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for the arts in education

Teaching and Learning at Lincoln Center Institute

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Preface

I'm pleased to introduce an important new document for Lincoln Center Institute, which builds on our work since our beginnings in 1975. As implied by its name, *Teaching and Learning at Lincoln Center Institute* provides an opportunity to further explore the two complementary facets of the Institute's work.

Ideas do not happen without purpose and papers do not write themselves. I want my vision for LCI's ideological direction to be as clear as possible, to as many readers as possible. With that in mind, I asked Madeleine Holzer, LCI's Educational Development Director, to help me address three questions important to LCI. This paper is the second in a series designed to answer these questions by explaining our educational practice and values, and by positioning them within the greater discussion on education in the United States today. To accomplish this, Madeleine used our characteristic dynamic group process to draw on over thirty years of our philosophy and practice, including the pioneering work of Philosopher-in-Residence, Maxine Greene, and that of our teaching artists and the LCI staff. The three questions are:

1. What educational traditions, in and outside of the arts, help explain and position the educational practices of LCI?
2. What are the hallmarks of LCI's work that remain constant throughout our practice, no matter the programmatic context in which it is presented?
3. Within the design of any school, specifically in the design of the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry, how would we address the need for students to be able to understand why study in aesthetic education is central to their general education?

The first and second questions have been addressed in a paper titled *Education Traditions* (available on the Institute's Web portal), which highlights the hallmarks of teaching at LCI and traces these hallmarks back through the various educational traditions that support our work. Presented in 2005, this document has been invaluable in helping LCI create an ongoing conversation about our educational beliefs and practices in the broader context of education theory beyond that of the arts.

The third question is addressed in the paper you are about to read. It is one of our most concise documents to date, laying out the foundations of our philosophy and practice with precision and clarity. It contains the hallmarks of the Institute's practice as detailed in the *Education Traditions* paper and presents for the first time LCI's *Capacities for Aesthetic Learning*.

The *Capacities for Aesthetic Learning* is a tool with which we not only can enter the classroom, but also can articulate and assess what might be learned and understood by students. It arose as a response to conversations with our partners—all those interested in our approach to arts and education, and how imagination interacts with them; and as a response to our responsibility to provide the High School for

Arts, Imagination and Inquiry (HSAII) in its fledgling year with a structure that would help it assess student achievement. The Capacities are a way of describing the impact of aesthetic education within our community that is perhaps more concrete, more immediately applicable than any we have offered to educators in the past.

We crafted the Capacities so that the educators who work with us and practice aesthetic education could own them. It is therefore important that they be a flexible structure. I almost wish that we could avoid their old-fashioned paper presentation, which inevitably places things in a given order and therefore tends to provoke a very logical reaction: "Must I follow this step by step?" The answer is no, of course. If teachers are to feel true ownership of the Capacities, they must be able to draw from them in a way that suits their own curriculum and pedagogy. The Capacities are not a linear, didactic structure: they are an open-ended discussion of student accomplishment. The discussion is meant to be continuous and shared by all participants.

The Capacities will not dramatically change the work of our teaching artists, yet they will certainly influence it. Their intent is to promote deeper involvement on the part of the teacher, which, in turn, will add depth and focus to the teaching artists' work. If HSAII is any indication, this is already happening, and I must confess that it is incomparably validating to be able to give you a document that has already garnered "rave notices" from teaching artists and teachers alike.

The future of the Capacities lies in fulfilling two primary goals: We want them to have a life of their own as they serve the diverse and developing needs of educators, but, no matter how they are molded and used for best results, we want them to remain fully representative of LCI, of our philosophy and practice. From that perspective, the Capacities, as we offer them to our various partners to adopt and make their own, are a token of our trust. Like all of LCI's work, the Capacities and Hallmarks will develop and grow. I look forward to the discussions that will, over the years, keep them alive, vibrant, and relevant.

I thank all those who have contributed their invaluable thoughts to the creation of this document, chief among them Madeleine Holzer, who gave it language and form. And, as always, I thank Maxine Greene, whose ideas have guided the Institute since the beginning.

Scott Noppe-Brandon
Executive Director, Lincoln Center Institute

Teaching and Learning at Lincoln Center Institute

The Philosophical Foundation

Maxine Greene, Lincoln Center Institute's Philosopher-in-Residence, describes aesthetic education as "...the intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what there is to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful." Greene proposes that "When this happens, new connections are made in experience: new patterns are formed, new vistas are opened."¹ Her philosophy posits that understanding a work of art takes place in the continuous interaction between the viewer and the artwork, and neither in the work itself nor solely in the perceiver. Not only does she characterize a work of art as an "inexhaustible resource" for learning; she also proposes that as the perceiver's life changes, so do his/her perceptions of that work. In Greene's words, an interaction with a work of art involves nothing less than "lending it your life."

Aesthetic Education Practice

Based on this philosophical stance, for the past thirty years, Lincoln Center Institute's practice of aesthetic education developed into carefully planned observations and analyses of particular works of art connected to participatory activities designed by teaching artists to highlight the possible relationship between the artist's choices and the viewer's aesthetic response. Through art-making explorations in dance, music, theater, architecture, and visual arts, participants have been encouraged to integrate their prior experiences and their perceptions to create new understandings of a particular work of art and ask further questions that might reshape their world. This approach is neither teaching "art for art's sake," nor using the arts as a vehicle for teaching other subjects, but rather a third process that incorporates some of the elements of both, involving perception, cognition, affect, and the imagination.

The practice, developed for the study of specific works of art, depends on the needs, inclinations, interests, and inspiration of particular teaching artists, classroom teachers, and students, who collaborate with each other in the pre-K through grade

¹ Greene, Maxine, *Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 6.

12 schools and colleges of teacher education that partner with the Institute. All teaching in these settings bears a number of hallmarks. Some of these are:

- Selection of a work of art for study that is rich with possibilities for exploration;
- Collaborative brainstorming of many possible entry points into the study of an artwork;
- Creation of a generative question as a guide for the exploration, known at Lincoln Center Institute as the “line of inquiry”;
- Exploratory workshops in art making, facilitated by professional artists teaching in their own disciplines, prior to experiencing the work of art, and often after;
- Use of contextual materials throughout the exploration process;
- Conversations punctuated by both open-ended and more specific questions;
- Student-centered active learning that acknowledges each participant’s prior knowledge and life experience;
- Use of multiple learning modalities in each exploration;
- Creation of vocabularies, verbal, visual, and physical, that can be used to describe a work of art;
- Experiencing an art work, ideally, more than once;
- Group and individual reflection throughout the exploration and after a performance or a museum visit;
- Validation of multiple perspectives in the creation of individual, as well as group, understanding and meaning;
- Connections to the classroom curriculum and pedagogy; and
- Opening out of new possibilities for learning that includes generating new questions to be explored both within, and outside of, the arts.

This actual practice is not a linear one, but rather one that loops and spirals, based on the teaching artist’s and teacher’s skills and intuition. It can be seen as a complex dance that includes artist, educator, and student; artwork and perception; teaching, learning, and the creation of new possibilities.²

²Holzer, Madeleine F., *Aesthetic Education Philosophy and Practice: Education Traditions* (New York, Lincoln Center Institute, 2005), 2.

Capacities for Aesthetic Learning

The Capacities for Aesthetic Learning were developed by Lincoln Center Institute for use at the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry (HSAII), a small high school that opened in September, 2005 in New York City with 108 students. The Institute is the lead partner at HSAII, which is part of the New Century High Schools Initiative administered through New Visions for Public Schools.

The idea of capacities for aesthetic learning was first discussed at a meeting of the initial planning committee, whose members included Maxine Greene, Scott Noppe-Brandon, and Madeleine Holzer from LCI, former Principals of LCI Focus Schools, and representatives from the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center and New Visions for Public Schools. At that time, Dr. Greene encouraged LCI to use the word “capacities” rather than knowledge or skills to indicate that what could be learned from the study of works of art was not finite. The Capacities for Aesthetic Learning now in use at HSAII evolved from this ongoing discussion, and address the need for students to be able to understand why the study of works of art through aesthetic education is central to their education. The Capacities give them a way to name their learning, make it a part of their lives, and use it in constructive and imaginative ways.

As Lincoln Center Institute started to introduce the Capacities for Aesthetic Learning to some of its partners in K-12 and teacher education, it became clear from their responses that the Capacities would have a purpose beyond the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry. Nonetheless, the Institute’s initial purpose is to explore and assess the effectiveness of the Capacities while they are in use at HSAII, with input from the high school’s teachers, students and administrators. Beginning with Summer Session 2006, the Institute will introduce the Capacities through professional development for faculty and administrators. The intention by September, 2007, is for all LCI partners in K-12 and teacher education to explore the Capacities in some way through their work.

We also recognize that others may have an interest in thinking about the Capacities with us. With this in mind, we anticipate more discussions and explorations of the Capacities in future years. In some way, the Capacities for Aesthetic learning will always be in draft form. As with all work at Lincoln Center Institute, they are to be experienced, discussed, and revised as we learn more about the reality of their application in schools.

Within present thinking, the Capacities for Aesthetic Learning, as they have been articulated to the students at the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry are:

Noticing Deeply

to identify and articulate layers of detail in a work of art through continuous interaction with it over time.

Embodying

to experience a work of art through your senses, as well as emotionally, and also to physically represent that experience

Questioning

to ask questions throughout your explorations that further your own learning; to ask the question, "What if?"

Identifying Patterns

To find relationships among the details you notice, group them, and recognize patterns

Making Connections

to connect what you notice and the patterns you see to your prior knowledge and experiences, as well as to others' knowledge and experiences including text and multimedia resources

Exhibiting Empathy

to respect the diverse perspectives of others in our community; to understand the experiences of others emotionally, as well as in thought

Creating Meaning

to create your own interpretations based on the previous capacities, see these in the light of others in the community, create a synthesis, and express it in your own voice

Taking Action

to act on the synthesis of what you have learned in your explorations through a specific project. These include projects in the arts, as well as in other realms. For example: you might write and produce your own play; you might create a dance; you might plant a community garden as a combined service-learning/science project; you might organize a clothing drive for homeless neighbors as a combined service-learning/humanities project

Reflecting/Assessing

to look back on your learning, continually assess what you have learned, assess/identify what challenges remain, and assess/identify what further learning needs to happen. This occurs not only at the end of a learning experience, but is part of what happens throughout that experience. It is also not the end of your learning; it is part of beginning to learn something else.

Like the hallmarks of teaching at Lincoln Center Institute, the Capacities for Aesthetic Learning are not meant to be linear. We imagine that students will engage with them through loops and spirals, depending on their individual learning styles and needs, and their own entry points and interactions with particular works of art. And, as with all multifaceted learning at the Institute, the Capacities are meant to be inclusive of cognition, affect, perception, and the imagination.

Application

The Capacities, as they are articulated above, spring directly from long-term discussions at the Institute about the learning that can occur through the study of works of art using the Institute's practice of aesthetic education. At the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry, we also are exploring the applicability of the development of these Capacities as they relate to teaching and learning across other academic disciplines, as appropriate, such as English, Social Studies, Mathematics and the Sciences, and to other types of objects, natural or created.

Because the practice of Aesthetic Education resonates with other academic perspectives, such as constructivism, multiple intelligences, inquiry, reader response, and process writing,³ we are learning that the connections with disciplines outside of the arts come easily to teachers at the High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry, who want to incorporate aesthetic education in their classrooms, no matter which subject area is being taught. As they collaborate with Institute teaching artists, and actively involve their students in the process, they only add more complex and varied perspectives to our explorations of how and what students might learn.

We look forward to continuing the conversation....

³ Holzer, Madeleine F., *Aesthetic Education Philosophy and Practice: Education Traditions* (New York, Lincoln Center Institute, 2005), 34.