

Good evening members of the committee. For the record my name is Marilyn Delger. I have been an educator for 38 years—the last 15, as principal of Hawthorne Elementary School in Bozeman.

In your discussion of “What is a quality education?” -- I’d like you to consider the role of the arts in schools.

Fourteen years ago Hawthorne School was awarded a grant from the Montana Arts Council to develop a model school, for the state of Montana—a school which would prove the importance of inclusion of the arts in the educational process. This was a dream come true! It meant extra money for something we already knew was important, but, we had no idea that in the long term the project would become so important to the state of Montana. Just yesterday, Hawthorne received the prestigious Governor’s Art Award for enhancement of the arts in Montana. This is a huge honor for an elementary school.

For 14 years the Hawthorne staff has been delving into brain research and studies by eminent educational theorists including: Howard Gardner, Maxine Green, and Elliot Eisener.

The staff found that all significant educational research, indicates the arts are unparalleled in their role of building self-esteem, developing a strong work ethic and communication skills, helping people untangle complex ideas, meeting diverse learning styles, and perhaps, most importantly for meeting the needs of struggling students—for giving them hope and purpose.

The mission of our project is to provide an artistically rich environment for every student—an environment with arts encounters so powerful—that students will have lifelong memories of their participation. We now know from brain research, that people remember powerful, emotional experiences. Art functions on emotion. Bottom line, the Hawthorne model demonstrates that exemplary schools have exemplary arts programs

Starting in kindergarten—with P is for Picasso, and M is for Matisse—and ending in 5th grade with Shakespearian plays and a Master’s Art Reception—the Hawthorne program brings magic to the education of every student—and all this without an art teacher!

Because of the project's wild success the teachers have remained incredibly committed. They can attest that the arts refresh the spirit, they delight and they entertain.

The main thrust of the project was the development of the thematic units designed with "arts at the heart," incorporating the works of master artists to help students focus attention on the big ideas of the unit. Arts residencies, community participation and parent involvement are key elements to the Project. Each year artists from Bozeman area are invited to share their expertise and enthusiasm with the students from such diverse areas as calligraphy, tap dancing, mime, African drumming, opera, and mask making.

Performance is also strongly emphasized. We know it builds self confidence and self-esteem.

In Bozeman, parents can choose the school they want their child to attend. In the past few years Hawthorne has become a popular choice -- often with waiting lists at every grade level. The school has received much recognition. It has been included in lists of Exemplary Schools disseminated by the Iowa and Nebraska Departments of Education and Arts Councils and the Harvard University Project Zero. The staff was recognized, nationally, in 2002, with an Honorable Mention Best Practices Award, by the Boyer Center, which is an educational research organization, in conjunction with the National Elementary Principal's Association.

The Hawthorne Project is widely supported in the community. In the early years of the project it was sustained by donations and grants but in the past few years, over \$25,000 has been raised each year by parents and community to perpetuate the Model School Project. No money comes from the general fund.

Local arts organizations serve as partners in the endeavor and make it possible to offer opportunities for all the children in artistic endeavors such as ballet, theater, and the fine arts.

People often comment about the energy and enthusiasm felt in the school. There are very few discipline problems. Hawthorne students care about the school environment, and care about their fellow classmates.

And, visiting artists always comment about Hawthorne students' creativity and persistence in doing projects.

In 1999, a long range assessment was conducted by staff of Montana State University. They found Hawthorne students have remarkable strengths, apparent as students move to the middle and high school. They are willing to put a great deal of energy and persistence toward a quality product. They are often class leaders. They show Joy in the learning process and they love to perform! Students appreciate and enthusiastically celebrate the creative achievements of their peers.

BUT, in this is the period of "No Child Left Behind!" the public wants to see test scores! In the past ten years Hawthorne has become a high performing school. Each year standardized tests scores average in the 80 to 90th percentiles. These are consistently above the state and national averages. This year our school was 3rd in the state in several areas. Bottom line, the Hawthorne academic environment, enhanced by its arts focus, is a highly successful method of providing students the skills and abilities they will need to become successful adults.

Despite the fact that most Montanans choose to live here because they want to live in a rural setting, they also want a sophisticated educational system; one that will adequately prepare their children for a world culture. The arts will do this!