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Museum Education: A Closer Look: Reinforcing Visual Literacy Skills Through Museum-School Collaboration

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MUSEUM EDUCATION
A CLOSER LOOK

Reinforcing Visual Literacy Skills Through Museum-School Collaboration

By
Margaret A. Wastie
Dr. Petra Chu, Advisor

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in Museum Professions Seton Hall University December 1999
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"I loved that damn museum." Holden Caulfield, the rather misanthropic protagonist in J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, felt most at home in the Museum of Natural History in New York City. “The best thing . . . in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody’d move.” (120-21) As an adolescent, Holden was particularly resistant to change, and the fact that things always stayed the same at the museum gave him a sense of peace and control.

Not all visitors to museums feel the same way as Holden did, however. To many, "museums have often seemed like alien planets." (Sterling, 42) The static and rather exclusive nature of museums has come under attack in the latter half of the twentieth century. Museums have earned their somewhat negative labeling from critics, writers, and even the artists who rely on museums to house their works. Artist Yayoi Kusama describes some museums as “mausoleums.” (McShine, 12) Robert Smithson, in his drawing *The Museum of the Void* (1969), portrays the museum as “an empty space, a tomb.” (McShine, 20) In addition, the rather sophisticated aura that often surrounds these “marble-floored stock houses of Culture” can have a daunting effect on potential visitors. (Greenstein, 9) A Philadelphia teacher commented, “I’d passed the
Historical Society of Pennsylvania many times, all my life, and always assumed it was for an elite, not for me." (Hodgson, 35)

Seemingly designed for the cognoscenti, museums sometimes cause ordinary people to feel that perhaps they do not “belong” in an area that they may not feel knowledgeable enough to enter. “A large proportion of the population still see museums as places meant only for ‘others.’ For themselves, they say that museums are ‘not for people like us.” (Schouten, 24) Boston museum consultant Larry Morrison addresses this problem when he says, “A museum cannot serve exclusively or even chiefly as a vehicle for the personal or professional fulfillment of its staff unless, of course, it wishes to ignore the requirements of public consent.” (Hodgson, 27)

Fortunately, the entire focus and mission of museums have changed to reflect the needs of viewers heading into the twenty-first century. The public’s voice in the changing view of museums today is increasing, and “the museum’s historical role as a storehouse of aesthetic memory” is rapidly modifying to include many other roles in today’s society. As the twentieth century ends, “a museum is neither static [nor] somehow outside history (as it may sometimes seem).” (McShine, 12, 19) Museums’ roles are changing, critics would agree, for the better. “Museums are not ends in themselves; they are means in the service of man and his cultural evolution.” (Wittlin) One major change in the evolution of museums is in the area of education.
CHAPTER I
EARLY MUSEUM HISTORY

Although there is much research today on the important role of museums in the education of their visitors, museums were not originally developed with education of the masses in mind. In fact, they were not even developed with visitors in mind. "Early museum collections were not intended for public display; they simply reflected the personal collecting interests of individuals." (Grinder and McCoy, 11) Public interest began to rise 200 years later, when Victorians established public museums, resulting in the founding of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1852. (Grinder and McCoy, 11)

Even though museums became "public" during this time, they were by no means meant to be open to the entire public. While the practice of collecting modest entrance fees is certainly accepted today and understood as a way to help defray the cost of running the institutions, the collection of money at a museum during the Victorian era was for a very different reason. "Fees were charged at most museums in the 19th century for the purpose of keeping unacceptable visitors out, as museums were not always considered appropriate places for the general public to visit." (Grinder and McCoy, 12) Thus, the education that was afforded to visitors to the museum was restricted only to those who were privileged enough to be able to enter.
The ambience of sophistication established by the British museums continued to be fostered in American museums. In the United States in the nineteenth century, museums, although officially open to the public, were not meant to be available for everyone. “Museums, in fact, did not exist for immigrants, laborers, or the poor of the cities.” (Grinder and McCoy, 12) The rich, the educated, and the socially accepted were the clientele of early museums, and education was not considered the purpose of these institutions because it was assumed that the visitors were already informed and well versed in the subject matter offered in museums. Indeed, the learning that took place in the museums was designed for the already schooled, certainly not for the untaught. “When public museums were founded throughout the United States (particularly in the East), their first priorities were other than public education. Museums, it was thought, should be centers of learning for students and scholars. Generally, museum education then was a by-product—not an objective.” (Grinder and McCoy, 12)

The twentieth century brought about major changes in the concept of museums, especially in the United States. Two early American museum reformers and innovators, Benjamin Ives Gilman, Secretary of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1893-1925), and John Cotton Dana, founder and director of the Newark Museum (1909-1929) held related, yet opposing views on the purpose of museums. Although both men felt that museums were important in order to socialize people, Gilman felt
that “exposure alone was sufficient,” while Dana stressed that “the task of the museum was to educate—to bring information and ideas to the people.” (Grinder and McCoy, 12-13) Regardless of their different views, however, their change of perception of the role of museums opened the door for major changes in museum practices later in the twentieth century.

By 1939, in a report issued by the Carnegie Foundation, President Frederick E. Keppel urged “the shift in emphasis from the custodial function of the American Museum to its opportunities for educational and other services.” (Grinder and McCoy, 14) These services are now firmly established in the missions of most museums today.

The 1960s and 1970s precipitated other major changes in the perception of museums as educational institutions. Although “in the turbulence of the late 1960s and early 1970s museums were [occasionally] perceived as ivory towers outside the mainstream of society,” changes were being made. (Museums for a New Century, 19) “Museums were beginning to program from a heightened awareness of their social responsibility. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 officially designated museums as educational institutions. (Museums for a New Century, 55) Museums began to educate in a number of ways: factual information on labels, workshops, guided tours, outreach programs, and exhibits that involved visitors both physically and intellectually.” (Grinder and McCoy, 14) The political and social upheaval of the 1960s and
...1970s served to make significant inroads into the ways many major institutions sought to change to appeal to society's individual groups.

Changes in society over the past two hundred years have been reflected in the changes in museums. In the later decades of the twentieth century, the educational purpose of museums has undergone a revamping. The traditional "information-driven, not experience-driven" practice of museum education is now being challenged. In the past, "by handing down all the answers, [the museum] sent[ed] the implied message that these answers [could] only be discovered by experts." (Chambers, 41) The museum staff are no longer perceived as the sole keepers of wisdom, the keys to understanding the contents held within. According to Excellence and Equity, a publication produced by the American Association of Museums, and the first major report on museum education, three goals of museums for the new century include: "understand[ing], develop[ing], expand[ing], and use[ing] the learning opportunities that they offer their audiences; . . . assur[ing] that the interpretative process manifests a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives and reflects a diversity of the museum's public; . . . and engag[ing] in active, ongoing collaborative efforts with a wide spectrum of organizations and individuals who can contribute to the expansion of the museum's public dimensions." (Anderson, 32-3)

Museums today seek new and different ways in which to educate their visitors. These changes can be seen in the programs offered by
museums, the partnerships now engaged in between many museums and educational institutions, and in educators' perceptions of learning and how knowledge of the arts is instrumental in tapping the learning potential of students of all ages. As a result, more and more schools and museums are re-evaluating their functions in the education process, particularly in the area of the visual literacy. This re-evaluation has resulted in questioning the basic definitions of visual education in both schools and museums, and considering alternative methods with which to educate students.

Changes are being sought to increase museums' and schools' educational offerings, particularly in areas evaluated by mandated state testing programs. Many states now specify successful passing rates on standardized tests in order to insure promotion and graduation. In addition to evaluating the traditional "basic skills" areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, several states have now increased the number of areas evaluated.

In New Jersey most notably, students in 4th, 8th, and 11th grades are evaluated in proficiency assessments. At the high school level, particularly, successful performance on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) is a requirement for graduation. One previously neglected, yet important area now being evaluated is visual literacy. The area of visual literacy is evaluated in two important content areas: language arts and the visual arts. Collaboration between public schools
and local museums has become one method with which to teach and to reinforce visual literacy.
CHAPTER II
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Expansion of visual literacy education both in schools and museums is paramount at the high school level in order to improve basic skills, stimulate cultural understanding, and to create life-long learning. The purpose of this study is to examine the need for visual literacy training specifically for high school students, to determine workable strategies for dealing with this audience, and to explore museums and their educational programs particularly targeted to the visual literacy and other core curriculum content standards evaluated in the HSPA for high school students. (Modern state departments of education identify major skill areas as standards and particular benchmarks within them as cumulative indicators of progress). The New Jersey museums addressed in this study are the Newark Museum, the New Jersey Historical Society, and the Montclair Art Museum.
Traditionally, visual education was considered to include only the area of "art," particularly fine arts such as painting and sculpture. Even though visual education was an area covered by both schools and museums, there seemed to have been a difference between the perception of "arts education" in each setting. In the area of visual arts specifically, schools emphasized art making through hands-on art classes that emphasized creation of individual art pieces. Art appreciation through viewing models and examples of art emphasized artists' techniques for the purpose of improving individual student technique. Art education in museums, on the other hand, emphasized visual appreciation and interpretation, usually through guided tours.

Basically, art education for museums was considered a way to make the purpose of an exhibit apparent to the public, in other words, the means through which the exhibit content was made understandable to the visitors. (Gamblin) The hands-on approach, although often offered by museums, was usually presented in separate classrooms, apart from general school visitor experiences, and voluntarily through Saturday or after school enrollment.

Today, there is a broader interpretation of what traditionally was referred to as "arts education," but is now referred to as "visual literacy"
or "visual education." This change in interpretation has led school curricula and museum programs to include much more than the traditional "arts education" experiences of the past.

Visual literacy, "the ability to understand (read) a variety of visual examples, such as painting, sculpture, film and architecture, and the ability to express oneself (write) with at least one visual medium," is considered of paramount importance in education today. (Curtiss, 1) With the proliferation of non-print media such as television, film, video, and computer graphics that stimulate the visual senses, emphasis needs to be placed on creating visually intelligent students and consumers.

"From seventy-five to eighty percent of human sensory perception is visual; ten percent of vision is in the eye and ninety percent in the brain; and at least sixty percent of forebrain activity—cognition, memory, and emotion, as well as perception—is linked with vision." (Curtiss, vii) As with written language, visual "language" needs to be developed in order "to construct a basic system for learning, recognizing, making, and understanding visual messages that are negotiable by all people, not just those specially trained." (Dondis, x) In fact, Howard Gardner's recent research on multiple intelligences has shown that "some students may have a natural predilection for visual learning that previously had been neglected and/or discouraged." (Curtiss, viii)

The importance of visual education in improving students' general scholastic ability and specific test scores has been studied and proven.
"We perceive first, using the senses; then we employ language and numbers (mathematics) to explore further and communicate what we perceive. A growing number of educators and parents now acknowledge the role creative activities play in improving a child's grasp of both representational and abstract concepts." (Burgard, 27) Elliot Eisner of Stanford University feels that "the arts are unparalleled in developing seven different intellectual abilities, including the ability to be imaginative; to make judgments in the absence of a rule, to think metaphorically, and to devise multiple solutions to a problem." (Chase) Thus, more, rather than less, emphasis on the arts must be considered a key component in children's education, from kindergarten through high school.

Gardner's theory also supports the need for visual education. "The arts can play a crucial role in improving students' ability to learn because they draw on a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences upon which most schools are based." (Murfee, 3) Other researchers agree: "The supposedly 'nonessential' subjects of music, theater, dance, and art promote the kinds of thinking, enthusiasm, self-esteem and discipline that are necessary requisites for learning." (Oddleifson) The enhancement of visual literacy does not conflict with the academic regimen of students' school days; on the contrary, Oddleifson feels that "a curriculum that devotes 25% or more of the school day to the arts
produces youngsters with academically superior abilities." Improvement in descriptive writing skills has been documented. (Curtiss, viii) Even the College Board, one of the driving forces of high school curriculum planning, sees the important connection between academics and the arts. "Students of the arts continue to outperform their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test, according to The College Entrance Examination Board. In 1995, SAT scores for students who studied the arts more than four years were 59 points higher on the verbal and 44 points higher on the math portion than students with no coursework or experience in the arts." (Murfee, 3)

These statistics are positive and encouraging, and would seem to foster renewed interest and enthusiasm in incorporating the study of the arts into school curricula. U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley focused on the results of the 1997 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in the arts, an exam that tested what students know and can do in the areas of music, visual arts, and theater. He feels that "basic literacy in the arts is as important to today's students as mathematics and science." (McGone) Even though it is recognized that study of the arts will improve student performance across a wide range of "scholastic" areas, "there are few attempts to provide students in grades K-12 with an incremental series of experiences—both as participants and spectators—that lead them skillfully along the path of perceptual awareness." (Burgard, 27)
Indeed, at a time when it has been researched, proven, and generally accepted that a firm grounding in visual education is essential to the overall improvement of students, many schools are cutting education in the arts in order to reduce spending. Declining test scores of students in the crucial areas of mathematics, reading, science, and language have alarmed educators and school boards. Unfortunately, the reaction of many school districts has been to remove art programs from the schools in order to free up teaching positions and classrooms for basic education. "Failing to recognize that perception is one of the three basic means of learning, our society [through the reduction of tax dollars towards arts education] places a low priority on the arts." (Burgard, 27)

Because the visual arts tie in with so many areas of "basic" education, however, the need for continuing this important instruction and even raising the priority of visual arts especially is crucial.

In schools today, visual literacy need not be confined to art classes. In fact, with budget cuts and losses of courses in the arts in public schools, it is imperative that visual literacy should be covered in any and all classes, especially the "basic" areas of language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. "[Visual literacy] is too central to human intelligence to be limited to the minority of students who elect to take art classes," if, indeed, such courses are even offered (Curtiss, viii) Skills that require visual literacy can be found in all of the "basic" courses as well. Visual prompts are frequently used as catalysts for writing, social
studies classes examine the art of historic periods in order to get a fuller sense of the time period, and math courses refer to the geometry and line of works of art, to mention a few areas. Therefore, new ways of reinforcing visual literacy in the traditionally non-arts-type courses are very necessary.

A different venue for visual exploration can also have a positive impact on teen audiences. Visual education for teens does not have to be restricted to the art classroom in the school or under the purview of the specific education specialist at a museum. Teachers in other subject areas in schools can utilize relevant art as a springboard for visual literacy. Through presenting selected works of art or visual images, an instructor can help to create a catalyst (carefully housed in the “safe” activity of examining someone/something outside of the teenagers’ selves) for students’ introspection and eventual visualization through perceiving, reacting to, writing about, acting out, and creating art. Direct contact with visual prompts such as painting and sculpture for introspection can augment the classroom experience of reading about, writing about, and discussing the course content.
CHAPTER IV

NEW JERSEY'S EMPHASIS ON VISUAL LITERACY

Traditionally, New Jersey has been a leader in educational improvement in the United States, and the state has made recent inroads into the area of visual literacy in its public schools. The standardized testing programs implemented by the state have served to drive curriculum to improve the standards of education from kindergarten through high school in all of the public schools. Annual testing given in grades four, eight, and eleven has alerted New Jersey educators to potential learning problems early in students' scholastic careers, helped to conquer the "social promotion" problem, and created graduates from New Jersey schools who are well versed in many academic areas and more than competitive with graduates from schools in other states. High school students, particularly, are targeted to pass the test, and a non-pass prohibits the granting of a diploma from a public high school.

As part of its research, the New Jersey Department of Education has studied national tests such as the 1997 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) to determine areas important to include in its state testing. In addition to testing the traditional "basics" considered in education—language arts, mathematics, science and social studies—the 1997 exam tested students in the areas of music, visual arts, and
theater. (McGlone) Educators throughout the state agree that “the lessons learned from the national arts test are of special interest to New Jersey, where new core content standards for the arts are being introduced into the curriculum.” (McGlone) The New Jersey State Board of Education has defined a new set of fifty-six curriculum standards that specify what New Jersey students should know in seven academic subjects, and more than ten percent of the standards are devoted to visual and performing arts. As one of the states on the forefront of improving testing for its students, New Jersey is one of only eight states that have embraced these fifty-six standards completely. “In a 1995 survey conducted by the National Art Education Association, 49 states said they were using [the standards] as a guide. New Jersey is among eight states making arts instruction mandatory.” (Goodnough, 1998)

The High School Proficiency Test (HSPT), the most recent of the standardized tests required for graduation from a New Jersey state public high school, has recently undergone re-evaluation based on guidelines released in 1994 by the United States Department of Education, and is being replaced by the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). This new test will evaluate students in seven core content areas: visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, language arts literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages. (Klagholz, et al, 1) The new test administration will begin on a sequential basis, depending on content
area. Tentatively scheduled to start in the fall of 2000, the test will first evaluate mathematics and language arts literacy. The area of “literacy,” traditionally designed to test reading and writing, has been revised to include other areas determined necessary for comprehension and communication. These skills on the HSPA will include reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. Marete Wester, executive director of the Alliance for Arts Education/NJ at the Arts Literacy for a Changing America conference, stated, “The implication for us in New Jersey is profound as we approach the first field test for the arts.” (McGlone) The inclusion of visual literacy and art literacy components on the state test reinforces the notion that visual literacy training and reinforcement is necessary for completely educating the whole child. “The state has taken a bold step to say the arts are not just a frill; ... the arts are essential to developing skills,” claims former Oradell Superintendent of Schools, Judy Conk (Goodnough, 1998)

The viewing skills portion of the HSPA includes eleven key skills clusters:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Recognition of central idea or theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>Recognition of supporting details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3</td>
<td>Extrapolation of information/following directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>Paraphrasing/retelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>Recognition of text organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6</td>
<td>Recognition of a purpose for viewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8</td>
<td>Prediction of tentative meanings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Leo Klagholz, former Commissioner of Education in New Jersey, “the standards suggest which concepts children will be tested on.” Students taking the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) in the fourth grade “must use their senses, imagination and memory to express ideas and feelings in dance, music, theater and visual arts.” By eighth grade, students taking the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) “must identify significant artists representing various historical periods, world cultures, and social and political influences.” Eleventh graders taking the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) “must able to interpret, respond to, and evaluate visual and aural messages of both print and nonprint media.” By virtue of this new state testing program, the State Board of Education expects “students [at all levels to] become critical viewers when they respond thoughtfully to print and nonprint visual messages.” (Klagholz, et al, 13-19)

As in the rest of the test, in the viewing skills portion, through both objective and open-ended questions, “Students [will] draw upon their . . . viewing experiences to think, to learn, to communicate, and to create original work.” (Klagholz, et al, 1) Viewing prompts, which may include
drawing/illustration, photograph, film/video, slide, and three-dimensional form, among others, will contain the following elements (13):

- topics that are age- and grade-level appropriate
- a clear focus
- a clearly identifiable theme or central idea
- an established tone or mood
- key details that support the theme or central idea
- conventions of viewed text (humor, irony, setting, metaphor, etc.)

In addition to the specific visual and performing arts literacy section, a new emphasis of the language arts literacy section of the HSPA will include reaction to visual prompts as a catalyst for writing. Thus, the need for facility with observing, reacting to, decoding, and understanding both printed and moving images is crucial to school curricula at all levels as students become responsible for constructing and extending meaning through viewing. (Kлагholtz, et al, 146)

These far-reaching and original areas of evaluation in New Jersey’s state assessments reinforce the need for strong arts education throughout the students’ educational years. Kathleen Gaffney, creator of Artsgenesis, a training program designed for teachers which emphasizes Howard Gardner’s theories of multiple intelligences, feels, “You can’t separate art from the rest of a child’s education or his life . . . It is a way for us to examine ourselves and the world around us, and to make sense of everything we learn.” (Goodnough, 1996) New Jersey school districts are redirecting their mission of educating the whole child to include strong emphasis on visual education to enhance the other core
curriculum areas involved in a child's learning environment. Part of this redirected mission includes student involvement with museums.

There are, however, drawbacks to involving teenagers in museum projects, particularly in field trip experiences. Often, if the teenagers are treated like adults, they will act more like adults. This expectation of positive behavior, unfortunately, is not always the case, and immature or disrespectful behavior is the complaint of many museum educators.

In addition to dealing with possible behavior problems, museum staff also often consider providing programs for teenagers to be more difficult than providing them for elementary school aged students. “The reasons may include insufficient understanding of adolescent development in planning exhibits and programs, impatience in museums with typical but annoying adolescent behavior, and museum staffs’ unease with young people in this age group, mirroring society’s general unwillingness to accept adolescents.” (LeBlanc, 44)

This feeling of mutual distrust has caused many schools and museums to retreat from the collaborative experience at a time when it can be best utilized. Thus, for a variety of reasons, “museums have found the demands of the high school audience immediate and intensely challenging.” (Brooking and Hardy, 4) Janet Rassweiler, Director for Programs and Collections at the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark, New Jersey, feels that it is just this “intense challenge” that makes high school-museum collaboration so rewarding. “There is an advantage to
serving teenage audiences. They're easier to move, and we can treat them like adults."
CHAPTER V
SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR TEENAGE MUSEUM PARTICIPANTS

One solution to the problem of adolescent audiences is emphasis on direct teacher training prior to the museum experience. Rassweiler emphasizes the importance of talk and collaboration between the classroom teacher and the museum education staff beforehand so that the teachers can be fully invested in the museum experience. Many of the problems with misbehaving teen audiences, stresses Rassweiler, are not problems with the teens themselves but with the teachers who bring them to the museum. Perhaps the teachers are not knowledgeable enough about the exhibit in order to become fully involved. Or perhaps they have used the museum experience as an excuse to “relax” and let someone else handle the students for the time spent in the museum. Rassweiler concludes that more active participation by the classroom teacher usually will create a more productive museum visit for all participants.

Special guidelines also need to be considered for this audience.

*Although school systems group children chronologically by grade, the practice is somewhat inappropriate for early adolescents, since they vary so much in physical maturity, intellectual development, and social abilities. Meanwhile, guides should be aware that individuals in this age
group may be very different from one another.” (Grinder and McCoy, 97-99)

Whether the collaborations are school-based, outreach, or on-site programs, one practical way for both schools and museums to reinforce visual education is through understanding the individual learning styles of the students involved in collaborative education programs. “Unless the casual observer either has prerequisite knowledge directed to specific learning outcomes, or has specific learning intents of his (or her) own, it is likely that little learning will result from the casual perusal of exhibits.” (Ames, 29) Thus, attention to the types of learners in the preparation of programming can make the experience more meaningful for all participants. The following model of basic learning styles indicates pivotal questions that ought to be considered when planning educational programs in museums. (Ames, 30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF LEARNERS</th>
<th>INFORMAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; ATMOSPHERE</th>
<th>INFORMAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; ATMOSPHERE</th>
<th>INFORMAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; ATMOSPHERE</th>
<th>FORMAL PROGRAMS</th>
<th>FORMAL PROGRAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imaginary: Learn by listening and sharing ideas</td>
<td>When visitors arrive, are they people to answer questions, listen to ideas?</td>
<td>Does interpretation encourage social interaction with others in groups of visitors?</td>
<td>Do staff members provide opportunities for visitors to articulate their reasons for coming?</td>
<td>Do guides allow time for group discussion and sharing ideas?</td>
<td>Do lectures involve the audience in discussion? Do discussions follow films?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic: Learn by thinking through ideas sequentially</td>
<td>Is there a floor plan and other printed information describing what is where?</td>
<td>Does interpretation provide facts and integrate groups of objects through fascinating ideas?</td>
<td>Can visitors submit specific factual questions and get them answered by staff?</td>
<td>Do guides give factual information along with discussion and analysis?</td>
<td>Do lectures have outstanding credentials in their field? Is plenty of information given?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common sense: Learn by testing theories</td>
<td>Is there freedom to discover and find one's own</td>
<td>Does the museum design tests and allow</td>
<td>Do guides pose questions and allow time for indepth exploration</td>
<td>Do programs include opportunities to explore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Table with columns for types of learners, informal and formal environments, and questions related to each.*

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*Table continues with various scenarios and questions for each type of learner.*
Grinder and McCoy have determined additional specific characteristics of adolescent audiences. These characteristics should be kept in mind when planning and preparing museum educational activities for teenagers. The chart below indicates the major differences between early adolescent groups and adolescent groups and the suggested strategies for effective museum experiences. (98)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF VISITS</th>
<th>TOUR RECOMMENDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 12-14</td>
<td>Emerging sense of self</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>Inquiry-Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Adolescent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guided Discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 14-18</td>
<td>Abstract thought; like realism; Goals: to get through school, go to college, or get job</td>
<td>Infrequent</td>
<td>Inquiry-Discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Inquiry-Discussion method emphasized by Grinder and McCoy "promotes interaction between members of the class and the adult interpreter" through "specific and focused" questions. (99) When coordinated with attention paid to students' individual learning styles, this method can have a positive effect on the teenage audience, making the visual education experience worthwhile for the students. For on-site museum visits, an additional benefit of this method is encouragement of more active involvement of the teachers present. If the teachers feel a sense of inclusion in the proceedings, the sense of "just being on the
fringe," or feeling unimportant to the visual education process referred to by Rassweiler will be lessened as they become more invested in the program.
CHAPTER VI
MUSEUM AND SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Affiliations with local museums are a good resource for schools seeking to reinforce visual literacy skills for students and to enhance classroom practices for teachers. Museum staff, trained in the ability to read objects, can provide the visual materials and stimuli necessary for students and help the students to understand and interpret the objects. Museum administrators throughout the country agree. Willard L. Boyd, president of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, feels that museum education can be a solution to increasing young people's knowledge of and enjoyment of the arts because they "strengthen basic skills, basic knowledge, basic comprehension, and basic understanding. Cultural institutions educate." (Museums for a New Century, 57)

Museum experts feel that arts experiences not only positively affect students' learning of the "basics," but also that the experiences fostered in museum education can affect the students in other ways as well. Anthropologist Nelson H. H. Graburn "sees in museum learning the potential to build cultural self-confidence and bridge the barriers of class and ethnicity." (Museums for a New Century, 59) Frank Oppenheimer, director of the Exploratorium in San Francisco, adds, "The whole point of education is to transmit culture, and museums can play an increasingly important role in this process. It is a mistake to think that preserving
culture is distinct from transmitting it through education.” (*Museums for
a New Century*, 57)

Today, when so much of the school curriculum focuses on the
understanding of other cultures, museum exhibits seem not only the
likely, but also the rightful place for educators to reinforce visual literacy
in order to expand students' multicultural education. A large portion of
both the world languages and social studies standards has to do with the
appreciation of different cultures. For example, study of other cultures,
as an adjunct to social studies class in a school through witnessing an
exhibit in a museum promotes “understanding of other cultures, their
histories, symbols, myths, values and beliefs.” (Murfee, 9)

The three New Jersey museums included in this study—the
Newark Museum, The New Jersey Historical Society, and the Montclair
Museum—have been as aware of the new state mandates for curriculum
standards as the schools have been. Their brochures highlight the core
curriculum content standards, and the programs they offer for
collaboration with local schools include many of the strands in their
presentations.

**The Newark Museum**

The Newark Museum, always at the forefront of educational
programs since its inception by John Cotton Dana, has an active and
involved school collaboration program that includes on-site visits by high
school students. Their *School & Teacher 1999-2000* brochure promises
programs "providing teachers of all levels and disciplines ways of making instructional links across the curriculum." In addition to providing individual curriculum consultation, school in-service programs, summer teacher institutes, and teacher open houses, and an educational loan collection, the Newark Museum provides—often at no charge or for a small fee—teacher workshops such as Strategies for Art Standards (aligned with New Jersey core curriculum content standards: Arts 1.1, 1.4, 1.5) and Integrating Language Arts, Art and Social Studies through words and images (aligned with New Jersey core curriculum standards: Language Arts 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5). Additionally, teachers are encouraged to use their skills to improve other teachers' experiences at the Newark Museum. Each participant will develop a series of classroom activities based on an object selected from the Educational Loan Collection. Each activity must reinforce the Core Curriculum Standards, make interdisciplinary connections and stimulate inquiry.

Four programs at the Newark Museum are particularly designed with high school students in mind: Express Yourself: Exploring the Changing Face of American Art; Hot Off the Press: the Ballantine House; Asian Adventure; and From the Sacred Realm: Treasures of Tibetan Art. Each exhibit emphasizes core curriculum standards in visual arts, language arts, and social studies especially, as seen in the following chart:
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual &amp; Performing Arts 1.1 Aesthetic Awareness in Dance, Music, Theater, &amp; Visual arts</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Visual &amp; Performing Arts 1.3 Artistic Products</td>
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<td>Visual &amp; Performing Arts 1.5 Historical Influences On Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lang. Arts 3.1 Speak in a Variety of Contexts</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Lang. Arts 3.5 Use Non-Textual Information and Representations</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soc. St. 6.2 Citizenship Through Humanities</td>
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<td>Soc. St. 6.4 Historical Understanding of Societal Ideas and Forces</td>
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<td>Soc. St. 6.5 Historical Understanding of Cultures</td>
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The New Jersey Historical Society

The New Jersey Historical Society is another museum dedicated to serving the needs of both New Jersey public school teachers and students in the area of test readiness.

Teacher services are offered through in-service workshops either at the New Jersey Historical Society or at individual schools. Topics “tailored to [schools'] needs” include “Satisfying the Core Curriculum Content Standards,” and “Integrating the New Jersey Historical Society’s Resources into your Curriculum and Assessment Techniques.” Additionally, graduate credit courses through New Jersey City University
are offered in "Curriculum," "Teaching with Objects," and "Meeting Core Curriculum Content Standards."

For students, the New Jersey Historical Society offers a variety of programs that are educational, entertaining, and targeted to many of the New Jersey state performance standards and their cumulative progress indicators for groups in grades K-12. The following chart shows four such programs—Communities, Cultures, Traditions; Once Upon a Building; History's Mysteries; and Past Profiles—and the core curriculum content and career standards addressed in each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT AND CAREER STANDARDS</th>
<th>COMMUNITIES, CULTURES, TRADITIONS</th>
<th>ONCE UPON A BUILDING</th>
<th>HISTORY'S MYSTERIES</th>
<th>PAST PROFILES</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Critical Thinking &amp; Problem-Solving</td>
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<td>Workplace Readiness 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Management Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual &amp; Performing Arts 1.3</td>
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<td>Artistic Products</td>
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<td>Visual &amp; Performing Arts 1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Influences on Art</td>
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<td>Visual &amp; Performing Arts 1.6</td>
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<td>Develop Skills to Plan</td>
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<td>Function of Space</td>
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<td>Health and P.E. 2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Aspects</td>
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<tr>
<td>of Family Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Arts 3.1</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak in Variety of Contexts</td>
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<td>Language Arts 3.2</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Active Listening, Interpreting and Responding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Arts 3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read, View, Listen to, Respond to Texts</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Arts 3.5</td>
<td>Use Non-Textual Information and Representations</td>
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<td>Mathematics 4.1</td>
<td>Solve Math Problems in Everyday Experiences</td>
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<td>Mathematics 4.3</td>
<td>Connect Math to Other Learning</td>
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<td>Mathematics 4.7</td>
<td>Develop Spatial Sense</td>
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<td>Social Studies 6.2</td>
<td>Citizenship Through Humanities</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies 6.3</td>
<td>Historical Understanding of Political Ideas and Forces</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Social Studies 6.4</td>
<td>Historical Understanding of Societal Ideas and Forces</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies 6.5</td>
<td>Historical Understanding of Cultures</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Social Studies 6.7</td>
<td>Geographical Understanding Through Spatial Terms</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Social Studies 6.8</td>
<td>Geographical Understanding Through Human Systems</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Social Studies 6.9</td>
<td>Geographical Studies Through Environment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Languages 7.2</td>
<td>Understanding Relationships Between Language and Culture</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The New Jersey Historical Society also collaborates with the Newark Museum to provide educational programs for students in elementary, middle and high schools.
The Montclair Art Museum

The Montclair Museum is also devoted to coordinating its educational programs with New Jersey schools' mandate for core curriculum content standards. A current exhibit, *Paris 1900: The American School at the Universal Exposition*, serves to show how the museum is implementing the standards. The packet of materials supplied to the teachers before the collaboration is extensive, and includes a pre-visit lesson plan with an objective, an interactive script, suggested activities geared to all types of learners, and vocabulary readiness lists. There is also additional biographical background of some of the artists represented in the exhibit. A listing of the core curriculum content standards that will be covered is included: Visual and Performing Arts 1.1, 1.5; Language Arts 3.2, 3.5; Social Studies 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.7; and Workplace 1, 2, 3.

The Montclair Art Museum has expended great effort to tie in the knowledge the students bring from school to an art exhibit, and the parallels with the state core curriculum content standards are easily apparent. Students, through lessons learned both in school and reinforced in museum programs whether on site or at the school, are clearly well prepared for the different content areas tested by the state testing program.
In New Jersey, where visual literacy is tested in the HSPA and is a requirement for graduation, visual education at the high school level is extremely important. Unfortunately, it is the age group at this level that is least served by arts education in the schools. High schools, needing to supply the important college preparation core courses and constrained by budget restrictions, often offer few, if any, arts courses. Students, unless they are serious art students, often will opt to take something other than art in order to complete their college-preparatory schedule. High school aged students are not being exposed to visual stimulation through museum trips either. "When the curriculum gets 'serious' in high school, museum visits are hard to coordinate with class schedules, and most high school students have little organized exposure to museums."  

(Museums for a New Century, 67) The number of school trips and outside activities drops off at the teen years. "High school students make up only 10% or less of all student visitors to museums." (O'Connell, 2)

Part of this low percentage, of course, is due to the scheduling constraints of high school students. A field trip for one class may involve
students' missing several other classes during that time. In addition to possible friction created among teachers who do not want students to miss their classes in favor of another teacher's activity, the students themselves may have problems in balancing the make-up work required for missing other teachers' classes. After-school times are also much more structured for older students who often have extracurricular activities, responsibilities at home, or jobs.

Another reason for meager participation is that teenagers as a rule do not choose to visit museums. Museums have not succeeded in attracting them. "Teenagers generally will not go where they feel unwelcome." (LeBlanc, 44) Unlike Salinger's protagonist, most teenagers do not "love that damn museum," do not find museums "user-friendly," and tend to avoid environments in which they feel insecure or unschooled. In response to this dropping participation, "the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development stresses the importance of community-based institutions and programs in the healthy development of adolescents." (LeBlanc, 44) It would, therefore, seem reasonable that museum-school collaboration, whether school-based, outreach, or on-site, would best serve this audience.

**School-Based Programs**

One way of getting teenagers to museums is by making visits a requirement of visual literacy projects that are originated by the high schools. River Dell Regional High School in Oradell requires
"Involvement in the Arts" projects of each of its seniors. The basics of its program are described in one of the district's several successful New Jersey Department of Education's Best Practices applications:

Each of the four units examines the central human drives common to all men, while at the same time observing the extraordinary variations between cultures which is exhibited in the diversity of religious, artistic and musical expression.

Each student is required to visit a museum throughout the year. Each visit is to be to a different museum or a different area of the museum. Students are encouraged to explore their individual interests, while expanding their knowledge of art.

Truly, the Humanities program has something for everyone and allows all students to be successful. (1998)

The program is founded on the principals of Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE). The school district's Director of Curriculum and Instruction Frank L. Niccoletti explained why and how his school's program has become a recipient of the New Jersey Best Practice award.

"Our kids immerse themselves in the challenge of asking and answering the questions about their own and others' works: Is it art? Is it good art? What is its history? In addition to creating their own work of art, they must articulate its links with other works of art in the same or other media and present it with their own curatorial notes. The program is, therefore, performance-based, and entirely in keeping with the New Jersey standards for fine and performing arts—and literacy."
Outreach Programs

Outreach programs—visits by museum education staff to the schools—are another way to increase museum-school collaboration. Joel N. Bloom, Director of the Franklin Institute Science Museum and Planetarium in Philadelphia, considers outreach programs to be the modern "muses":

The muses were beloved for coming down from the temple, bearing their gifts of dance and poetry. They moved through the bustling streets... with the stuff of spiritual life, inspiring the people. In some respects, we have since captured them and put them back in the temple, that house of refuge we call a museum. The business of... outreach programs has been to return the museum to our modern streets, to the shopping centers and other areas of activity where people can be found today. (Museums for a New Century, 56)

Visits by museum staff can usually be planned within the students' regular class time, thereby avoiding the problem of students missing classes for a field trip. An additional benefit of outreach programs is a positive effect on the teachers involved. As a result of co-planning the experience with museum staff, according to Rassweiler, "teachers working with [outreach] collaborations are already more invested in the program."

The New Jersey Historical Society has created many successful programs to attract and encourage teenage involvement through networking with local high schools. Teenage New Jersey 1941-1975, a collaborative project between the New Jersey Historical Society and
Columbia High School in nearby Maplewood, utilized teenagers to help create an oral history project. Students from St. Benedict's Preparatory School in Newark created *Newark in Depth*, publication inspired by their experience with *Teenage New Jersey 1941-1975*; they focused on teenagers from the 1950s to the 1990s. Another New Jersey Historical Society collaboration with a local school, *Welcome to Our Neighborhood*, involved the New Jersey Historical Society and students at Technical High School in Newark in an architectural history project.

The Montclair Art Museum also has an active involvement with teenage audiences through outreach programs at local high schools. According to Tara Belluscio, Director of Education, "We have more high school exposure through outreach rather than on-site experience." One example is the museum's collaboration with Cedar Grove High School. In September, Tara visited art classes at the high school for an orientation prior to the students' visit to the museum where they would view *Paris 1900: The American School at the Universal Exposition*. When students visited the museum, they observed the exhibit, concentrating on the "American-ness" of the selections and reflecting on what that meant to them. Since their return to school, they have been working on their own projects, emphasizing the American experience, and modeling either domestic or ex-patriate styles in their original works. In January, they will exhibit their works at the Montclair Art Museum. In addition to
creating the artwork, the students will be responsible for hanging the exhibit, preparing the wall texts and writing the accompanying brochure.

**On-Site Programs**

When school groups can visit museums for on-site experiences, a variety of programs and activities can be considered in order to attract teens and to stimulate their interests. “Generally, high school students feel ill at ease in a museum, and its collections and exhibits seem not to relate to their lives.” (Grinder and McCoy, 101) Museums need to create exhibitions and programs that are relevant to teens. The experience of working with teenage audiences will be far more when the material presented is “intrinsically interesting” to adolescents. (Nichols, 150)

The New Jersey Historical Society has sponsored an “intrinsically interesting” project that specifically attracts teen mothers to the museum, while providing a service to the community. “We are not a social service agency,” advises Rassweiler, but the benefits of the teen mother program to the community are obvious. Teen mothers are brought to the exhibits and their visual literacy is expanded through their being taught how to use the museum, how to read an object, and how to teach their own children about the exhibit. Rassweiler says that the next step in this program will be to include training teen fathers to work with their children. Through being able to control their educational environment, these young parents are learning new skills and
information, and, it is hoped, they will contribute to the legacy of their own life-long learning and that of their children.

The teen parent project underscores another solution to improve adolescent exposure to and participation in museums: personal empowerment. When teenagers feel more in control in the museum and arts education setting, they are more invested in the experience and receive a greater sense of gratification.

The peer-teaching approach has also been used successfully at the New Jersey Historical Society. Teenagers have been hired to work at the museum as interns who become positive role models for younger visitors. The exposure to the museum and visual environment for these teenagers is important for them and for the younger children whom they help. Also utilized at the Fine Arts Museums in San Francisco, peer-teaching is felt to empower teens. "The [Museum Ambassador Program] is designed first to teach high school students about art and teaching techniques and then to assist them in acting as peer teachers and role models for younger students... High school students in our... museum program teach younger kids about museums and art—lessons they themselves have learned only recently." The results are positive, and the museum staff have seen teenage students "grow in maturity, self-confidence, and ability to accept responsibility. They also learn about art, museums, public speaking, and teaching and experience teamwork and friendships that cross racial lines." (Brown, 72-4)
The Montclair Art Museum also involves teenagers in on-site experiences by sponsoring tours and projects throughout the year in collaboration with the New Jersey Regional Day School. This school provides services for autistic students, ages five through twenty-one. An additional program of the Montclair Art Museum focuses on teens in the "Kids Helping Kids" program. Similar to the peer teaching program offered by the New Jersey Historical Society, the Montclair Art Museum's program trains teenagers as docents for younger children to lead them through exhibits and to follow up with hands-on art projects. What is different about "Kids Helping Kids," however, is that all of the participants—the teenage guides as well as the younger children—are chronically ill. This program and those in other museums, in addition to reinforcing school curriculum standards, reinforce self-esteem in young people.

In order to observe an on-site program in progress, I accompanied a class of twenty ninth graders from St. John Vianney High School in Metuchen, New Jersey as they and four of their teachers visited Sacred Realm: Treasures of Tibetan Art at the Newark Museum. Their guide led the group through the exhibit, starting first with a painting of Buddha. He used this piece of artwork as the basis for an introductory explanation of Buddhism, the religion of Tibet, and the Mandela or Wheel of Life. With this very attentive group, the guide related Buddha's
experiences with greed, violence, and other difficult experiences to the experiences of teenagers today. He mentioned the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, and other instances of violence and abuse as parallel to some of the trials experienced by Buddha. Using a method similar to Grinder and McCoy's Inquiry-Discussion method, he first solicited answers from the group members before responding to students' questions. He encouraged the students to think, to use their intuition in order to make connections between what they were seeing in the artwork and artifacts and what they already knew about Tibet. He also made connections between the students' Roman Catholic backgrounds and the religious significance of many of the paintings. The guide emphasized the austere nature of the Tibetan monks who painted sacred icons, paralleling them with the Catholic Church's medieval priests who painted icons of the saints.

Sharing a personal story of his own interest in Tibet and Buddhism and telling the tale of Milarepa, the "patron saint" of Tibet, the guide created a comfortable environment for the students in which they could listen, respond and reflect. He provided music of Tibetan monks chanting to create a meaningful background for the students' experience. The guide's variation of the Inquiry-Discussion method worked well with this group, which contained mature and attentive participants. The teachers in attendance were equally involved in the proceedings, often
asking questions themselves, and making connections with the exhibit and the activities happening in their classrooms at school.

The guide also extended the exhibit experience beyond the limits of the school field trip by encouraging the students and their teachers to return to the museum over the weekend in order to see a Tibetan artist at work in one section of the exhibit.

The teachers involved with this visit did not utilize a pre-program prepared by the museum. One of the teachers was very familiar with the exhibit from her own frequent visits, and thus had prepared manila folder packets for each of the students to refer to during the visit. Each folder contained background information on the exhibit, and explained several of the symbols used frequently in Tibetan art. The packet also contained work sheets, which listed questions the students should answer, and spaces in which the students could write down observations and reflections. The students were encouraged to refer to and make entries in the packet both during the visit and after their return from the visit.

The presentation of the program also tapped the interests of different types of learners. (Ames) The students were imaginative as they pictured the stories presented by the guide, and were readily invited to ask and respond to questions. They became analytic learners aided by ample wall texts next to each piece in the exhibit. The students used a common sense learning style in order to apply the information to present-
day situations and to plan their original pieces of artwork. All the students became *experimental/dynamic* learners when they were invited to interpret their impressions in new ways. This led to their follow-up project in which they created unique works of art upon their return to school. The museum experience inspired students to function successfully utilizing many learning styles.
CONCLUSION

APPRECIATION OF MUSEUMS FOR LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Although "[the adolescent group] can be one of the most difficult to
guide ... awareness of its limitations and potential can also make this

group one of the most challenging and enjoyable with which to interact .

... they like participating in the discovery of new ideas and other people's

ways of doing things." [Grinder and McCoy, 97] Because "museums

represent certainty in uncertain times," they can be appealing to

teenagers for whom times are often uncertain. [Museums for a New

Century, 17] Teenagers are trying to find out who they are and where

they are going and the museum experience can help them in this
discovery. "So what is needed to invite adolescents to see museums as

special places in their lives that can make a difference? First, a firm

long-term commitment by [museum] trustees and staff to policies and

practices that invite adolescents into the full life of the museum."

[Sterling, 43] The museums described here have shown such a

commitment to all students, including teenagers.

The challenge of museum education for adolescents, therefore, lies

in helping teenagers to embrace visual education, not only during their

high school years, but, it is hoped, for their personal life-long

enrichment. The former director of the Boston Children's Museum,

Michael Spock, feels that museum education not only has a positive
effect on the visitor during the school years, but also later in life, with what he calls "landmark" learning. "Although every part of a museum will not have a profound effect on everyone, each visitor is likely to be moved in a special way by something he or she sees. That becomes a 'landmark' in the visitor's lifelong learning experience." (Museums for a New Century, 59) A strong interest in teaching visual literacy and reinforcing visual education for high school students will help to create landmarks in their lives and will, it is hoped, underscore one definition of the artist's task as: "To give each man his own view of the world—show him what he sees but does not know he sees." (Brooking and Hardy, 5)

Whether involving school-based, outreach, or on-site visits, however, museum-school collaboration programs are, according to Rassweiler, "where we should be going" to instill and reinforce visual literacy in New Jersey school students. In today's electronically visual age, it is, she adds, "more important for students to be visually literate as we become more connected."

Thus, through the hard work and collaboration of the staffs of schools and museums, emphasized by their keeping up with current educational demands, the visual arts are on their way to becoming intricately entwined with both school-based learning and museum presentations. One day, thanks to meaningful collaborations, perhaps all teenagers will discover that they really can "love that damn museum."
LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED


