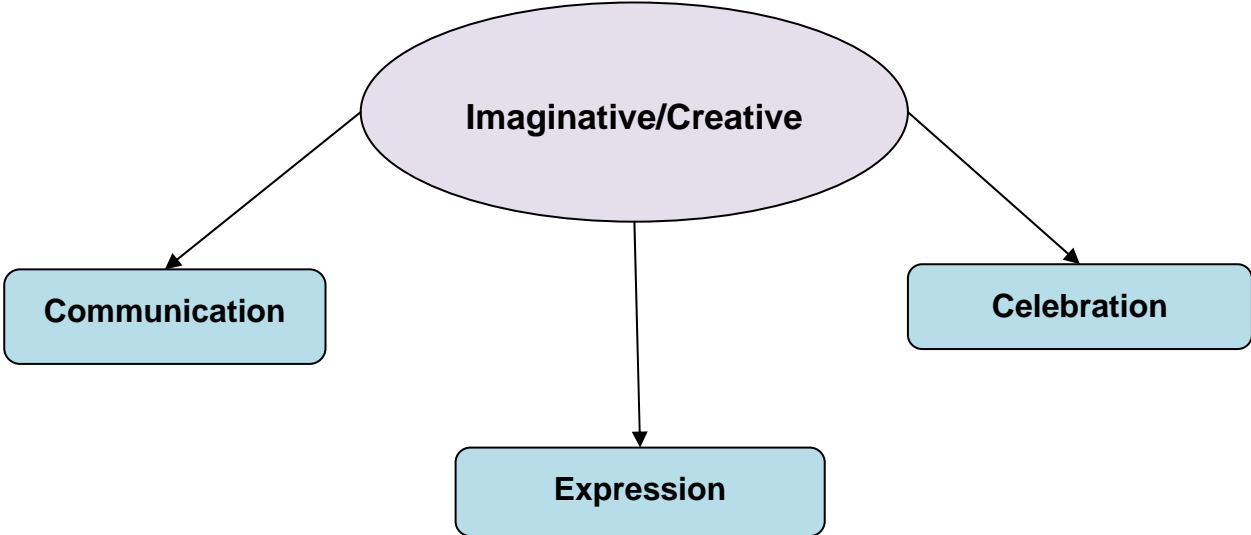
Identifying Key Concepts and Structural Models

Based on discussions of the ideas that resonated most strongly in the dreams and visions activity, participants were asked to work in groups to identify the themes or key concepts essential to building an Arts Education program. Groups were asked to be discerning about the key components they selected and were asked to prioritize them so that only broad, trans-disciplinary concepts remained. The final task was for the groups to organize their key components into a visual structure. What follows are the groups' representations of key concepts and structural models.

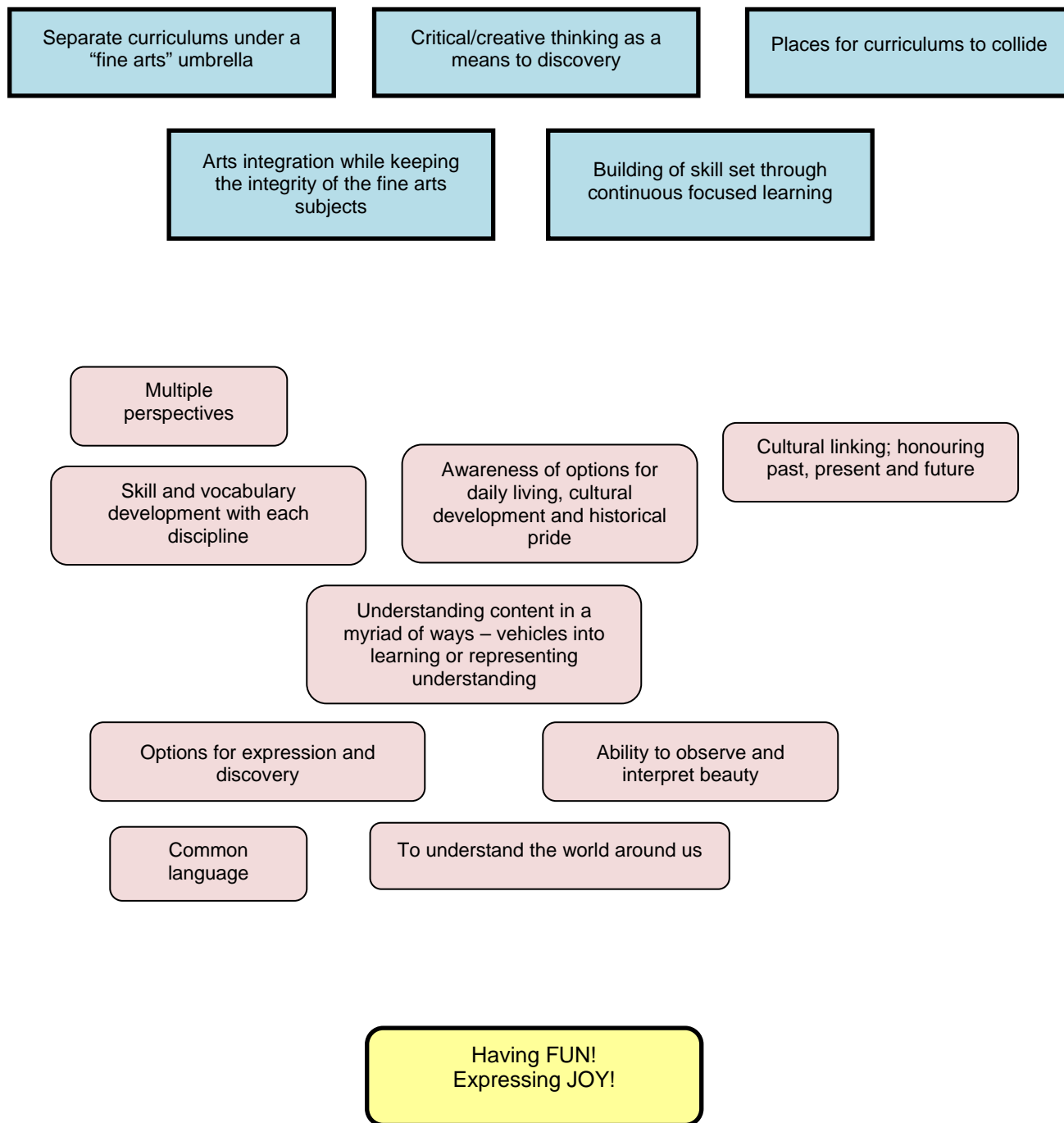
Model A:



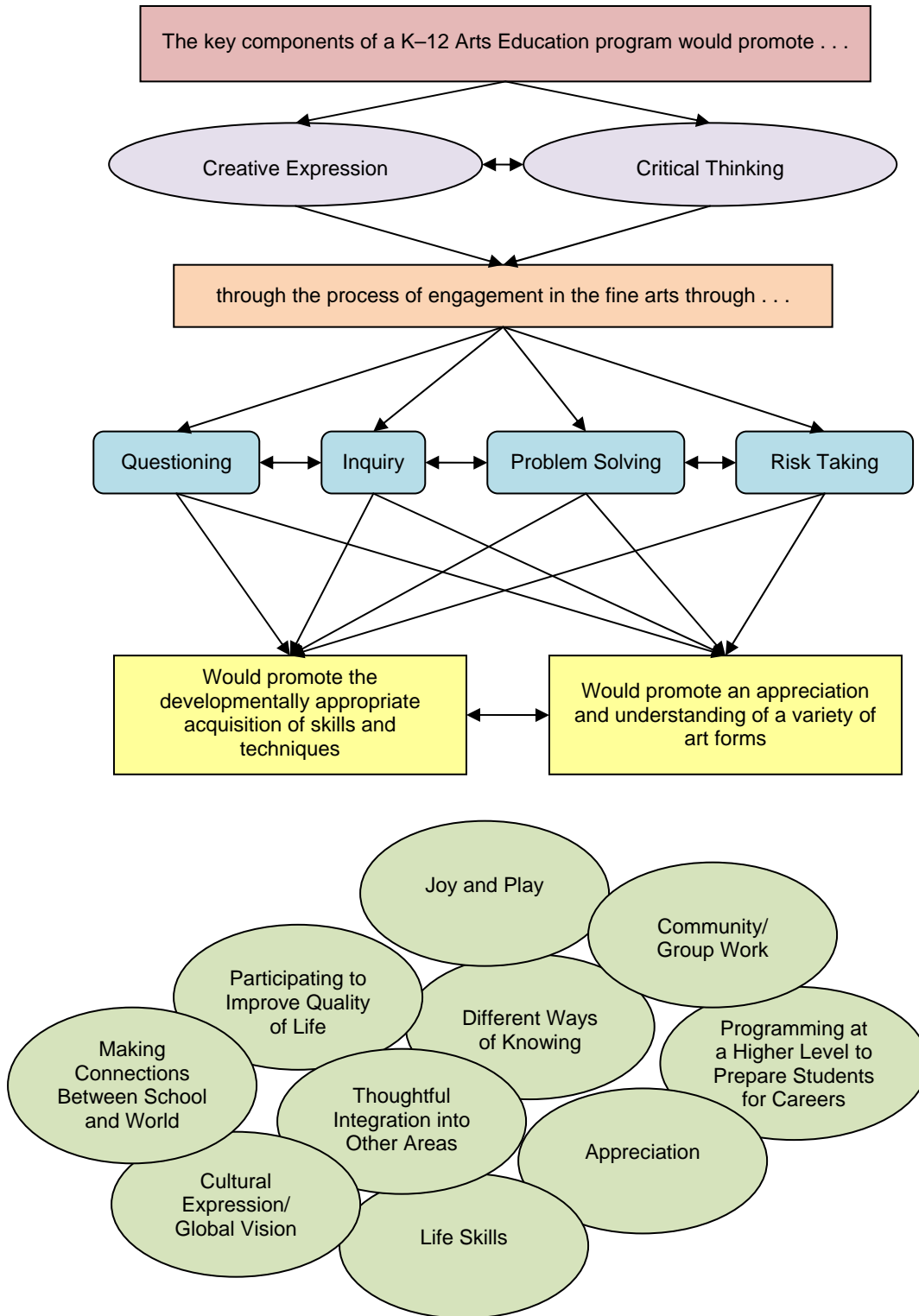
Model B:



Model C:



Model D:



Model E:

Learning ABOUT

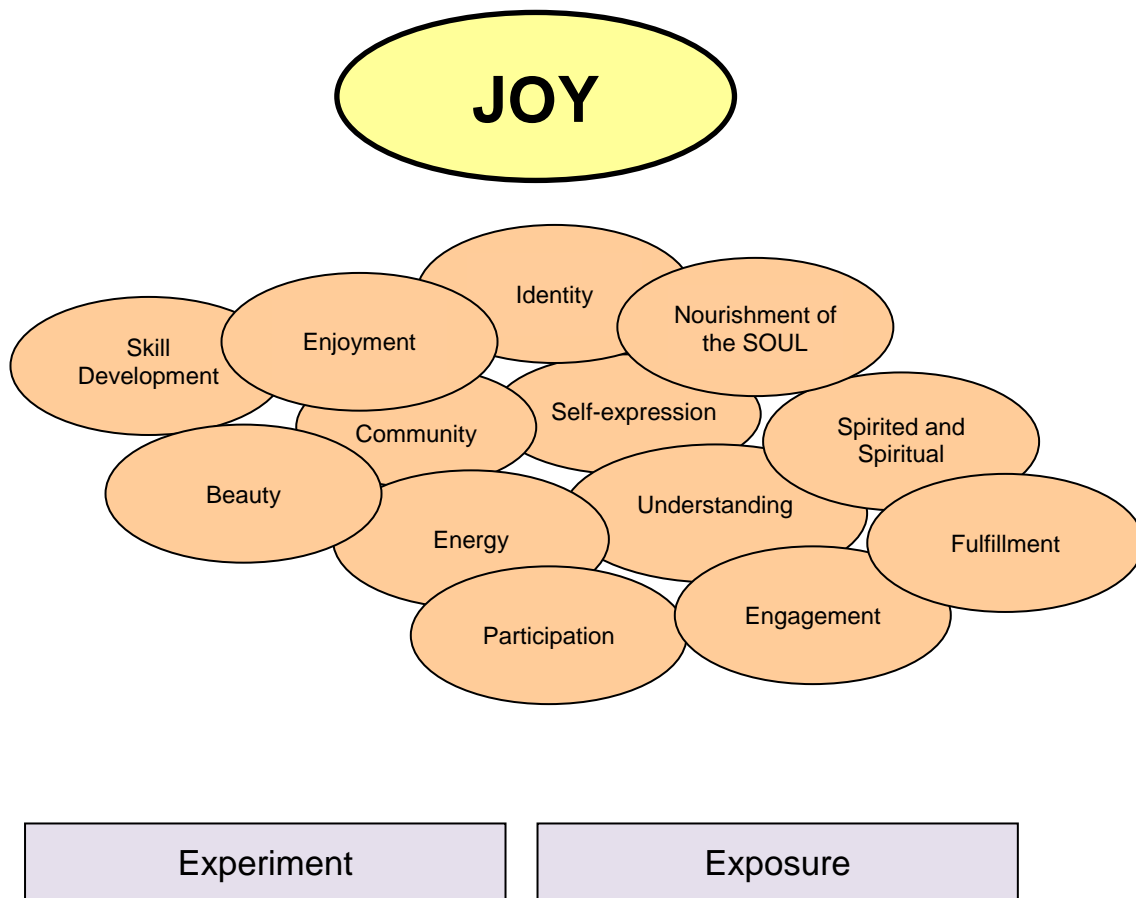
- History
- Appreciation as a consumer
- Experience

Learning THROUGH

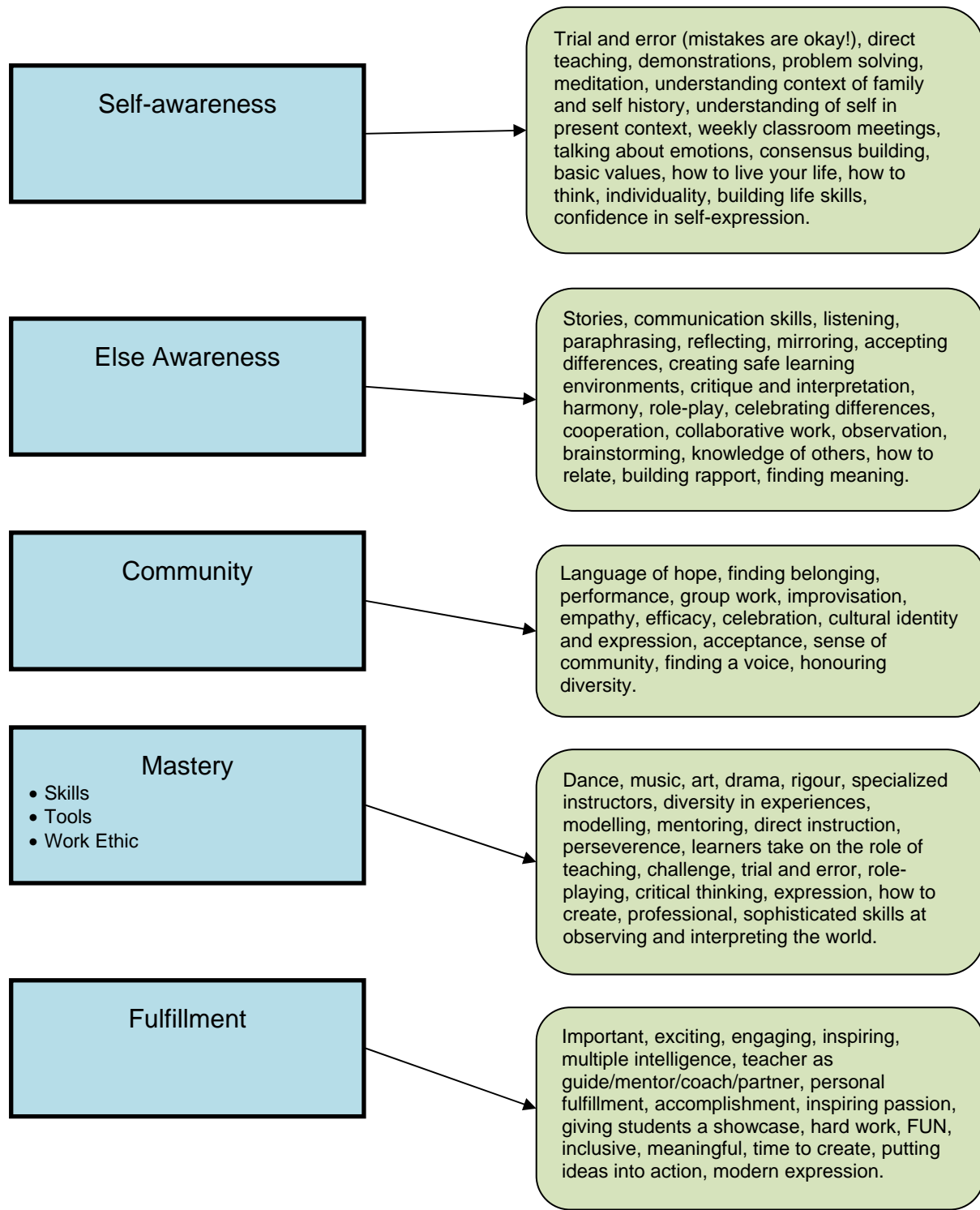
- Experience as Participant
- Integration and Interconnectedness
- Multiple Modalities
- Modes of Learning

Learning IN

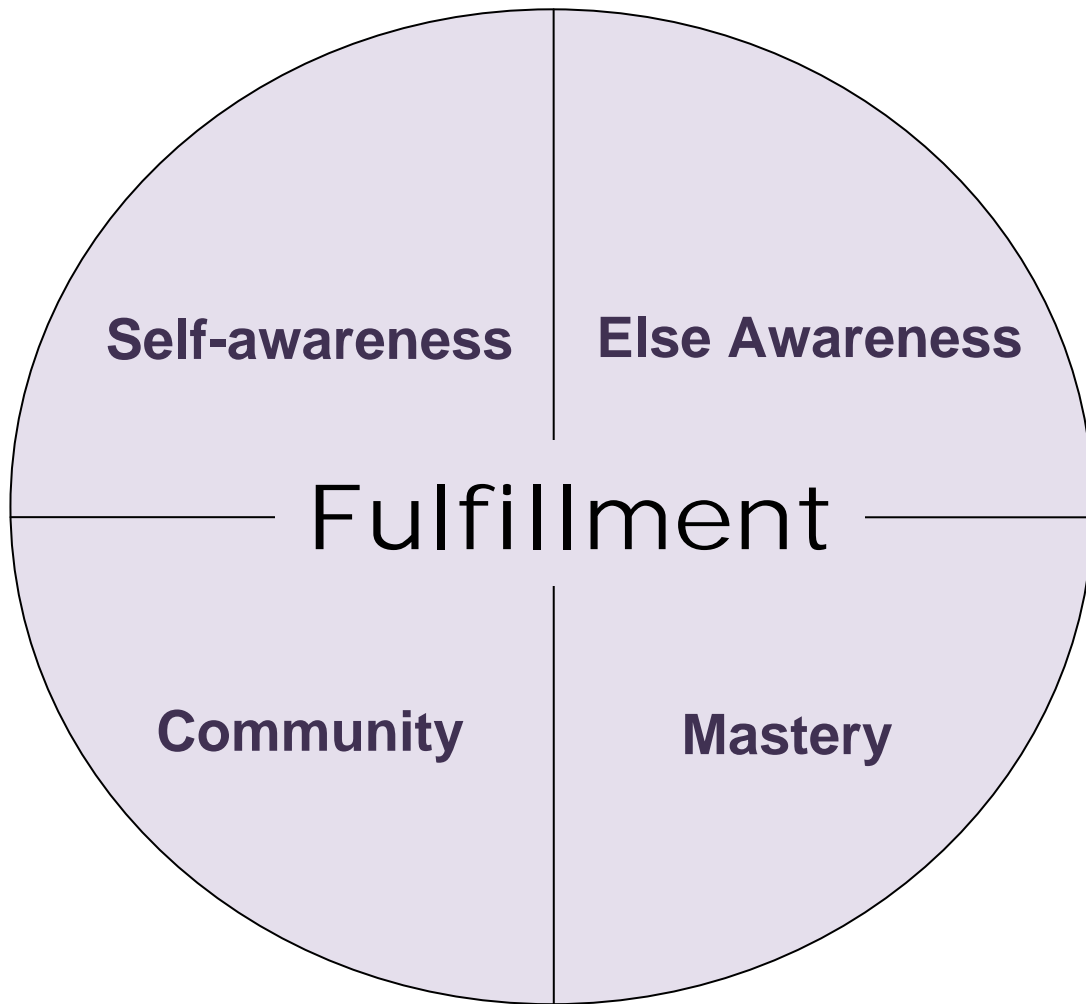
- Skill Development
- Experience as Participant
- Conceptual Understanding
- Lineage (mentor to student)



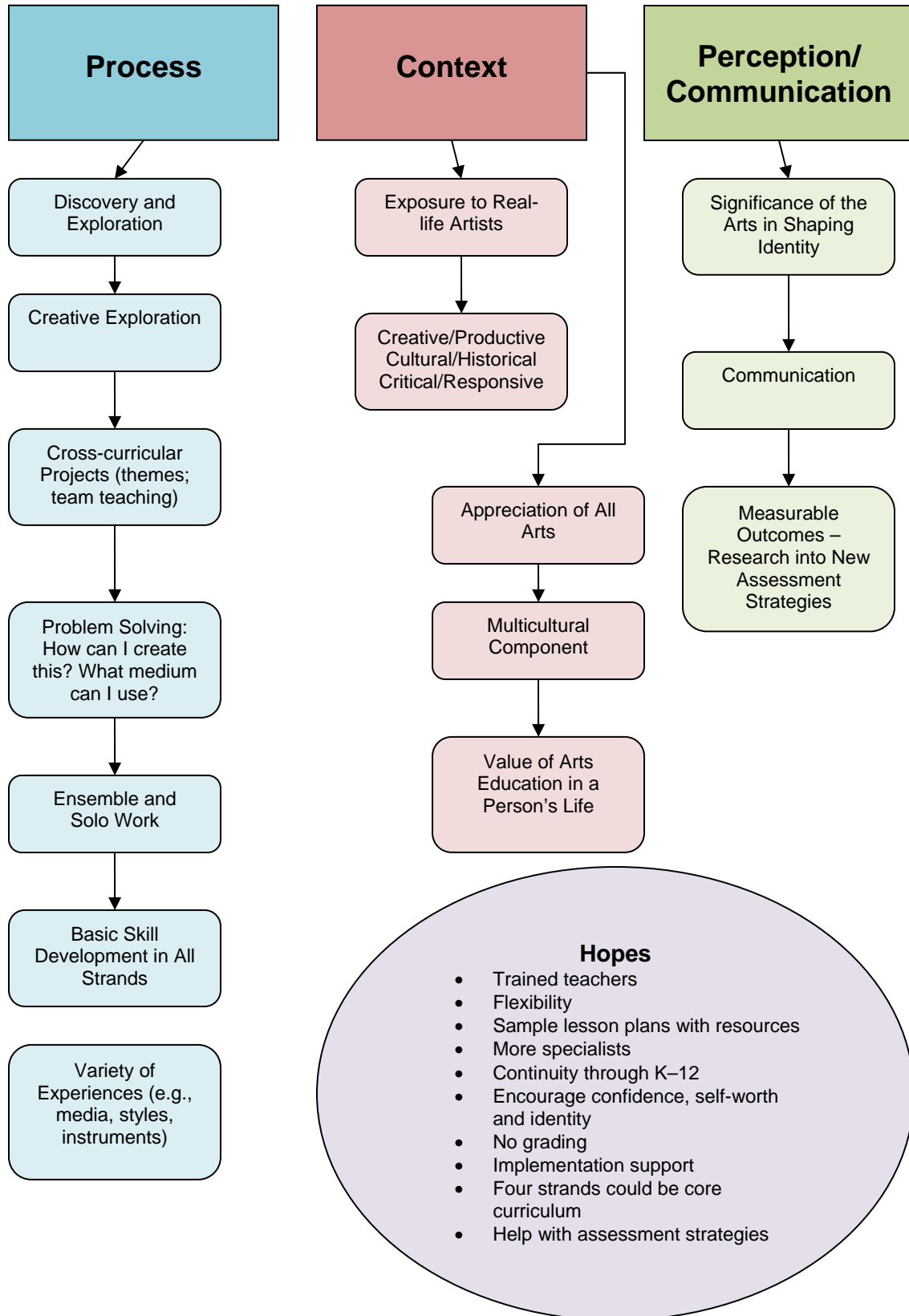
Model F:



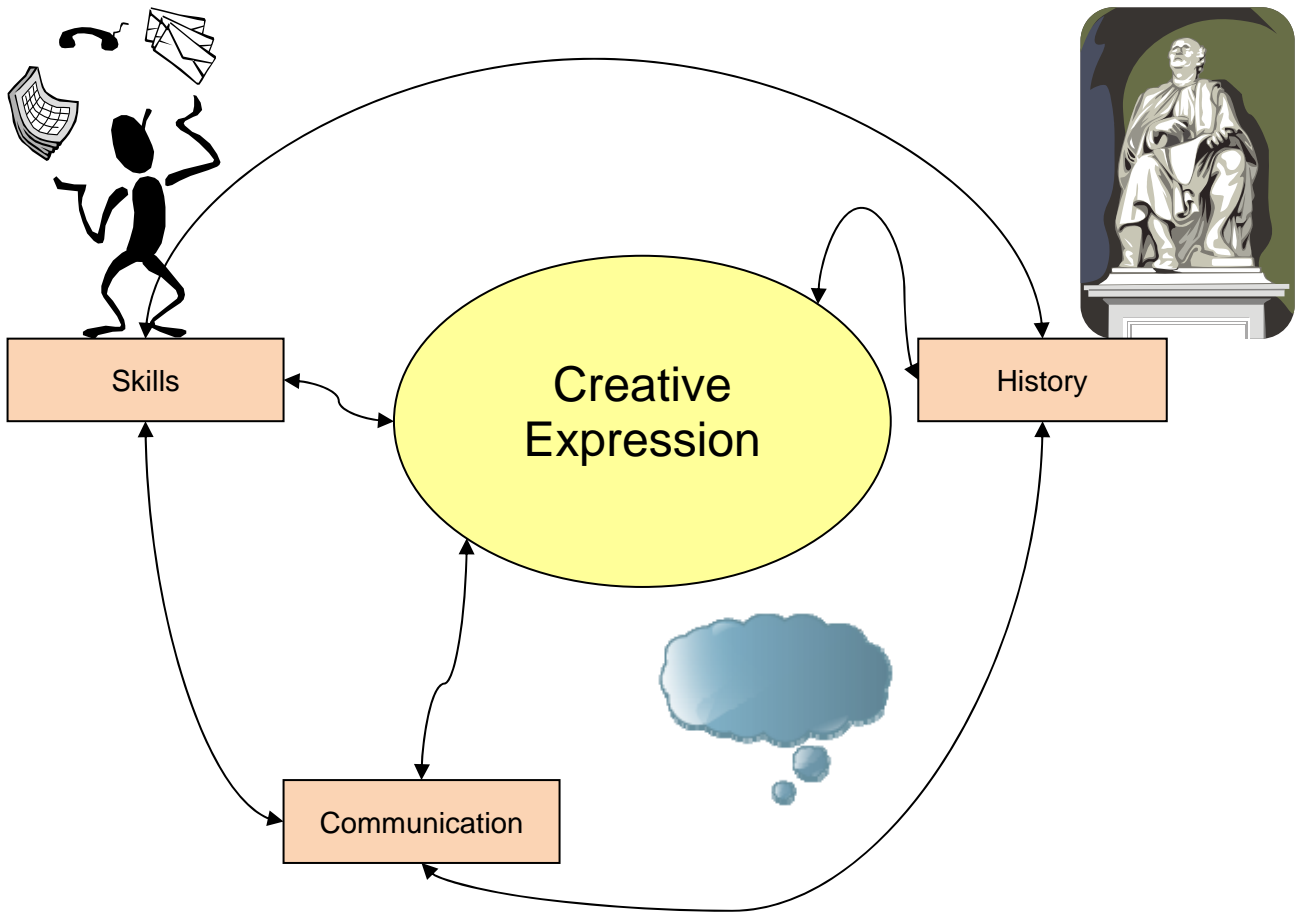
Model G:



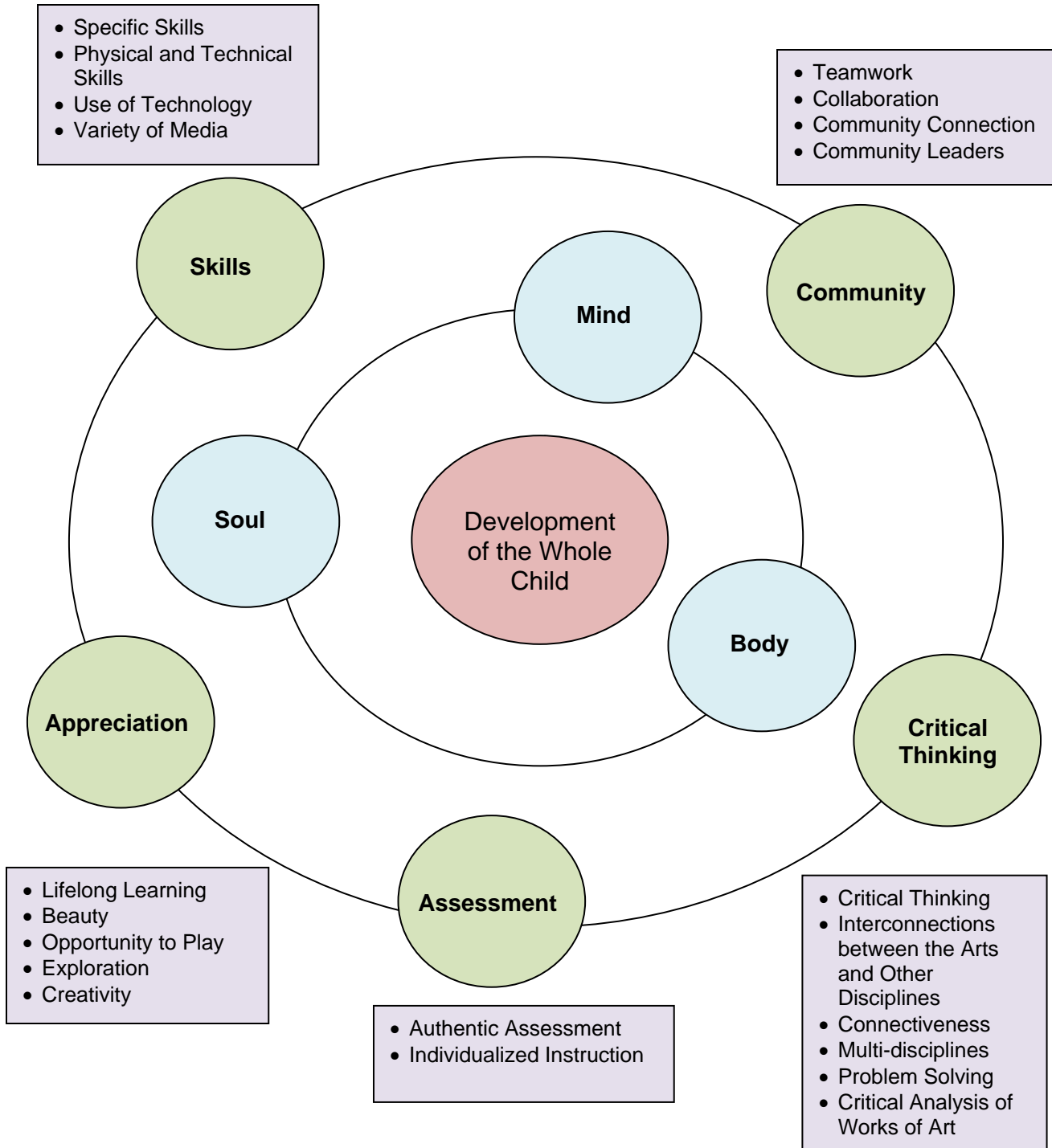
Model H:



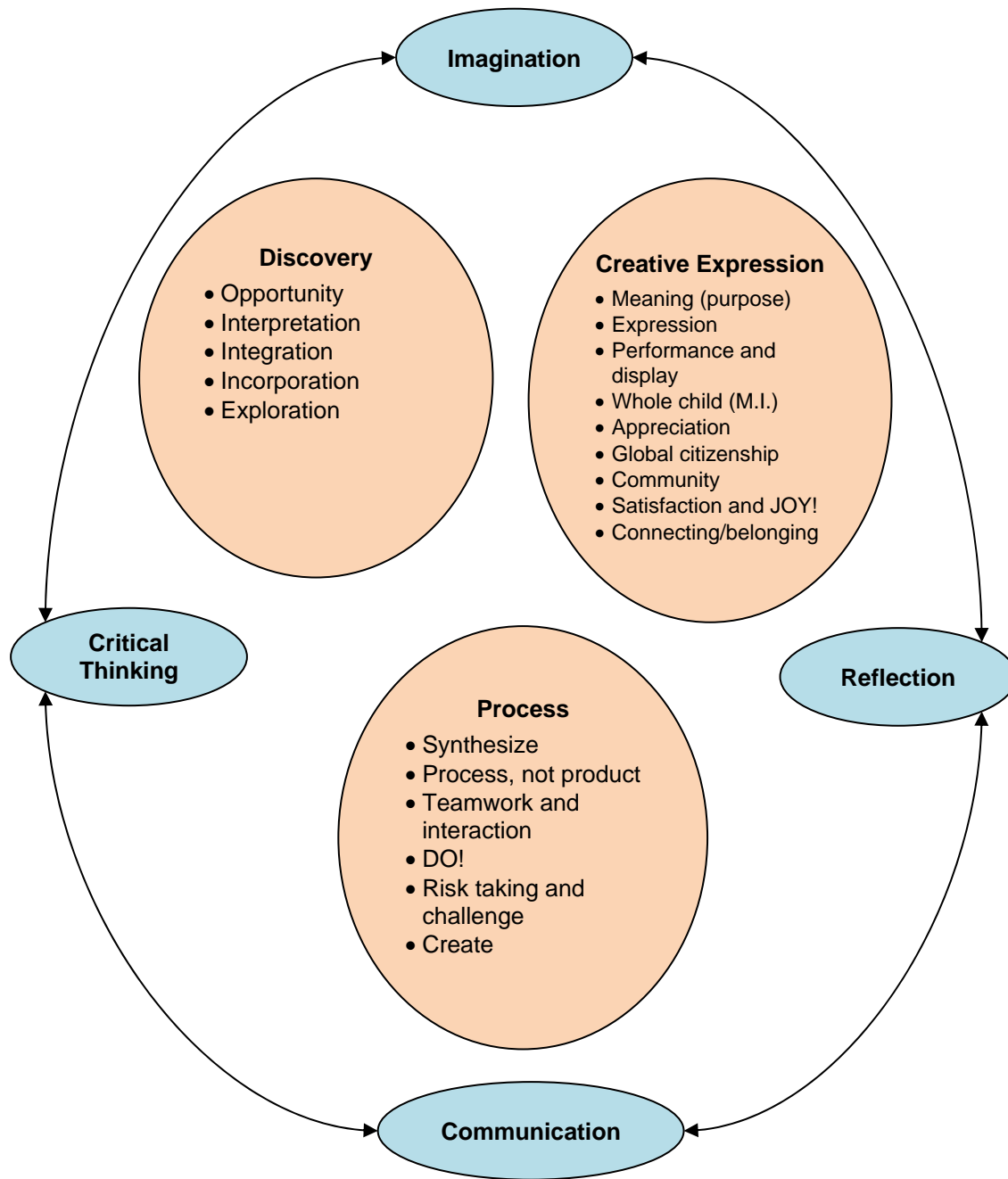
Model I:



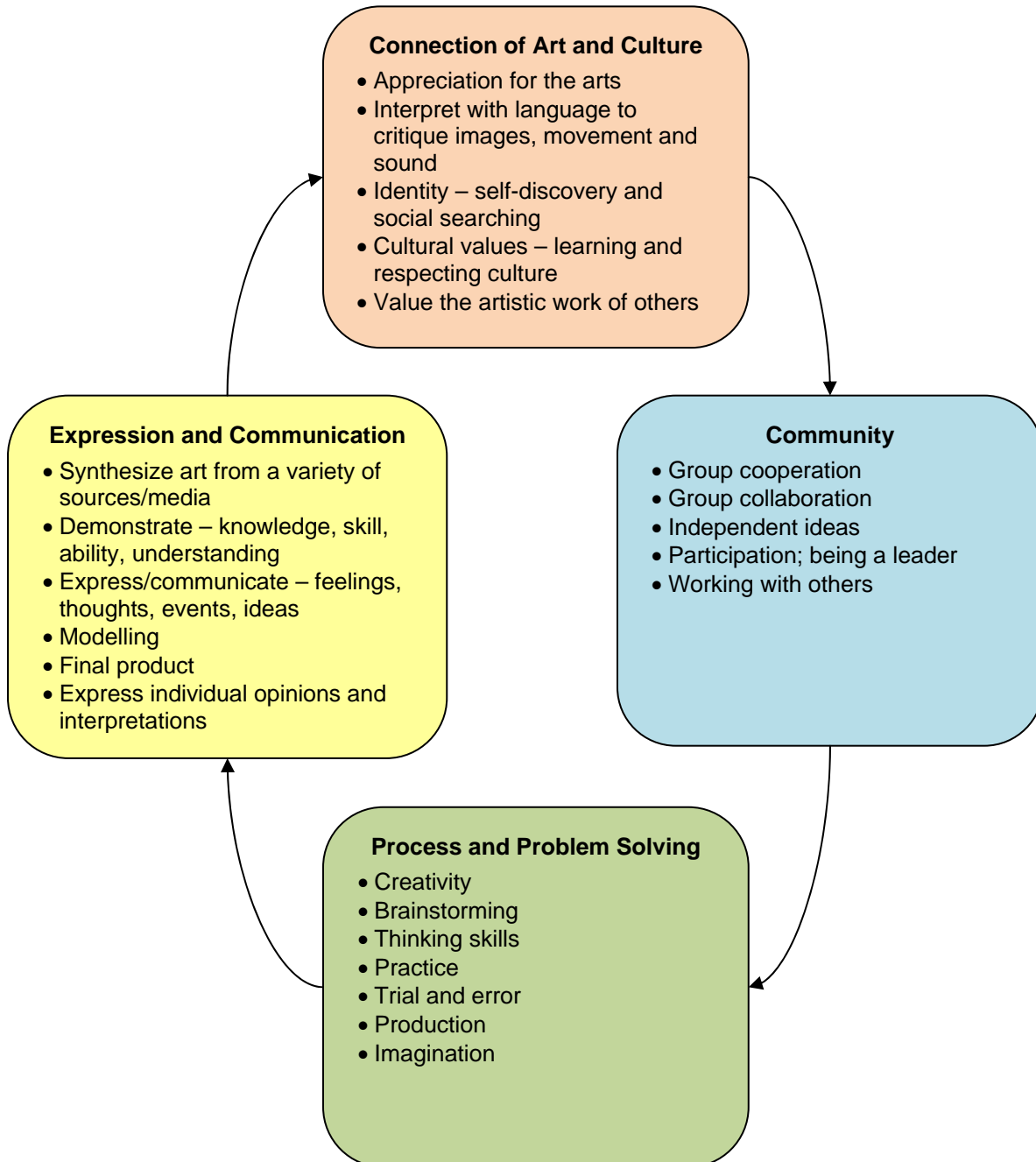
Model J:



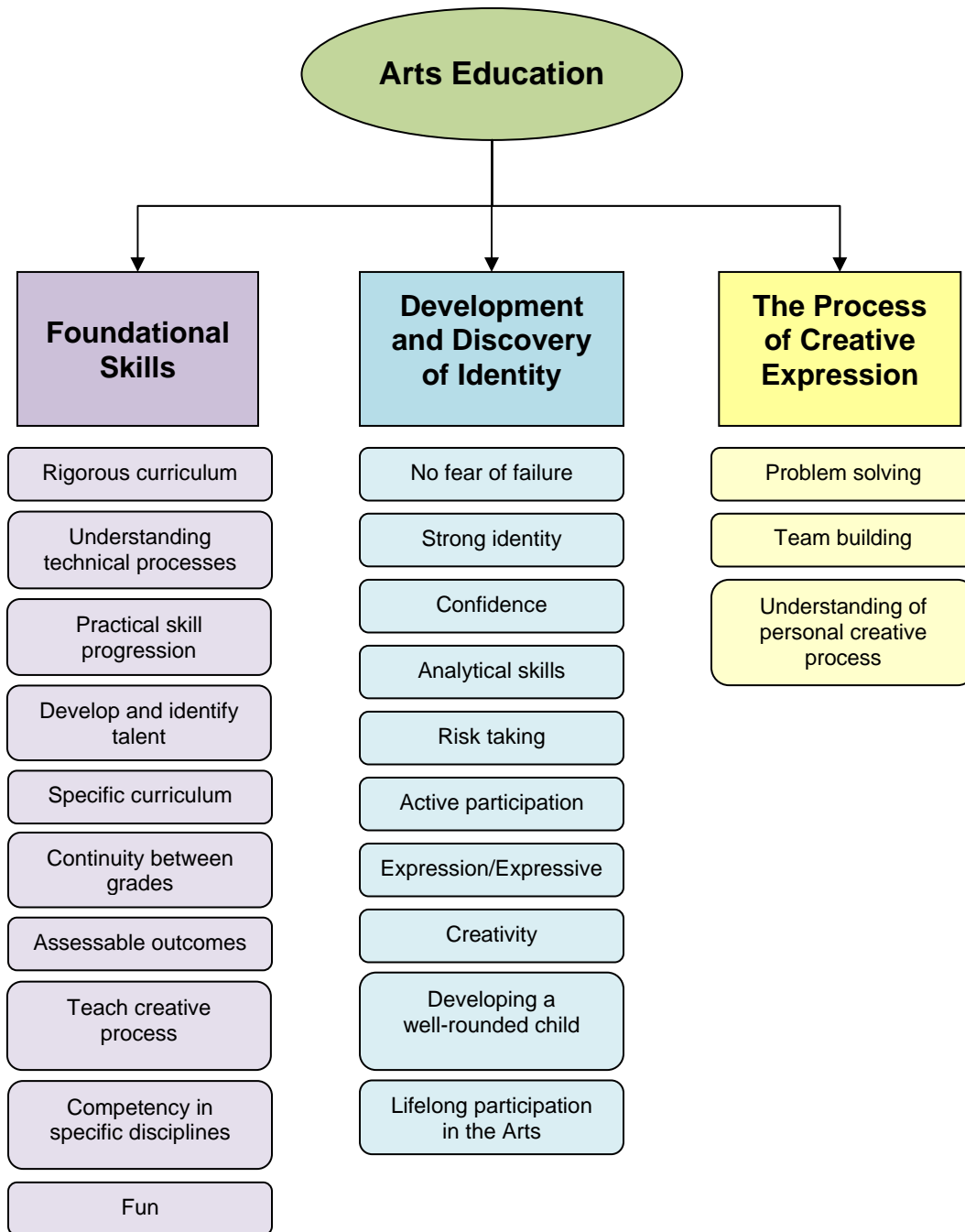
Model K:



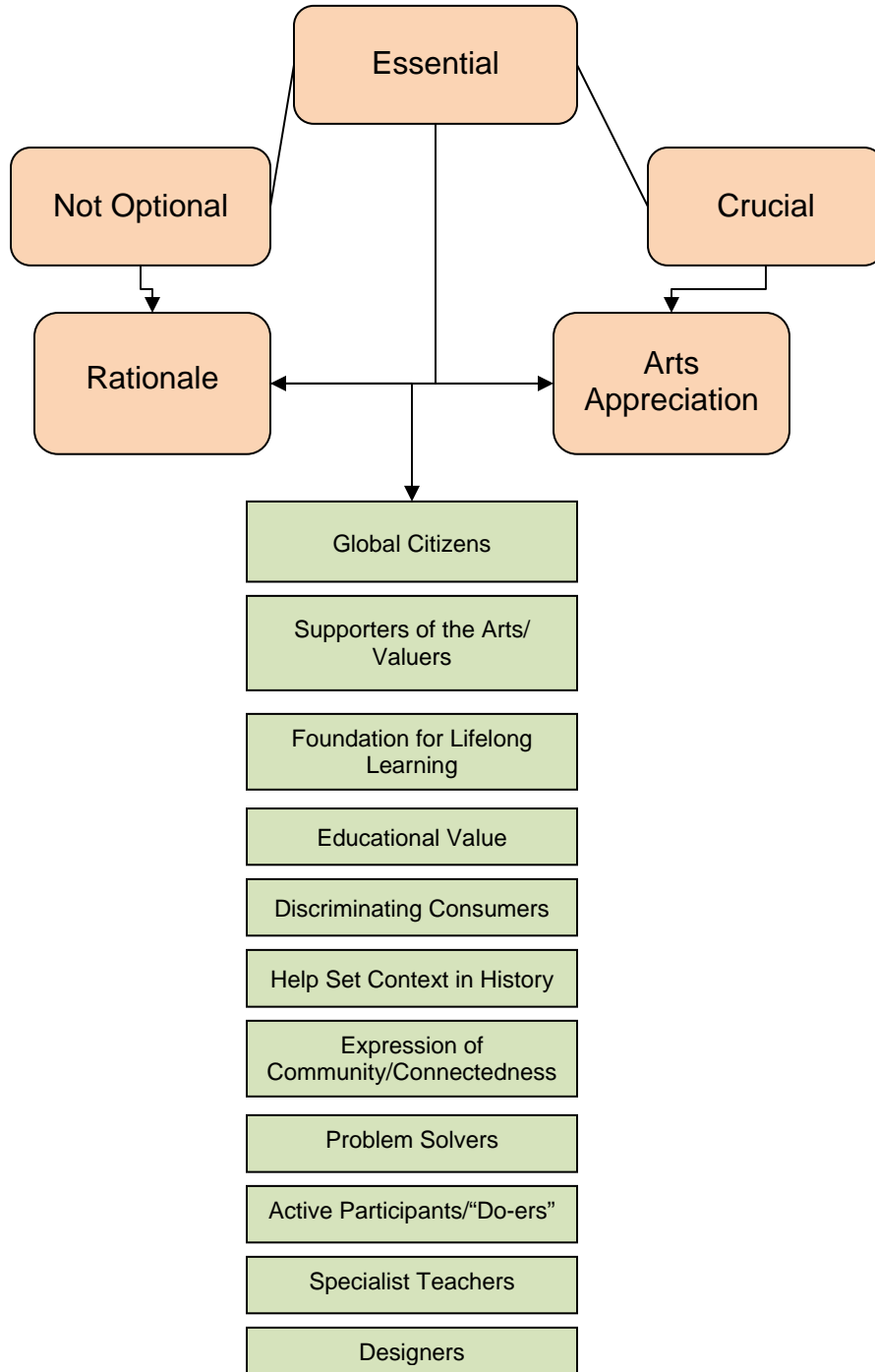
Model L:



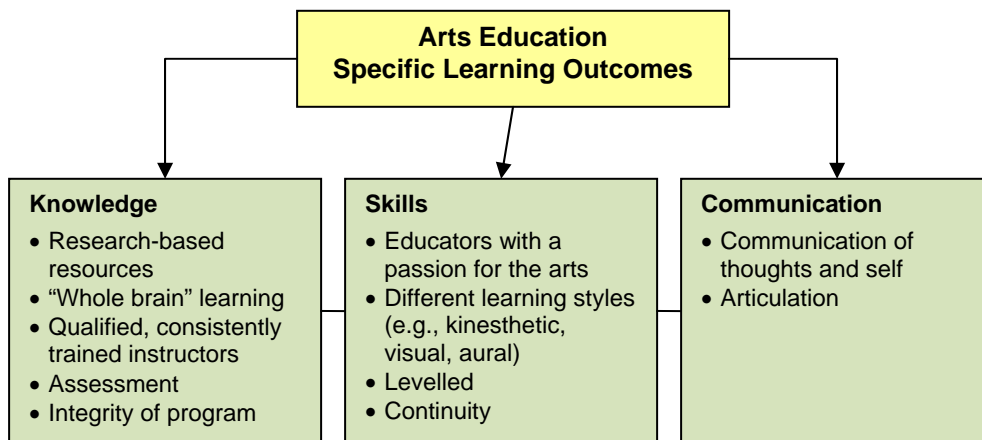
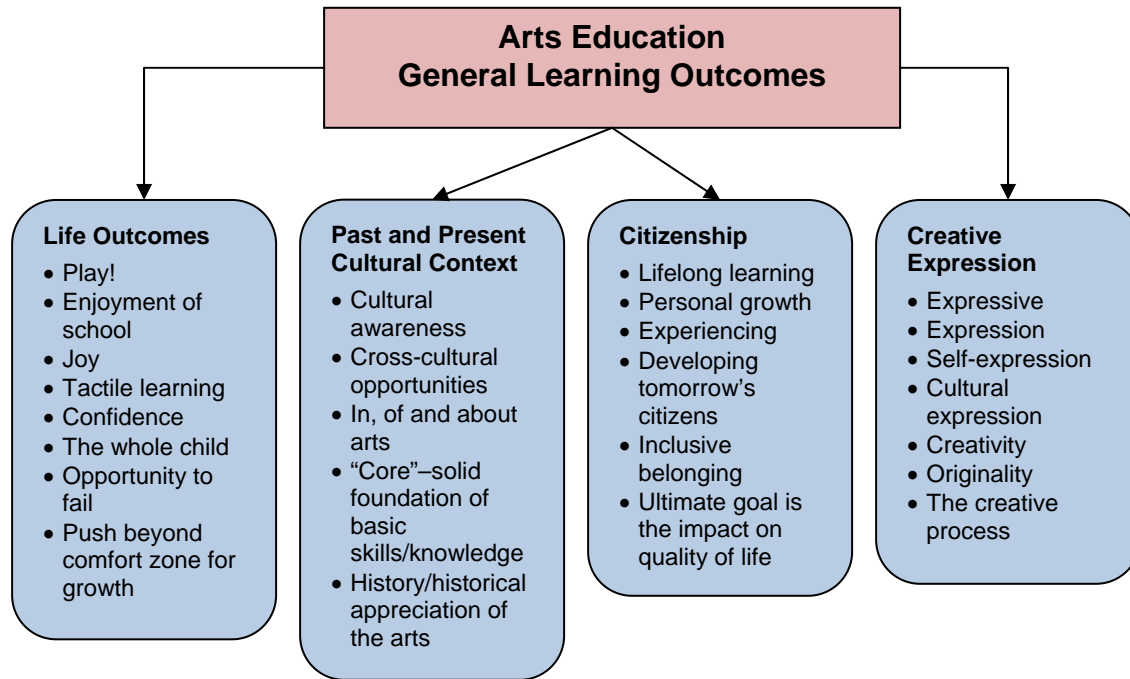
Model M:



Model N:



Model O:



Recommendations

Recommendation for Core Learnings

While group models and language varied among the focus groups, there were several key concepts/themes that emerged. *Most groups identified that the ultimate goal of Arts Education was the fulfillment and nourishment of the whole child, resulting in fun/joy.*

The themes below represent the most commonly identified elements of an Arts Education program and are recommended for consideration in the development of a K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Framework:

- ✓ **Self-awareness** – self-discovery, identity, confidence, fulfillment, voice, reflection
- ✓ **Connecting and Belonging** – community, relationships, citizenship, play, fun
- ✓ **Else Awareness** – culture, global citizenship, context, multiple perspectives, history, appreciation and valuing the arts, critical and responsive, arts consumers, artistic literacy, reflection
- ✓ **Creative Process** – participation, collaboration, imagination, critical thinking, risk-taking, problem solving, aesthetic education
- ✓ **Creative Expression/Celebration** – participation, communication and expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas; integration into other subjects
- ✓ **Skill Development** – mastery, technical skills, language, rigour, thinking skills, job skills, career planning.

Recommendation for Teacher Development and Certification

The consensus among the groups was that the ideal Arts Education teacher is someone who is passionate, knowledgeable and skilled in the art form that he/she is teaching. *It is recommended that teacher education programs and professional development opportunities for Alberta teachers focus on first attracting and retaining passionate teachers of the arts, and then supporting knowledge and skill development.*

Recommendation for Curriculum Acquisition Feasibility

Alberta Education staff did not display curriculum models from other education systems outside Alberta during the focus groups so as to engage the participants in an authentic curriculum review process. When groups were asked to identify the key components of an Arts Education curriculum, many struggled with the language and structure necessary to communicate their desires for a new program of studies. It may have been helpful to consider several curriculum documents for the purpose of stimulating discussion, borrowing and recombining the best ideas. Without prompting, several of the groups mentioned that future groups consider other curriculum documents. Curriculum documents from Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Europe were mentioned as models to consider.

Recommendation for Middle Years – Complementary Programs Collaboration

Recommendations for middle years opportunities were inconclusive. Some schools identified positive experiences when students participated in fine arts “exploratories” or “minis” instead of full-year options. These short, exploratory courses (3 to 12 weeks in length) were designed to expose students to brief experiences in all four of the arts (music, visual arts, drama and dance) in the first year or two of middle school. As students progressed to year two or three, they selected courses they wanted to study further. Some participants reported that these exploratory courses allowed students to find hidden talents or interests, and that they exposed students to all the complementary courses that a school could offer.

Other participants were adamant that the arts do not lend themselves well to “dabbling”—that the development of skill sets and appreciation in the arts takes time. Arts processes and production require time for exploration of self, reflection, relationship building, collaboration, feedback and adaptation to be fully lived and experienced. Many participants felt that merely sampling the arts would reduce the experience to tokenism, and that the strength and truth of the arts experience would be lost in such a model.

Initial reaction to middle years collaboration was inconclusive. Therefore, it is recommended that a middle years Arts Education focus group consider the opportunities and challenges involved in a middle years program model.

Recommendation for Next Steps

Initial consultations identified the need for further consultation with Francophone, French Immersion, First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholders. These consultations are documented in K–12 Arts Education Summary of Consultations with Francophone and French Immersion Representatives and K–12 Arts Education: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Focus Groups – Themes and Findings in Arts Education.

Upon completion of initial consultations it is recommended that Alberta Education convene a working group to consider information from a variety of sources, including research and promising practice, focus group results and other Arts Education curriculum models for the purpose of informing the development of a Draft K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Framework.