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BRIDGING AESTHETICS AND COMMUNITY:

A STORY OF A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL

by

JULIE M. A. SESSIONS

(Under the Direction of Delores Liston)

ABSTRACT

This study begins with the construction of a bridge that symbolizes the philosophers that impact this study: John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Delores Liston. The bridge is the beginning of a journey where I analyze the concepts of aesthetics and community. This in-depth analysis culminates with the study of a school that successfully incorporates aesthetics and community into its curriculum.

The study is based on a methodology known as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997) where relationships and community involvement are important elements in telling the story of a school. In order to fully paint this portraiture, interviews were conducted, observations performed, and work samples collected.

This study takes education from the negative realm where it seems to be housed during a time of standardization and test scores and brings light and hope with concepts such as community and aesthetics. The school portrayed, Porter-Gaud School, is a prominent private school located in Charleston, South Carolina. The Porter-Gaud School campus houses grades kindergarten through twelfth and is a coeducational, college preparatory day school with ties to the Episcopal Church. The school is a successful academic institution with a focus on education, socialization, spirituality, athletics, and artistry.

With a focus being on aesthetics, this dissertation cannot merely be written. Website links have been created to paint this portraiture with an aesthetic lens. Student artwork is displayed among these sites as well as pictured in the paper. Photos of the arts and performances are portrayed to visually show the importance the school places on aesthetics.

INDEX WORDS: Aesthetics, Community, Portraiture, Joy

BRIDGING AESTHETICS AND COMMUNITY:
A STORY OF A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL

by

JULIE M. A. SESSIONS

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2008

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BRIDGING AESTHETICS AND COMMUNITY:
A STORY OF A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL

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December 2008

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family:

My father, Gary Adams, is my biggest fan and supporter....

My mother, Janet Adams, is my best friend and inspiration...

My husband, Derek Sessions, is my soulmate...

My son, A.J. Sessions, is my star...

My son, Ed Sessions, is my sunshine...

My grandparents, Thelma and Robert Ross, I have learned so much from you and cherished our moments together....

My late grandparents, Warren and Dorothy Adams, with whom I remember with a sense of joy...

My in-laws, Ed and Carlene Sessions, your love and support are amazing...

My brother and his wife, Mark and Sharleen Adams, for friendship and support from a distance...

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Dr. Ming Fang He, a dissertation committee member and professor throughout my studies, helped me find my voice. Throughout the program I wrote when asked to write, but had not really found my own voice. Dr. He and her narrative inquiry style helped me to not only find my voice, but apply it to my thoughts on curriculum and education. She helped me to build my confidence as a writer and an educator. The encouragement and advice that Dr. He has given me is invaluable. I am grateful.

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To all my other professors, I have learned from you all. You have helped shape my educational views and beliefs. I have grown because of you.

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Finally, I want to thank my family. Patience is truly tested in a marriage when late nights in a computer room become a habit and traveling to school takes the place of soccer games, baseball games, and even planned vacations. My husband, Derek, and my two boys, A.J. and Ed are my world. I have accomplished this for and because of you.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
LIST OF FIGURES	12
CHAPTER	
1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND INTRODUCTION.....	14
My Bridge: A Theoretical Framework.....	14
John Dewey: The First Section.....	15
Dewey’s Connection to Eisner on the Bridge	20
Elliot Eisner: The Second Section.....	21
Connecting Elliot Eisner and Maxine Greene	25
Maxine Greene: The Third Section.....	25
Connecting Maxine Greene with Delores Liston	28
Delores Liston- The Final Section to My Bridge.....	29
Context of Study: A Passion	33
Statement of Problem	35
Purpose of Study	35
Research Questions	39
Significance of Study	39
Definition of Terms	43
2 PERSONAL JOURNEY AND LITERATURE REVIEW	46
Looking Back to Take In Order to Take a Journey Forward.....	46
A Large Wooden Worn-Out Door	50

	10
A Tradition of Excellence.....	51
Literature Review: Aesthetics and Communities within Education.....	55
Part I: Aesthetics.....	55
Aesthetic Experiences and Aesthetic Education	56
Aesthetics for Social Change	58
Aesthetics and Joy	63
Part II: Communities	65
Weaving a Community	65
Relationships and Communities in Schools	66
Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft	68
Tribal Aspects	71
Conclusion: Putting Community and Aesthetics in Our Schools	72
3 METHODOLOGY.....	74
Research Method: A Portraiture.....	74
Selected Participants and Data Collection Strategies.....	76
Analysis and Presentation of Study	78
4 A PORTRAITURE OF PORTER-GAUD SCHOOL	81
A Sketch of the Main Characters	81
The Evolution of Porter-Gaud School	86
From Orphans to Military	87
The Transformation of Gaud School	89
Merging of Academic Institutions	90
Porter-Gaud Today	93

Adding Color to the Sketch	94
Background	124
The Middle Ground	135
Detailing with Community	138
Aesthetics Brings Beauty to the Portrait	146
Joy and Bringing Feeling and Meaning to the Picture	151
The Foreground	154
5 ANALYSIS	159
Shading in the Final Features of the Portraiture	159
The Outsider's Perception	160
A Community? A Tribe?	167
It's All About the Students	181
Aesthetic Experiences	185
Testing the Foundation.....	193
Experiencing Joy	195
6 CONCLUSION	199
Bridging Aesthetics and Community into the Educational Realm	199
All Schools Can Focus on Aesthetics and Community	210
REFERENCES	214
APPENDICES	
A. GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS INTERVIEWS	223
B. GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS	224
C. GUIDING QUESTION FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWS	225

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Mary Singing and Praying.....	82
Figure 2: A Trusty Thoroughbred	82
Figure 3: Reading as a Narrator.....	82
Figure 4: Solo Performance.....	82
Figure 5: Mother Cow and Curly Horn Sheep.....	83
Figure 6: King Herod.....	83
Figure 7: The Performance.....	83
Figure 8: Portraits the Students painted of themselves in character.....	84
Figure 9: Second graders make clay angels for holiday gifts.....	85
Figure 10: Kindergarten Work Displayed for Founder’s Day.....	100
Figure 11: Flute Playing.....	100
Figure 12: Playing Instruments for Parents.....	100
Figure 13: Mother’s Day	100
Figure 14: Sharing Indian Culture.....	100
Figure 15: Dissecting Flowers in Science	100
Figure 16: 4 th Graders standing by their state projects in the hallway.....	104
Figure 17: Dissecting Owl Pellets.....	104
Figure 18: Senior student shares her trip to China	104
Figure 19: Reading on the Library Rug.....	105
Figure 20: Singing at Bishop Gadsden.....	109
Figure 21: Balancing in science class.....	109
Figure 22: 12 th Graders read to 1 st graders	109
Figure 23: Pilgrim Maiden.....	110
Figure 24: Pilgrim Men.....	110
Figure 25: Indian Tribe.....	110
Figure 26: Indian Chief.....	110
Figure 27: Indian Girl.....	110
Figure 28: Pilgrims Praying.....	110
Figure 29: First Grade Artwork- Self Portraits of Characters in Play.....	111
Figure 30: Dr. Seuss’ B-day.....	114
Figure 31: 2 nd graders are acolytes in chapel.....	114
Figure 32: Read across America.....	114
Figure 33: Angels for Christmas.....	114
Figure 34: Drayton Hall Plantation.....	114
Figure 35: Headmaster reading to class.....	114
Figure 36: The Statehouse in Columbia.....	117
Figure 37: Carolina in the Morning.....	117
Figure 38: Halloween Stories	117
Figure 39: Gem Mining.....	117
Figure 40: Green River Preserve.....	120
Figure 41: Upper Bald hiking trip.....	120
Figure 42: Experiments in science class.....	120
Figure 43: Taking over chapel.....	120
Figure 44: Graduation production.....	120
Figure 45: Coach.....	121

Figure 46: Agnes Gooch.....	121
Figure 47: Football Player.....	121
Figure 48: Referee.....	121
Figure 49: Towns People.....	121
Figure 50: Cheerleader.....	121

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND INTRODUCTION

My Bridge: A Theoretical Framework



“Bassin aux Nymphéas” Claude Monet, 1899

I am on a journey, one of self-discovery and evolution. I feel as though I have wandered through the woods as a rite of passage and growth. I remember standing in awe of what lay before me: the excitement and the anticipation of the unknown. I have been introduced to new creatures and lifestyles, some of which I have welcomed along side of me during my journey, others that I dismissed and left behind, but all of which I have learned from. As I have continued this crossing, I have tripped over obstacles, felt alone in the darkness, endured sleepless nights, and continually questioned myself and my beliefs. But now there is a clearing at the end of the thick brush with a bridge leading to the next leg of my journey.

The bridge is symbolic to my being. The bridge has four sections, one to represent each of the theorists that I have come to recognize as the basis of my own philosophy including John Dewey (1934), Elliot Eisner (1998, 2002), Maxine Greene (1995), and Delores Liston (2001). I know that I am the one who has created this bridge. I have carefully chosen these philosophers and placed them as sections of my bridge in a specific order and with a specific purpose. As I stare at the bridge I analyze each section

carefully to make sure that it is carefully constructed before I cross. This bridge will make up my theoretical framework and permit me to continue my journey — a journey that will allow me to create a portraiture of a school showing aesthetics, community, and joy.

John Dewey: The First Section

The man known as the Father of Education and is “the most prominent philosopher of education” is John Dewey (Garrison, 1997, xix). I have heard his name and read more about him than any other person in education. I began hearing his name as a student in high school and continue to hear his name through present day. He has influenced me as an educator because of his focus on application of experience. As I began my journey, I first called myself a pragmatist alongside Dewey. I whole-heartedly believed that Dewey’s beliefs were synonymous with my own. I still believe that I have pragmatist trends, but my views are ever growing and changing into existentialism. The aspect of pragmatism that I hold true is the connection with nature and experience-based learning. Because of the connection that I feel with Dewey’s beliefs and because of his connection with nature, I believe that he should be the first section on my bridge — the basis of the structure and one that touches nature.

John Dewey was at the forefront of pragmatism and the creation of our current education system (Garrison, 1997). Dewey is well known for his pragmatist philosophy, but I also believe that he is a passionate supporter of aesthetic education primarily because of his book *Art as Experience* written in 1934. For Dewey, aesthetics centers on personal experience and interaction with the environment to create a higher level of cognition. Without this personal experience an aesthetic moment cannot occur and higher

level cognition and meaning will not be constructed. The mere idea of connecting arts and aesthetics with intellect was frowned upon within the pragmatist philosophy and a concept that steered Dewey away from pragmatist supporters. According to Garrison (1997), “Dewey’s philosophy is organic and holistic” (p. 89) with the purpose not being “to discover timeless truths” (p. 90) rather to use inquiry to “respond to human nature’s evolving needs, desires, and interests” (p. 91).

For Dewey there is no ultimate truth, instead the temporary truth has to have evidence to support it— this is his connection with science and experiential learning. According to Reed and Johnson (2000), Dewey believes in experimental knowledge, one that begins with an innate sense and then is brought out through stimulation and discovery learning where knowledge goes from conscious to unconscious (p. 91). This knowledge occurs because of the interaction among the individuals within an environment, such as with cooperative learning groups or science lab groups; this interaction creates a social response. The combination of students’ prior knowledge and a new topic, in conjunction with making observations and using their senses, allows the students to expand their sense of reality through inquiry-based experiences. An inquiry-based approach requires exploration and the generation of new ideas to create knowledge. This requires building on prior knowledge and posing of new questions to further that knowledge. “Dewey, however, reminds us that knowledge cannot be dispensed. It must be constructed, reconstructed, and located in our own individual ways of thinking” (Garcia, 2002, p. 321). This individual meaning creates personal educational experiences that promote intrinsic values. According to Dewey (1934, p. 14), it is when these mere ideas or inquiries become “the corporate meaning” of the objects that an aesthetic

experience is occurring. The aesthetic experience for Dewey (1934) takes intellect to a higher level as he states, “the difference between esthetic and the intellectual is thus one of the places where emphasis falls in the constant rhythm that marks the interaction of the live creature with his surroundings” (p. 14). This interaction generates an emotional tie with past experiences and it is the emotional tie that is the focal point to create new meanings. Science inquiry is an area that invites these intrinsic experiences because of the limitless interactions that can occur with nature. Dewey, being a pragmatist, believes that reality needs to be constantly changing to be functional. According to Badley (2001), learning through inquiry to gain knowledge and truth is a pragmatic perspective (p. 165). I believe in fostering a sense of civic efficacy, using social learning through cooperative groups, and helping to cultivate a sense of community, which are all characteristics of a progressive philosophy and are supported by Dewey. I also agree with Dewey about the importance of personal experience in education. Throughout this study I will be analyzing personal experiences to show how aesthetics, community, and joy are essential aspects in the education process.

Dewey’s book, *Art as Experience*, is a main focus within my theoretical framework along with Garrison’s *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching*. These books show how Dewey supports experience-based learning in connection with the arts and aesthetics to bring meaning into education. Dewey believes that the arts have a direct tie to aesthetics. The connection between artistic and aesthetic is explained by Dewey (1934) as artistic correlating with “production” while aesthetic correlating with “perception and enjoyment” (p. 48). Dewey (1916) states that arts are “enhancement of the qualities which make any ordinary experience appealing,

appropriable— capable of full assimilation— and enjoyable, (which) constitutes the prime function of literature, music, drawing, painting, etc” (p. 238). For Dewey the arts do not only mean the product created by an artist; it can be any event that can happen within nature and throughout our lives. When using art such as paintings, drawings, or sculptures, it is essential to look beyond the material thing or the product that was generated. The arts are the tool that allows aesthetic experiences to occur. Dewey (1934) suggests that “in order to understand the aesthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens” (p. 3). There is a feeling of carrying forward or a desire to know more about the object— a curiosity that draws a person further in. Eisner (1999) explains how the progressions of constructive character cognition started with Dewey, continued with Piaget and Bruner, and is still promoted by psychologists and philosophers today (p. 658).

Dewey (1944) calls for the schools to not represent society but to represent family life and culture with its communication, aesthetic interests, and participation (p. 131). Dewey saw the difference between society and family structure— even in the mid 1900s. He was promoting an education with meaning that was based on experience. I believe that education today does not represent community, but is driven by test scores. The focus is on standardization not individualized learning. Dewey (1944) stressed that education should be based on interests and the individual, and that when “institutionalism clashes with individuality” (p. 381), the ways may diverge and there is no “consistency or continuity of experience” (p. 381), which will ultimately affect the learning community. Aesthetic education for Dewey meant that work must become an experience and that an

aesthetic moment occurs when ideas become meaningful through an emotional attachment with a focus on community. According to Garrison (1997), Dewey stresses “the importance of relationships and community” (p. 39) and believes that “students and teachers must share interests and concerns” (p. 40) for the aesthetic experiences to occur in the learning community. Dewey’s connection with aesthetics and learning is one of the main reasons that I am bringing Dewey into my framework.

Dewey believes in an inquiry-based education that centers on the sciences. “Inquiry for Dewey is a creative artistic activity, a part of a *poiēsis*: Aesthetic forms emerge because of inquiry” (Garrison, 1997, p. 24). An inquiry-based education promotes the sciences because the sciences require exploration and the continual building of past experiences to generate new ideas and concepts. Dewey (1934) maintained that “science itself is but a central art auxiliary to the generation and utilization of other arts” (p. 33). Dewey also believes that literature and writing, such as writing an autobiography, allows us to understand our students’ needs, emotions, desires, interests, and purposes, which supports the aesthetic inquiry process. Garrison (1997) supports Dewey and promotes inquiry-based learning to achieve aesthetic education because he believes that inquiry emerges from background information and evolves into a desire to know— this is the birth of the inquiry itself (p. 101). The solution is then derived in a form of a conclusion, which satisfies the desire to know. Then another question emerges and the cycle continues. This inquiry-based exploration can be used in every subject across the curriculum to create meaningful learning. Both Garrison and Dewey promote aesthetics in education, which is why I have chosen their texts as focal points in this study.

Dewey's Connection to Eisner on the Bridge

The first section of my bridge represents John Dewey; the second section represents Elliot Eisner...but how do these philosophers connect with one another? I have purposefully put them next to each other because of their connection with aesthetic education. Aesthetics is an important part in the pragmatic philosophy because it focuses on order and value. I do not believe that they share *all* of the same beliefs, but Eisner is a Dewey enthusiast.

Eisner (1998) refers to Dewey often throughout his work in regards to pragmatism, science and aesthetics and describes Dewey as “a respected scholar whose work is supported by intuitions” (p. 63). In Eisner’s (2002) words, “John Dewey once commented that the stamp of the aesthetic needed to be on any intellectual idea in order for that idea to be complete” (p. 199). Dewey (1934) relates aesthetic with enjoyment noting that it is the consumer’s standpoint, not the producer and that just to create art does not also immediately produce an aesthetic moment (p. 49.) Dewey’s connection with aesthetics is in regard to science and inquiry-based learning, and believes that the creation of art alone is not aesthetics. It is the experience and the feelings generated due to the interaction with the art that allows aesthetics to evolve. Dewey (1934) describes the interaction with art as an intrinsic connection that brings “joy, surprise, or sadness” (p. 66). Nel Noddings (1998) recognizes the important features of Dewey’s concept of experience, “One that he shares with existentialists is the emphasis on meaning and affect. An experience for Dewey is not a mere exposure or passive undergoing; it has to mean something to the one undergoing it” (p. 30). Aesthetics is a connection for the two

philosophers, but Eisner takes aesthetics beyond the scientific realm. This is where Elliot Eisner becomes the second section in the construction of my bridge.

Elliot Eisner: The Second Section

As I was traveling on my journey I was never quite sure what I was searching for, often feeling lost and confused. There were paths that I was tempted to take knowing that each would take me on a different course. At times I felt as if I were walking blind in a perpetual darkness, but I always knew that the purpose of my journey would make itself known when I was ready for it. Reading Elliot Eisner allowed the clearing in the forest to begin and I felt as though light were being shone into my forest. A sense of calmness and belonging came over me as I read through Eisner's work knowing that meaning was being given to my quest. As I read Eisner, I found my focus. I want the same type of school system that Eisner (2002) describes; he describes the kind of schools that we need...this is why I have chosen Eisner as the second section on my bridge,

The kind of schools we need...would provide teachers...a chance to discuss and share their work, their hopes, their problems with their colleagues...(the schools) would take seriously a child's distinctive way of learning and creating...(the schools) would recognize that the most important forms of learning are those that students know how to use outside of school, not just inside school. And the teachers in such schools would consistently try to help students see connections between the two. (p. 576)

Elliot Eisner is a leading theorist in art education and aesthetic learning. "Before Eisner, the arts were merely affective and creative endeavors— certainly not cognitive ones" (Palmer, Bresler & Cooper, 2001, p. 248). Eisner calls for the arts to be a

permanent aspect in the curriculum, which will be the tool to bring aesthetics into the learning process. The arts demand judgment rather than exact answers, which deters standardization and welcomes individualized learning. When bringing the arts into education, whether it is paintings, music, dance, or literature, different views are brought into the educational setting allowing different situations to arise. The arts teach students to think through and within images. This can create a new reality for the students and allow aesthetic experiences to occur. The creation of art can even allow for different forms of expression. Feelings and imagination are also brought into education. “Through the arts we learn to see what we had not noticed, to feel what we had not felt, and to employ forms of thinking that are indigenous to the arts. These experiences are consequential, for through them we engage in a process through which the self is remade” (Eisner, 2002, p. 12). Making the arts and aesthetics a focal point in the curriculum is how Eisner’s view differs from the other theorists.

Eisner’s biggest challenge as a curriculum theorist is to change the standardization and promote aesthetic learning to meet the needs of each individual. This resonates throughout his book, *Art and the Creation of Mind*. Eisner (2002) believes that “standardized tests still prevail” in American schools and that taking the scores of the tests seriously can be detrimental (p. 50). The focus is on standardization, not creativity. The individual gets lost in the masses, which is a common state of today’s public schools. Eisner calls for a change consisting of three major aspects: encouraging expressive responses that will allow for teacher and student growth, staying clear of educational fads and the assembly line model, and helping the students create meaningful experiences (Palmer, Bresler & Cooper, 2001, p. 248). These meaningful experiences can occur

through aesthetic literacy and aesthetic experience across the entire curriculum. Eisner's epistemology focuses on art as a basis of knowing which allows the creation of meaning through experience. By creating a stimulating environment, active learning can flourish.

For Eisner knowing correlates with connoisseurship and critique. The word connoisseurship comes from the Latin word meaning to know (Eisner, 1998, p. 6). By drawing upon different dimensions of situations and experiences new knowledge or meaning is being created and by placing the understanding in wider context, connections can be made— these connections are what Eisner is referring to as connoisseurship. But, Eisner believes that criticism is another essential aspect in creating knowledge. By using criticism as a form of evaluation, Eisner (1998) believes that truth can be brought into situations, “it helps it to come into being, then later refines it to become more acute” (p. 6).

Eisner believes in aesthetics as the basis for education, but not necessarily in conjunction with the arts but also with inquiry-based learning. This is a connection that Eisner has with Dewey. “It is the aesthetic that represents the highest forms of intellectual achievement, and it is the aesthetic that provides the natural high and contributes the energy we need to want to pursue an activity again and again and again” (Eisner, 2002, p. 576). Eisner is calling for schools to be based on aesthetics. In these types of classrooms and schools, the teachers should use open-ended questions inviting individual answers where no single answer is correct. This would allow students to explore their inner selves and create their own truth and meaning. Eisner (1998) maintains that “the aesthetic is not only motivated by our need for stimulation; it is also motivated by our need to give order to the world” (p. 38). We have a natural desire to live a stimulating life, to experience the

delights of exploration, and to make sense of experiences. Through aesthetics this can be achieved. Eisner (1998) takes art and aesthetics one step further by believing that we need to teach students the importance of aesthetics in every field of study— not just the arts (p. 41). His book, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, suggests ways to implement aesthetics in mathematics, social studies, and other subjects within the curriculum. He also calls for further studies on the topic. By incorporating aesthetics in curriculum, the practicality of standardization is replaced with meaningful learning that can bring joy into the learning process. Standardization can be compared to what Eisner (2002) calls “anesthetic (because) it dulls the senses (and) renders you numb to feeling” (p. 81). Unfortunately, in today’s society standardization is the crux of our educational agenda, not individualized learning. Eisner (1998) believes that “the aesthetics in education has two major contributions to make, neither of which is yet a purposeful part of our educational agenda. First, it tells us about the world in ways specific to its nature. Second, it provides the experiential rewards of taking the journey itself” (p. 43).

As a supporter of Eisner, I believe we have the tools to make all the subjects creative and affective, but it will take the inviting of aesthetic education into our schools to be a statute in our curriculum. This welcoming of aesthetic education will create a whole new atmosphere within the schools. The students will be allowed to take charge of their learning and take pleasure in the learning process. “It is a way of being moved, of finding out something about our own capacity to be moved; it is a way of exploring the deepest parts of our interior landscape. In its best moments it is a way of experiencing joy” (Eisner, 2002, p. 202). Joy is not a term that is used much in education, but if the arts are about anything, they are about how they make you feel in their presence— when you

know how to read their form (Eisner, 2002, pp. 84-85). Eisner wants to deter from abstract thinking and engage more in figurative language. Abstraction, so this common view goes, is a process that belongs to the sciences and to mathematics. The arts are more engaged with matters of feeling and with the use of the hand, and they rely more on imagination than intellect (Eisner, 2002, p. 8).

Connecting Elliot Eisner and Maxine Greene

Elliot Eisner shed light into the darkness throughout my journey. Maxine Greene turns the light into a rainbow. Both Eisner and Greene are existentialists, which is the main factor that links their work. Both philosophers focus on “a knowing (that) is personal and subjective” (Gutek, 2004, p. 91). Both philosophers are anti-standardization and call for a teaching of the humanities. Eisner calls for reform in schools and discipline-based art education, which focuses on aesthetics in schools. Eisner was my introduction to aesthetic education. He opened my eyes to qualitative research and aesthetics, but Greene has allowed me to go further on my journey. I believe in an education where children are exposed to quality arts experiences and are given multiple avenues to tell their own stories as authors, artists, poets and actors. I believe in imagination being released in the learning process. This is a connection that I have with Maxine Greene, hence the reason she is next on the bridge.

Maxine Greene: The Third Section

Maxine Greene is a philosopher who draws regularly on existentialism and uses the arts, philosophy, education, literature, and psychology to create her inspirational writings. Greene believes that personal truth is knowledge and for Greene, truth is related to fairness, which is directly correlated with freedom. Greene (1988) says, “not only do

we need to be continually empowered to choose ourselves, to create our own identities within a plurality; we need continually to make new promises and to act in our freedom to fulfill them, something we can never do alone” (p. 51). Through freedom truth can be obtained and changed. I believe that Greene encourages student stimulation to create their own personal truths, which allow the students to create their own reality based on their own values. This allows each student to be responsible for organizing and interpreting their own experiences and developing a balance between freedom and responsibility. For Greene this can be accomplished through the use of aesthetic inquiry and the engagement of aesthetics in the learning environment.

Greene has mastered the role of teacher, lecturer, and author. Greene has written more than one hundred articles, in excess of forty chapters for collections and anthologies, and seven books. The two books in which I focus on throughout my study by Maxine Greene are *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* and *Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education*, but other sources will be cited to support the work that Maxine Greene has promoted and accomplished. Greene’s influence “reverberates in a remarkable variety of fields: arts and aesthetics, literacy, cultural studies, school improvement, teacher education, social justice, and civil rights” (Thompson, 2001, p. 112). A primary focus of Maxine Greene’s work centers on the aesthetic education and the arts such as literature, paintings, sculptures, theater, music and dance. With Greene’s focus being aesthetic education and the arts, she is finding ways to merge other subject areas with the arts and still allow aesthetic education to occur. Goodman and Teel (1998) state that “given the purpose of education, Greene suggests that the humanities

curriculum be emphasized throughout one's schooling" (p. 8). The humanities such as art, literature, music, philosophy, and history are subject areas in which aesthetic education can flourish. Greene is concerned that an overemphasis on science, mathematics, and technology can dull rather than sharpen our intellects; this is where Greene is taking Eisner's work even a step further. According to Greene (2001), the process must enable people to release their imaginations, to ponder alternative ways of being alive in a world with others, and to attend differently to what surrounds (p. 170). The idea of engaging and experiencing the art means to empower the students through their own efforts and imagination. "Without engagement one can move but not dance" (Greene, 2001, p. 224).

Aesthetic education, for Greene, is a multi-step process of using the arts to create a new world of feeling and meaning, which if done properly will lead to aesthetic experiences. Imagination is essential because ultimately to engage with thought that is freedom, indeed, to educate for freedom, requires imagination, "because of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). With the use of imagination our students can better achieve aesthetic experiences, but a key aspect in this process is to make the experiences meaningful. In order to do this we need to know our students. The better we know our students' interests, the more effectively we can help them successfully incorporate aesthetic education into their learning process. Greene (2001) supports this concept and believes that "the first concern of those of us engaged in aesthetic education is to find ways of developing a more active sensibility and awareness of our students" (Greene, 2001, p. 8).

Aesthetic experience takes aesthetic education a step further by focusing the attention on the experience and allowing it to exist apart from the everyday routine and practical concerns. Greene (2001) strives for people to accomplish this task of perception from a unique standpoint against the background of their own personal history to make new personal meanings (pp. 54-55). This is the process of transferring what is learned in aesthetic education and making it a personal experience. “We need to recognize that the events that make up aesthetic experiences are events that occur within and by means of transactions with our environment that situate us in time and space” (Greene, 2001, p. 130). Reaching this level of aesthetic experience is not easily achievable. We need to understand that art alone does not create aesthetic experiences but “to pose aesthetic questions is to make the aesthetic experience itself more reflective, more critical, more resonate” (Greene, 2001, p. 138). The way to achieve an aesthetic lifestyle is to envelop in the arts in conjunction with aesthetic experiences. This can be done through constant reflection and correlation with lived experiences. This reflection will bring meaning and joy into the experience.

Connecting Maxine Greene with Delores Liston

Existentialism is the link that allows Maxine Greene to be connected to Delores Liston on the bridge that I have created. Even though Liston recognizes herself as a post-positive realist, I believe that her existentialist tendencies bond her work with Maxine Greene. Both theorists share a belief in educating the whole child in the midst of an education based on choices. The engagement of others in the learning process with a focus on shared experiences is a focus for both Greene and Liston. The use of imagination is also a connection between the two theorists. According to Liston (2001),

“the way we experience our world is tied to the way we imagine it” (p.186). Even though these theorists share many similarities, I believe that Liston has allowed me to step further by focusing on what it means to be human and how we might all live and work together. Liston looks at a holistic approach to education with a call for social change.

Delores Liston-- The Final Section to My Bridge

My bridge is almost complete, but I feel the last remaining section is one of personal importance. The other theorists that I have chosen were done so based on their academic works that have reverberated throughout the educational community for decades. Bringing Liston in fulfills personal needs. Not only will this section complete my bridge, but it will tie the whole crossing together and bring meaning and purpose to my educational goals. This meaning and purpose is bringing joy into the learning experience by teaching the students to think differently. I feel that this will tie the entire learning process together. Students need to examine their own identity, be an active part of their learning, and learn to think differently. This is done by making Delores Liston and her metaphor of joy the last section of the bridge.

The concept of Joy has been explored in depth by Delores Liston, author of *Joy as a metaphor of convergence: A phenomenological and aesthetic investigation of social and educational change*. Liston (2001) takes the term Joy and seeks “to recreate its original and ontological Greek meaning: its *logos* (which) includes the powerful and poetic connotations of an inner and profound light radiated from the human spirit” (p.9). This light and human spirit is what I believe will bring personal meaning to education. This light is what I search for as an educator; I call it the “A-Ha” moment that students achieve when they truly understand and connect with a topic. I feel that I have

succeeded as a teacher when I see that light come on within the students. I truly believe that the students have a feeling of joy during this moment. These moments occur through aesthetic experiences when the students go beyond the basic interaction with material and are allowed to connect personally with the concepts. Liston (2001) believes that “aesthetics is simply what we consider beautiful” (p. 3) and that we must “make an environment in which we can be free to think creatively, combining things in new and unique ways” (p. 5). This is not limited to the arts but welcomed in the entire educational experience. “Educators are not implementing curriculum. We are designing education” (Liston, 2001, p. 5).

By bringing in joy, the educational experience is meaningful, which makes it productive. The students are playing an active role in their own learning process which means they have a vested interest in education. The students are creating their own reality within their experiences in education by generating new metaphors, which expands the domain of the experientially-based knowledge and combines it with the ethic of care to create an environment that advocates for social change and new realities. Liston (2001) believes that joy should be a part of education and that “we are creating an environment in which our students can organize and reorganize the ideas and concepts that we present into as many different patterns as possible. That is, we are creating an environment in which we and our students can learn” (p. 6). I believe that this type of learning can be accomplished through aesthetic education and by removing the pragmatic and application aspects. It is time to change the monotony of education where the schools are in the business to mass produce students of mediocre quality. Liston (2001) is “calling for educational change” (p. 216) and she believes in “creating an environment in which our

students can organize and reorganize the ideas and concepts that we present into as many different patterns as possible” (Liston, 2001, pp. 5-6).

Making a change in how education is perceived and how our curriculums are structured is a goal for Liston. She is in opposition of standardization and wants to create learning communities. The metaphor of Joy in conjunction with aesthetics can allow the much needed changes to occur. According to Liston (2001), “education is about making meaningful lives for ourselves” (p. 218). Our schools should foster this concept and give students the opportunity to be involved in their own education by encouraging them “to think creatively, combining things in new and unique ways” (p. 5). The learning of the students should be based on previous knowledge with the encouragement to pursue further knowledge. “Schools ought to be places where exciting things happen, where learners and teachers engage in meaningful exploration of themselves” (Liston, 2001, p. 218). She suggests using inquiry and exploration with the sciences and the use of poetry and literature to achieve aesthetic experiences. Liston (2001) states that “we do have an ‘epistemic hunger,’ a drive to learn and know. Schools should feed this need” (p. 218).

Using metaphors to describe our schooling is a characteristic that Liston feels will make the difference in education. The metaphor of a factory or assembly line has been used to describe our educational system. Eisner (2002) states, “We are not in the shoe manufacturing business...we are not in the business of producing identical products” (p. 576). Aesthetic education will promote individuality, not homogeneity. Liston (2001) agrees that “...new metaphors allow us to come to new understandings, generate new worlds, and create alternative, genuinely empowering, relationships. I believe that the metaphor of Joy more accurately represents and supports what we ought to be doing in

education.” (p. 7). Joy can and should be used as a metaphor to describe the educational process and aesthetic education can be the tool that is needed to achieve this goal.

Relationships and experiences are two other aspects that Liston focuses on within her work. Liston uses *techné* and *logos* to explain the development of relationships and experiences. *Techné* is the technical aspect or the craft of art while *logos* is the relationship or the reasoning. In her text, Liston (2001) uses motherhood to describe the two concepts stating that the cultural baggage is the *techné* while the relationship is the *logos* (p. 23). This I can relate with because I also share a common aspect of motherhood that Liston uses as an example in her text. Let me explain further in my own interpretation of motherhood in terms of *techné* and *logos*. There is a deeper meaning of being a mother— it is not the changing of diapers or the feeding of a child— it is the interpersonal relationship (*logos*). The changing of the diapers or the feeding is the *techné*. The actual process is the *techné* but the other layers of what is happening, the developing of the relationship, is the ontological aspect. *Techné* and *logos* happen simultaneously. The relationship between the two is essential to create a holistic meaning. I believe that our experiences and relationships shape our world, which creates our realities and allow us to create new truth and knowledge. Therefore knowledge is constructed through these relationships and experiences. This supports an epistemology that truth and knowledge are socially created. This line of thinking correlates directly with my educational and personal philosophy and is the reason that Liston is the final segment of my bridge.

Context of Study: A Passion

Even though each section of my bridge differs from the others and could easily stand alone, when put together the new structure represents my beliefs and my inner being. The construction is complete and I am crossing in apprehension and excitement for what lies in store ahead of me. There will come a time when I am to look back, but now the excitement builds within me and I must cross and push forward on my quest.

As I continue my journey I get lost in the sounds and sites around me. I feel an inner peace that warms me throughout. For me, this is an aesthetic experience. For a moment I lose train of thought for where I am going, but start to think about the person that I am. As I am thinking I detect a shiny reflection that bounces off my hand every so often. I look for the source of this reflection and notice a silver band around my middle finger on my right hand. I stop and stare at the ring that I am wearing. I realize that this piece of jewelry puts into words that person that I am. The words etched in my ring read, “desire, peace, serenity, courage, love, my bliss, and happiness.” If I believe that these words represent me, then why do people think that I am often too serious? Many have told me that they are intimidated by my self-confidence, but when they say this, I often laugh. Do they not see the real me? Yes, I am a focused person and I always do seem to have a goal I want to achieve. When I see something I want, I tend to make it a passion. That is when it hits me; passion is the word that sums up all of the words on the ring and I realize that passion is a more than a word to me; it is my lifestyle.

I like to believe that I am passionate about all aspects of my life: my family, friends, career, hobbies, and more. I carry this passion into my classroom and throughout the school in which I work. As a teacher I strive for that moment of enthusiasm and

interest that the students have during a lesson. My passion is contagious and my students have been infected with it. I believe that this passion is nurtured through the use of aesthetics in teaching. I believe that students attain a higher-level of cognition when they are allowed to make personal connections with materials. When students allow themselves to get wrapped up in a lesson and are actively engaged, they experience passion. The end result of the passionate experience is joy and serenity. That is the moment when education has made a personal impact and influenced the student in one manner or another. So for me, passion equates with aesthetics, joy, and peacefulness. I believe that my passion within is what pushes me forward on my journey.

As I continue I begin to think about how my passion impacts others. To experience passion within oneself is satisfying, but to share it with others brings the process to a higher level. This is where community comes into play. With a strong, supportive community, there is a milieu to succeed and grow as individuals, which ultimately creates productive members of society. For a community to be effective, it needs to encompass as many facets as possible. When I think of community I think of a well functioning family or a tribe. To me a community has its own identity but allows for individualism within the larger scope. When put together, I believe that aesthetics and community can bring joy and passion into the educational setting.

I find that my journey has presented itself. It is now clear on what I must do. I will find a school where there is passion, joy, aesthetics, and a focus on community and paint the portrait and tell the stories. I will share these with others and once again make my passion contagious.

Statement of Problem

I believe that the focus of education today is more towards standardization and not enough towards the needs of the individual students. National standards and prescribed lessons have become commonplace within the schools. Criteria set by the national government have taken precedent and the focus has gone from the students themselves to the numbers they produce. Often education has a negative connotation connected with it. I believe that this is a problem. I think there are schools that are putting the needs of the students at the forefront, but that these schools are not the focus within our society so I want to make this a focus for this study. There are schools that promote community involvement and bring aesthetics into the classrooms. I believe schools like this need to be showcased and used as models for other schools, ultimately proving that putting the needs of the students first will provide a better educational experience than standardization.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, the goal is to showcase a school that puts the needs of the students ahead of standardization. This study is an in-depth exploration, or portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997), of a school that emphasizes aesthetics and community to promote higher level learning. The school of focus is Porter-Gaud School, a locally and nationally reputable private school, which is located in the heart of Charleston, South Carolina along 70 acres on the Charleston harbor. This study will take you into the Porter-Gaud community and show how the institution has earned its reputation for excellence. The study will focus on research questions that will be explored through observations and interviews.

Secondly, the purpose is to show how this type of curriculum and philosophy can be incorporated in all schools, whether private or public, which will call for social change. Porter-Gaud School is a private school, but the techniques used within the school, including the focus on aesthetics and community, can be accomplished at any school. The focus will be turned from the economic status of a private school to community and aesthetics. If the education system uses model schools like the one in this study, there will be political and social changes. No longer will national standards or prescribed lessons be the focus, there will be a call for change in the educational system as we know it.

One change that is needed is a change of mindset about what is considered to be academic and what is often referred to as the fluff. The arts always seem to be put in the fluff category while the math and sciences are part of the academic rigor. What people need to realize is that arts are not only part of the academic setting, but they enhance the education that is being delivered and received. The arts allow for aesthetic experiences to occur, which in turn creates a higher level of learning.

There are numerous studies that have been conducted that focus on arts across the curriculum. The studies are calling for the arts to be a mandatory part of the curriculum. Too often the focus is on test scores not on the educational process. Alexandra York is calling for the arts to be the “fourth ‘R’ in education” (p. 274). According to York (1998), “art educates the whole person as an integrated individual: it educates the senses, it educates the mind, and it educates the emotions” (p. 274). York (1998) is calling for art to be a main stay in the curriculum and by doing this she believes that we will be “returning our children, one by one, back to the sea of structured creativity, where each

individual child... can be taught to swim smartly, successfully, and joyfully toward the promise of adulthood” (p. 274). Melanie Buffington (2007) conducted a study modeling an art infused curriculum in an elementary school. The study also connected service learning with the arts. Buffington worked closely with the art and dance teacher to model a curriculum that infused the arts in other areas of the curriculum. She also used the arts to promote service learning. The study showed that there were benefits to implementing the arts and creating an art infused curriculum. My study will take the concept of an arts infused curriculum a step further. I will focus on the benefits of the arts, as Buffington did, but I will also focus on community and the impact that arts has on the community aspect of the school. Another arts-based curriculum study was conducted by Patricia Lynch. Lynch explored ways in which different forms of art were integrated in a public arts-magnet school. Lynch (2007) did not focus on test scores, but on the learning process itself. She calls for studies to be conducted of successful schools to support her finding that the arts “enhance the creation and expression of meaning” and that these studies cause “thorough examination and thoughtful reflection” (p. 39) on the arts within the curriculum. Lynch concluded that “if public education is truly committed to having no child left behind, it would do well to consider bringing the arts along, too” (p. 33). The study that I am conducting will support Lynch’s study by producing an in-depth analysis of a successful school that incorporates the arts with a focus on aesthetic experiences. My study will be an extension of many studies already conducted on art-based education. The main difference in my study is that it will be an in-depth study of all facets within the school community, including the teachers, parents, community members, and students.

The connection with an aesthetic curriculum with a focus on community will make this study different than others that have been conducted.

There have been books written that tell stories of schools from a phenomenological lens. Sara Lawrence- Lightfoot, author of *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and High School* (1983), conducted an in-depth study of high schools with the goal being to create accurate portraits of the different schools. Lightfoot (1983) describes herself as “an observer and reporter” (x) of the events within the schools and believes that “the essential ingredient of creating a portrait is the process of human interaction” (p. 6). Lightfoot used her personally designed methodology of portraiture to first sketch, then add layers, and finally produce a representation of the different high schools. This book is an excellent model for my own study. My study will be different because I am focusing on one elementary school while Lightfoot focused on different high schools. The age and population differ. Also, my methodology is based on Lightfoot’s portraiture, but the focus will be on community and aesthetics which will make the presentation considerably different from Lightfoot’s study.

Meredith Maran is the author of *Class Dismissed: A Year in the Life of an American High School, a Glimpse into the Heart of a Nation* (2001), which is another book that is relevant to this study. Maran is a journalist who had previously written an article about Berkeley High School that inspired her to follow the lives of students and compose a book about the life inside the high school. The purpose of her book is to tell stories of three different students from three different cultures and backgrounds. She tells the stories in a narrative format while keeping the majority of the identities true to form. This book, while not noted in any pages, can be considered a portraiture of the lives of

these students. Maran takes the reader into the personal aspects of the students' lives and allows the reader to feel a part of the story. Maran has a rough outline for a methodology with the purpose being to look closely at the life lessons learned during high school and within our education systems. This book is an excellent resource for my study because the focus is on one particular school, which is also what I plan to conduct. The difference between my study and Maran's study is that she focused on three students and put them in context within different communities while I am focusing on the school as its own internal community.

Research Questions:

The central questions for this study are:

- What are the perspectives of teachers, students, parents, and the school community on the use of aesthetic education as a focus for the curriculum?
- How does Porter-Gaud develop, maintain and value community within the school?

Significance of Study

Tying this study in with the big picture in education will bring credence to this dissertation but could wreak havoc politically and economically in the educational setting. With social justice being one of the goals of this inquiry, aspects such as social, economic, political, and cultural factors need to be considered and addressed throughout the dissertation.

Social and cultural aspects will be enhanced throughout an aesthetic and community-based curriculum. In today's society bell hooks (1994) states, "racism, sexism, and class elitism shape the structure of classrooms, creating a lived reality of

insider versus outsider that is predetermined, often in place before any class discussion begins” (p.83). A curriculum based on aesthetics breaks down that barrier and stigma. I believe that aesthetics does not see race, gender, socioeconomic status, yet it equally allows everyone the opportunity to make meaning of their own educational experience. The Lincoln Center Institute is a prime example of this belief. “The Lincoln Center Institute is dedicated solely and specifically to meeting the needs of young people and their teachers” with the objective of “opening students to the aesthetic dimension in human experience, rather than simple exposure” (Greene, 2001, p. 2). Maxine Greene is a leader within this institute who educates students and teachers about the arts and aesthetics. She brings the arts into the classroom and allows for experiences beyond just going to a museum or a program. Within the institute, race, gender or socioeconomic status (SES) is not an issue— the focus is on aesthetics and bringing deeper meanings into education.

Elliott Eisner has taken the aesthetic curriculum concept and removed the outside socio-cultural influences to allow all students to experience and benefit from aesthetics within the educational setting. The Kettering Project, a project that Eisner headed at Stanford University to support discipline-based art education (DBAE) has been tremendously successful and could be a model for other programs. The Kettering project sought to demonstrate that even younger children, no matter race or gender, could apprehend concepts in different domains of art, and that their own art work could benefit from guided inquiry and experience in production, criticism, and historical curricular activities. Kettering provided extensive instructional support for the teacher, including a “Kettering Box” filled with materials designed to facilitate learning in the productive,

critical, and historical domains of art (Dobbs, 2004, p. 704.).

I personally believe that aesthetics does not see race, gender, or class based upon the fact that I have taught using aesthetics for fifteen years. I have taught in schools with low socioeconomic status where the population was 98% free and reduced lunch. I have taught in schools with varied socioeconomic status, and also in schools with upper socioeconomic status. In all scenarios the students were able to make connections with the material and achieve a higher level of learning. Within these schools there were different ethnicities and genders, all of which were able to obtain aesthetic experiences. Therefore I believe that with the right training of the teachers and within an aesthetic-based curriculum that aesthetics does not discriminate. Eisner (2002) supports this line of thinking when he discusses works of arts and aesthetics being distinctive to individual students which allows for “diversity, originality, (and) individuality” (p. 236). Greene (1995) encourages interaction with the arts whether at formal places such as museums or informal such as within the classrooms. She believes that all students have the capability to release their imaginations if given the correct instructions on how to “strike a delicate balance between helping learners to pay heed...and helping them to achieve particular works as meaningful” (p. 125). Greene’s Lincoln Center Institute and Eisner’s Kettering Project are both successful examples of how with the right training and resources different races, genders, and classes can achieve aesthetic experiences.

Socially the students will interact with one another in the classroom, which ideally will be transferred into the community and society. By students learning to look beyond the classroom walls and being exposed to issues in the real world, the students are becoming better citizens. This will help to alter the concept of school being a different

world from the outside world. There will be a smooth transition between the two worlds and the students will feel an accepted part of both. An aesthetic and community-based curriculum does not deter from different cultures but recognizes the differences and allows all cultures within the classroom to flourish by promoting a culturally responsive pedagogy. In order to successfully incorporate a culturally responsive pedagogy, the teachers must create a classroom culture where all students are welcomed and encouraged, regardless of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The schools will be learner-centered where the strengths of the students will be used to guide the learning. For a culturally responsive pedagogy to work the entire community needs to buy into the concept: the administration, the faculty and staff, the students, and the parents. According to Gay (2000), “learning experiences and achievement outcomes for ethnically diverse students should include more than cognitive performances in academic subjects and standardized tests scores...teaching should be devoted to teaching the whole child” (p.15). Celebrating the differences brings even more depth and exposure to the educational experience. Social and cultural aspects and the impact on social justice will be addressed throughout the dissertation.

Politically this type of curriculum is different from the current norm. Accountability of student achievement is not easily accessible and there are no standardized tests that can truly measure aesthetic achievement. While qualitative studies are earning more credibility within the field of education, there are often those who want data-driven results to have concrete proof that something works in education. Politicians want numbers— hence quantitative is what they seek. Currently a consideration for our schools is having national standards and lessons that are scripted. This is the exact

opposite of what an aesthetic curriculum is calling for. In turn this brings a negative spin on economics because politics and economics are so closely intertwined. According to Michael Apple (2001) “rather than democracy being a *political* concept, it is transformed into a wholly *economic* concept” (p. 39) showing that economics rules over politics. If the schools are not receiving funding, then the programs or training cannot be implemented. Funding of schools is mostly based on test scores and accountability. This is different for Porter-Gaud School because it is a private school; hence the monies for programs come from tuition. This would be a challenge for public schools. In order for the economics to really change, the political stance would need to change first. This study will hopefully reinforce what many others such as Eisner, Greene, Dewey, and Liston have been calling for. By showcasing a school that focuses on aesthetics, community, and joy, the community at large will see the positive outcomes and successes the school community is experiencing.

Definition of Terms

There are terms that are used throughout the paper that I would like to clarify. I have put these terms in my own words concerning how they are used in context.

1. *Aesthetics*: the bringing of the arts into the curriculum to allow a higher level of meaning to occur. This can be a part of every subject area but is usually associated with the arts.
2. *Aesthetic education*: an education that is based on aesthetics where aesthetics is a goal within every subject area and classroom.

3. *Aesthetic inquiry*: an investigation that challenges the students to reach a higher level of thinking and bring personal meaning into the educational experience. This is often correlated with science class.

4. *Aesthetic literacy*: A concept designed by Maxine Greene and is an increasing attentiveness to a diversity of art forms and can correlate with popular culture or nature, but only if the process engages persons to reflect with a degree of passion with particular works of art.

5. *Community*: a group or population of people with shared characteristics or beliefs.

6. *Culturally responsive pedagogy*: a theoretical philosophy that puts the cultural needs of the students in the forefront of education. Class, gender, language, and race are not the focus of discrimination, instead they are the strengths that lead a learner-centered classroom. The entire school community must be onboard for this to be incorporated and successful.

7. *Gemeinschaft*: is a term used in sociology that translates to community. This term was first written by Ferdinand Tönnies and represented the importance of being a part of a larger group. Family and kinship is considered the perfect example of *gemeinschaft*. The focus with *gemeinschaft* is on strong personal relationships. The contrast to *gemeinschaft* is *gesellschaft*.

8. *Gesellschaft*: is a term used in sociology that translates to society. This term was first written by Ferdinand Tönnies and represented being an individual with a focus on self-interest. A business is the perfect example of *gesellschaft* because the individual worker cares for his production and payment, but does not focus on other workers or the product just individual performance. The contrast to *gesellschaft* is *gemeinschaft*.

9. *Higher-level thinking*: a level of learning that is beyond rote memory, that brings analysis and reflection into the learning process.
10. *Learning community*: a group within a school setting that has shared interests and impact situations within the educational environment.
11. *Phenomenology*: a research method that focuses on how meaning is made within everyday life and how these meanings are developed through social interaction.
12. *Portraiture*: a methodology designed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot that looks at ways to portray schools and relationships within the schools including the lives of the students, relationships created within the schools, and community involvement
13. *Tribe*: a group or clan that has ties with one another.

CHAPTER 2: PERSONAL JOURNEY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Looking Back to Take In Order to Take a Journey Forward

Last night when I was saying good night to my eleven year old son, he asked me a question. He asked what I remember about being young. I sat next to him while he tucked himself under his covers and began to think. I shared a story about my brother losing his bucket while we were at the beach and me being afraid of the ocean waves. I told him about when I was six years old and the feel of sand slipping through my fingers as I picked up shark's teeth while walking with my grandparents. He shared a story from several years ago of vividly remembering the face of the boy who pushed him down a waterslide which resulted in a trip to Dr. Paul's for stitches. As we talked he asked why he cannot remember everything. I explained that the things I remember have meaning of some sort and we both noticed that the memories we both shared included not only visual description, but sound and feeling, too.

After hugs and kisses to my boys I went down stairs and plopped myself into my chair as my husband was watching the SportsCenter highlights. I began thinking more about my childhood. I let my mind drift to school. What did I remember? How far back could I go and did it really have meaning? Dissecting frogs in Mr. Manzi's seventh grade science class, acting out Shakespeare in middle school, but what else? Fifth grade was a blur, so was fourth. I know I attended both of those grades but I could not tell you a thing about them. What about third? Ah, yes, third...Miss Virene. Wow the memories came flooding back. Miss Virene has really had an impact on me and was the one teacher who I truly believed inspired me to become a teacher.

Moving from our desks to be seated in the front of the room on the carpeted floor was a natural occurrence in Miss Virene's third grade class. As I put my hand on the cold, smooth, grey surface of the desk to help push myself out of the chair that was attached, I felt anticipation for what was to be the focus of today's lesson. Everyday seemed to be something new and exciting. As the class was eagerly sitting on the rug, Miss Virene pulled out her guitar, sat in her rocking chair and began to sing, "Somewhere over the Rainbow" in a soft, beautiful voice that made my breath escape me. We hung on her words and even sang along with the parts we thought we knew. When she finished the song, she asked some students to grab colored chalk and draw rainbows all over the board. My hand shot into the air as I could feel myself going from a sitting position to being perched high up on my knees. When Miss Virene's bright eyes looked my way and she nodded her head, I knew it was my turn to go to the board. I cannot remember what order I put the colors in or how large I drew the arcs, but I have never let go of that feeling of excitement about being able to color on the board and learn in such an exciting way. Miss Virene went on to talk about rainbows and weather. As we went back to our desks to complete the science activity, I remember putting the paper on the top of the cool, smooth desk knowing that this was the template for the masterpiece I was going to create.

My third grade year contains numerous memories like this one. I remember always singing, dancing, playing, and somewhere in there, learning new information. This is the year of elementary school that remains the clearest in my mind. The personal connections created moments of pure joy in learning. This is when my love of learning was born and when I first consciously thought of being a teacher.

When I applied for the elementary education program at Southern Illinois University, where I received my undergraduate degree, I wrote about Miss Virene and how she had inspired me to be a teacher. I remember her being so young, beautiful, and caring. That writing was passed on to other professors within the department and helped me to receive an academic scholarship in the program. At that time I decided it was time to go back and see Miss Virene and thank her for what she had given me, not only a third grade education, but a glimpse of the type of teacher I would like to be. I felt she would appreciate knowing that she was my inspiration.

During spring break I traveled back to my parent's house, which I frequented only during breaks, to seek out Miss Virene. I assumed she was married by now and not still teaching in the same school. I called my old elementary school and explained that I was a student there over twelve years ago and was looking for a teacher who used to work there. Surprisingly, Miss Virene was still there teaching third grade. I inquired about their visiting policies, called an open-door policy, which meant that I could just pop in and sit and watch her class without an appointment. So that is what I did.

If Miss Virene was the teacher that I remembered, she would not mind having an adult stop in to be a part of her class. A grin crossed my face as I walked into the building and smelled a familiar scent that was a part of my everyday childhood existence. Schools seem to have a specific odor about them, a scent that brings memories flooding back. I signed in at the office and was directed towards her classroom, noting it was in a different location than when I was in her third grade class. Yet the school looked the same. The white halls were decorated with student work and tile floors shone like they were just waxed. The students lined the halls with laughter and pure joy that only childhood can

bring. Innocence and excitement filled the air. Even though I was twenty years old, all of a sudden I felt a connection with these elementary students as my own memories came streaming back.

As the students filed in the classroom I was greeted by an assistant. I explained that I was a former student and that I was home from college visiting my elementary school. She showed me to a seat in the back at an oval, brown table. As I passed the desks I ran my hand along the cold, gray surface and smiled as a warm feeling spread throughout my body. I took a seat in a chair that was shorter than I had remembered and watched as Miss Virene, who was married and going by another name, was the last to enter the classroom. She was not as young as I had remembered, her blond hair was still shoulder length and she exuded a warmth and tenderness about her that was unmistakable. Apparently the students had just come from a special area class and were getting settled back into their routine. Miss Virene called the students to the front to sit on the rug. As she did this she scanned the room and noticed that I was sitting in the back. She gave me a friendly, congenial nod and continued with the class. She pulled out a children's book and read it aloud. I listened to her voice change as the characters changed and I watched the eyes of the students sitting in front of her. They hung onto every word and appeared to get lost in the story. Unconsciously reminiscing, I felt a lump rise in my throat. I wanted to sit with the kids and be a part of Miss Virene's third grade class again.

After the story, Miss Virene stopped and looked back at me. The class was silent and all turned to see what had stole their teacher's attention. This time she smiled a warm, young, caring, and beautiful smile as she introduced me to the class. She had remembered me. I left my seat in the back and took a seat on the floor with the students.

They wanted to hear stories about when I was in third grade. I told them about the guitar, the singing, and the drawing of rainbows. The students seemed pleased with this, but not at all surprised. I was describing my third grade teacher as well as theirs. This was the caring environment they were now a part of. I concluded my visit with sharing about my decision to be a teacher and about how Miss Virene had been such an inspiration.

A Large Wooden Worn-Out Door

I found myself now in front of a computer typing my story. I had somehow moved from my comfy chair with the SportsCenter highlights in the background, walked into our office, turned on the computer, and began typing my story. Now was the time where I needed to think about where I have been as a teacher and where I want to go...

After I graduated college, I moved to Charleston, South Carolina and got my first teaching position as a seventh grade science teacher. During my interview, I talked about using children's books to teach science and about drawing, singing, and incorporating the arts in teaching. The principal had to have either thought that I was nuts or just a young, naïve, graduate hoping to change the ways of teaching. Nevertheless, he hired me and I got my first official classroom.

I stood in front of my classroom door for a few minutes and just stared at it. It was large, wooden, and worn out. I truly believed that this would be the gateway to making a difference in the everyday lives of my students. I needed to decorate and make my space inviting. I wanted to create an environment that was welcoming and nurturing but also safe and exciting. I wanted to bring joy and meaning into the learning process for these students. I had grand ideas of having an inquiry-based science classroom and

incorporating aesthetic education into my teaching. I planned to read aloud to my students and be an inspiration to all who entered my class.

As I walked around the school and met colleagues, I quickly noticed several of them were like my classroom door, not large and wooden—but just plain worn out. They would often talk about changes and fads in education. They appeared to be burned out and seemed very reluctant to try inquiry-based learning or the bringing of arts and aesthetics into their curriculum. I struggled with this because I saw the joy in my own students due to inquiry and aesthetics, and could not understand why they would not want to share in that experience. I often felt like a lone ship floating in a sea in search of others to join my fleet. There would be times when some teachers would jump on board and try inquiry-based lessons or talk about aesthetics, but that never lasted very long. Often teachers reverted back to lecture style classrooms teaching their isolated subjects. I began to accept that I could not change others and I turned my focus on my own teaching.

As I continued to teach, my own life was progressing. I married my soulmate, who also was a teacher at the time, and we had two beautiful boys. Now I was a teacher and a mom. This is when my pursuit for a change in education really came to fruition. My children would soon be attending school. Where would they go? What school would give them the same opportunity that I had received? What school would not be full of large, worn-out wooden doors and teachers?

A Tradition of Excellence

When my sons were born, my husband and his family were optimistic that Porter-Gaud School would be the choice for their future education. For my husband's family, Porter-Gaud is tradition. My husband had attended the school from first through twelfth

grade. This is also the same school that his father attended from first through twelfth grade when it was a military school. We have viewed old yearbooks, watched films, and heard stories of the days at Porter. By having my two sons attend the school, we would have the third generation of Porter-Gaud students. For my husband and his parents this was a sense of honor.

Porter-Gaud is a private school with the reputation of being socially and academically elite. This was hard for me to understand because I did not consider myself as a member of either of those categories. I grew up in a suburb of Chicago and am a product of public school. I lived in a modest neighborhood and received a top-notch education because my parents chose to live in a good school district. When I was born my father was transferred from Springfield to the Chicago area with his job and my parents had to choose an area within their price-range to live, which at the time was barely middle-class. The company showed them a few different neighborhoods and my parents chose the one they believed to have the best school system. The only private schools that I recall hearing about were religious schools. I was not the product of an elite, private school education or community.

I found myself perplexed because I was a public school teacher —how could I teach in public school but send my children to a private school? This question unfortunately became easier to answer as my years of teaching in public school continued. My level of frustration began to rise as funding was cut, discipline issues were on the rise, and teaching became more of a challenge. The teachers seem to either represent the worn-out wooden door, or were optimistic with their hopes too often being crushed.

We toured Porter-Gaud School when my first son, A.J., was five years old. I was hesitant because I did not want to send my children to a school primarily due to legacy or status. As I drove onto campus and around the curved road leading to the Lower School, I was overwhelmed. The grounds were immaculately clean and well kept. The brick buildings gave a feeling of stature and strength. Instantly I felt that this was a safe learning environment that emanated a sort of power and a feeling of invincibility. There was definitely a tradition of excellence that exuded from the walls of Porter-Gaud School. My first impression was that Porter-Gaud meant power, whether it is financial or academic. But was there passion? What was behind the brick walls? Where did the paved, arched walkways lead?

At first we toured the campus; we saw the middle and upper school areas, the two gyms, the auditorium, the chapel, the fine arts buildings, the lunch room, and the offices. This was a general tour just given to provide an overview of the school. I think it is partially given as a “Wow!” factor! But then the focus became solely on the elementary school, which is called The Lower School. The school had the same open-door policy that I had in my elementary school when I was a child. The hallways were lined with children’s work, the students were smiling and excited about learning. That warm feeling of my childhood started to creep back through my body. Our guide explained how teachers plan together and incorporate the arts into teaching and that interdisciplinary units are created. As our guide was talking about teaching the whole-child, I actually stopped walking. This was one of those buzz words in education that meant the teachers did not only focus on test scores but cared about the individual students. As I stood there lost in her words, I realized that this is what I have been looking for as an educator. For a

moment I forgot that I was there as a mom. All of a sudden I knew that this is not only where my children would attend school for the next twelve years, but also where I needed to teach.

At the end of the tour we enrolled A.J. in the test group for first grade. He would come in and take an individual written test that would show his ability level and then he would be put in a play group and interact with others who were also testing. These two segments would determine if our child was admitted into Porter-Gaud School for first grade. The students did not sit in a desk, take a written test, and then leave as it was done with other private schools in the area. Most other private schools had students take a test where they would share scores with other schools. It was not like this at Porter-Gaud.

There were several teachers, assistants, and administrators at the testing. They all seemed to be working together to interact with the students and make them feel a part of their clearly established community. I believe these observations were done to see if and where the children would be a fit within the community. Seeing that academics and socialization were important aspects for this school, I decided to research these concepts further. I wanted to know why such an elite institution considered social aspects as important and academics. The school in which I currently had taught focused on standardization and test scores. There was no emphasis put on socialization or building or working as a community. This is what inspired me to research the concepts of aesthetics and communities within education. I started this research with my four theorists as my basis and then expanded with other theorists in the field of education who shared similar philosophies and interests. After reading numerous books, articles, and journals I was able to put into words what I deemed important about aesthetics and communities within

schools. My review of literature became the groundwork for my study; it gave me the initial information needed to be able to create a portraiture of a school.

Literature Review: Aesthetics and Communities within Education

Aesthetics and community are terms that are becoming widely used in education. In an anti-standardization cry for change, educators are looking to aesthetics to make a difference in our school systems. They are also looking for an education based on community instead of standardization. Students are inundated with testing and accountability whereas personal meaning is being removed from the educational process. But is aesthetics the answer? How can aesthetics be incorporated into the classrooms? What about communities within school? How can communities be established without losing identities? There are controversies that directly correlate with aesthetics and communities. In Part I, I will address topics concerning aesthetics. I will take my theoretical framework a step further by looking at some of my major theorists a little more in-depth and also bringing in other theorists. In Part II, I will tackle issues with communities by also using some of my major theorists along with others prominent in community studies.

Part I: Aesthetics

Aesthetics can almost best be defined by what it is not. Aesthetics is not standardization or matters of fact; instead it is the abstract or the intangible. Aesthetics does not only apply to the Arts, even though it is regularly correlated with the Arts because of the connection with beauty. Aesthetics is not pragmatic with numbers that have a measurable outcome. Yet aesthetics promotes experiential learning, creativity, and imagination.

The Arts are supposed to bring out deeper feelings and meanings when exposed to them, but I believe that aesthetics can be taken even further. Aesthetics can be a part of schools and brought into the educational realm. Aesthetics can be tied with education through the feeling of pleasure and connection with material, giving students the opportunity to be mentally tied to the experience. The subjects can be compared to crafts where focus is on process not only the product. The Arts can be incorporated within other subject areas creating interdisciplinary units. I believe that both the Arts and aesthetics should be a part of the educational experience.

Aesthetic Experiences and Aesthetic Education

By bringing aesthetics into the curriculum, ways of implementation must be considered. Obviously the first subjects in school to welcome aesthetics are the Arts, but this also needs to be brought into the other areas of study. The content must allow for surrendering to the material and time for reflection. Aesthetic experiences do not segregate the Arts from other areas of learning, but instead can be welcomed in all areas.

Inquiry with the sciences lends itself to higher level thinking and reflection, which align with the concept of aesthetics. Sciences for John Dewey are the means for inquiry-based learning and it is through inquiry that aesthetics evolves. This connection between science inquiry, the arts, and aesthetics is unique to Dewey. Dewey believes that the arts and sciences have direct ties to aesthetics. The connection between artistic and esthetic is explained by Dewey (1934) as artistic correlating with “production” while aesthetic correlating with “perception and enjoyment” (p. 48). These experiences do not have to be prescribed but can be what Dewey (1934) calls a “crude experience” (p. 9) that allows for intrinsic meaning to occur. With inquiry and science or interaction with art, it is the

heightening of the experience that is the true measure of aesthetic involvement. For an aesthetic event to justly occur, the event must create an emotional unity. If meaning is gained but events just transfer into other events with no true absorption of the content, then an aesthetic experience did not occur. With the sciences if a lab is completed without personal connections, then aesthetics was not a part of the lesson. But if personal connections and meanings were made because of an emotional attachment then aesthetics was present in the educational experience.

Dewey proposed that aesthetic experience itself differs from other experiences not so much in kind, but in quality, and that it has commonalities to all experience, the way “mountain peaks do not float unsupported, . . . but are the earth in one of its manifest operations” (Dewey, 1934/1989, p. 9). For Dewey it is the experience that makes the difference in the learning process and he believed that when done properly it “arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over the dead places. . .” (Dewey, 1997/1938, p. 38).

I believe that Dewey would agree that aesthetic experiences occur only when a sense of surrendering is allowed to happen. This surrendering allows personal growth, which ultimately increases the intellectual state and ability. As Garrison (1997) states, “growth of meaning is, for Dewey, the aim of education for both individuals and society” (p. 198). This growth of meaning takes place because of what the arts and sciences bring to the creation of meaning. Bringing these types of experiences into the educational realm allows for each individual to create his or her own meaning. So for Dewey, education would be based on experience in connection with science and art with aesthetics playing a vital role.

Eisner takes Dewey's concepts of aesthetic experiences a step further by calling for aesthetic education. By bringing the arts into the curriculum, innumerable aesthetic experiences are more likely to occur and the process actually becomes aesthetic education. Emotions are linked with aesthetics, but Eisner calls for cognition to also be an integral aspect. "We do not typically associate the aesthetic with knowing. The arts, with which the aesthetic is most closely associated, is a matter of the heart" (Eisner, 1998, p. 33). Eisner (1998) strives to make a connection with experience and art to show "that the roads to knowing are many" (p.33) and that "the aesthetic in knowing...points to some aspect of the world and helps us experience it" (p.37). By being able to recognize the feelings and traits associated with aesthetic experiences, people will be able to develop the abilities to have more aesthetic experiences, hence creating an environment for aesthetic education. Aesthetic education and aesthetic experience are essential to maintaining individuality, making meaning of experiences, and obtaining freedom to learn and grow. Eisner (2002) refers to this as allowing ourselves to "surrender" (p. 87) to the work.

Aesthetics for Social Change

Maxine Greene believes that our education system is preoccupied with test scores, management procedures, and accountability. She calls for arts and imagination to be an integral part of education with the main objective being social change. Aesthetics is one of the key instruments in obtaining this goal. Greene's beliefs in aesthetics and advocating for social change make her unique to other theorists and take their beliefs into the political arena.

Greene is very active in making changes in our educational systems with the goal to change society. Besides her numerous publications and lectures, she has designed, implemented, and is currently a philosopher-in-residence and teaches aesthetic education workshops during the summer sessions at the Lincoln Center Institute. As stated in Greene's *Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education*, (2001), "Maxine Greene has inspired teachers to think in new ways about aesthetic experiences they have at the Institute, urging them to transform their learning into innovative classroom teaching that recognizes perception, cognition, affect, and the imagination as ways of knowing" (p. 3). At the Lincoln Center Institute teachers are immersed in the arts with the focus being to generate awareness of aesthetic education, introduce the concept of aesthetic literacy, and to create an aesthetic curriculum. The teachers are given the opportunity to interact with artists during the sessions and continue this partnership throughout the year. The main goal of the Lincoln Center Institute for educators is to learn to open "students to the aesthetic dimension in human experience, rather than simple exposure" (Greene, 2001, p. 2) to the arts within a curriculum. This is what Maxine Greene refers to as aesthetic literacy.

Aesthetic literacy is the increasing attentiveness to a diversity of art forms and can correlate with popular culture or nature, but only if the process engages persons to reflect with a degree of passion with particular works of art. Maxine Greene believes that aesthetic education flourishes in the art world, such as museums, theaters, and art galleries, but also can occur in classrooms and schools. "Education, as I view it, is a process of enabling persons to become different, to encounter multiple provinces of meaning that create perspectives on the works" (Greene, 2001, p. 5). This education can

happen anywhere. Of course areas that contain an abundant amount of art would be ideal but is not required. We need to understand that “simply being in the presence of art forms is not sufficient to occasion an aesthetic experience or change a life” (Greene, 1995, p. 125). Studying art such as art education or art appreciation does not equate to an aesthetic experience. First it is essential to make personal meaning of the art through the use of imagination, and then allow it to become an experience. The willingness to open up to the art form and look beyond the immediate structure is needed to achieve an aesthetic experience. Greene (2001) states

Aesthetic education is an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful (p. 6).

The meaningfulness of an experience is essential because without meaning there is not aesthetic experience. In a letter to Greene, Blumenfeld-Jones (1998) draws a correlation between what Greene means by art education and aesthetic education. He states that aesthetic education is “the deliberate efforts to foster increasingly informed and involved encounters with art” (p.161) while art education is the general teaching of the arts. It is the process of the aesthetic education that is the key— not the location of the teaching or encounter with art. As stated by Greene (2001), “I believe that all of those interested in the arts and in aesthetic education ought to find opportunities to come together in order to find an honored place for the imaginative— for the opening of possibilities — in our classrooms and in public spaces, wherever they exist” (p. 66). The Lincoln Center

Institute is one of the places that Greene has designed to help educators come together and celebrate aesthetics in education.

Aesthetic education promotes growth and development. “We see it as integral to the development of persons— to their cognitive, perceptual, emotional, and imaginative development. We see it as part of the human effort (so often forgotten today) to seek a greater coherence in the world” (Greene, 2001, p. 7). As educators, we need to find a way to reach our students and allow them the opportunity for this growth. This first happens by us getting to know our students. The better we know our students’ interests, the more effectively we can help them to successfully incorporate aesthetic education into their learning process and take away the monotony of standardized lessons. The students should be given the opportunity to dwell in a poem, to get lost in a painting or scene, to achieve a higher state of consciousness. Greene (2001) states

I think we too often forget that the primary purpose of education is to free persons to make sense of their actual lived situations— not only cognitively, but perceptually, imaginatively, affectively — to attend mindfully to their own lives, to take their own initiatives in interpreting them and finding out where the deficiencies are and trying to transform them. And discovering somehow that there is no end to it, that there is always more to see, to learn to feel. . .(pp. 206 – 207)

By embracing aesthetic education, teachers allow for aesthetic experiences to blossom and evolve.

Though Greene argues for the centrality of arts in the curriculum, it is important to recognize that she is not advocating for art education; she is arguing for aesthetic

education with the focus on social change. She wants to change from the subjective educational system we have now to an education based on the needs of the learners.

The concept of teachers being proficient in aesthetic education would create aesthetic literacy and be the basis for an aesthetic curriculum. “Aesthetic education is a process of empowering diverse persons to engage reflectively and with a degree of passion with particular works of art” (Greene, 2001, p. 170). According to Henderson, Hutchison, and Newman (1998), Greene’s “passion for aesthetic literacy has broadened curriculum studies” (p. 197). They acknowledge at least four contributions from her work on aesthetic literacy: the challenge to use language and metaphors to balance the traditional scientific and technical understanding of schooling, a more humanistic understanding of student learning with more imaginative approaches to curriculum development, more artistic forms of assessment, and her challenge of “the literary and artistic canons that have served as the normative referent for Eurocentric curriculum studies” (Henderson, Hutchison, & Newman, 1998, p. 197). This means that Greene is helping the educators that are literate in aesthetic education and the arts to transfer their knowledge and processes to other areas within the curriculum. According to Greene (2001)

when we allow for and cultivate aesthetic literacy, we are doing what can be done to enable as many young people as possible to crack the old forbidding codes, to break through artificial barriers that for so long have excluded so many from engaging in aware fashion with the arts...if we and our students can somehow find ways of choosing ourselves as imaginative beings risking presentness to

works of art, risking questioning, new spaces will be carved out in experience.

There will be moments of ‘freedom and presence’ seldom seen in schools. (p. 76)

Greene is calling for the arts to be the basis to create new and meaningful experiences that will help students grow, but recognizing that other aspects in our curriculum can be considered works of art. In summary, Maxine Greene argues for a curriculum that is expanding and deepening, that provides multiple options in seeing the world through literature, images, and music. This type of curriculum can begin the process of releasing the imaginations of those who feel trapped in the educational and cultural confusion of our time. Greene is advocating for social change and aesthetic education as part of the solution.

Aesthetics and Joy

The concept of joy is often associated with happiness, but what exactly is that? I find it often hard to describe my feelings; I can tell what it was that made me feel that way, but can never quite put words together to describe exactly what I am feeling inside. When I think of joy I think of happiness that has been brought to a higher level. So how do go beyond students being happy or content in school, but to actually experience joy?

Delores Liston has her own view for aesthetics in education and for Liston, aesthetics goes beyond a holistic education and is the tool that brings joy into the learning experience. “Philosophers have observed that there is a strong connection between what a person considers to be beautiful and what a person considers to be good” (Liston, 2001, p. 3). This connection is used to describe aesthetics in a classroom. To obtain an aesthetic experience or connection, both beautiful and good need to be present. Think about the term beautiful and the term good. Different feelings arise when the different terms;

different visions come to mind. Beautiful allows for the imagination to run wild. Beautiful correlates with stunning and striking, which are powerful ways to describe something. When thinking of the term good, it is more ethical or solid. I believe that there is a connection between beautiful and good just like there is a connection between aesthetic and ethics. Liston wants both to be a part of the classroom, not one or the other, but a combination of the two. With this, Liston (2001) is “calling for educational change” (p. 216) and she believes in “creating an environment in which our students can organize and reorganize the ideas and concepts that we present into as many different patterns as possible” (Liston, 2001, pp. 5-6.).

In the text *Joy as a Metaphor of Convergence: A Phenomenological and Aesthetic Investigation of Social and Educational Change*, Liston (2001) uses the metaphor of joy to help people “to think differently about the purposes and processes of education” (p. 7). She states, “I believe that through Joy, we can move beyond the perspective currently being offered through critical and holistic theories and others, and generate new metaphors to construct and understand our worlds” (p. 7). It is the way that Liston describes joy that I make a correlation with aesthetics. “Joy” according to Liston (2001) is “a state of awareness” (p. 19) or “a way of ‘coming’ to view, hear and feel the world” (p. 19). I believe that this state of awareness and this way of viewing the world describes aesthetic experiences. Through joy aesthetic experiences occur. Throughout Liston’s text she gives examples and descriptions that seem to define aesthetics; she states that joy “leads to an understanding of the interrelatedness of matter and spirit” (p. 20). With the mind leaving the physical nature of material and fading into the mental aspect, new meaningful experiences will occur. This to me is aesthetics. I believe that if people obtain

joy in education or other situations then they have encountered aesthetic experiences. It is as Liston (2001) describes “like the switching on of a light, the total environment is dramatically altered by the slightest change in the current” (p. 216).

The metaphor of joy in conjunction with aesthetics can allow the much needed changes to occur. According to Liston (2001), “education is about making meaningful lives for ourselves” (p. 218). The learning of the students should be based on previous knowledge with the encouragement to pursue further knowledge. “Schools ought to be places where exciting things happen, where learners and teachers engage in meaningful exploration of themselves” (Liston, 2001, p. 218). She suggests using inquiry and exploration with the sciences and the use of poetry and literature to achieve aesthetic experiences. Liston (2001) states that “we do have an ‘epistemic hunger,’ a drive to learn and know. Schools should feed this need” (p. 218). Making a change in how education is perceived and how our curriculums are structured is a goal for Liston. She is in opposition of standardization and wants to create learning communities.

Part II: Communities

Weaving a Community

Being a part of a community can be complicated because the goal is to be a part of a group without losing individual identities. “In thinking of community, we need to emphasize the process words: making, creating, weaving, saying, and the like” (Greene, 1995, p. 39). I think the concept of weaving is an excellent metaphor for communities. The needle and the yarn represent people. The canvas represents location. The needle is the leader that guides others along the way. The yarn is the members of the community coming together with a specific objective or commonality. The yarn is different colors,

sizes, and has different characteristics. The yarn comes in contact with other pieces of yarn, possibly intersecting and interacting, and then continues on its way. When weaving two or more pieces together there is more strength and support than in isolation. Each different part, though intertwined, still retains its own characteristics. It is essential to recognize the differences of each piece of yarn but also to realize that when put together the pieces become a part of a larger picture.

Relationships and Communities in Schools

The idea of schools being based on communities is not a new concept. When we think of communities we often think of neighborhoods, churches, or groups of people with like interests but usually do not think about schools. With communities there is a sense of belonging. The relationships developed within the communities are a key aspect to the community staying together and being productive. I believe that schools should model after the community concept and should create community-based curriculums.

In schools if there is a community-based curriculum, the students have broader views of knowledge, which helps to create interpersonal relationships. John Dewey is a proponent of communities within schools. Dewey (1932/1985) states, “the kind of self which is formed through action which is faithful to relations with others will be a fuller and broader self than one which is cultivated in isolation” (p. 302). In isolation there is only one view, one way to look at a situation, whereas with a community there are numerous views and options. Schools do not promote isolation but require interaction because of all of the students thrust together in classrooms, clubs, and activities.

According to Garrison (1997), “Our minds and personalities emerge through interpersonal relationships” (p. 42). Relationships are a vital aspect in communities and I

believe that without relationships a community will not flourish. According to Sergiovanni (1994), “it is the web of relationships that stands out and it is through the quality and character of relationships that values, beliefs, and norms are felt” (p. 18). Schools are settings where students develop relationships because of the interaction that occurs. A school is the perfect environment for relationships to form and a community setting to develop.

In order to successfully create relationships one must know their own self first and not lose sight of those characteristics. Identity is a crucial aspect when building relations. Moya and Hames-Garcia (2000) bring a postpositivist realist position to reclaiming identity by examining social groups and social issues. “Our ability to understand an ‘other’ depends largely on our willingness to examine our ‘self’” (Moya & Hames-Garcia, 2000, p. 68). Postpositive realists believe that one’s identity can be constructed, which allows for a better understanding of oneself. “Identities shared by members of the same social group are stable and based on shared, self-evidently meaningful experiences” (Moya & Hames-Garcia, 2000, p. 251). Once people truly understand their own selves, then they can start to learn about others. This correlates with a concept known as culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). According to Geneva Gay (2000), “culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to them” (p. 29). For teachers to be culturally responsive, they must first analyze their own beliefs in order to be able to understand and work with others’ beliefs. The understanding of one’s own identity is essential to forming relations with others. Ladson-Billings (1992) explains that

culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). Once identities are established then relationships can begin to form.

Major theorists have been fighting for communities to a part of our school systems. Greene (2001) calls for "the emergence of communities within our schools" (p.181). Communities within schools create a better learning environment for the students. The involvement of parents, teachers, students, administration, faculty, and staff can help to build a strong community within a school and I believe the relationships among these members are vital to the success of the school community. A critical theorist and a postmodernist, Sidorkin (2002), beckons for a relationship of mutual respect for all parties involved in the educational process. In Sidorkin's *Learning Relations Impure Education, Deschooled Schools, & Dialogue with Evil* (2002), he focuses on the positive aspects that relations can bring to the school setting. "Hundreds of people are brought together without any common interests or an identifiable project and are expected to maintain social harmony and peace" (Sidorkin, 2002, p. 127). Sidorkin's educational theory based on relations can bring a school community together and create a flourishing learning environment. "What we do with our students is not that important; what sort of relations we build with and among them becomes very important" (2002, p. 85). Sidorkin is well known for his relations theory, but there are other theories also available for implementation of a community-based curriculum.

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

There are theories for communities that have been researched and suggested, but there is no one easy way to design a school based on communities. According to

Sergiovanni (1994) there are two terms that describe two different mindsets or versions of being: “gemeinschaft, [which] translates to community and gesellschaft, [which] translates to society” (p. 6). The concept of gemeinschaft is what school communities should be based upon. This would support the idea of “building a common goal, [having] a shared set of values, and [having] a shared concept of being” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 6). Using these common goals, values, and concepts, all those involved in the educational process would be able to work together and thrive. The positive involvement and support system would be amazing. In a school based on the gemeinschaft beliefs, teachers and students would be interacting and the students would be an integral part of their own education, ultimately building a learning community. According to Prawat (1996), “the learning community approach highlights the importance of connectedness and inventiveness” (p. 88). Class sizes would be small so the teachers would be able to get to know the students on a personal level. Cooperative learning and social interaction would be a part of the classroom environment. The students would feel safe and have support that they needed to continue to strive to the next level academically and socially.

According to Bencivenga and Elias (2003), a healthy social and emotional environment is essential in a successful learning community (p. 72). Teachers would be interacting and planning together. Administration and other school personnel would interact with the students and teachers to become an integrated part of the community. Ultimately this type of caring-based curriculum “moves beyond a one-dimensional academic view of school reform by creating a multidimensional curricula of social-emotional caring and intellectual empowerment” (Rea, 2007, ¶ 2).

But, too often our schools focus more on the *gesellschaft* or the instrumental preparation for society, which happens to be heading towards a more worldly focus than a community focus. The concept of *gesellschaft* can be compared to Eisner's assembly line metaphor where education focuses on mass production of like products. The focus is on the functional features and not the personal aspects. According to Rea (2007), "the fundamental purpose of education is the improvement of students' basic academic skills in preparation for competition in the world market" (§ 2). Today's schools model cohabitation not community. We live together but never truly interact. The interaction that occurs is mostly competitive, not cooperative. Schools have groups that superficially intermingle but never take an interest in the other. Typically teachers do the lecturing and the students are passive learners. The disciplines are segregated with no cross-curricular focus. Standardization and grades are a focus without alternative assessments or reflection time allowed for individual growth. Some schools are so large that students do not even know the names of everyone in their classes. Look at the size of our classrooms and schools— it is like an assembly line education. Students are changing classes and often having up to seven or eight different teachers in a day. The classes are busting at the seams with no additional teachers being added. The school is run on a budget with standards to be followed. That does not exude a community atmosphere. According to Bencivenga and Elias (2003), "we cannot expect children to maximize retention and generalization of information presented to them at school under conditions of high pressure, low relevance, and great challenge" (p. 71). As Sergiovanni states, "in the extreme both *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* create problems" (p. 13). This explains the

problems that our school systems are experiencing. The balance is off and the focus is more on society than community.

Ideally our schools need to be able to maintain a balance between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. Sergioivanni (1994) believes that “as modern society advances... community values are replaced with contractual ones” (p. 8). Currently our schools tilt more towards *gesellschaft* but still have *gemeinschaft* characteristics. Sergioivanni wants us to realign the balance and have an equal combination of both concepts within our schools. In order to have this balance, community is going to have to be a more prominent factor in school systems.

Tribal Aspects

The terms tribe and community are often used synonymously; they both describe a group of people that live and work together, form regular rituals, and provide the support of extended families. I believe that although the terms are similar that the term tribe takes the concept of community to a deeper level. With tribes there are cultures and traditions, tribal gatherings, tribal symbols, tribal councils, tribal attire, connections with the spiritual world, hierarchy within the ranks of the members, and subcultures within the tribes. In my opinion, tribes are the ultimate tight-knit community. I believe that a school modeled after a tribe would be a successful school.

Jeanne Gibbs, author of *Reaching All By Creating Tribes Learning Communities* (2006) has created learning communities within schools based on the concept of tribes. Gibbs focuses on a positive learning environment that gives equal opportunities for all students while incorporating all aspects of the school community within the tribal concept. According to Gibbs (2006), “tribes is not a curriculum, not a program or a

collection of activities. It is an on-going goal-oriented *process* based on sound principles and practices that maximize academic, social, and emotional development for today's children" (x). The concept of tribes for Gibbs (2006) "goes beyond the one-size-fits-all" (x) education and focuses on community and relationships. Gibbs has based the concept of tribes on research and feels strongly that schools should be "student-centered..safe and caring..with responsive education as the pedagogy" (p. 34).

Conclusion: Putting Community and Aesthetics in Our Schools

Both aesthetics and community belong in our schools. Aesthetics allows for a transition from rote learning to active learning. With the use of aesthetics and a focus on inquiry and art, the students are able to experience education in a way that is meaningful. To have a curriculum based on aesthetics, community has to come into play. The relationships within the community are the key to the implementation and success of the community within the school.

There are several facets of relationships that need to be considered within communities. The student-student relationship, the teacher-staff-administration relationship, the teacher-student relationship, the parent-teacher-student relationship, the parent-administration relationship, and the school-outside community relationship must all be considered when establishing a learning community. Relationships between students must be of mutual respect in order for the students to successfully work together in cooperative groups. Relationships among faculty, staff, and administration must be compatible in order to successfully implement cross-curricular and interdisciplinary activities. The teachers need this relationship in order to work with each other to plan the lessons and activities with support from administration. Parents must have relationships

with the members of the learning communities so there is continued support at home. All of these relationships help to develop community but it is the teacher-student relationship that is the key for connecting community with aesthetics.

For a curriculum to be based on aesthetics, students have to be an integral part of designing their own education. This can only be done in conjunction with the teacher. For students to have aesthetic experiences the relationships between students and teachers must be established. The only way that this can be established is through the development of learning communities. Therefore community can be cultivated through the use of aesthetics. The teacher will have the opportunity to observe and interact with the students allowing the teacher to know the students on a personal level. This will allow the teacher to guide the students in the creation of individual learning activities where the students are an integral part of the creation of the lessons. The aesthetics occurs due to the interaction with others in the classroom and with the activities that have been generated. By students having continual aesthetic experiences the possibility of an aesthetic education can occur. I believe this is due to the community atmosphere that is in the school.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Method: A Portraiture

This is a success story— a story about how highly experienced and innovative teachers help students meet the daily challenges of the mind, body, and spirit through critical thinking, aesthetics, and inquiry-based activities within a community-based environment. I am creating a portrait of Porter-Gaud School showing its attributes and telling the stories of those within the school community.

The underlying methodology used in this study is portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2002). Portraiture, most well known within the works of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis and their text *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (2002) will be used as a model to create a detailed representation of Porter-Gaud School and its community. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2002), “Portraiture is a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (xv). Lawrence-Lightfoot invented this type of methodology as a way to portray schools and relationships within the schools including the lives of the students, relationships created within the schools, and community involvement. With portraiture the goal is to “record and interpret perspectives and experiences of the people (by) documenting their visions-- their authority, knowledge, and wisdom” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2002, xv). This method is ideal for studying and portraying a school setting. The complexity and dynamics that occur within the school will create a myriad of experiences that will produce a complete picture of the life among the community within the Porter-Gaud School.

With portraiture, social and cultural contexts are a focus because the portrait being created is put within the larger discourse, in this case, the current educational system within the United States. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2002), “Portraiture is... framed by the phenomenological lens: it seeks to illuminate the complex dimensions of *goodness* and is designed to capture the attention of a broad eclectic audience” (xvi). Phenomenology connects well with cultural studies because it focuses upon how meaning is made within everyday life and how those meanings are developed through social interaction (Creswell, 1998). Social interaction is a main facet in this study. The interaction between all involved in the Porter-Gaud community will be a focus. To truly paint this picture with words, I need to be looking through a phenomenological lens.

The telling of the study will be done through a narrative inquiry format, or the telling of a story. Narrative inquiry “is the closest one can come to experience” (Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005, p. 254). A collection of observations and data will be used to tell the stories and recreate the experiences of the members within the Porter-Gaud community. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), “the narrative turn has been taken (and) many have learned... to locate themselves within their texts” (p. 4). Narrative inquiry allows me to put myself within the context of the study. I am a part of this community therefore I am a part of the study. I want my voice to reverberate throughout the narrative putting myself in context while telling the story that is Porter-Gaud. The telling of the stories with the inclusion of my own personal experiences will create the narrative that will be used to paint the portraiture.

Even though there are trends that mimic the case study method of inquiry, I do not believe that this study truly is a case study because, in my opinion, a case study is too

enclosed. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), a case study means to study a specific case. I do not feel that this study is one specific case, but requires the combination of several aspects or cases to tell the complete story. In a case study, “data tends to be gathered through the ethnographic tools of participant observation and in-depth interviewing” (Glesne, 2006, p. 13). While I am conducting the observations and interviews, I will also be collecting samples of work and stories from the participants. I am telling the story of the school, not studying one aspect of it. One certainly could argue that this study could be a case study, but I chose to label it portraiture due to many layers of data that will be fleshed together to create the final piece.

Selected Participants and Data Collection Strategies

The first phase of this qualitative study consisted of observations throughout the school including classrooms kindergarten through fifth grade. One class per grade level was randomly chosen for observations. The class was chosen by putting room numbers in a container and drawing the numbers. Observations also occurred in the art and music classes. A random grade level was chosen for the observations for the art and music class in the same manner of drawing a number just as the classrooms were chosen. A total of eight observations were conducted for this study, one per grade level for kindergarten through five and then an art and music class. The observations consisted of a 45-minute class period for each observation with the option of returning for further observation time, if needed. Pictures and detailed notes were taken of each observation.

After the observations, interviews were conducted. There were three focus groups for the interviews: the teachers, the community, and the students. The focus groups were randomly chosen to accurately represent the population interviewed. The teacher focus

group consisted of one teacher randomly chosen from each grade level, totaling six people in the group. In order to do this, I compiled a list of all of the teachers, cut out each teacher's name, put all of the teachers' names in a jar and kept drawing names until I had one to represent each grade level. If I had already drawn a name for that grade level, I replaced the name and continued the drawing until I had the focus group selected.

The community focus group consisted of six community members, two who are alumni with students currently in the lower school at Porter-Gaud, two who are not alumni but currently have students in the lower school at Porter-Gaud, and two who are board members. The board members do not have students at Porter-Gaud School. In order to do this I used our school directory, which has all of the names of all parents in the school. I opened the directory to the middle and chose a name, then the first half and then the last half, respectively. I continued to randomly select names from areas within the directory until I had the proper number for each section of the focus group.

The student focus group consisted of six students, three from grade four and three from grade five. These two grade levels have been chosen because of age and maturity level. I believe that students younger than this may not be able to give information that will be pertinent to the study. For the students, I compiled all of the fourth grade names from the class roster, cut the names out, and put them in a jar. I randomly chose three names for the group. I conducted the same process for the fifth grade. By putting the names for the fourth and fifth grade together I have my focus group of students.

There are two individual interviews that were conducted. Individual interviews took place with the art teacher and the principal of the lower school. The individual interviews are with the art teacher because she is an integral aspect with aesthetics within

the curriculum. The individual interview with the principal gave statistical and administrative information that helped to validate the study and put Porter-Gaud within context on other schools in Charleston and South Carolina.

The interviews occurred during 45-minute time slots with the option of extending the time, if needed. The guided questions (see Appendix A, B, C) were the focus of the interviews. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews. The interviews were also recorded through the use of audio tape. Using a process of sorting and defining data that is applicable to this portraiture, these tapes were transcribed and coded (Glesne, 2006).

The third phase of the study was the collection of student work samples. The teachers randomly selected the student participants that would be submitting the work samples from the portfolios that have been created throughout the year. The samples were not from a given assignment but from work that has already been completed during the school year. The purpose was not to generate work, but to collect work that truly represented the normal goings-on within Porter-Gaud School.

Analysis and Presentation of Study

The analysis of the data gathered was used to generate the narrative which is the main factor in creating the portraiture. I took all aspects and wove them together to create a vision of the school that allows the reader to feel a part of the Porter-Gaud community. There are three strands that occur in the analysis to create the narrative: the teacher, the community, and the student. Throughout the analysis of the observations and interviews I looked for trends of learning, evidence of bringing joy into education, community building, a desire to learn, higher-level thinking, and the use of aesthetics in education. The objective of these interviews, observations, and work sample collection was to allow

the reader to delve into the Porter-Gaud School experience and see how aesthetic education impacts the school community and brings joy into learning.

The second aspect of the analysis, or portraiture, is a focus on community and how this impacts the schools, ultimately creating a community-based atmosphere. By having a tight-knit community, the school mimics tribal aspects. The community supports the aesthetics within the curriculum which impacts the education that takes place at Porter-Gaud School. The school community puts an emphasis on aesthetics and building a strong community, therefore having a cohesive relationship between aesthetics and community.

The theoretical framework was interwoven throughout the creation of the portraiture. The major theorists, John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Delores Liston, along with other theorists were cited throughout this portraiture giving support to the data gathered. The synthesis tied aesthetics into the learning process to build a school community, promote higher-level thinking, and bring joy into the curriculum.

The final part of the study addressed Porter-Gaud being a private school and showed how this type of success can be a part of every school, whether private or public. An analysis of the surrounding schools' populations, both public and private, was given to compare Porter-Gaud School with the neighboring schools.

The study was written in a narrative format with stories telling the tales of the participants. The stories consisted of information gathered during the observations and interviews. The work samples are placed throughout the portraiture to add detail to the stories. Since this study has an aesthetic focus, website links and a video link has been

constructed to add visual dimensions to the narrative. Together the narrative and the visual components create the portraiture of Porter-Gaud School.

CHAPTER 4: A PORTRAITURE OF PORTER-GAUD SCHOOL

A Sketch of the Main Characters

An aura of excitement is streaming throughout the campus as the holidays are quickly approaching. Travel plans, holiday celebrations, and exchanging of gifts are just a few of the hot topics as the final days of school are winding down before the two week break occurs. A few second graders are buzzing with anticipation as they are coming out of the bathroom in full costume for their production of their Christmas play. The second grade play is being attended by the entire Lower School this morning. The students have worked very hard to memorize lines, sing songs, and perfect their acting techniques to be able to tell their story of the First Nativity.

As we file into the auditorium we are surrounded by artwork on the wall of the lobby. In art class the second grade students painted portraits of themselves in character for the play and they are all beautifully mounted on the walls for families and friends to see. Students in grades kindergarten through fifth (all except for second because they are the stars of the performance) are filing in and being seated in the maroon, cushioned chairs of the long rows of the auditorium. The Gwynette Auditorium seats about 400 people comfortably and this morning will warrant a packed house. This performance is for the students, teachers, and faculty. Tonight's performance will be for family members and friends.

As Ms. Brown, the lower school principal, walks to the front podium, the final students and teachers are finding their seats. She raises her hand and within a few seconds the students and teachers mimic this movement and the auditorium is silent. "We are glad you could join us this morning for this wonderful production that the second graders have

worked so hard to put on.” She continues by briefly talking about the play to make connections to students who have put on the performance in years past, and then she concludes by asking the audience to sit back, relax, and enjoy the production. The overhead lights dim, the spotlights shine on the front stage, and the music begins. Sixty-five second-grade students advance down the two isles in full costume and make-up to take their places on stage. The show has begun.



Figure 1: Mary Singing and Praying



Figure 2: A Trusty Thoroughbred



Figure 3: Reading as a Narrator



Figure 4: Solo Performance



Figure 5: Mother Cow and Curly Horn Sheep



Figure 6: King Herod



Figure 7: The Performance

Figure 8: Portraits the Students painted of themselves in character:



Figure 9: Second graders make clay angels for holiday gifts



This is a typical occurrence at Porter-Gaud School. Students perform regularly on stage in front of their peers, family and friends. Artwork is always on display whether it is in the hallways, the cafeteria, the classrooms, or the auditorium to showcase what the students are doing in their academic classes. The school is full of life, passion, and enthusiasm.

Let me introduce you to the main character of this story: Porter-Gaud School. Yes, the school is the main character, but just like any main character in a story, it must have different roles to play in different scenes with different personalities. Like any

worthy protagonist, the character has really grown and changed over the years, all of which play a vital role in making it the school that it is today. So read on and learn a little bit about our character and then I will continue with the story.

The Evolution of Porter-Gaud School

The history is written in books and revered by those who link themselves to Porter-Gaud School. The first book, *Led On! Step by Step: Scenes from Clerical, Military Educational, and Plantation Life in the South 1828-1898* (100th Anniversary Edition 1967) is an autobiography by Anthony Toomer Porter, the founder of the school. Karen Greene (1982) followed Porter's book with *Porter-Gaud School: The Next Step* as a request from the Porter-Gaud School Board to fill in the latter information. A children's book is in the discussion phase among parents and community members who want the students to be able to have a book that tells the history of the school. A parent who is an artist has volunteered to illustrate the book. When hired as a member of the faculty, the new employees sit in a History of Porter-Gaud seminar taught by Dr. Maxwell Mowry, a Gaud graduate class of 1962 and a current teacher at Porter-Gaud. This seminar is held to help foster a sense of tradition and essentially help outsiders to understand the significance of the heritage of what has become Porter-Gaud School.

The school's name has changed, demographics have transformed, mergers have transpired, and as time has passed, the school has evolved into an elite academic institution. Those currently involved in the school take pride in the traditions of the past and yearn to be a part of the continual evolution of the school. Porter-Gaud is a community that has its own identity and values and puts the needs of the students at the forefront of the educational process.

From Orphans to Military

Anthony Toomer Porter was the original founder of the school that is currently known as Porter-Gaud. Rev. Porter founded the school in 1867 after yellow fever caused the death of his son, John Toomer Porter, at the age of ten. Rev. Porter had already committed himself to a life with the church when he sat praying at his son's grave. He claims to have had a spiritual moment and was told to "stop grieving for the dead and do something for the living" (Greene, 1982, p. 11).

At this time Rev. Porter opened the Orphan Home and School Association of the Church of the Holy Communion. The land and facilities for the school were loaned to Rev. Porter by the state for \$1.00 per year for 99 years as long as the land was used for schooling. The school was located on 11.3 acres of arsenal grounds in the heart of downtown Charleston, South Carolina. The school enrolled its first orphan in 1868 and had 33 full time boarders within a week. The charge for schooling was fifty cents per month or a bag of potatoes, whichever the families could afford. "Many of the boys were educated, clothed, and fed for free" (Greene, 1982, p. 12). Due to limited space and increased enrollment, Rev. Porter had to discontinue female enrollment. In 1882 the name officially changed to Holy Communion Church Institute and four years later the name changed to Porter Academy.

Around 1887 the curriculum and focus of the school began to change with the introduction of military training. As the school grew and changed, so did the facilities. Building and dormitories were erected and grade levels added with the ultimate goal of raising the academic level. Shortly after 1910, Porter Military Academy was on "the accredited list of the University of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools

of the Southern United States, which meant that Porter graduates could enter, without examination, any college in the United States” (Greene, 1982, p. 23). In 1917 all of the students were in uniform and the hiring of a Professor of Military Science and Tactics and the instillation of the junior ROTC helped the school to receive assistance from the federal government.

Throughout the early years there was financial trouble but the school was always able to keep its doors open. In the mid 1920s the school lost the military connections and the name was changed to Porter Academy. The enrollment fluctuated as did the faculty and staff. During a time of near closure, the school was released from the agreement with the state and purchased by individuals in connection with the Episcopal Church. The school continued its pursuit of academic excellence and again regained the military status with the onset of World War II.

Just as the tides seemed to be turning for the school and debt being less of a worry, Hurricane Grace hit Charleston in 1964 and caused massive damage to the campus. Roofs were torn off buildings, flooding occurred, and the damage cost the school tens of thousands of dollars. After most of the damage was fixed, the following summer brought another hurricane which spawned a demolishing tornado that swept through campus. The damage once again was devastating. Due to the rebuilding of the facilities, Porter Military Academy encountered financial strain. As Porter Military Academy was determining its solvency, the Medical University continued to grow and was beating down the doors to purchase the land. Talks of moving the campus and starting fresh began to take place. In 1962 Tom Rice signed a deed giving Porter Military Academy 70.37 acres of land at Albemarle Point for educational facilities to be constructed. It was

time for Porter Military Academy to sell its land to the Medical University and start fresh across the Ashley River at Albemarle Point.

The Transformation of Gaud School

William Steed Gaud started the Gaud School for boys by merging with Edward Ford Mayberry who was the founder of University School in 1908 to create an elite academic institution. Within a couple of years the school earned its way on accredited lists for the state and universities and was officially known as the Gaud School for Boys. As years passed, Gaud embarked upon other adventures and challenges, such as teaching opportunities and fighting in the World War I. He sold his school, which eventually closed due to the conflict.

Gaud returned to Charleston with his family in 1919 and reopened The Gaud School for Boys. Gaud held his students to high standards and “taught the basics and kept the students to the grindstone with daily recitations and quite a bit of homework” (Greene, 1982, p. 46). Upon graduation from the Gaud School, students were prepared for prep schools and higher education.

Despite the depression and the changes it wrought in the South, Gaud School was able to keep its doors open and did not seem to be impacted as much financially as other institutions. This was due in part to the financial stability of William Steed Gaud but mostly because the students enrolled in Gaud School were from financially stable, if not wealthy, families. In 1922-1923, Gaud invited girls to attend the school, but “after two years coeducation was discontinued, and never again did a female enter the Gaud School” (Greene, 1982, p. 54). The school returned to being a single-gendered educational facility. Gaud sold the school one more time and went on to other ventures. But yet, once

again he returned to Charleston, this time to become the head of Porter Academy. This lasted for one year and then he realized it was his own school that he needed to oversee. Gaud returned to his school as the headmaster for the next twenty years.

In 1948 Berkeley Grimball “purchased the Gaud School for Boys, which basically included the old wooden desks and chairs, tables and chalkboards, for \$125.86” (Greene, 1982, p.92). Grimball’s mother, Ann Watt, had started her own school, The Watt School, and had successfully instructed children in grades one through three since 1933. Grimball attended Porter Academy and went on to become a ranking officer in the Army as well as receiving a college degree and his MA in history from Duke. His passion was education and he returned home to Charleston and found himself working with William Gaud at Gaud School. Gaud retired and Grimball continued the traditional educational methods on which Gaud School was founded. Gaud School flourished under the leadership of Berkeley Grimball with enrollment and academic achievements on the rise. The school continued a steady growth, which required Grimball to purchase new facilities and hire more teachers for the students. Gaud School for boys obtained an excellent academic reputation.

Merging of Academic Institutions

As the Board of Trustees of Porter Military Academy surveyed plans for moving the school, the discussion of a new headmaster was also underway. First on the list was Berkeley Grimball. According to Greene (1984, p. 162), Grimball agreed to the position and the “only stipulation was that Gaud, Watt, and Porter schools all merge into one” because he did not want competition with his mother’s school and most of the students leaving his mother’s school after grade three attended either Gaud School or Porter

Military Academy. The deal was completed and the doors of both Gaud School and Watt School were closed in 1964. In 1965 Porter-Gaud School opened its doors on the new campus.

With the merger came other changes, mostly cultural. The blending of the schools was a process that required integrating students from two rich, academic traditions into one institution. Even though both were single-gendered schools, there were major differences between the schools. The major difference stemmed around finances and philosophies. The Gaud School students were mostly from families with financial status while the Porter Military students were from all different areas. The Gaud School focused highly on academic achievement while Porter Military Academy had connections with military traditions, including ranks that were given to members within each class. These schools were basically rivals and often caused problems within the community while playing pranks on one another (Greene, 1982). Stories are told about rivalry between the two schools that would mimic rival high schools today. Students played tricks on one another and even vandalized each others' campuses. The combining of the school was a challenge because neither school wanted to lose its identity.

The students came to accept the combining of the school names to represent their newly founded school. This was a way to hold onto what the students felt represented each former school. The military status was lost and the school started to model more after the Gaud School philosophy as a college preparatory school. With the integration well underway, the next major issue for the school became coeducation. Until 1972 both Gaud School and Porter Military Academy had been single-gendered educational facilities. Females had not been enrolled in Porter Academy for more than a century and

were also removed from Gaud School decades earlier. In 1972 Porter-Gaud School opened its doors to 644 students, both males and females. The first few years did not draw many females because of the single-gendered girls' school that is well-known in Charleston, Ashley Hall School. The number of female students at Porter-Gaud is still challenged today because Ashley Hall School continues to be a prominent educational facility.

The boarding aspect remained a part of Porter-Gaud School until 1973 when it was determined that there was declining interest. The decision to end the boarding of students was a very controversial decision because Anthony Toomer Porter founded Porter Academy for orphans and the underprivileged and this decision steered the school away from the original founding principles. The number of orphans attending Porter Military slowly declined over the years as did the number of boarding students, but the church remained a financial backing for many lower class families that could not afford the Porter Military tuition. The students requiring financial assistance were always allowed to attend Porter Military Academy and a large concern was that this era was coming to an end.

The school's jointly designed curriculum put a focus on the arts along with academic rigor. With the school being a preparatory school, the focus became producing students that were college bound and well rounded in all aspects of education, including foreign languages, math, sciences, literatures, and the arts. This would mean that the students have a balance of academic and social skills. According to Greene (1984), in 1974 "one of the biggest changes that fall was the hiring of the first full-time music director for the primary grades" (p. 187). This developed into a full-scale music and arts

program for over 600 students. The school continued the traditions of a preparatory school.

Porter-Gaud Today

Porter-Gaud School, enveloped with rich history and tradition, currently stands erect and proud on Albemarle Point. The school has strong ties with the Episcopal Church and is an independent, college preparatory school. The campus has changed throughout the years with continual upgrades, including the WATCH tower, a new science and technology building, a kindergarten wing, a cafeteria, and more. The WATCH tower symbolizes Porter-Gaud because WATCH comes from a long-standing philosophy that the students focus on: Words, Action, Thoughts, Character, and Habits. As the school progresses and evolves, those involved in the changes never lose site of the founding principles of the school. In addition to academic excellence, the school is dedicated to providing a sound artistic and spiritual environment. Porter-Gaud strives to nurture and protect the students' curiosity, talents, integrity, and humanity. The community aspect of the school mimics tribal aspects. Generations, or elders, are actively involved and looked to for wisdom, peers support one another, and faculty and staff are like family. Porter-Gaud emanates a respect and desire for a tight-knit school community.

Now that you have a rough sketch of the main character, Porter-Gaud School, let me continue by helping you get to know the main character even better. I consider the second layer of a portrait to be the addition of color to the sketch. So let me continue painting this portrait by adding some color...

Adding Color to the Sketch

Whether you are coming from downtown Charleston or from a neighboring city, Porter-Gaud School is marked by a small, green, rectangular street sign with an arrow pointing towards campus. For the layperson driving by, it is a sign that has been seen hundreds of times, but blends in with the speed limit sign or a local business sign giving it no meaning at all. For the person who is aware of the educational scene in Charleston, it represents an elite school that some consider like home, but few really have ever experienced or visited. That is where this study comes into play. I am going to take a turn at the green street sign and invite the reader to join me on an in-depth look of the school, including observations, interviews, and work samples. The study that I have conducted will take you into the heart of Porter-Gaud School and show how community and aesthetics bring joy into the school setting and educational experience.

“It looks like a small college campus,” a fifth grader described. “There is so much open green space and the view of the marsh is amazing,” a fourth grader continued. To me the whole idea of a fifth grader knowing what a college campus is set the tone for this study. These are privileged students looking towards the future with high expectations for themselves. But, I have to admit, the descriptions given were fairly accurate; the grounds were immaculately kept and the view looked like something out of a Rhett Butler movie. While driving onto campus there are sports fields: a football field, a baseball field, a soccer field, tennis courts, perfectly manicured open green areas, and several buildings with a few paved parking lots. The overall appearance can be overwhelming and breathtaking at the same time.

The first building that comes into view is the Science and Technology building. A clock tower expands from the top giving the building an educational appearance. According to a Porter-Gaud graduate of the class of 1986, “The clock tower represents growth and change. It has become the landmark for the school. The school holds strong to tradition but has to change with the times. These sections of buildings were not here when I went to school.” In order to walk on to campus, you must pass by gates. These gates are not guarded by anyone and definitely not meant to keep anyone in or out, but instead they are a tribute to the history of the school. The gates harken back to the school’s roots as Porter Military Academy. Even though it has been many years since the school was supported by the state, prepared boys for war, and took in orphans, the school still is rich with tradition and values its history.

Walking onto campus from here leads one into what is known as the Upper School. The Upper School refers to the high school, which consists of grades nine through twelve. Intermixed within the halls of the Upper School are science labs and technology rooms that are also frequented by middle-schoolers. The Middle School actually has its own section of campus for grades six through eight, but also shares science and computer labs with the Upper School. The Lower School also has its own section of campus and consists of grades kindergarten through five. The three different schools are managed separately and can appear to be exclusive of one another, but these three schools coexist and are often intertwined because of the focus on community within the school. Walking through campus one quickly notices that all of the buildings have names given to them: Fishburne Gym, Buxton Hall, Wendell Center, Berkeley Grimball Fine Arts Center, and so on. These represent tributes paid to PG associates. The students

refer to the buildings by the given names, which gives these current students a connection with previous people who have been associated with and impacted Porter-Gaud School.

The campus overall consists of twelve main buildings with several wings of each. There are common areas that are used by all of the students: the cafeteria, the chapel, the auditorium, the gyms, and the fine arts building. Throughout a school day the students tend to stay in their appropriate area with their groups of friends seeming to enjoy their educational experience.

This study focuses on the Lower School of Porter-Gaud. Even though the school consists of three sections and the students in the Middle and Upper School interact with the Lower School students, the main focus of this portrait is the Lower School.

Throughout this section I will take the reader on a campus tour, which will consist of telling about the setting within the school and about observations that were conducted.

The first building that comes into view when driving to this section of campus is the kindergarten building, which is separate from other buildings and houses three classes of students. The building was designed to be a state-of-the-art facility for education. The kindergarten curriculum coordinator helped design the building and the program to make sure the needs of the students were at the forefront of construction.

Inside the building there is a large common area room with enough tables and chairs for all of the students. The room is welcoming with its bright colors and huge rug. Student work lines the walls giving meaning to the decoration of the rooms. The common area is where art, music, Spanish, social studies, and special activities take place. There are four classrooms, one for each of the three kindergarten classrooms and a science exploration lab. The four classrooms each jet off the common area. Within each

classroom there is a reading loft, a computer center, desks put in groups, and a couple sitting areas with rugs for story telling and class meetings. Each classroom has two certified teachers as well as an art, Spanish, physical education, computer, music, and a science teacher with whom the students rotate classes to see at different times. The class size does not exceed 22 students, which gives the class a 1:11 student to teacher ratio. Throughout the day the students are mixed among the children in the other classes for reading activities, math activities, and more.

Walking into the kindergarten building for my first set of observations turned out to be a little trickier than I had expected. I was locked out. The doors of the building remain locked throughout the day to ensure the safety of the school. So I knocked a couple of times and a student greeted me with a smile. The teacher was standing in the background and had obviously given the OK for the student to let me in. The student escorted me to an area where the teacher was seated with the class near the far side of the common area. He then reached out his hand, looked me in the eye, and with limited use of his R's said, "Hello. Welcome to our art class." He told me his name and showed me where to sit. I returned his greeting and thanked him for his kind welcome. I sat down half expecting the class to be looking at me and giggling, but nothing of the sort was happening. At first I thought this was staged because of the observation, but as I continued to watch the lesson my line of thinking began to change.

The teacher was giving instructions for using fine motor skills to weave lines in a burlap-looking piece. There were about 10 students in her group and all were sitting in chairs watching the demonstration of the activity. The teacher gave multi-step instructions about how to get more yarn if needed, how to thread the needle, and how to

take pride in their work. To me this seemed like a lot of responsibility to give these little hands, but the students listened with anticipation, nodded as the teacher talked, and began with an enthusiasm that showed they were eager to weave and create a piece of artwork.

Names were written on each piece of burlap and I quickly noticed that each had a different design. I assumed that the teacher ordered the designs and let the students choose the one they wanted. To confirm my assumption, I asked a table of students if they chose the designs they were using. A group of bright, young eyes looked up at me and one girl said, “We did not choose it, we made it.” Another girl continued to explain, “See, this started out as another art project where we had to draw a path that an animal could take.” The first student continued the explanation, “We were doing that in science and we drew it here in art. Then Mrs. Olson, our art teacher there (the student pointed to the teacher) let us trace them in paint and make a template.” I must have looked like I was in shock because the student proceeded to tell me what a template was and how to make it. The group used hand gestures to demonstrate the template and screening process. I could not believe the language coming from this miniature adult sitting in front of me. Templates? Screening? Printing? Was I hearing this right? The five-year old child sounded like he knew how to run a printing press! The group continued by explaining that this was the final part where they could weave their original designs. The teacher nodded in confirmation and filled in a few of the minor details that the students had left out. She said that she could have ordered pieces to weave, but this gave so much more meaning to the students. At that point I decided to make no more assumptions.

As I sat and observed the class interacting with one another and the teacher, I quickly concluded that rules had been previously set and followed and that there was a

level of comfort and trust in this group. The students went to the teacher as their yarn broke, ran out, or they needed to thread another needle. The teacher often greeted them with a smile or a hug, showed excitement about their work, and set them on their way secure and confident. Laughter and smiles were contagious.

Kindergarten Pictures throughout the Year:



Figure 10: Kindergarten Work Displayed for Founder's Day



Figure 11: Flute Playing



Figure 12: Playing Instruments for Parents



Figure 13: Mother's Day



Figure 14: Sharing Indian Culture



Figure 15: Dissecting Flowers in Science

Leaving the kindergarten building and following the sidewalk brings you to the next wing, which is Buxton Hall. This is a hallway that consists of the computer lab, three fourth grade classrooms, the back entrance to the library, and the Spanish classroom. The computer lab is visited by all students in the lower school for a designated amount of times throughout the week. The lab has 30 computers, Smartboard technology, and more. Painted on the hallway outside of the computer lab is a blank map of the United States. A focus in fourth grade is the states and the capitals, and this map becomes an interactive activity used throughout the year. On both sides of the map and lining the hallway is student work including computer projects, fourth grade work for social studies, math, or language arts, and Spanish projects.

The three fourth grade classrooms are equipped with desks and chairs to comfortably fit the 21 students per class. There are projectors on the ceilings that are used for internet use, computer use, and video viewing on the large screen posted on the front wall. Smartboard technology is readily visible whether it be a tablet or board mounted to the wall. There is a common area within each room for class meetings and discussions. Since fourth grade is departmentalized, each classroom is decorated with its specific subject in mind. The fourth grade teachers each teach their own subject: math, language arts/reading, or science, and then they teach their own homeroom social studies. The students rotate classrooms throughout the day. Spanish is a special area class which grades first through fifth attend. The Spanish teacher displays student work and has a brightly colored, welcoming classroom.

Walking into a science class always hits home with me. I have been a science teacher for fifteen years and have to admit that it is my favorite subject to teach. I have

always said that I teach the best subject because the students get to explore new concepts and conduct hands-on experiments. Needless to say, I was not disappointed when I walked into the fourth grade science lab. I quickly took a glance around the room and saw mobiles hanging above lab groups to designate group names. It was obvious the topic of study was astronomy. The room was bursting with science materials, supplies, and animals! The best way to describe the sound was productive noise. The room was by no means quiet, but it was not out of control either. The students all seemed to be immersed in conversation, not about random topics, but about the size of a crater an asteroid would create if dropped from the sky. They were exploring if different size objects would create different size divots upon impact. The asteroids were play-doh balls and the earth was a pan of flour —the students loved it! They had measurement tools out, recorder sheets, and materials for each lab group. It was obvious that every student had a specific job or role to play in the activity with no students being left out.

I walked table to table and heard such things as, “We need to predict before the next drop. What size crater do you think the two inch ball will make?” “This rocks! I love science! But I hope one of these will really never hit the Earth!” After that comment a group discussion began about what size object would knock the Earth out of orbit. A student wrote down the question to save for the class discussion. Another group member said, “Did everyone record the last measurement? We need to make sure we have it before we test the next one.” The lab ran very smoothly and the students really seemed to grasp the concepts. The teacher pulled the class together at the end and led a discussion about asteroids and meteorites. She used her projector to show real pictures of craters on the Earth and on the moon. She explained that this was a lab/discussion that would take a

few days; I was instantly sorry that I would not be here again tomorrow. I was sure the students were excited about the topics and were looking forward to science class the next day.

As I walked into a math class in progress, I noticed the entire class on a rug in front of a Smartboard. The teacher was conducting an interactive lesson on fractions. The students were all focused and excited about the topics. With the Smartboard the students can pick up a marker type instrument and draw on the surface of the board. While nothing is actually coming out of the utensil, the writing appears on the boards. Answers can be completed with the touch of a finger. Students can change colors, fonts, and move answers all by the use of their hands or the writing instruments. The Smartboard facilitates interactive participation for all in the class. The class period seemed to fly by and as the bell was ringing several students were asking to use it again the next day.

I stayed after class for a moment and asked the teacher about the Smartboard and if it increased participation within the class. She assured me that it did and felt strongly that all teachers should have the boards in their rooms. There are teachers in every grade level who have the boards and others have the portable tablets giving everyone access to that type of interactive technology.

4th Grade throughout the Year:



Figure 16: 4th Graders standing by their state projects in the hallway



Figure 17: Dissecting Owl Pellets



Figure 18: Senior student shares her trip to China

After leaving Buxton Hall the library is the next door on the right. The library is used by the entire lower school and is a haven for checking out books, researching, or laying on a huge rug to get lost in the latest story. There are rows and shelves of books that are neatly displayed and inviting to browse through. There are tables of computers with bench seating and a large reading area rug. The librarian teaches classes as well as helps the students find books of interest. While I was walking through the library to observe the setting, I noticed students standing around a castle that was on display. The librarian was explaining the different parts of the castle and telling the class of second graders about the fifth graders' projects. I quickly noticed the dozens of castles that were on display for the rest of the lower school to see.



Figure 19: Reading on the Library Rug

Leaving the library and continuing on takes me past a boardwalk that leads to the playground and outside gardening area for science classes. The board walk passes the backdoors to primary classrooms and is decorated with the theme of the year. The classroom doors are painted a bright color and the windows are decorated with student work. There are often plants outside the doors— there was even a Dr. Seuss bathtub outside a first grade door! As I pass the board walk I hear giggles and cries of joy from students playing on the playground. I peak down and see students playing four square, basketball, tetherball, swinging, rock climbing, and sliding down one of seven slides. I stop for a moment and think about joining them, but know that I must observe my next class.

As I enter the primary hall, I note the theme for the year is Global Education. There are mock passports on the doors with student photos. Flags are hanging from the ceiling representing different countries. This definitely looks like a hallway of world travelers!

As I walk into a first grade classroom, I am greeted by a student. This was very similar to the greeting I received from the kindergarten student. The child stood from his desk when he saw me in the doorway. He quietly walked up to me and said, “Welcome to our class.” He told me his name as he stretched out his little hand to shake mine. I met his hand with my own and told him my name and that it was a pleasure to be there. He walked me to my seat and told me a little about what they were doing at that time. He then returned to his seat and continued to follow the lead of the teacher. The teacher’s eyes met mine and she greeted me with a wink and a smile. She did not miss a beat with the instructions she was giving the class. The students were not at all distracted by my

presence in the room. This was a well rehearsed routine and one that seemed to really work for the class.

I sat in a small chair in the back, which quickly reminded me that I was among the younger students in the lower school. My knees hit the top of the table as I took out my paper for notes. As I looked around I observed centers for different subject areas, a word wall that obviously correlated with the reading series, bulletin boards, shelves of books, computers for students, and student work displayed on the walls. The room was very inviting and very comfortable. As I looked more closely at the bulletin boards, I noticed that there was one for jobs. The boy that greeted me at the door was “The Greeter” for the week.

After their general morning routine of turning in homework, completing and checking morning work, the class began their morning meeting. A morning meeting takes place with all of the students sitting in a circle on the rug in front of the classroom. It is obvious that this is a community building concept with the students modeling a classroom community. There are students assigned to share each day. One student is the leader of the morning meeting. This person calls on the first person to share and then facilitates the sharing. The student who shares gets to talk for a couple of minutes. After the student is finished he or she states so and says, “I am ready for two questions.” Then two different students ask questions and the sharing person answers the questions. Then it is the next person’s turn. The student who is leading the sharing thanks the person for sharing and calls on the next student. As I observed this process I noticed that the students listened carefully to one another and had questions that really pertained to the topic. For example, one student shared about his grandparents living in Hilton Head and

that he was able to visit them over the weekend. The first question was about the length of the drive and the second was about how often he gets to see them. The whole sharing time lasted about ten minutes and then the next phase of the morning meeting occurred.

The second phase of the morning meeting dealt with improving listening comprehension skills in a fun way. A student was chosen to be the listener and had to leave the room for a moment. When the student was out in the hall, the class came up with a topic and each student said a sentence about it. The goal was for one student to change the sentence and see if the listener could pick up which student made the change. While the listener was outside the class chose a student to change her sentence. When the listener returned the classmates, each said a sentence about eating ice cream. The listener could ask for a student to repeat his or her sentence, if needed. Then the class went around and everyone said the exact same sentence except for the one chosen student. Then at the end, the listener got three chances to choose the student who changed their sentence. The activity really made all of the students listen carefully. The listener did not get the answer correct so his classmates helped him out in the end.

During the meeting the teacher was an active part of the class, not the leader or director. The students had their own roles and responsibilities which made the meeting seem to be their meeting, not a teacher-led meeting. The students were active participants, not just audience members. After the meeting the students updated the calendar and counting wall for the number of days of school. Once again, this was led by the students, giving them ownership in their classroom. The morning work and class meeting took about 30 minutes to complete. This is a daily routine for all of the first grade classes.

First Graders at Work and Play:



Figure 20: Singing at Bishop Gadsden



Figure 21: Balancing in science class



Figure 22: 12th Graders read to 1st graders

The First Grade Play



Figure 23: Pilgrim Maiden



Figure 24: Pilgrim Men



Figure 25: Indian Tribe



Figure 26: Indian Chief



Figure 27: Indian Girl



Figure 28: Pilgrims Praying

Figure 29: First Grade Artwork- Self Portraits of Characters in Play



My trips into the second grade classrooms were scattered and often in different areas. I observed the second graders in art, science, library and in their regular classrooms. I was even asked to be a guest reader! The second grade teachers and students are like a breath of fresh air! The excitement in their eyes and laughter in their voices makes coming into the classrooms something to look forward to with anticipation. The teachers really seem to go above and beyond to make the classrooms inviting and comfortable. Desks are regularly moved into different patterns and seating arrangements, students' work is always displayed in the halls, decorations in the room correlate with units of study, and there is a theme that runs throughout the classrooms. Even though the students are in one class for the duration of the day, they interact with the other two classes and have a concurrent theme throughout. Reading and math groups are pulled from the classes to meet daily. These groups are not ability groups, but consist of a few students from each class to get more individualized instruction. On average there are 22 students in each second grade class with two teachers.

The first time I observed the second graders was in art class. The students walked in a line with bright yellow aprons tied around their waste to the fine arts building. On campus there is a separate building for the music and art classes. The rooms are full of instruments and art supplies. There is even a room for a kiln to create their angels and bunny sculptures, which is a yearly project for the students. The students filed into the class and took their seats at huge art tables that had obviously seen their days of wear and tear. The tables made the room relaxed and inviting. The students had already begun a self portrait and were continuing their work on their pieces. Smiles and giggles could be heard as the students worked and chatted. There were several serious faces while painting

close to the lines and adding detailed work. Overall the atmosphere was refreshing. The students painted for the duration of the time that I was in the class and then they cleaned up in an orderly fashion. After lining up table by table, the students marched back to class with smiles accenting the bright colored art aprons they were wearing.

Another observation that I conducted was a practice for their second grade play. All of the students were in the auditorium, seated or standing on stage, and listening intently to their own teachers and the music teacher. The music teacher was the head of the production and music class is primarily where the students practiced the songs and movements. As the production drew nearer the practice time spilled over into the classrooms. This was one of the first rehearsals on stage. Lighting was in full swing as well as the microphones and sound system. The little voices rang across the stage and the movements and gestures were accented by the shadowing from the lights. Play practice lasted about 45 minutes with everyone getting to say their parts, sing their songs, and say their lines two times through.

At times students yelled too loud and their voices rang throughout the audience or once a girl whispered because the microphones scared her. But as the students practiced and as they were commended for their hard work and adjustments, they gained confidence being on stage. By the end of practice only a few were still tentative with their speaking parts, but most seemed ready for Broadway!

Second Graders in Action:



Figure 30: Dr. Seuss' B-day



Figure 31: 2nd graders are acolytes in chapel.



Figure 32: Read across America



Figure 33: Angels for Christmas



Figure 34: Drayton Hall Plantation



Figure 35: Headmaster reading to class

Leaving the primary hall with the first and second graders and walking on in the Lower School section of campus takes me to the last and final hall, the elementary hall. Housed in this building is six classrooms, three for third grade and three for fifth grade. Both the third grade and the fifth grade change classes for all of their subject areas. There are three homeroom teachers for each grade level with an average of 20 students per class. Observations in this hall were a bit of a challenge for me because I teach one of the third grade science classes and I also teach science for the fifth grade. While I have the most exposure to this level because I see them daily, I needed to make sure that my observations were as least biased as possible. I had to take off my teacher hat at times and observe the students from an outsider's point of view. Since I know how students interact in my science class, I observed the students in other classes and situations throughout the school. This is how I tried to minimize the biases within the study. Even though by seeing these students so often one might consider the possibility of bias, I view it as being able to see them on a different level. I am like family to them. I see their faults as well as their achievements. I can read their expressions, which allow me to have an understanding of them that goes beyond the words they say.

Third grade English class was heard before seen. As I approached the door I heard the teacher asking a question and a whole class responding in unison. This was not skill and drill, but this was learning about grammar in a fun way. The teacher was in front of the class like he was on stage performing for the students. I honestly felt like I had walked into a theatre! The English lesson about quotation marks became a scene from a play. A student would stand and say, "John says comma quotation mark I had a salad for lunch period end quotation mark." Then another student said, "Sally asked comma

quotation mark what kind of dressing did you have on your salad question mark end quotation mark.” The class went on speaking like this. They made up names and sentences, questions and exclamations. The students laughed at and with each other but quickly understood the process of correctly using quotation marks. At the end of class the teacher took a brief assessment and every student got the grammar aspect correct. Wow! What a way to teach quotation marks!

Carolina in the Morning is a program that was written, directed, and produced by the third grade teachers and the music teacher. South Carolina is a major unit of study for third grade. The students study this topic in every subject area within the grade level. The summer prior to third grade consists of traveling or researching special aspects of the state. This year topics included golf courses around the state, state parks, plants of South Carolina, museums in South Carolina, sport teams in the state, and more. The purpose is for the students to actually travel to these places and see their state. Not every student can travel to every place, so research is the second option. In science class the students study the regions of South Carolina and then research a South Carolina animal. In art class they create a clay sculpture of the animal they studied. In English class they write a report about the animal. It is true interdisciplinary work in action! The Carolina in the Morning program is a culmination of the years’ projects and activities. Each student tells a part of history for the state or tells a current state fact. The program is original to our school and a hit with all involved! This is a way the students not only learn but more importantly remember information about our state!

Third Graders throughout the Year:



Figure 36: The Statehouse in Columbia



Figure 37: Carolina in the Morning



Figure 38: Halloween Stories



Figure 39: Gem Mining

Across the hall from the third graders are the fifth grade classes. The fifth graders have been deemed “Leaders of the Lower School.” This is a title that was self-proclaimed and well deserved. The students pride themselves in being the oldest in the Lower School and welcome the challenge of being role models to others.

Fifth grade starts off the school year on a class trip for a week to Green River Preserve in North Carolina. The purpose of the trip is to have aesthetic experiences in nature that will help them to reflect and see themselves in a different way than their everyday lives in Charleston. The trip promotes team building and a respect for nature that carries on throughout the year and hopefully their lives. Students reflect in journals, write poetry, sketch pictures, observe nature through touch, smell, taste, hearing, and seeing. On a hike to a place called Upper Bald, there was a time when the naturalist stopped the students and told them all to find a seat on a rock where no one else was in direct view of another person. Then he said we were all to just sit for a few minutes- no talking- no noise at all. He told us to just listen. When we sat as far as I could see was mountains, clear skies, and a few wispy clouds. The naturalist started to play his flute. The sound was like nothing I have ever experienced. It felt like just me in nature and that nothing else mattered or even existed. I got lost in the sound of the music and the beauty of the mountains. When he finished playing I could hear nature clearer than ever. I heard birds, crickets, an owl in the distance, and the flutter and buzz of insects. I felt like a whole world had come alive in that moment.

He slowly gathered the group together and we continued the hike. Back in the cabin that night my students discussed that moment for them. They described it much like I had felt. I was stunned and pleasantly loved to hear my students describing and aesthetic

experience in nature. The words they used to describe their feelings were amazing. That was a moment that I will never forget, and I feel sure that they will not either.

The fifth grade, even though they are three separate classes, truly work as one. Every week there are grade level meetings that the students lead. The entire grade level sits in a classroom together and talks. This is a time where the students voice their concerns, thoughts, and feelings. The amount of respect that they have for each other is astonishing. Students listen to each other and try to solve the problems as a group. The teachers are the facilitators- not the leaders. The students vote on topics such as community service, open lunches, recess rules, class rules, and more. Whenever a topic of concern arises the students take it upon themselves to bring it up in the meeting. I have been very proud of students who bring up such topics as bullying, peer pressure, cheating, cliques, and friendship. There have been times when the guidance counselor or principal have been invited in to discuss issues. It is amazing how much the students want responsibility and can take the lead when given the chance.

While sitting in the final dress rehearsal for the fifth grade play, *Sis Boom Bah*, I noticed characteristics about students on stage that do not always appear in the classroom. The singing ability, the dance moves, the way a student holds his or her shoulders back while walking across stage and delivering lines can exude such a sense of pride! I watched in delight as the students performed their lines and sang the songs with the utmost seriousness and concentration needed to put on the performance of a lifetime. The following day would be the performance for the Lower School with the parent performance the next night. The auditorium was alive with excitement and jitters!

Fifth Graders in Action:



Figure 40: Green River Preserve



Figure 41: Upper Bald hiking trip



Figure 42: Experiments in science class



Figure 43: Taking over chapel



Figure 44: Graduation production

The Fourth and Fifth Grade Production of *Sis! Boom! Bah!*



Figure 45: Coach



Figure 46: Agnes Gooch



Figure 47: Football Player



Figure 48: Referee



Figure 49: Towns People



Figure 50: Cheerleader

Slide shows for each grade level's productions:

Since a focus is on aesthetics, I found it a priority to show this study in an aesthetic way. Following are links to picture slideshows for different productions completed this year at Porter-Gaud. Please click on each individual link, sit back, and watch in amazement what our students have done!

Founder's Day 2007: Founder's Day is a program where the entire school honors the Founding of Porter-Gaud by paying tribute through the arts. This picture slideshow link shows art work, musical pieces, and performances done by students at Porter-Gaud School.

http://www.portergaud.edu/foundersday/Founders_Day/Founders_Day_Home.html

First Grade's "A First Thanksgiving" was put on by all of the first grade students. The students painted portraits of themselves in character in art class. All of these portraits along with the students during performances are on this link.

http://www.portergaud.edu/media/thanksgivingplay/The_Thanksgiving_Play/Welcome.html

Second Grade's story of Nativity and Christmas is told in this link. There are 71 clay angels shown, 46 pieces of art displayed and 122 photos to tell the story.

http://www.portergaud.edu/media/christmasplay/Christmas_Play/Photo_Albums/Photo_Albums.html

4th and 5th Grade choir members present *Sis! Boom! Bah!* for the 2007 Lower School Musical. Click here to see the pictures of the inspirational story.

<http://www.portergaud.edu/media/sisboombah/Home.html>

It is Saturday afternoon with school starting Monday and I am sitting on a wet board at the Porter-Gaud Lower School picnic taking turns with other faculty and staff watching students and parents throw the softballs at the bulls-eye and laughing as we hit the water. As I am sitting on the dunk tank board looking into my eight year old son's eyes, I see a glow of happiness that can only be described as pure joy. The scene almost occurs in slow motion. I am taking in the sounds and the sights of the event. As I scan the crowd. I hear laughter in the distance, numerous smiles flash by me as students run around the open green area. I see my other son walking with his friends; I catch glimpses of parents interacting with teachers, administration mingling, football players signing autographs, and smell smoke rising from the grill sending off a scent of well-prepared hamburgers and hotdogs. I scan back and see my son as he aims and throws. The ball leaves his hand and for a moment the only sound to be heard is the ping of the ball hitting the round, metal bull's-eye. Then I hear his, "Woo-hoo!" just as I am submerging below the water. I smile and laugh with him and cannot help thinking that this is what the Porter-Gaud community is all about.

My turn ends in the dunking booth and another teacher takes over. As I am walking to my room to dry off, change clothes, and join the rest of the crowd, I begin to recollect the interviews that I conducted for this study. There were three focus groups: teachers, students, and community members. The groups met at different times but basically covered the same questions and topics. By hearing the voices from these three separate groups I was able to get an in-depth view of the topics of community and aesthetics within the school. The first group to meet was the teachers, then the students, and finally the community members. Knowing that I spent time with each group helped

me to reinforce the main concepts that I was studying, the main concepts that are so apparent at Porter-Gaud School: community and aesthetics. Standing in the breezeway, holding the metal door handle leading to my classroom with a towel in one hand and dry clothes in the other, I look back at the crowd. I stand as an outsider looking, but I know that I belong among them. There are so many different people all interacting together—so many different hues and colors. A portrait is being created in my mind...

The Background

The background of the picture is the base that sets the tone for the main features that are being portrayed. In order to create this picture I needed to carefully choose the colors that would allow me to accurately and adequately paint this picture. The palette for this portrait is the three focus groups: the teachers, students, and community members. Looking back on the interviews I realized that these participants are the palette that will generate the colors, hues, and tones needed to paint this portrait of Porter-Gaud School.

The teacher focus group consisted of six teachers representing each grade level kindergarten through fifth grade. The kindergarten teacher is a female with a bachelor's and a master's degree in teaching. She has been a teacher at Porter-Gaud for four years. The first grade teacher is a female who has been teaching four years at Porter-Gaud. She has a bachelor's degree and is actively pursuing her master's degree. The third grade teacher is a male teacher and also an alumnus of the school. He has a bachelor's and master's degree and has been teaching at Porter-Gaud since 1998. The fourth grade teacher is a female with a bachelor's degree and has taught at Porter-Gaud for fourteen years. The fifth grade teacher is a female with bachelor's and master's degree and has

taught at Porter-Gaud since 1998. All of the teachers are white and claim to be of average socioeconomic status.

All of the teachers in the focus group who have children have sent or are currently sending their children to Porter-Gaud for their education. One of the teachers still has a child attending school while the others have graduated. Three of the teachers receive or have received financial aid for their children to attend the school. Prior to the year 2000, teachers received one child free in tuition costs as part of their contracts. After the year 2000, teachers had to apply for financial aid and were given priority status to receive funding, if needed. All teachers did not automatically receive funds for their children to attend, but there is a belief that teachers who teach at the school should be able to send their own children there.

I have found that teachers tend to pay attention to detail in a way that gives them their own category of precision. This attention to detail generates the first true lines and colors of the portrait. These lines are stable and precisely drawn to represent an unwavering and secure backdrop for the picture. These colors are dark, bold, and strong. The teachers take care of at least twenty students per class and plan for several subject areas each day. To juggle the materials, prepare the lessons, and take into consideration learning styles is a hard feat to accomplish. When I asked teachers to participate in the interview process, I was not in the least disappointed. I was pleasantly reassured of the teachers' commitment to the school as all of the teachers not only showed up with the forms but also had the questions filled out with notes to add to the discussion.

We sat around the lab tables in my science class and I reiterated the process according to the forms and made sure that all were willing to participate. I had teachers

from all grade levels attend with exception of second grade. The teacher had a student that needed help after school so she emailed me her answers and then we met to discuss them further. The interview with the teacher focus group lasted about an hour and I met individually later with a few of the teachers to clarify answers and discuss the observations of the classes.

The second section of my palette is the community member focus group. The colors that represent this group are softer tones with a comforting, calming feeling. The community focus group was a mixture of people who I felt truly represented a good sample of the Porter-Gaud community.

This focus group was a little more challenging to pull together. I had a focus group meeting at school, but due to jobs and family obligations not everyone could attend. If participants could not attend the interview group meeting, they were in contact with me through email and telephone. Three of the six community members met at school while three sent their information via email. Five of the six participants sent email written answers to the questions that were asked and I conducted two phone conferences to clarify questions.

One member is a female alumnus who graduated in 1989 from Porter-Gaud School and who currently has three children enrolled in the Lower School, two boys and a girl. She has a high socioeconomic status (SES) and comes from a family with a high SES. The second member of the focus group is also an alumnus, is female, and graduated in 1985. She attended Porter-Gaud school for twelve years along with her brother and sister. She now has three daughters enrolled in Porter-Gaud Lower School. The third member of the group is a female who is not an alumnus of the school. She is an associate

teacher in the Lower School and has a husband who also teaches at Porter-Gaud in the Middle School. She has two sons and one daughter who attend Porter-Gaud. They receive almost full financial assistance for their children to attend the school. With both parents working they have an average SES, but when one parent was working their SES was low. The next member of the group is also female and is not an alum of the school. She is actually an alumna of the rival high school in the Charleston Area, Bishop England. Her husband is an alum and they send both of their girls to Porter-Gaud. The girls both are currently in the Lower School. This family owns a prominent electrical engineering company and has a high SES. The fifth member of the group is a board member who is also an alumna of the school. He opts to not send his two daughters to Porter-Gaud. He ran for the State Senate and his wife is on the Charleston County School Board. They feel that because they are public figures that they should send their children to public schools. He has made it very clear that his children will graduate from Porter-Gaud and be given the opportunities that he has received, but for now they are in the public school system. Both of the parents are lawyers and have a high SES. The final person in the group is a member of the Father's Association and has two children who attend the school. He is also an alumna who graduated in 1982. His daughter does not attend Porter-Gaud but is enrolled at Ashley Hall School. He believes that Porter-Gaud is a school that caters to boys while Ashley Hall, being an all girls private school, is the place to send females. Overall there were six members, five of which are white and one of which is African American. Three of the members have an average SES, one has a low SES, and two have a high SES.

The atmosphere was different than the teachers who recently sat in the same chairs. The adults were more formal and initially not as comfortable in the classroom setting. Some had a businesslike or guarded aura about them. They did warm up after having a classroom tour and meeting the three guinea pigs, four hamsters, two turtles, a chinchilla, and a rabbit that all called the science classroom home. They also were more at ease after I went back over the purpose of the questions and the procedures that were to take place. Prior to starting one parent said, "I do not remember my school being this active and exciting. It seems that there are so many things going on here that I cannot keep up with it all." Another said, "With me working, my wife is the one who goes on field trips and comes into the classroom. I only come for the big events such as the plays and performances." Another said, "This is an amazing place." On that note we started the interview process so I would be able to create the basis of the Porter-Gaud portrait.

The final focus group, and one that I believe to bring vibrant color to this portrait, is the student group. The bold and energetic colors that give a sense of energy and liveliness comes from the students. This is the group that brings life to the portrait. I believe that ultimate truth and happiness can come from the eyes of a child. There is a sense of innocence and security that a child exudes. In order to truly paint this portraiture, I needed to see the school through the eyes of the students. I observed classes, interviewed teachers, parents, and other community members, and really got the feel of the school from an adult point of view...but how do the students view their own school? They truly are the voice of the school and so I felt that their voices needed to be heard.

I chose fourth and fifth grade students to make up the focus group. I felt that students younger than this would have a hard time either understanding some of the

topics or would find it challenging to put it into words. The students that were chosen have been at Porter-Gaud School for at least three years and would be able to represent all grade levels in the Lower School.

Of the three fourth grade students, two were males and one was female. All of the students have attended PG since first grade. One of the students received financial aid and comes from a family with an average SES while two of the interviewees came from families with a high SES. The female student has a mother and father who are alums of the school, one graduating in 1984 and the other in 1987. She has a younger sister who also attends PG. The family has a high SES. The first male fourth grader is one of four children, two brothers and a sister, who attend PG and comes from a very wealthy family. Neither of his parents attended Porter-Gaud School. The family is very active within the school community. The second fourth grade male is an only child with parents who did not attend Porter-Gaud School. The family is from the northeast and moved to Charleston fifteen years ago. The family has an average SES and receives financial aid for their child to attend the school.

The three fifth grade students that were interviewed all attended the school since first grade. There were two females and one male. The first female is a product of an abandoned mother who became a single parent raising a child on her own. She has no financial assistance from the father and he currently lives in Greece. The student has received financial aid ranging from full tuition to partial tuition based on the mother's salary. The mother has a low SES. The second girl has a brother who also attends PG and comes from a wealthy family. Her mother is a graduate of Ashley Hall School, the prominent girl's private school in Charleston. Both parents have a family history of a

high SES. The fifth grade boy who participated in the group is a product of a divorced family. He has a brother who also attends PG. His father lives out of state, travels regularly to see him and his brother, and also is responsible for paying the tuition for their schooling. His mother is remarried, so he has two step-siblings. Both of the step-siblings attend Porter-Gaud, too. Their father is an alum of the school who graduated in 1975. The second marriage and step father situation is very difficult with court cases occurring regularly. His home life is often confusing and can appear troublesome.

Parental permission was obtained by all of the students prior to the interviews. I sent the questions home with the interview forms to make sure the parents were aware of the topics discussed. This gave the parents time to contact me if they had any questions or concerns. The only contact that I had was from a parent who said her child was excited to be chosen and would love to participate.

The students filed into the meeting room on the day of the interview. The interview was scheduled to take place during a recess period since that was time that both the fourth and fifth graders had together. A couple of students walked in together, laughing and joking, seeming very carefree. Two walked in together with ice cream that they had brought from lunch since they apparently did not finish it prior to recess. The students are allowed to bring desserts and drinks to recess as long as they clean up their own mess and dispose of any trash. Some arrived by themselves, but all clearly felt safe and comfortable in the setting. I was seated at a lab table with chairs pulled around—providing one for each interviewee. The students casually sat down and listened to me explain the purpose of the questions and focus group. All of the students had already turned in the parental permission forms but I went back over the information with them

again. I was relieved to see how relaxed they were. A fourth grader stated, “Talking about PG will be easy —our school rocks!” Noting that “rocks” was the current term equating with cool, I smiled, sat back, began the questions, and let the colors flow onto the canvas.

The canvas is the solid structure that accommodates the colors and allows them to take shape and form and also to remain for others to view and experience. With colors flowing from the palette forming the portrait, it is necessary to know the backdrop used to display this work of art. For Porter-Gaud the backdrop or canvas is the foundation of the school, which is the tradition the school is based upon. Though for many, this is just the backdrop, but to me it is the base and starting point for this portrait. The canvas allows the portrait to form. Without a solid structure to paint upon, a masterpiece cannot be generated. Tradition is this solid structure.

When I was hired as a teacher at Porter-Gaud, I remember seeing on the schedule of events on the first day that I had to go to a ‘History of Porter-Gaud’ lecture. I thought to myself, ‘what kind of elite school is this that they give their own teachers a course on the history of the school...can they brag anymore about what they’ve got?’ But then I sat through it and learned so much. I quickly realized that this is pride, not boasting. This is the basis of the school, which everyone takes very seriously. As I left the lecture I thought that it was the best part of the entire in-service program presented during those couple of days before we started school. I had an understanding of where I was teaching and the philosophy in which the school was based upon. While interviewing the focus groups I received many of the same sentiments that I personally have.

“Tradition is valued because it is the history that this school is based on. We need to know where we come from in order to truly understand who we are and who we might become.” This was the answer from a teacher who is also an alumnus of the school. All of the teachers agreed that the school itself puts a lot of value on tradition. They gave examples such as buildings being named after people associated with the history of the school, the Porter Military Academy (PMA) gates are a symbol for our current school; the W.A.T.C.H. (W.A.T.C.H. stands for Words, Action, Thoughts, Character, and Habits) tower outside the chapel donated by PMA graduates; scholarships are given in the name of PMA; the cannon displayed on the grounds from the PMA campus; the items in the chapel from the PMA campus when Anthony Toomer Porter headed the school; the mentioning of the saints such as Anthony Toomer Porter in our Eucharist services; the connection with the Episcopal church, and fact that all new faculty have to attend a history of PG course upon hire.

The students value tradition. “Porter-Gaud is tradition,” a fifth grader said. Another said, “We take pride in the gates that are in front of the Upper School. This is our history.” The maturity on how the students viewed this topic was amazing. “We have learned about the history since we were in first grade,” said a fourth grader. Another said, “Yeah, every year we hear more stories and we have taken a campus tour to see all of the things that are historic to us.” My own son takes pride that his grandfather’s name is on the W.A.T.C.H. tower as a donor from Porter Military to help construct the tower to honor PMA. He was also a recipient of the Porter Military Academy Alumni Scholarship and said, “I have a history at Porter-Gaud. My dad went here and my grandpa went to Porter Military. I am grateful for the connection and I take pride in it.” A true sense of

pride is the best way to describe the attitude and demeanor of the students as they talked about their school.

The community members are well aware of the focus on tradition at PG. According to a current parent, “Students develop a sense of tradition at an early stage in their education.” She went on to list traditional activities such as Special Activities Day, fifth grade vs. teacher competition, the seniors walking in the Halloween parade with the first graders, the twelve days of Christmas program, the lower school plays and she states how these events help parents to gain a sense of tradition from student participation. Two other parents commented on the current traditions and their hope that they continue. Both the students and the teacher focus groups also mentioned the listed items as traditions that they hope continue at the school.

The community focus group took the concept of tradition in another direction when they discussed their concerns about changes occurring within the school. A parent stated that most PG alumni that live in Charleston send their children to Porter-Gaud, so in that part they want to keep the tradition alive. But tradition within the school is changing. The school is changing with the times for better or worse. He explained by giving examples of “third grade going self-contained, which is a tradition being broken and the addition of kindergarten to the campus.” An alum stated, “Tradition is valued and honored, but just because we value tradition does not mean the school cannot change for the better. We hold on to tradition and make new traditions. We never lose site of who we are or where we have come from.” The students also noted changes is tradition when a fifth grader said, “We don’t want to lose the connection to the past so we keep some things the same, but things also change— like look at technology. I bet my parents did

not use an iPod in science class!” I think the statement about holding on to old traditions, but making new ones is essential. There are ways that tradition can curb changes from occurring too quickly. According to a board member, “Tradition guides the board and faculty, and creates a sense of continuity with curriculum, faculty hires, and school policies.” He goes on to say there is a respect for the PG tradition of excellence that prevents dramatic changes to occur.

Tradition clearly influences the background aspect for the education at Porter-Gaud, but it definitely does not dictate the current teaching procedures. The basic consensus from the teacher focus group about tradition influencing education is that it does not really influence the day-to-day goings on at school within the classrooms. A teacher said, “It is more the bigger picture or the bigger events that deal with tradition.” The teachers acknowledged things that have been traditional in the past such as the plays, graduation, the 12 Days of Christmas, and the Halloween carnival. Another teacher said that the connection with the history of the school is important and we use it as a teaching tool. A teacher added to that by saying, “We are not teaching the same way we did even ten years ago, and we do not have the same type of student we did then either. We need to change with the times, which means that we need to accommodate for different learning styles and teaching styles. Technology is also a factor that we are highly involved in.” Then a teacher added, “We say that we do not focus on tradition daily, but we still highly stress W.A.T.C.H. within our classrooms. That is what a huge part of our philosophy is based upon.” It is evident that the teachers value and respect Porter-Gaud traditions but they are not stuck in traditional teaching styles or methods; instead they are

often on the cutting edge when it comes to technology and research for new ways for instruction. Tradition at Porter-Gaud creates a strong, yet vibrant canvas for the portrait.

The Middle Ground

The middle ground of a picture is the focal point. This is the main subject of the picture, the primary focus. I believe this to be the students. I volunteered to sit on that slimy, wet bench and be repeatedly submerged in the water because I knew my students would enjoy it. I am content with the administrative side of my job, but am currently truly happy when I am in the classroom with the students. I teach because I want to make a difference in these kids' lives. On the other hand, I am a mom. I pray that my children's teachers are in the profession for the same reason that I am. I hope that they put my own child, along with the other students, on top of their priority list. So as a teacher and as a mom I believe that the most important aspect of our school is the students. I am not the only one who would paint the students as the focal point of the picture. All of the interview groups agreed that the students are the primary focus within the school. Other aspects support this, such as the students receiving an excellent education, the students being happy, the students making friends, the students being safe, and so on. The common denominator is the students; hence the students are the focus of this section.

When discussing the most important element within the school with the teacher focus group the response was unanimous, "The students," was the answer that came from every person sitting in front of me. Wow, the discussion could have ended there because from here on out the teachers just gave supporting answers to reaffirm that the students were the most important element in the school. They stated how materials and technology helped them teach the students and how learning new techniques was a vital aspect in

properly educating the students...but they went on and on and on about the students. They cared about learning styles, family issues, friendship concerns, and more. The teachers were discussing the whole child— not just the education, but the social aspect, too.

When discussing the most important element with the community focus group the responses varied, but all had the underlying theme of the students. “Opportunity” is how a current parent described the most important element at PG. She was quick to answer and went on to say, “With an education from PG, students are taught more skills and knowledge than most schools. Students are given the opportunity to participate in programs not commonly offered in public school, i.e. Chinese languages/history classes. Students may choose to take many Advanced Placement Classes, learn from the most experienced teachers, become involved in the outside community, and develop a sense of values that will assist in their further education.” A second parent believed that academics and performance is the most important element at PG. He stated that this is both parent and school driven. The school has an online grading program and as the parent says, “We can have a daily dose of how our student is doing.” The parent feels that this can make for a very competitive environment. I quickly picked up on his tone of voice which told that this can be both positive and negative. Porter-Gaud has been known for being to stringent academically with a very competitive educational environment. I personally have noted this being more in the Upper School and no so apparent in the other Middle School or Lower School. According to an alumni and board member, “The most important element in the education at Porter-Gaud is the focus on excellence and the moral/ethical component exemplified in the Honor Code and in the Episcopal-based

philosophy.” Three parents agreed on the most important element being the quality of teachers and the individualized instruction that their children have received. One shared how her child was struggling and the teacher taught the material in a different way because the learning style was different. A board member stated that the teachers are here for the students and summed up the fact that all that had been said stemmed from student success and student happiness. This response and explanation supported my thoughts about the students being the most important aspect at Porter-Gaud.

The only group that did not recognize themselves as the most important element was the students themselves. When asked the question three students answered in unison, “What we learn.” Then one continued, “We all are going to college and we need to be prepared for the future.” Others nodded and a brief, friendly debate occurred between South Carolina Gamecocks and Clemson Tigers. The students continued talking about subject areas like how Latin in 6th grade can help them because it is the root of our language, about how the Advanced Placement courses are far away but they know they need to take them. I was amazed at the discussion about school. The students even commented on the teachers. One fifth grader said, “Do you know how many doctors we have teaching here? I bet no other school has teachers that are as qualified as ours!” Then a fourth grade girl said, “The teachers have to be good in order to be able to teach us the material and for us to be able to learn it.”

A girl changed the train of thought when she mentioned that friends are important, too. She said, “I think my friends here are important. My dad still is friends with people that he went to school with when he was my age. I like that I will grow up with these kids

for twelve years here and then stay friends forever.” Others agreed and mentioned friends that they have made that have made school important.

I do not even believe that the students realized that they were the focus of the school. I would deem this humility. They did not sit there and demand to be taught or have an elitist attitude. Instead they complemented the teachers and the curriculum. They are looking towards their future and realize the importance of an excellent education. Friendship is a factor that was highly stressed. I believe that this shows that importance is put on the social aspect as well as the academic aspect within the school.

Looking out at activities taking place at the picnic, I truly believe that the school can be divided into three separate groups: community, teachers, and students. But even though there are three distinctly different groups, they all seem to be intermingling comfortably amongst each other. There is a level of ease and trust that exudes from the activities as they unfold. Tradition is my canvas and the focus groups are my palette. My portraiture is coming into form.

Detailing with Community

In order for the students to succeed at Porter-Gaud, both academically and socially, there needs to be a setting and support system for them. The community is the support structure that helps to foster the educational environment. The Porter-Gaud community is what brings all of the detailing to this portrait. At times the community is vibrant and shines in the forefront of the happenings at Porter-Gaud. Other times it is the soft hue or glow that gives comfort, and by just seeing the shine, it soothes the soul knowing that there is support and reassurance when needed. Community can be represented as deep, dark, strong lines as well as peaceful and calming tints of colors.

Community gives the main character, the students, security and allows for beauty and stature to be painted in this picture.

When talking with the focus groups about community there was an aura of contentment and satisfaction along with excitement. These were the makings of the strong sense of community, which would be represented by bold lines and vibrant colors. It was apparent that the focus groups valued community and wanted the community influence to remain an integral part of the school. The topics that reverberated among the groups were examples of whole-school events, classroom events, and Lower School activities. Many of the events also have become tradition at the school.

Some of the whole-school events cited repeatedly were the Founder's Day concert, the Halloween Carnival, the performances, and the 12 Days of Christmas. These are events where all of the students participate together in activities. A current parent said, "The 12 Days of Christmas is something that every student has to experience just once and then they are hooked on the PG community. It gives me goose bumps and I giggle with excitement every year I see it occur." The fifth grade teacher said, "The Founder's Day concert allows all of the students in grades four through twelve to show their musical abilities and allows them to be a part of the larger PG community." A first grade teacher commented on how the first graders look forward to a senior walking them around in the Halloween parade and then also mentioned the seniors coming back to read to the classes. A second grade teacher shared that there is a special performance of the second grade play for only the seniors and they get to say the parts and sing the songs with the current second graders. A student within the focus group also mentioned this and he asked his fellow classmates, "Do y'all remember when the twelfth graders sat in the

auditorium for our second grade play? They sang the songs louder than we did! I can't wait to do that when we are seniors!" The other students nodded and laughed in agreement. To me this speaks volumes about how students want to be an active part of the larger school community.

As the examples from the focus groups continued, the portrait's features began to gain more depth and detail. A kindergarten teacher shared that fifth graders and seniors have come in to their classes for science activities. She said that this helps the younger students to "see that there are others on campus and have quality time for interaction with them." A third grade teacher then cited times that juniors, other teachers, faculty and staff have come into their classrooms to read aloud to the students. That opened a whole other line of thinking and at least twenty examples were given when faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and administration have come in to the classes. Third grade had alumni from The Gaud School and a previous administrator give the students a lesson on PG history, and for *Read Across America* week every lower school class had at least four visitors to read to their class. Field trips were listed with chaperone involvement to show how parents are a part of the community, too. I was overwhelmed with the amount of examples I was being given about community. I also wondered how many more I would miss out on hearing about because of the limited time that we had for the interviews.

Another vignette to be explored was the area of sports and clubs. There are numerous opportunities for students of all ages to interact with others within and among the Porter-Gaud community. Starting in sixth grade the students are able to interact with others within the middle and high school in competitive sports and social clubs. Intramurals is for fourth and fifth grade students where the six, seventh, and eighth grade

students volunteer to help and are the referees and umpires in the games. Cheerleading is run by the varsity and junior varsity squads for students in Lower and Middle Schools. Saturday morning basketball is for grades second through eighth where the high school students are the coaches. Again, the list went on and on. More detail continued to be added.

After the brightness toned down from the extensive list of community-based activities, the conversation generated a tone that could only be described as comforting with a sense of peacefulness. To me the colors became softer and calmer. Voices did not reverberate, but instead had a subtle quality to them. A teacher said, “You know that you see the true sense of a community when a death occurs. How this community came together during that time still brings tears to my eyes and puts a lump in my throat.” This past school year will always be tainted with a bit of sadness and grief. I remember checking my email one evening and seeing the notice that a junior had passed away. I also quickly noted that the school itself had become the location for grieving. It opened its doors for students, parents, and anyone in need to gather. One teacher remembers, “This became the community center where the students and parents came to gather, to grieve, and look for answers.” Our chaplain ran services and our guidance counselors were helping all in need. This carried on throughout the week and culminated as the Upper School closed its doors so everyone could attend the memorial service. There was such a sense of pride and closeness in the Porter-Gaud community at that time that it can only be described as family.

To our shock and dismay that would not be the only death to occur within our community. On the day that two twin sisters received their driving permits, an

automobile accident occurred that took the life of one of the sisters and her mother. The sole survivor, a fifteen year old girl, was left seriously injured, but alive. Once again our Porter-Gaud community was grieving and in shock. The only family at home for this girl was her mother and her sister, dad had left when she was a child. Now, she had no one, so the Porter-Gaud community became more of a family than she could have ever known.

Community itself has different layers and aspects. While I have discussed the overall larger Porter-Gaud community, I think it is vital to focus on the community within the classrooms of the Lower School. The classrooms are like neighborhoods within the community. A second grade teacher made a comment that supports this concept. She said, “We are a family in my class. It feels like we are all families here in different rooms that live in one huge house together.” Taking a deeper and more in-depth look makes it easy to see why the overall community is so effective and successful. The students model community daily and by successfully implementing a focus on community, the students are able to be an intricate part of the larger Porter-Gaud community.

To show that the school values community, our principal sent four teachers to be trained in a program called *Responsive Classroom*. Through in-services training the remainder of the Lower School staff has also been trained. Each grade level does the program differently due to time and age-appropriateness. Kindergarten, first, and second all have morning meetings with a morning message, greeting and sharing time. Kindergarten calls it, “The time to share and shine.” The goal is to take about 20 minutes every day for this time. Grades three through five have class meetings where the *Responsive Classroom* activities occur, but they also have grade level meetings where the

students can talk all together. Since these grades change for all academic classes, they have a period in the schedule for class meeting to make sure there is that common time. “The fact that administration would recognize that we need the time to foster the sense of community and actually put it in the schedule speaks volume about how much they respect the sense of community,” stated a fifth grade teacher.

A parent of a current student shared how he is aware that students work in groups together and learn to be, “responsible, respectful people who can work and learn together.” He goes on to say that this “helps our kids learn to be productive members of society.” A board member and alumni explains how community is a focus because of the “shared values” that are “communicated to students while they are at the school: namely academic excellence, achievement, community service, and ethics. Everything taught at Porter-Gaud reflects this, and it is the shared experience and a bond that ties students, faculty, and parents together.” Jobs and roles within the classroom help to model a community atmosphere. Every grade level shared how jobs were assigned and rotated through in order for all students to experience and learn about responsibility. The jobs were specific for each class, but one job was specific throughout— the greeter. This is the person who welcomes others into the classroom. The teachers explained how they practice as a class with each other and work on eye contact and proper voice. A first grade teacher said, “We are teaching life skills, not only classroom skills. I have noticed the confidence building as the students perform the jobs.”

The students also recognized that their classrooms model and focus on community. They gave examples of jobs in the science class and how it is different for each of the classes. They explained that as students get older the jobs become more

important with more responsibility. A fourth grader laughed and said, “Do you remember in first grade when everyone had a job every day? I think they did that so no one’s feelings would be hurt and everyone could be included.” A student added, “But now the jobs make sense like feeding the animals in class, which means that you actually get food from the cafeteria, monitor the amount of food for each animal, change the water, and really take care of them. I guess with age comes responsibility, right?” I found myself chuckling to this response! All of the students agreed that they liked being an active part of the class. One student said, “It is like the teachers trust us and that makes us feel good about ourselves.”

As I continued my talk with the students, a fourth grader changed the topic a little and started talking about class meetings, *Responsive Classroom*, and sharing time. She explained how they actually meet to discuss problems, vote on issues, and have what she called, “a mini-town meeting every week.” She even gave an example of how they have guests come to their meetings such as the guidance counselor, headmaster, principal, parents, or other teachers. A fifth grader added, “In our meetings we run them. The voice that is heard is ours. The teachers help facilitate, but they listen and give us a chance to speak. That makes me feel like I am valued as a student.” That statement almost took my breath away. The next statement almost brought me to tears, “You see,” the fifth grade girl said, “I guess you may call it a community, but I call it a family. I even called my teacher ‘mom’ once! But this is a place where I think of as another home. I love it here.” Others raised their eyebrows, tilted their heads, and seemed to be thinking of times that were special to them. Small smiles appeared on their faces as they looked at me and

nodded with bright, wide-open eyes. End of discussion— according to them we are not a community, but a family. What a portrait this was turning out to be!

So far the focus really has been on the Porter-Gaud community on the school campus. What is it like looking from the outside in? Are parents and community members really a part of this portrait? I believe they are an important part and have their own roles and features that add detail to the overall picture. A current parent stated, “I feel a part of the community just from having children here at the school. It is more of a connection to other parents than a connection to the school. I have developed some really great friendships with parents of other students.” Another parent of a current student contradicted that and said, “I do not always run in the same social circles as some parents at the school. I feel connected because of the teachers and the events that happen here at school. That is the time that I interact with parents and the PG community. It is the school’s activities that make me feel a part of the larger PG community.” Other parents described that they feel a part of the community when they are invited in the class or school such as to chaperone a trip or to attend chapel. Different views and different levels of comfort are expected, but the underlying feeling of being a member of the school community is apparent. Porter-Gaud makes this a priority and keeps the connections that would not necessarily be made if the common aspect with the parents was not education.

A board member and alumni who currently does not send his children to PG believes that he feels a part of the Porter-Gaud community because of his friends that he made when he attended PG. He states that, “Many PG alums stay in Charleston and the informal network that continues after graduation creates a strong sense of community.” He also comments on “the school’s most recent attempt to reconnect with alumni by

hosting events and sending updates on school news” and how this helps to reinforce that sense of community. This alum and board member commented that he wants his children to graduate from the same school where he did, but that because of his family’s focus politically he cannot send his children to a private school when he and his wife are vying for public office. Even though his children do not currently attend the school, he serves on the board and remains an active member of the Porter-Gaud community.

No matter whether people are physically on campus or not, current students or recent graduates, alums or non-alums, all feel a part of the school community. Porter-Gaud clearly makes community a focus and a priority, which is why it is such an integral part of this portraiture.

Aesthetics Brings Beauty to the Portrait

Aesthetics is an aspect that brings beauty to this portrait and brings the focal point, the students, to life. Aesthetics often equates with the arts, and the arts are a vital aspect of Porter-Gaud. Major productions occur in the grade levels that are the culmination of weeks and months of practice. But there is more to the arts within the school community than just productions, there is also integration within the subject areas. Aesthetics and aesthetic experiences occur within classrooms in the Lower School because of how the material is presented to the students. The campus itself has been equated with aesthetics because of the beauty of the landscape and the attention to detail that created a backdrop for an aesthetically pleasing educational environment.

The Arts are the primary area that allow for aesthetic experiences to occur. The main focus when referring to aesthetics are the major productions that occur yearly. The teachers, parents and students all listed every major performance throughout the year for

the different grade levels. Grades one through five all put on formal productions with stage, props, lines, and songs. One teacher said, "There is not another school in Charleston who has formal productions for every grade level to the extent that we do." The students listed plays for each grade level and how even though they grow older and learn a new play, that when they go back and see the play from the previous year, they find themselves singing along. They are amazed at how much they remember from the plays they produce. Within art class itself the students create art portfolios. Sculptures, paintings and drawings are just a few of the items that are in the students' art portfolios every year. Almost every item that is created in art correlates back to the academic areas and what is being covered in class. "The facilities, the resources, and the teacher make that all possible," commented one teacher.

Aesthetics in the classroom is where the integration of arts within the curriculum takes place. While talking with the teachers, they first questioned themselves in regard to how much they used aesthetics in their teaching. "We don't always experience school, we do school." This was the attitude of one teacher when first responding to the question asked about how much aesthetics is a focus within the class. "We want to use more aesthetics, but we don't always have time." The initial reaction to the question was negative with a definite sense of disappointment among the group. This told me that the teachers cared about aesthetics and wanted to use them more, but that there were academic expectations that took precedent over the arts. It was like the teachers knew aesthetics was important but they just had so many other things that they had to cover. But as the conversation continued, their tone of disappointment changed to relief and a bit of excitement. This is where the painting clearly became brighter.

A fourth grade teacher said, “You know, we sing a lot in fourth grade. I mean a lot...the states and capitals, math facts, grammar topics, and more.” The third grade teacher laughed and said, “The students don’t want to hear me sing, but they do act out and sing on their own for topics in third grade, too.” Every grade level was able to give examples of learning through singing. Then the topics of journals, poetry, and publications were discussed. There is a school wide publication in which the students submit their work and they can shine through writing. Several grade levels publish books that the students have written, drawn, and designed. A science teacher stepped up and said, “My subject allows for aesthetic moments to occur. We can reflect upon topics and make a connection that cannot always be done with other subjects. We experience nature and we have those ‘a-ha’ moments where the information just clicks and it has given a special sense of meaning to the students.” Then the teachers started to share science activities that they know occurs within their grade levels. They agreed that the drawing of the pictures in journals, the actual doing of the experiments, and most importantly the reflection brought meaning to the students in a way that allows for aesthetic experiences to occur.

As a teacher gave a sigh and a smile started to appear on one side of her mouth she said, “I feel a lot better about this. This is the question that bothered me the most. I believe that when aesthetics is a part of the classroom and school that the students are achieving meaningful learning. I was afraid we were not doing enough here at Porter-Gaud. But, WOW! Did you hear all of that?” She questioned the others referring to the long list given of productions and examples of arts within the classroom. Now there was a sense of pride among the teachers. Even though this feeling of relief set in, the teachers

noted that this is an area of focus to continue to foster and promote within the school. They listed several suggestions of more things that could be done to help the students achieve aesthetic experiences. The teachers questioned the parents even really knowing the arts are used outside of the performances that are produced. I found this interesting because one parent questioned aesthetics being used in any place other than the arts. The parent did follow up by stating that our art program surpasses any school she knows, but questions aesthetics being used in the classroom. Then another parent shared examples happening within the classroom and stated that there are “parts and aspects that are used,” but that she believes “aesthetics is not fully implemented in all subject areas.”

The students responded differently than the teachers when discussing aesthetics in the classes. They listed numerous examples of how aesthetics are used within the different subject areas. “You should hear my teacher sing!” came out with a burst of laughter. “Mine dances and walks across lab tables!” shouted another! The students started giving examples of in each grade how singing, dancing, and acting occur in every class. Topics such as playing music while teaching, creating quilts, making Aztec and Inca figures, and building castles were discussed in unison. “Wait until you act out Shakespeare in 5th grade,” one fifth grader said to a fourth grader. He continued, “You will forever remember, ‘Romeo, Romeo, Wherefore art thou, Romeo’,” he said as he stood up from his seat with one arm stretched upwards and speaking to some imaginary person up high. The students giggled. They continued giving examples of how they use the arts in the classes. Many of them liked the drawing journals and taking time out in nature to reflect. One fifth grader said, “Y’all wait until Green River next year, you talk about being in touch with nature. I ate roots, leaves, and bugs. It is the most peaceful

place in the world and a trip that brought out feelings in me that I never knew I had.” He was so serious that no one dared laugh or make a joke about it. Instead the topic changed to the plays that the school puts on. One fourth grader said, “You know when we act it out or draw it there seems to be more meaning to it and I remember it better.” Another added, “When I hear something I sometimes remember it, but when I have the chance to do it and really think about it— that is when it makes sense and I seem to just get it in a different way.” They all agreed. The students felt strongly that the arts were a part of the learning occurring in school and had no trouble citing numerous examples to support their beliefs.

The community focus group had a different take on the concept of aesthetics than the students had. They tended to look at the technical side of aesthetics instead of the fun learning activities that the students cited. Essentially they are looking at the performance versus the experience. To me this makes sense because the parents are on the outside looking in. They are not experiencing the aesthetics but seeing them performed or hearing about them. There is a difference. I expect excitement and meaning for those who experience aesthetics, and more of a calmness or matter-of-factness from those who talk about it. According to a current parent, “Aesthetics assist in children learning to the best of their ability. If children feel safe and are happy to be in the environment, then teachers are able to not only teach the curriculum designed but expand to higher educational grounds. Students will thrive in environments that stimulate the visual sense bringing in an increase in thoughts and imaginations.” A parent expands on that and states that, “the Arts are the element that bring the students to the aesthetic moments and that the grounds and campus give way to a beautiful aesthetic learning environment.” This statement

about the school grounds was an aspect that I did not think about at first, but adds to the detail of this portrait. The grounds are immaculate and aesthetically pleasing. Another current parent describes aesthetics as the neatness of work and pride in presentation. He explained how students work is always on display around the entire campus, not only the Lower School, and that means that the students are taking pride in presentation. He commends the focus on the arts at the school including inside the classroom and the official art programs.

Joy and Bringing Feeling and Meaning to the Picture

I believe that joy is a vital part of the learning process and often can be the result of aesthetic experiences. When discussing the topic of joy with the focus groups, I quickly found that they shared my feelings about joy being an important element within the school. Every person in the focus groups gave examples of enjoyable things that were done in the classrooms that made the learning environment pleasant and even fun. Stories were told from every angle within the school: teachers told about student examples, parents shared stories their children had told them, and students shared events that made them smile and glow with delight. It was clear that the learning environment at Porter-Gaud was full of joy and happiness.

The teachers focused on the joy for their students. A third grade teacher said, “Every single day we all experience joy in my classroom!” The other teachers commented in agreement. Then the fourth grade teacher said, “The kids are happy when they feel safe and comfortable. I think that Porter-Gaud is a safe, comfortable environment where the students can enjoy themselves and have fun.” Again the nods came with agreement. The first grade teacher shared how she had a highly functioning

autistic student and how he brings a sense of joy to the class through humor, “He has such a great personality and he makes the other students laugh while they are learning.” Then examples started pouring out of activities where the students are truly enjoying learning— the singing, the dancing, the activity songs in chapel, the drawings, the hands-on labs, the fraction burgers, and more. The one thing that was very obvious was that all of the examples were from active learning opportunities. It was also obvious that the teachers enjoyed the activities as much as the students. They laughed and demonstrated/mimicked the students while they were describing the different examples. There was not a teacher who could not name numerous examples of joy within the classrooms.

The parents also focused on the students when discussing the topic of joy within the classrooms. I was pleasantly surprised about the importance that they put on joy within the educational environment. Honestly, I expected there to be more focus on academics; it was a relief to hear that the focus was on the happiness of their children. “I believe that my child is happy at Porter-Gaud and this is due in part to the joy that is experienced in the classroom,” one parent stated. Another agreed and said, “If my child is not experiencing joy, then we will find another school, plain and simple.” The parent went on to share how other families she knew have had to change schools because of bullying or kids not being treated fairly and basically being unhappy. She said, “Porter-Gaud is a safe campus where the needs of the students are put first. I feel sure that if bullying occurs then it is dealt with in an appropriate manner. I also like how there are guidance counselors who are available to help if the students are having issues.” Then a board member added, “There are resources for the students if they need it, which is a

great asset to have on campus. But I believe that it is the teachers who truly bring joy into the classrooms. They are the ones who foster the gleam in the students' eyes and making the educational experience a joyful one.”

For me the students are a breath of fresh air and their responses to the question about joy within the classroom did not disappoint me in the least. “Do you really want us to list them all?” asked a fifth grader. The innocence in his eyes made me smile. He was sincere when he said, “I would hate to leave something out, so can I just say that almost everything we do here brings us joy and makes us happy. That is why we choose to come here.” The others agreed and one fourth grader said, “School is fun. Learning is fun—even the tests are not that bad. I can honestly say that I want to come to school when I wake up every morning and I am sad to leave every day.” A fifth grader commented that school is hard at times, but that it is still fun. There are nights when he has an hour of homework and tests are harder in fifth grade than in fourth or third. He shared how it will get harder in Middle School and Upper School and told how much his brother has to study. He noted that even though it is hard that it is also enjoyable. He loves the school, the teachers, and his friends. He said, “I am happy here, plain and simple.” A fifth grade boy shared a story about how he was disappointed when his mom picked him up at the end of the day and he could tell that he had hurt his mom's feelings. He said, “My mom looked crushed when I did not run into her arms and hug her. I was just having so much fun with my friends that I did not want to leave. I tried to explain that to my mom, so now I hug her first and then tell her about the fun that I had.” A student added that his mom has said that she wishes she could go to school with her daughter because learning seems

to be so much fun. She said, “She gets jealous when I tell her about the cool things we do in class and she is glad when she can chaperone or be a part of it.”

It is apparent that joy is a feature that all of the community members experience in the school. The students experience joy when learning, the teachers experience joy teaching the students and watching the students have fun. The parents experience joy knowing that their children are in this type of educational setting. Joy is another aspect that adds detail and color to this portrait. It is the brightness that highlights the students and allows them to shine.

The Foreground

The final attributes to this portrait are the surface features. This wash over the middle ground is what is known as the foreground. The foreground is the aspect of Porter-Gaud that is closest to the viewer, which is essentially the surface layer. It can also be described as the texture of the portrait that gives the picture its detail and originality. These are the accent marks that are often transparent, but when looked at carefully produce a whole different meaning. Only one that truly looks closely, studies the texture lines and opens themselves to feeling, can be able to see the forms beneath.

Most do not see the palette itself and we are well aware of this. People looking from the outside in see the superficial aspects of the portrait. The outsiders see the large campus, the cars in the parking lots, and the uniforms. When discussing this topic with the focus groups, all of them seemed to have similar responses to how the outside community views us.

The teachers’ answers came in unison, “Snotty and self-absorbed.” “Stuck-up.” “Wealthy families.” “Hard academically.” “Private school snobs.” The first grade teacher

elaborated and said, “It is actually a big mystery so people make assumptions. They see the big campus on the marsh and the students in uniforms, but they really don’t know what goes on here at all.” The kindergarten teacher continued that thought and said, “When people ask what I do for a living I tell them I am a teacher. I do not volunteer to say where I teach because I am reluctant to see their response. If they ask, I tell them. I often get the response of elitism or they want to know how I got a job at such a prestigious school. It is funny because that is such an outsider’s view.” The fifth grade teacher said, “People on the outside make assumptions and stereotype us. I wish they could see what it is really like on the inside.” The fourth grade teacher followed this statement by saying, “Yes, we have financially elite people here— it seems like some of these families have more money than God, but that is not all of us. All of the students here are not like that. There are those who flaunt it with the new cars and the trips, but most do not. I wish the people on the outside would stop looking at material things and take a look at us from the inside.” The community focus group continued this mindset with similar answers.

According to an alumnus who does not currently send his children to Porter-Gaud, “The outside community views the school as an elite, mostly affluent institution with excellent academics— the best in Charleston. I think the community may view the student body as a bit coddled or spoiled, which is a misperception we need to work to correct.” A parent of a current PG student who is not an alumnus stated, “I think the community sees PG as a school for rich, smart kids. I do hope that the parents, teachers, and administration will keep these students’ heads on straight so that they can prove that Porter-Gaud provides the best education of an all-around great kid.” The responses also

came in unison of, “Snooty, rich, elitists,” but were quickly followed by, “If they only knew how much we get in financial aid or the help we get to pay the tuition.” That parent was referring to family members helping with the cost. One parent said, “They think we are all rich, white families with all of this money. They need to understand that yes we have financially elite families here, but most of us are families with two working parents making education a priority for our kids. We give up a lot to pay the tuition here and give our kids the best gift possible— an invaluable education.” Another parent who currently has two children in the Lower School stated that there are positives and negatives for how the outside community views us. She stated that positives are “a wonderful education, highly qualified teachers, religious-based education” and the negatives are “spoiled children who are given everything they want, limited diverse student population, too education-minded which causes too much stress, and peer pressure issues.”

The overall tone of the community focus group was that the outside community makes assumptions, some to be true and some to be false. A parent concluded with a statement in which others nodded in agreement, “I just wish some of those people would look beyond the cars in the parking lot and take a seat in our classrooms to see what our teachers are doing for our children. The teachers’ dedication has nothing to do with money— it is a passion for teaching and a love of children.”

The students, while young and innocent are not ignorant to the outside perception of others. I got several answers at one time when asking how others perceive us: “Snotty.” “Rich.” “Wealthy.” “Stuck-up.” “Private School Richies.” “Smart.” The students who answered all looked at each other and giggled. There seemed to be an inside joke that I was not aware of. Then a fifth grader said, “They don’t know us. They think

they do, but they assume that we are all those things.” Then another fifth grader said, “They want to be us. They want to send their kids here. But for whatever reason they do not.” Then another student said, “It is very expensive. My parents tell me that all the time. But I also know we get help with the cost. A lot of people do here.” One student shared about when he played baseball on a recreational team and the other team members asked him where he went to school. When he said, “Porter-Gaud” the other players said, “Ohhhh...” He said that was the first time that he realized that going to a private school made him different. He said that one of his teammates asked him if he was rich and the other asked if he was just real smart. He laughed it all off, but it was obvious that this confrontation bothered him. He told how he went home and asked his parents if they were rich. He had not thought of it before because that was all he had known. Other students shared similar stories about interacting with students who attend public school or other private schools

The outside layer of the portrait is a school with large buildings, students neatly dressed in uniforms, expensive cars in the parking lots with stickers donning the cyclone emblem and Porter-Gaud proudly displayed in the rear window. The sticker equates with status—the status of an elite education with the perception of financially elite families. While some of this may be accurate, it is only the surface. There is a depth beneath the surface of the portrait that is waiting to be explored and revealed. I invite all to take a closer look and see for themselves the different layers of the portrait: the different layers of Porter-Gaud School.

With towel-dried hair and dry, fresh clothes I emerge from my classroom into the crowd. I become a part of the portrait that I have created. I interweave among the

different layers of the portrait just as I am intermingling among the students, parents, faculty, and administration at the picnic. I walk among the focus groups that I have interviewed. I am greeted with smiling faces and even a few hugs from students. My principal winks and nods as a token of thanks for me participating in the festivities. I smile back sending the message that I would have it no other way. I scan the crowd in search of my own children hoping to play the role of a mom for awhile. I see my mother watching my eight-year old son stand in front of a fan to cool off. He laughs with delight as he runs back to her and continues to partake in the games and fun. My other son runs up behind me asking how long we can stay. There is a sense of comfort and joy knowing that we are all a part of this Porter-Gaud community.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

Shading in the Final Features of the Portraiture

I feel as if I am sitting in an open field surrounded by wildflowers with a soft breeze blowing in my face. I can feel the sun beating down upon me and I have a sense of security and peace. I feel warm and safe. I find myself thinking back to the journey that I have taken. Thinking back upon when I was searching for direction and feeling lost. Remembering when I had found a clearing, one that allowed light to enter my realm of thoughts. Then I arrived at a bridge— one that represented my being. As I crossed each span of the bridge, I evolved as a person. The farther I traveled, the more I grew and changed. As I passed over the last span of the bridge, I yearned for a magical and joyous journey. I realize that the bridge is my foundation, my structure. It is what has been my passageway to the journey that I have taken and will be the passageway to other journeys that I will take. I can look back on the journey with a sense of fulfillment. There were times throughout the journey where I felt as if I were floating over and watching as an outsider. Then there were other times when I felt as though I had always belonged as if this was a part of me from the beginning. My journey itself is complete, but the analysis will continue to foster growth in me as an educator and as a person.

I was once an outsider with regard to Porter-Gaud School. I was an outsider when my in-laws suggested that my children attend and I had no idea what the school was like. I was an outsider when I taught elsewhere. I was an outsider until we enrolled my child in first grade and then I became a Porter-Gaud parent. I was an outsider until I accepted a teaching position at the school, and then I became a Porter-Gaud employee. I am an

outsider compared to my husband because he is an alumnus of the school. There are different aspects of being an outsider— different ways to not see what other can.

The Outsider's Perception

The outsiders who have no connection with Porter-Gaud at all see a glimpse of the school or the students and make assumptions and draw conclusions that are not necessarily or always true. The answers from all the focus groups mimicked each other with respect to the question about how people outside the Porter-Gaud community view us. It was almost as if everyone was in the same interview. All of the groups stated that there is elitism, but they all also claimed that it is a wrongful perception or requested that people look beyond the surface and into the classrooms. The focus groups just wanted people to take a closer look before judging.

It was very obvious that the teachers were disturbed by the question about how those not connected with the school views us in regard to the stereotypes that correlate with elitism. They evidently wish for people to look beyond the surface, to get by the financial status, and look at the students as individuals. This makes sense because that is what they do as teachers. The teachers do not look at the incomes of the families as they are teaching the children. I am sure that teachers are aware of some of the parents' professions because they are in contact with them, but it is not showcased within the school. The Porter-Gaud School Directory lists names, emails, and phone numbers; it does not list professions or incomes. An outsider can assume that teachers would know elite families from lower income families, but this is not necessarily true. After further discussion with a teacher she shared that there is usually one or two students within her class that will brag and say that they are rich, but most say nothing at all. That same

teacher commented on the cars that the students drive. She said, “Just drive by and take a look at the cars in the student parking lot and you can tell that these kids come from money.” She brought up a good point. Why is it that the parents buy those cars for their kids? Do they want to show off their financial status? Possibly, but this is not what the teachers see inside the classroom and they want others to have a chance to see inside the classrooms, too. The teachers also noted that there is a perception of academic elitism mainly because of the publicly known information about colleges that students attend after going to Porter-Gaud and because of the academic success that is showcased in the media sources.

I believe that the community focus group members had a very realistic grasp on how PG is perceived by members outside of the community. They recognized that there is financial elitism but they also want others to look beyond that and into our classrooms. They did not deny that there are families with money, but that is not all there is to PG; it is the superficial aspect of the school. Parents at Porter-Gaud have made education a priority with a financial commitment. There are many families that have two parents working in order to pay for tuition; not all families can write a check and not have to calculate the balance in their accounts immediately. In further discussion with a parent who has three children in the Lower School, she told me how she received a Porter-Gaud bumper sticker on the first day of orientation when her oldest child enrolled in first grade. She watched in amazement as a group of moms went to their cars and immediately put the stickers on. At that time she realized that going to Porter-Gaud equated with a status symbol just like joining a club. She did not put the sticker on her car that year. She did not choose the school as a status symbol. After sharing the story, she continued to say

that the bumper sticker did make it on her car the next year after she really felt pride in the school and felt a part of the school community. She did not equate it with status, but with a community. But, that just shows that even though community members want us to look beyond the status symbol and into the classroom, that they are some who are displaying the symbol so boldly. Why do people put the stickers on the cars? I believe that there is pride in being a part of the PG community, which includes being in that level of socioeconomic status and receiving an excellent education. The outsiders see the stickers, which represents elitism.

The students seemed to have somewhat of a different attitude than the teachers and community members; they wanted to almost laugh it off. They found humor in others thinking that they were that different. But what do these students know about being different? The majority of the school's population is just like them. They do not really understand that not everyone can send their kids to Porter-Gaud because of the cost. They compare each other on different levels of being wealthy. These students have grown up having money or the means to pretty much have whatever they need. Very few, if any, of the students comprehend what it means to truly want for something. Their parents drive nice cars and many live in the same types of neighborhoods and vacation in the same types of places. This naivety is confirmed by the story that the fifth grader told about interacting with others on a recreational baseball team and being confronted with going to a private school. He did not think he was different because that is all he has known. He is ignorant to what public schools are like because he has never set foot in one. It is safe to say that these children are sheltered. So do they consider themselves elite? I think that

they are starting to recognize that they are different and have something that others possibly desire.

Realistically there has to be financial elitism because the tuition does equate to \$13,080 for kindergarten and \$14,810 for grades first through fifth per student per year. That means that if a child attends Porter-Gaud from kindergarten through twelfth grade, the total cost, not considering inflation, will be at least \$190,800 per student. Yes, that is almost \$200,000 that will go towards education. That is equivalent to the cost of a house or several cars! Taking a quick glance at the families within the school, people will name major business owners such as Piggly Wiggly, Belk, SeaFox Boats, Pearlstine Distributors, MooRoo, Black and White, Chico's, Papa John's, five major car dealerships, and so on. We do have families of successful, state, national, and world – wide companies that send their children to Porter-Gaud. One of our parents is currently ranked in the top ten on Wall Street for being one of the highest paid and most powerful females in the world. So there is a rightful perception of financial elitism and that makes it hard to focus on the families who are not elite or to recognize that every family does not take in at least six, seven, or eight figures a year!

Financial aid is available and is awarded on a needs basis. Forms are filled out and submitted to a national company that is associated with private schools. Porter-Gaud School has a goal that financial means not be the deciding factor as to whether a student can or cannot attend the school. The amount of \$800,000 was awarded last year in financial aid to families to help offset tuition costs. The goal for the school for the next year is 1.2 million dollars. But, with an enrollment of 910 students, the tuition cost alone exceeds 12 million dollars. So, financially elite? Most— yes, and even though there are

families who receive financial aid, very few families receive full tuition costs covered. I believe that the majority of the families at PG are at an average or high socioeconomic status (SES). There are families that have a low SES, but they are the minority. The majority of the families are in the middle or upper SES.

Another issue that is perceived is the high quality of education. That perception was considered a compliment to all of the focus groups. When discussing education, the tones of voices and body gestures showed amusement and pride among the people being interviewed. That perception, which is actually very accurate, was considered a positive perception. Porter-Gaud has an ability test that must be taken in order to be accepted in the school. The ability tests measures basic skills at the appropriate grade levels. The test is one designed by Porter-Gaud, but equates with a basic test to make sure students are on grade level academically. Throughout the year there are different standardized tests, such as the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) test in grades one through five. Many students continually score among the top in the nation. The high school students take the ACT and SAT and also score extremely well. There have been students who have obtained perfect scores on these tests. This just seems to be a feather in their caps because there is no focus on standardized tests whatsoever. Not all students are academically gifted, but those who tend to struggle get help from teachers, tutors, or peers. Porter-Gaud does have average students, or students who earn grades in the C-range. Students who continually fail, or receive below a 60 percent in a class will not remain at Porter-Gaud because there is a policy about passing grades which states retention or removal can occur. If a student does not pass an academic year, the student can be retained or not invited back to enroll the following year. Last year there were three students who were retained in the second

grade. So retention does occur, if needed. There are also learning services that are available at the school. There is a Learning Specialist on staff who works individually with students with diagnosed learning deficiencies. Students can be referred for observations by teachers, parents, or administration. Observations occur and then a meeting with a team is scheduled. The team consists of the teachers, parents, and administrator. From there a plan is devised with the students' needs and best interests in mind.

Every year there are a few students who leave the school because of academic struggle, but the number coming in surpasses the number leaving. I was told by a parent during the interview that her child got A's in a nearby public school and is getting B's at Porter-Gaud. The academics are more challenging, which has ultimately given her daughter a better education. The public school has state standards that must be followed, while private schools have a choice. Porter-Gaud opts to teach a curriculum that surpasses the public school standards to challenge the students. The school is currently working on a curriculum pacing chart that will be publicly posted by fall of 2009.

The outside community is aware of Porter-Gaud's academic success because of newspapers and advertisements. The yearbook has a page dedicated to the colleges that the last graduating class attended. The school prides itself in the number of National Merit Scholars, its ACT/SAT scores, and the number of students receiving academic scholarships for college. Recently a student from PG achieved a perfect score on the SAT. A part of the perception is derived from media and talk outside the community. The perception of a focus on academic excellence is true— but it is not the only focus that Porter-Gaud has for its students.

The financial and academic elitism are the two main perceptions from the outside community. One can easily say that with one comes the other. I agree that with financial elitism comes the opportunity for academic elitism. I remember calling my husband from my classroom on the first day of teacher orientation. I sat through the welcome courses and so on in the morning, but in the afternoon I met with the technology director and science department chairperson. In my room was a projector mounted to the ceiling with surround-sound for videos and teaching capabilities. The overhead projector was a thing of the past. There was more technology than I could ever imagine in my classroom for me to use. The technology director told me about SmartBoard tablets, SmartBoards, laptops for students, podcasting, websites, and more. In the meeting with the science chair I had learned that I had a science budget for the Lower School of close to \$20,000. I had to ask a few times to make sure that I read and heard that number correctly. That was just for the science classes; there was also money for the other subject areas plus a grade-level budget. I sat wide-eyed looking at the figures and said, "How in the world am I going to spend \$20,000 on science stuff every year?" The science chair giggled and said that we did not need to spend it all, but that it was there so we could teach in the best way possible. So when I called my husband, he answered the phone and I said, "I know where our tuition payments are going. I am standing in my classroom and you should see what the kids have here at this school. It is unbelievable!" So, yes, I believe that financial elitism gives the opportunity for academic elitism. I believe that the outside community has drawn some accurate conclusions. I also think that the outside community should take a closer look at what is working and see if it can be taken back to their own school communities.

A Community? A Tribe?

One thing that I noticed when I was an outsider was that there was a sense of community or a bond that connected people at Porter-Gaud to one another. While sitting here, reflecting back on the study, I was trying to think of another time when I have witnessed or experienced a bond like this. Of course my family has a close bond, but that is normal because most families have a connection and can rely on one another. For a family to be close is the norm and nothing out of the ordinary. I also was a part of a swim team while growing up. I swam on a club team and then in college. My teammates and I had the connection of swimming and being competitive. We also shared other interests and really became a family. But after we reached a certain level, like graduating high school and going to college or after graduating college, we seemed to lose touch and for the most part move on with our lives. I have never been a part of something that has connections at so many different levels. Porter-Gaud has a community aspect to it that mimics a tribe or a family.

All members of the focus groups gave examples of how they felt a part of the Porter-Gaud community— this tells me one very important thing: that there is a true sense of a community at Porter-Gaud. There were different perceptions by the different focus groups about how they felt a part of the community, but nonetheless all of the members of the focus groups felt a part of the Porter-Gaud community in somehow or someway. From this conclusion, I can ascertain that the majority of the people who are associated with the school feel a part of the Porter-Gaud community. It would be unrealistic to assume that everyone has an equal part of this society; I recognize that people play different roles and are involved in different levels with some opting not to be

involved at all. The amount of participation is a personal choice, but all are invited to be active in the Porter-Gaud community.

The teacher focus group looked to the interaction among students as their first impression of community. The teachers recognized that students from other grade levels were an active part in their own classes, which made them a part of a student-based community outside of their own classrooms. Sports available for the lower school students are basketball, volleyball, cheerleading, lacrosse, gymnastics, tennis, intramurals, golf, and soccer. Starting in fifth grade the students can participate and compete in all mandated South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA) sports such as track, swimming, baseball and softball. Other extracurricular activities available include brownies, scouts, karate, creative writing, cooking, robotic instruction, science play, story telling, ballet, guitar, piano, drama, hip-hop jazz, choir, chess club, and service learning programs. They mentioned sports and extra-curricular activities as ways for social interaction for students of different grades, ages, and genders to interact with one another. The teachers looked within the school setting and the immediate school campus as the first response for the community. After some discussion and brainstorming about these events, the teachers began to expand their line of thinking.

A way that stood out that differed from the other focus groups was when the teachers discussed how the entire community came together for the death of a student. In that instance it was more than older students reading to younger students, it was people counting on and needing each other. The people in the community were not only the immediate people on campus but also the outside members of the community such as parents, family members, board members, and alumni. This was the first time parents

were mentioned as being a part of the community. The teachers looked to their colleagues and the students as the community and initially did not recognize parents, board members, or alumni. It took an outside event to bring the other members into the discussion. Once brought into the discussion the teachers noted that they are a vital part of the school.

I followed up with the third grade teacher about parental involvement in his classroom. He said that he welcomes parents in as guest speakers and chaperones on the field trips. He is also an alumnus of the school, so he interacts with other alums outside of school. He was asked to serve as an alumnus on the search committee for the current headmaster of the school. Situations like that show how different people play different roles within the same community. In one instance this man is a third grade teacher, another he is a parent of a Lower School student, and another he is an alumnus of Porter-Gaud.

Looking deeper into the parental involvement issue, I believe there are really two sides to this coin. Parents pay a lot of money for tuition— should they not be able to have a say where their money is being spent? Teachers at PG have an open door policy and welcome parents in regularly. Tours are given on a weekly basis and families often float in and out of classrooms. But, does this ever reach a point of invasion? Do the parents ever overstay their welcome? Personally this was a concern of my own when I started teaching at Porter-Gaud. I had previously taught at another private school in the Charleston area and had a situation where the parents wanted teachers fired and were overly involved in the job the teachers were doing. One parent even attended a field trip to observe a teacher, not help with the students. This showed no trust and a lack of

respect for the administration and teaching staff. This is one reason that I assumed because the parents pay the tuition that they will want or expect a say in the goings on within the classroom. So far I have been pleasantly proven wrong. I have had parents question grades or even the amount of activities or projects, but that happens with concerned parents at any school. I have not actually had a parent try to tell me how to teach or run my classroom. I have never felt that a parent has overstepped the so-called boundaries that are set with the hierarchy in a classroom. Parents respect that the teachers are hired to conduct a job because they know the administration works hard to hire the most qualified teachers possible. The parents have the opportunity to fulfill roles that allow them their say in the running of the school, such as board and committee members, and those who want that will take those positions. Overall, I think it is the respect that is given and the trust that the parents have that their children are in a safe, nurturing, top-notch educational environment.

It is obvious to me why the teachers focused so much on the classroom aspects of community when they were asked the question about being a part of the PG community. Community is a main focus within our curriculum and teachers make a point of it being an important aspect of everyday learning.

Responsive classroom is the concept that the Lower School bases its community model on. The *Responsive Classroom* is an approach to elementary teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community (Kriete, 2002). This concept is one that has been implemented throughout the Lower School and is used in every classroom by every teacher. The school administration researched the methods, sent teachers to training, and purchased the *Responsive*

Classroom books for every teacher on staff. All of the teachers currently have *The Morning Meeting Book* by Kreite and *Power of Our Words: Teacher Language that Helps Children Learn* by Denton. It is not surprising that the school chose such as program because socio-emotional skills are important to the development of the students. The school has in place a guidance program that teaches these skills as well as daily/weekly lessons on character education.

The concept of *Responsive Classroom* can be correlated with Jeanne Gibbs' (2006) concept of *tribes learning communities*. Gibbs (2006) wants a paradigm shift from traditional education to a progressive style of education where "teachers now see themselves as learners, facilitators, researchers, and designers of curricula" (p. 8). Tribes is a term used to describe the interaction and relationships that occur within the classroom. Group learning and collaborative building skills are the primary focus within the tribes. This type of learning is what I observed in all classrooms at Porter-Gaud School. According to Gibbs (2006), there is a mission statement for the classroom tribe as well as a tribal school. The mission for the classroom is, "to assure the healthy and whole development of every child so that each has the knowledge, skills, and resiliency to be successful in a rapidly changing world" (p. 10) and the mission for the school is, "to engage all teachers, administration, students, and families in working together as a learning community that is dedicated to caring and support, active participation, and positive expectations for all students" (p. 10). This type of learning is actively occurring at Porter-Gaud School. I honestly believe that Porter-Gaud achieves both mission statements of the tribal learning program that Jeanne Gibbs describes.

The students mimicked a lot of what the teachers had said because they looked to each other and the Middle and Upper school first as community, which makes them feel a part of the larger Porter-Gaud community. Eventually they added faculty, staff, and parents. But to them, their community is what they immediately see and with whom they interact. For them it is other students first. They focused on interaction among the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools and interaction within their own classrooms. There was no mention of isolation, but instead there were numerous examples of working together and interaction among students and grade levels. According to Gibbs (2006), isolation breeds inertia and those who are alone can experience a loss of creativity and productivity. Having support and creating a sense of camaraderie without compromising individuality is what a community allows. The students made it clear that there are three separate schools within one campus, but though there are different locations, they all feel a part of one overall school. They seem to have a sense of pride in being a Porter-Gaud student—this is a sense of identity to them.

The students described their own part of the community as how they interact and work within their classrooms. Jobs, roles, and responsibilities were discussed as ways to help the community cultivate and succeed. It is obvious that there are no dictatorships within the classes, but instead it is an interactive environment that promotes working together. Relationships are clearly being developed and valued. The students not only knew the term *Responsive Classroom*, but used it regularly when citing examples of class meetings and sharing opportunities. The part that really stood out for me was that the students feel like they have a voice and are being given the opportunity to use that voice. They believe what they have to say matters. They have said things and have been heard.

They feel as though they are valued. This was exemplified when Ms. Brown, the Lower School Principal, recognized the fifth graders as the Leaders of the Lower School and let them earn privileges throughout the school year such as dress-down days, running Lower School chapel, and open-seating during lunch. The fifth graders ran their own class meetings and class discussions and quickly learned that adults and other students cared about what they had to say. They were not pacified or talked down to; instead, they were given opportunities, which ultimately helped them gain confidence and build relationships among one another. The students feel a part of a larger community because they are valued within that community.

There are bonds through kinship with generations being tied to the school. These bonds help support and strengthen the community aspect. The students at Porter-Gaud come from families that are supportive and caring, which allows them to be able to continue this trend at school. According to Sergiovanni (1994), “Students who are fortunate enough to experience belonging from family, extended family, friends, and neighbors feel attached and loved, experience the warmth and safety of intimacy, and are more cooperative and trusting of others” (p. 10). A majority of the students live in neighborhoods together and have common bonds and interests. These interests help the student make connections with one another and build relationships.

The community focus group members shared the events that they see from the outside that make them feel a part of the current, active campus community such as programs, plays, and special events. This makes sense because it can easily be perceived that they are on the outside looking in. But this perception is a little off. They are on the outside by proximity because they are not physically on the campus like the teachers and

the students are. But, they are always welcomed on the campus and are often actually there. The Lower School provides countless opportunities for parental and community involvement. It was interesting that the events such as plays and programs that were mentioned by the community members were mentioned by the other two focus groups. It just shows how these events have become tradition and are valued throughout the school.

Two community focus group members shared how they felt connected with other parents or community members outside of the school campus. I believe this is where the schools differs from other schools and really puts a focus on community. There is a department within the school designated to alumni affairs. Parties, events, socials, and meetings are scheduled to help keep previous graduates involved in the school. A web publication, *Gaudeamus*, is sent to all alums and current PG parents and family members weekly. *Gaudeamus* gives an insight to the weekly events that occur at Porter-Gaud School. In my own family there are six different people who receive the notice weekly. In one aspect this is done for financial support, realistically the school is a business and needs funding. But what does that say about the education that the alumni received or the positive experience that they had when they attended PG? Donations are regularly given to help support and fund the school that they once attended. People are not going to give money to something that is not successful or that they do not truly believe in. To see how many alumni send their own children to the school speaks volumes about the educational experience that is received at the school. My own father-in-law takes pride in the fact that his two sons are PG graduates and now his two grandsons are Porter-Gaud students. The other reason this publication is sent out is to showcase the events that are happening on

campus. Not everyone can attend every event or be on campus daily, so this is a way to share what happens at PG with all of the PG community members.

A parent within the community focus group brought another aspect to the topic of community that had not yet been discussed. A connection was made with the larger Charleston community with the giving back through service learning. Neither the teachers nor the students mentioned the connection with anything outside of Porter-Gaud. The school has specific service learning policies. Currently on the school website there is over forty different service learning events in which students and families can participate. Students earn hours by donating their time doing various activities. There are also collections for donations throughout the year for different charities. Gibbs (2006) states that learning communities must welcome and recognize parents and outside communities. By the students and families at Porter-Gaud School helping others in the local community, they are not only recognizing other communities but also learning from them and being an active part of them. A large focus for Porter-Gaud School is Habitat for Humanity. The school donates money and time to constructing houses for people who need them. Our students and parents build the homes along with other members of the outside community. Fundraisers occur throughout the year to raise money to help offset the cost of the houses. Students, faculty, parents, and alumni spend countless hours constructing the homes and interacting with others in different communities.

When first analyzing Porter-Gaud School, I believed that the community had tribal aspects. With tribes there is a specific identity given and roles and responsibilities. When I think of a tribe I think of topics such as tribal cultures and traditions, tribal gatherings, elders, tribal council, tribal symbols, dress, The Holy Spirit, and subcultures

within the tribe. I can make a connection with Porter-Gaud and each of these topics. There are specific cultures and traditions that are shared among the members of the PG community. Examples of the traditions are performances that have been conducted for years, the connections with Porter Military, the concept of W.A.T.C.H., and more which are listed in questions six and seven.

Tribal gatherings can be looked at in numerous ways. If thinking about the on-campus tribe, gatherings are the class and grade level meetings that occur weekly. Those in attendance of the gatherings are students, teachers, guidance counselors, and administration. There are also gatherings of teachers weekly through grade level planning, but also faculty meetings. The administration has weekly meetings. The elders of the tribe, better known as the parents and alumni, have regularly scheduled meetings and functions. These also could be compared to the tribal council meetings. Gatherings or council meetings occur for planning purposes as well as governmental issues such as the running of the school when the board members convene. The gatherings help to efficiently run the school but also help with celebrations. There are get-togethers for parents in each grade level as well as several all-school events throughout the year. Performances, such as Founder's Day, celebrate our heritage.

Other tribal connections can be made with the elders of the tribe. In a tribe the elders are the wise ones who essentially run the tribe or that people go to for advice. Our elders would be our board members and alumni. The board members govern the school. The alumni have generations of connections to Porter-Gaud School and are able to tell stories of the past and keep our heritage and founding principals at the forefront of who we are today.

Porter-Gaud is recognized by several symbols such as a cyclone, which is the school mascot or the Porter Military gates which stand proud in front of the Upper School campus. The W.A.T.C.H. tower and the clock tower are also symbols that represent the school. Letters and acronyms such as PG or PMA also represent the school. This year the school has designed a crest that will be the new way to represent the school. The crest will be the symbol that will represent the school in years to come.

The dress for tribes consists of uniforms that represent the specific tribe. Porter-Gaud School has had generations of uniforms. Porter Military Academy started with uniforms for daily school attire and dress attire. The students wore the military uniforms daily as part of their identity with the school. As PMA merged with Gaud School the military uniforms changed to a formal dress code. "Our dress represented who we are. We showed that we had respect for our education and ourselves through our dress. Starting in middle school I wore a tie every day to school," states an alumnus of Porter-Gaud School prior to the implementation of formal uniforms in 2006. Currently the students don the official school colors and school logo/crest on selected attire. The boys and girls have daily school uniforms, dress uniforms for chapel days, and specific uniforms for physical education. Off campus people in the outside community quickly recognize Porter-Gaud students by uniform alone.

In tribes the Holy Spirit is highly regarded and usually a main focus. There are religious leaders and celebrations to worship the spirits. Porter-Gaud has ties to the Episcopal Church with a high regard for worship. There are two chaplains on staff who conduct gatherings and lead celebrations. The students pray every morning and lunchtime as well as attend full chapel services weekly. The students play active roles in the chapel

services by reading lessons, singing, dancing, and being acolytes. There is a special Eucharist service weekly for any member of the Porter-Gaud community to attend. There are religious courses and meetings that are offered outside of the scheduled chapel services. The Vestry, students chosen for their spiritual and moral leadership, work closely with the chaplains to enrich the spiritual life of the school. The mission statement for the school recognizes the sovereignty of God and makes it a focal point within the education and school community.

Subcultures are another aspect that relates Porter-Gaud to tribal aspects. Subcultures can be looked at in several ways. The three schools within one campus each have their own sub-culture due to age and interests. Each has its own identity by the given name of Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School. The classes within those subcultures can be even further divided and have their own identity given to them. The kindergarten even has its own building and section of campus. Academically and socially students have their own groups, clubs, and teams. There are sixteen different sports offered with numerous teams and levels for each sport. There are over twenty-one different clubs for students of all ages. Students can be members of numerous groups or subcultures. Even though the students are members of subcultures they are all still a part of the overall culture, tribe, or community which is Porter-Gaud School.

Relationships are the key aspect to a community. There are several different kinds of relationships that occur within the Porter-Gaud community. There are relationships among students, between students and teachers, between teachers and parents, among teachers and other faculty, between parents, among board members, between alumni and administration, and so on. All of the members of the community have a relationship in

one form or another with every member of the community. “The bonding together of people in special ways and the binding of them to shared values and ideas are the defining characteristics of the school as communities” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 4). Porter-Gaud School has a strong sense of values that are shared throughout the community which ties the members together and helps to build and cultivate relationships.

According to Sergiovanni (1994), relationships are the key factor in a community and “if we desire community in schools, we have no choice but to make them increasingly *gemeinschaft*” (p. 32). Porter-Gaud is a model for *gemeinschaft* because a main focus within the school is community. But do not be deceived because Porter-Gaud School is preparing their students for life in the real world, which often correlates with *gesellschaft*. “Getting ahead in a *gesellschaft* world is an individual endeavor; it emphasizes mastery of a set of instrumental skills that enables one to make the right transactions in an impersonal and competitive world” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 9). The majority of the parents of Porter-Gaud students are successful in the business world and they want the same opportunity for their children. Students are sent to Porter-Gaud School with the expectations of a top-notch education with the ability to achieve anything they desire at graduation. In order to make this possible, the concept of *gesellschaft* has to be addressed and taught in order for our students to be competitive in the real world. So just as community or *gemeinschaft* is a focus throughout the entire school, so has to be *gesellschaft* within the educational realm of the school. I believe this makes Porter-Gaud a well-rounded school because ideally there should be a balance of *gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft*.

Can our community/family be dysfunctional? Sure. Every community/family has issues that need to be addressed. Remember the parent interviewed who said that she does not run in the same social circle as some other parents? Well, after further questioning about her response she shared that she does not feel financially equal and had no interest socializing with some parents within her child's grade level. She explained that she has heard of trips taken to extravagant places for holidays and that there are those who fly all over on private jets— this is a world she does not and will never know. It is her personal choice to associate outside of the Porter-Gaud community but she did note that it is due to financial comparisons and restraints. I believe that it is her choice because she feels she has no other choice. Her family does not take the trips or are not members of the country clubs because of their SES, which ultimately disconnects her from that social circle. She has said that there has never been an incident where those people have excluded her; she just does not feel comfortable around them socially. In the school setting it is different and she feels connected with the same people that she does not socialize with outside of the school setting. She has interacted with them on field trips, in class parties, and within the numerous school events. She stated that Porter-Gaud is the connecting factor and that because the school invites her in and makes her feel welcome that she is able to make a connection with someone whom she may not outside of the school setting.

There are also issues that occur among members of community such as cliques or bullying. Every community has people who do not fit in or feel that they are ostracized. I would be lying if I claimed that Porter-Gaud was this Utopian society where this did not occur. A saving grace at Porter-Gaud is that there are so many different subcultures so-to-

speak in which people can choose to participate that there is bound to be a place for everyone to fit in. There are academic clubs, athletic clubs, artistic clubs, and social clubs where students can interact and socialize. There is a trained staff of guidance counselors and administration available to take care of issues as they arise. The hope is that there are developed relationships of trust that will allow those in need of assistance to come forward and accept the help.

It's about the Students

As I continue my analysis of the journey, I begin to see it through my husband's eyes. He is glad that I am concluding this journey because he has experienced the struggles with me. He sees me traveling, taking time from my family, losing sleep, stretching myself thin, and of course, he is also paying the tuition bill. His view of my journey has been very different from my view of this journey. He sees it as stressful while I see it as enlightening. He sees it as a burden while I see it as growth. He has stood beside me on this journey, and even sometimes carried me, but yet our views are very different.

I cannot help to think this is the same at Porter-Gaud. There are so many different members who are a part of one community, but they all look at the aspects of the community from different views. Just like with the question: What would you say you most value in your house? This is a very hard question to answer because the point of view of the person answering the question needs to be considered. If I were to answer this question now, I would not even hesitate and say that it is my two boys and my husband. Nothing means more to me than my family. It warms me inside as I try to describe or express the amount of love and respect I have for them. But, the answer to this question

would be different if I were to think about a hurricane coming inland. At that time I would think about the part of the house that will keep us safe. I hope that the windows do not shatter and the roof does not leak. If I had to leave the house behind, what is the most important thing that I would take? I want to save my irreplaceable wedding photographs and baby pictures. But really, no matter what point of view I answer the question, the end result always has something to do with my main focus, which is my family. This is also how I believe the question about what is most valued at Porter-Gaud was answered. The groups answered differently, but as you will see, they all focused on the same group: the students.

The students know they are at Porter-Gaud for an excellent education. They hear it from their parents, their teachers, and it is well known in Charleston that Porter-Gaud produces the best students. It is not necessarily drilled in their heads, but they hear it enough to know that the education at Porter-Gaud is highly valued and very important. I was a little shocked to hear how much the students actually value their education and are aware of classes that will be available to them in the years to come. The students clearly value the education they are receiving and look to the future to see how it will continue.

I am sure this primarily stems from home. Again, this correlates with SES, because most households have a parent or two who has a successful career often with an excellent educational background. The parents have a high-quality education and a good quality career so the child imitates the parent. That is what they know. That is what is expected from them. It is not “if” the child will go to college, it is “where” will the child go? A perfect example of this was when the kindergarten students dressed up for career day. My own child could not decide whether to be a rock star or a judge. My father-in-

law is a judge and my son thought that was a great idea. No one in my family is a rock star but that did not bother me because I am all about letting him be expressive and creative. He ended up spiking his hair, wearing tie dye and carrying a blue inflatable guitar. During his speech, he explained that he really will be a judge like grandpa but that being a rock star was more fun. As he concluded his speech he jumped up, landed on his knees, and strummed the fake guitar. His classmates loved it. I received emails and was given copies of pictures of him dressed in his rock star gear. When I asked him about the other students, he named professions that he could not pronounce correctly. I chuckled to myself because the majority of the professions were exactly what the parents had as careers. The students imitate what they see. I would have loved to have heard the student explain what an anesthesiologist does!

So, the students value academics because they are expected and encouraged to. After getting past the academic aspect of PG, they quickly noted that friends are important, too. I think the more they talked, the more they put importance on friendships that were created and developed. They shared stories of being friends and making new friends as classes changed and different people came to the school. All hoped to maintain life-long friends that they first made in Lower School. This was reiterated when several students commented on how their parents have maintained these types of relationships and that they would like to do the same. A student shared that in his class he has a set of friends whose parents went to school together. He said that he likes hearing stories about his dad and his friend's dad playing football together and watching videos of them when they were younger. He said that there are a couple of boys and girls in his class right now

that he hopes he will be friends with for life. He feels certain that he will because their parents have stayed friends for so long.

The community focus group looked at the whole picture at Porter-Gaud when asked what they value and think is most important. They basically were sharing personal reasons why they chose to send their children to this school. It is the teachers for some, the opportunity for others, and yet academics for someone else. One parent who is not an alumnus shared that she was giving her daughter an opportunity that she never had. With so many different answers given, one thing was proven— this school has an enormous amount of positive aspects associated with it. I almost would have thought that these parents were trying to sell Porter-Gaud to me, but as I watched them and listened to them, I noticed that they were not really even focused on me. They were deep in thought about what was important to them and why it was important. Every answer came with an explanation. “Teachers because the teachers that I had impacted me in a positive way and I want the same for my child” said one alumnus of the school. Another alumnus of the school said, “The school will educate them in a way that they will be able to be anything that they want in life. By giving them this education I am giving them opportunities.”

While going back over the responses, I started to make connections about what was being said by the members of the focus group. The list all described one group: the students. The education is for the students. The teachers should be good because they facilitate the education for the students. The opportunities will be for the students in their future endeavors. The students were the key factor and the common denominator here.

The teacher focus group was the only group to actually hit the nail on the head the first time. This was evident by the fact that in unison they all claimed that the students

were the most important element at Porter-Gaud and what they valued the most. There was no dancing around the issue. For them it was cut and dried, which while breathtaking, was not really that surprising. They are not in this profession for the money— they are in it for the students. They have a love of teaching and go above and beyond for every child that walks through their doors. The teachers attend conferences during free time in the summer and throughout the school year, put in countless hours for planning and preparation, and truly put the students' interests at the forefront of their teaching. Most of the teachers on staff have advanced degrees or are pursuing advanced degrees. The commitment to the students and their profession makes the teachers at Porter-Gaud top-notch, quality educators. The teachers are here for the students to help them have the best educational experience possible.

Aesthetics Experiences

As I reached new stages in my journey of creating this portraiture, I knew there were bound to be areas of apprehension or struggle. One area that I was not sure of was the aesthetics in the school. This was the part of the research that I was most concerned about because I feared that aesthetics would not be used to the degree that I was hoping. Porter-Gaud is known for academic excellence, not for being an artistic school. But what I think was emphasized throughout my study is that arts can foster academics. Prior to me conducting this study, I met with the headmaster of our school. He told me that he was very interested in the results of the study and wanted to know ways to continue to improve Porter-Gaud. I believe aesthetics is an area of focus that can continue to be cultivated. Porter-Gaud has a great start— better than any school I know, but this can be continued and cultivated.

As I interviewed each group and conducted the observations, I was pleased that aesthetics is being used and is a focus within the school. It was interesting to hear the answers for each focus group. Every group interpreted aesthetics in different ways and had their own spin on how to construe the concept. I found myself explaining my interpretation of aesthetics only to have the participants add their own rendition to the term too. At the end, the general concept of using arts within teaching to allow the students to experience a higher level of learning was the focus for all of the groups. They were just using different examples of aesthetic experiences that resulted in the same type of higher level of meaning or learning.

When interviewing the teacher focus group. I was at first disturbed and then pleased with their response to the question about using aesthetics in the classroom. The teachers hold themselves to a very high standard. I think that is part of what makes a good teacher, but the teachers' first responses were negative. Their optimistic demeanors changed to pessimism as they resounded to having to focus on reading and writing and not the arts. There was sadness in the voice of the first grade teacher as she said that she has to use the Open Court Series to teach Reading and that she has to cover a certain amount of material in a certain amount of time. She was making excuses with her tone of voice and hand gestures towards the wall like she was pointing to the cards that hang and represent syllabication and phonics. As she was talking, I was thinking that we are not much different than the public schools that are dictated by standards. But then as she was talking she seemed to talk herself out of the dread. She gave examples of how she taught the material that she truly believed was going to give her first graders the basis for their educational career. She did not use worksheets; students did not copy and repeat

monotonous information. She was creative and the students were active. The arts were a daily part of her Reading program. The more she talked, the more she realized that she was taking the material and presenting it in a way that made learning meaningful to the students.

All of the teachers started off with this negative perception of their use of aesthetics in the classroom. They had disappointed faces and demeanors. Once the first grade teacher went through her self-exploration, others did the same. Every teacher in the focus group shared a similar story about subject areas using aesthetics. As each talked it was almost as if the darkness that loomed over the table at which we sat was lifting and becoming a brighter area. The teachers had to prove to themselves that they were allowing for aesthetic experiences. They were not interested in proving it to me and seemed to forget that I was conducting the interview. The teachers seemed to have to prove to themselves that they had not turned into dry, boring, teachers that took the joy out of learning. This told me that they were passionate about teaching and cared about the students in their classes. They wanted the students to have the best learning experience possible and it appeared that this type of self-reflection had not happened with them before. Even though teachers plan together to create lessons and activities, it appears that they do not reflect back on what was taught and how it impacted the learning. The teachers were not used to analyzing themselves and their techniques used in the classroom. As the list of examples within their own classes went on and on, the postures started to relax and the tone and pitch of the voices started to change. The fourth grade teacher finally turned to me matter-of-factly and said, “Yes, I think we use aesthetics in our classes. We just never realized that is what it really was.”

To me this became an area of focus for this study. It took the teachers sharing the ideas to realize that they actually do use aesthetics in the educational process. In a further discussion with the second grade teacher, she suggested having more time to reflect on teaching techniques that are used within the school. She shared that often time is spent in planning and not enough on reflection. She said that there are so many talented teachers in the school that it would be great to have time to share what each other is doing. She suggested having a work day for this purpose and not to bring in someone from the outside but to share the wealth of knowledge we have here on the inside. This would foster a professional learning community, which would in turn help the school. With this type of learning community, I believe that the teachers want to have the opportunity to do more with aesthetics; but that they feel that there is just so much material to cover that they realistically cannot make everything they teach produce aesthetic experiences. I also believe that the teachers in the focus group will make more of a conscious effort to promote these experiences and continue to do at least what they are currently doing in the classrooms.

The student focus group equated the arts and activities that required actual movement with aesthetics. I was surprised that there was no hesitation when the question was asked to the group about aesthetics. I went over the definition to make sure they understood what I was asking and they had no problem giving examples. They did not once mention a lecture or a test as an aesthetic moment, which is not a surprise because aesthetic experiences tend to occur more with experiential learning. The students listed things that required the use of the senses such as listening to music, tasting the root of a plant, acting something out, conducting a lab, and interacting with nature. They all gave

specific examples and then a connection was made to show it was more than just the basic rote learning. I could see it in their eyes as they were explaining the answers that there was more to what they were saying, that they could not explain it just the right way because there was more feeling there than words could describe. Those were truly aesthetic moments. That is when meaning was given to that specific educational experience. As the students were explaining the activities, I felt as if I were in the classroom with them being an active part of the lesson. I heard myself laugh out loud as one student shared about the class dancing to learn science material. According to Eisner (2002) the aesthetic “provides the experiential rewards of taking the journey itself” (p. 43). The students are making meaning of the act of learning, not just the material that was covered or the focus of the lesson. Eisner (2002) continues by stating that humans have “a deep-seeded need for stimulation” (p. 37) and because of that need we respond more to active learning, which is more likely to cause aesthetic experiences. At Porter-Gaud there is active learning. Teachers are not lecturing with the students sitting in desks for extended periods of time. The students are working in cooperative groups and partaking in active lessons that focus on different learning styles.

A specific example stood out that was shared by a fourth grade student that really exemplified the active learning. I expect active learning in science because of the focus on hands-on learning, and in language arts because of the acting and story telling, but this example came from a math class. A student was telling how a teacher used to stand in front of the class and primarily lecture. They would periodically play games to learn concepts and often draw pictures to give visual examples. She said that math class was surprisingly interactive and that they did not do many worksheets. But she giggled as she

began to tell the story because she said that the teacher “really became an active teacher as they became super-active learners.”

The math teacher had a SmartBoard tablet that was supposed to help with interaction, but that just sat on the overhead instead of being circulated around the class. As the fourth grader described the tablet as, “a hard to write on overhead,” she rolled her eyes as if to say, “Duh, don’t you get it?” The student wanted more interaction than walking up to an overhead. But then with surprise she told how the teacher asked for a SmartBoard to be installed in her room because the teacher recognized that the tablet was not working for her. The student shared that this was an older teacher who she thought was not excited about teaching and had heard rumors of retirement years ago. When the SmartBoard was installed, the desk arrangement changed and the students sat on the floor in a group in front of the board. The lessons became interactive, including the teacher and the students. As the fourth grade girl was sharing the story, another fourth grade boy piped in and listed a half of dozen activities that helped him learn fractions in math class. His interruption could have been perceived as rude because he was clearly stealing the limelight of the story, but the girl did not care. She piggybacked on his excitement and together they shared other examples. They laughed as they mimicked the teacher’s movements and their active learning process. They both said they have noticed their teacher spending lots of time with her SmartBoard making up new lessons and playing! For this teacher it took a piece of technology to bring active learning into her classroom. She obviously tried other techniques, but for her this just clicked. This brought aesthetic experiences to both the teacher and the students.

The community members had mixed responses when it came to considering if and how aesthetics is used in the classrooms. To me this made sense because unless you have a child in a specific grade putting on a production, you would not know really what goes on day-to-day in the classes. I quickly noticed that the parents or board members who are involved directly with the school could name and describe aesthetic experiences and how aesthetics is a focus within the Fine Arts. The Fine Arts program at Porter-Gaud is extensive and allows for students to experience music, drama, and art while they are in the Lower School. Every year productions are put on my each grade level that surpasses all expectations! The productions take place on a stage with full costumes and a playbill. The facilities and props are amazing! Every student in grades one through three participates in the production. For grades fourth and fifth they can choose to participate in choir, which is the group that puts on the musical for the year. Students are given responsibility for speaking parts and well as acting and often dancing. The music teacher directs the performances with help from teachers and staff. For every performance there is a day show for the Lower School students and then there is an evening performance for family and friends. The students experience the theater at Porter-Gaud starting at age five and have the opportunity to continue throughout their education. I believe this is an aspect that many outsiders do not know about. The music and the drama make for well-rounded students. Being exposed to and performing the Arts is an important element of the educational process at Porter-Gaud.

The Arts tend to equate with aesthetics and in the Porter-Gaud Lower School students attend both art class and music classes from two to five times per week depending on the grade level. Within the music classes the students learn several

instruments as well as singing and music history. Musical performances such as the Holiday Market, Founder's Day, Grandparent's Day, and more begin in kindergarten and are continued through high school. The students do not merely sing, but they also master tone chimes, recorders, guitar, piano, flute, and more. But trust me, when you hear the beautiful voices of the students singing, breaths are lost and tears are shed. In the fourth and fifth grade, the students can join choir to extend their singing ability. These options open up even further in Middle and Upper School Choirs and the Chamber Singers. The musical instrument learning also continues with the option of Handbell Choir, Jazz Ensemble, and Concert Band. The school also has a Theater department which puts on musicals and plays throughout the year. Students interested in acting have the opportunity to perform on stage while students interested in costume, set design, and stage management have the chance to also follow their passions.

In the art classes the students experience numerous types of art including clay molds, water colors, collages, and more. The art teacher takes pride in planning her lessons around the academic areas such as Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. She works closely with the teachers to emphasize the content and use interdisciplinary techniques. In third grade science the students research a South Carolina animal and in art they create a clay sculpture of the animal of study. This is just one of numerous examples of how the arts are connected with the academic content to bring a deeper meaning to what is studied in the classroom. The artwork of the students lines the hallways and offices of the school, which gives the students' pride in the work that they have created.

The parents who are alumni but do not currently have students at PG do not equate the school they knew with aesthetic moments, except for the plays. This tells me

that Porter-Gaud is changing to meet the needs of the students. According to an alumnus who attended Porter-Gaud from first through twelfth grade, “We always had the plays, musicals, and productions. The sciences were always lab-based and hands-on, and in third grade we did newscasts, but besides that the school was very traditional.” Porter-Gaud is not the same school that it was twenty years ago. The way education is produced should not be the same as it was twenty years ago. Times change and with change come new studies, which generates new ideas and ways to do things. Teaching techniques change and well as the materials used to teach the subject matter. Porter-Gaud keeps up with the studies and tries to make the school the best educational facility possible. This is stated best in Porter-Gaud’s (2008) mission statement:

Porter-Gaud is an Episcopal, coeducational, independent, college-preparatory day school with a diverse student body. We acknowledge the sovereignty of God, recognize the worth of the individual, and seek to cultivate a school community that endows its citizens with a foundation of moral and ethical character and intellect. Porter-Gaud fosters a challenging academic environment that honors excellence in teaching and learning, respects differences, expects honesty, and applauds achievement. The school strives to create an environment that nurtures and protects what we value most in our children: their faith, their curiosity, their talents, their integrity, their humanity, and their dreams.

Testing the Foundation

Knowing that the bridge that I have created is my foundation, I have to think back and see how much that determines or plays a factor in the person that I am. Can I stray from the founders of my bridge? What if I believe in concepts that would start to wear

away at the structure? What if I found something that should be added or what if I want to build another bridge? I am fine with that because I believe that people grow and evolve. I believe that experiences shape who I am. But knowing that I will change does not destroy who I once was. It just adds to it. My bridge will always be a part of me— it is like having my own set of traditions.

Tradition equates with Porter-Gaud. When having a private school that has so much history, the question of tradition running the school has to be asked. Do things have to be done because they have always been that way? Are there concepts to hold onto that should remain or is it time to move on? Is the school living in the past or are they looking to the future? The history of the school is a story that has been put in books, spans generations and has survived wars and major changes. Just as our country has changed, so has the educational spectrum. The traditional military school that was opened for orphans has changed to a financially and socially elite academic institution. Within that time not only has our country changed and developed, but so has education. So the question remains, does tradition dictate how the school is currently run? I believe that it is honored and respected, but that it does not rule the school.

There are actually two different books written on PG and a third in the works, which will be a picture book to use in the classrooms. The stories are written as history books and tell world events as well as changes in the school. There were several major transformations that Porter-Gaud has survived including the almost closing of the school and the merging with other schools. This history and the tradition make Porter-Gaud what it is today. That is why it is valued to the extent that it is and made a priority to pass on to future generations.

There are numerous ways that everyone involved within the Porter-Gaud community are exposed to the tradition and history of the school. The administration requires new hires to attend a course on the history of the school, the teachers teach it to their students, and parents and grandparents tell stories to second and third generation PG students. There is a section on the website devoted to the history of the school, which allows everyone access to learn how the school was started and the changes that helped it evolve into the current school it is today. Tradition is who we are on the outside— it gives a sense of identity and pride to those who are associate with it. But, change continues to occur on the inside when it comes to educational techniques and issues. The history remains a factual part of who we are, but together as a school we are deciding who we will become.

Each focus group within my study would agree that tradition is an honor to holdfast and hope that tradition will continue to be valued at the school, but they do not believe that it controls the daily occurrences within the school. The traditions that were named by all of the focus groups included the performances, holiday traditions, and religious affiliations. The one aspect that was heard loud and clear is that tradition is valued but it does not govern what is done in the day-to-day running of the school. Teachers have changed their ways of instruction, there are new methods and materials, technologies comes into play, and let's face it, the students are not the same as they were years ago. Change is inevitable. Tradition is not hindering that change from occurring. There is still tradition with an extreme sense of pride, but by no means does it dictate the school.

Experiencing Joy

One of the goals for me personally on this journey was to experience joy in the process of creating this portraiture. I wanted it to have personal meaning and also wanted it to be something that is pleasurable. I wanted to sit back and reflect, as I am doing now, and have a feeling of contentment and satisfaction with a hint of bliss. The feelings that I am experiencing now are the same that I think students have experienced at Porter-Gaud.

Joy is a daily occurrence within Porter-Gaud School. Every focus group would agree with this and could support this statement with endless examples. I found this to be refreshing because I was thinking back to the first question about how the outsiders view Porter-Gaud. There was not one mention of joy in learning, it was all about academics, money and structure— but that does not truly describe Porter-Gaud. The outsiders do not see the joy, and I believe that is one reason that people within the Porter-Gaud community want the outside community to know more about their school. They want people to look beyond the status and realize that the students are developing a love for learning. The students are passionate about their education and have a sense of pride for the school because of the joy that they feel when they are there.

The teacher focus group interpreted the question about joy by equating joy with happiness and delight. There were numerous examples shared about how the students enjoy their education on a day-to-day basis. Answers came with laughter and stories. To me this showed that the teachers were just as happy as the students. Teaching can be a tiring profession and can wear on people— I often wondered myself how long I would teach. I tell people that when I consider teaching to be a job then I need to quit. This is when the joy will no longer be there and it will be more of a burden. The teachers who sat

in front of me during the interview have a passion that exudes from them when they discuss their students. It is a pride and a sense of love that they have for the classroom and the children in them. They experience joy because the students experience joy.

The community focus group compared joy with being happy at school. The alumni with students currently enrolled at Porter-Gaud said that he loved the school and had such a great experience that he wanted his kids to be able to do the same. A parent who is not an alumnus feels strongly that a school has to fit the needs of her daughter, and if that stops happening then she will find a school that does. So far Porter-Gaud has been a great experience and she hopes that it continues. But she did reiterate that she would not hesitate changing schools because her daughter's happiness is her first priority. The board member who does not currently send his daughters to Porter-Gaud stated that every time he is on campus the students seem to be happy and comfortable. He said that he felt that was when he was at Porter-Gaud and he wants his daughters eventually to have that same type of camaraderie and happiness.

When reflecting back on the stories that were told, I started to think about my own children's educational experiences at Porter-Gaud. I remember sitting in my first parent conference with my son's first grade teacher. I had two questions for her: "Does my son have friends and does he seem happy?" I knew that he was receiving a top-notch education. I had seen the grades and activities come home as well as watched performances that he has put on. Portfolios showed up in his book bag weekly. Education was not the issue, his happiness was. My child was one of the youngest in the class and did not have the confidence to be any type of leader. My son's teacher told me about his interaction within the class. She shared stories that made me laugh and she laughed along

with me. She obviously cared about the happiness of my son and she reassured me that he was happy and had friends. This brought a sense of joy and relief over me that only a mother can understand. We did not talk about grades that day, but that was the day that I truly felt Porter-Gaud School was the place for my child because that teacher cared about him as a person, not just a student. So far every year has been like this at Porter-Gaud. The joy that my own children experience reiterates the decision that my husband and I made for our children to attend Porter-Gaud School. Joy in learning is a priority at Porter-Gaud School.

The question about joy asked to the student focus group became my favorite topic of the whole interview. No student mentioned the financial status of their family when they talked about joy. Money is not what gives them pleasure when they are in school. I realize that money is the reason that they are attending the school, and it is the money that funds all of the incredible resources that are available. But, money does not teach the classes. Money does not help the students experience aesthetic moments and make learning meaningful. Money is not building a community. Those concepts happen because of the philosophy that Porter-Gaud has established. They have made building a community a priority and using the arts within the curriculum a daily occurrence. Instead it is the teachers and the lessons or activities that occur within the classrooms. It is the friends and relationships that they are building. Joy is the feeling they get when they are a part of a community that puts the students' needs at the forefront. I have experienced joy just sitting in the focus groups and listening to their stories. Their joy, laughter and love for this school is contagious!

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Bridging Aesthetics and Community into the Educational Realm

Knowing that a bridge is symbolic to my being and has allowed me to take on this journey, I believe the only way to conclude this portraiture is to bridge the concepts to the outside community and the overall mindset in education. I also believe that there are recommendations for Porter-Gaud to continue its growth as a community and to continue to focus on aesthetics, which will ultimately build bridges among faculty, staff, and the entire P-G community.

Porter-Gaud School puts a focus on both aesthetics and community, which impacts the school in a positive way and helps it to be an elite academic institution. This focus can be shared with other schools and can help to improve other academic institutions. By using aesthetics a school needs to commit to leaving behind the traditional mindset of teaching and be willing to move more towards progressive teaching styles. This type of teaching takes the needs of the learner into account and addresses different styles of learning. While aesthetics is primarily connected with the arts and literature, it also is connected with other subject areas, too. By teachers making learning active and meaningful, the students are given the opportunity to experience aesthetic moments in the classroom. This does not take additional funding, which seems to be lacking in public schools, but instead it takes innovative teachers with a passion for teaching. Integration with the Arts as well as literature and the sciences can create meaningful learning experiences. Allowing the students to take a personal interest in the lessons and reflect upon the material will help to make the information meaningful with the chance of aesthetic experiences.

I am calling for a paradigm shift from the current objective-based lessons that are taught in today's schools to an environment that promotes aesthetic learning with a focus on community where students are looked to as responsible individuals and where learning is meaningful. In Porter-Gaud School teachers still write lesson plans, but they are not collected and stressed as they are in public schools. The plans are more of an outline or guideline to what is to be taught. Standards are not cited as they are in public schools. Whether or not the standards are cited is really not the issue. The issue is that the teachers are given more leeway to use creativity and gear their lessons towards different learning styles and levels instead of uniformity. There is not a set script that must be followed where teachers have to keep a certain pace. Every child is not the same. Once the people in power within the public schools realize that standardization does not benefit every child, then the students will have a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience.

At Porter-Gaud the teachers are able to plan together in each grade level. This is also needed in public schools. There is a team planning period set up in the teacher schedules so that at least once per week all of the teachers for a specific grade level plan together. This allows teacher interaction, which leads to integrated lessons and open discussion about students. The cross-curricular activities are planned to best reinforce content across the entire grade level. This is also a time when teachers share activities that they have enjoyed and methods of teaching they have experienced success with or ones that have not been very successful. But, even though the teachers can plan together does not mean that they all teach the same way or even the same subject matter. They do not all have the same population of students, so why should every lesson be the same? There is material to be covered that is required, but it is done in a creative way that gives

the students a voice. Planning together should not take additional funding, just time and effort with scheduling. It will foster a sense of community among the staff, which in turn will generate a better sense of community in the school.

The dispute for arts in education and the removal of standardization will permit students to excel in schools. According to Eisner (2005), when education policy emphasizes the display and achievement of uniformity, when it diminishes the opportunities for imagination to flourish, when it considers metaphor and ambiguity to be problematic, both the argument and the need for the arts become even stronger. The arts are not ideal for today's measurement mentality, so the idea is to remove the arts from the curriculum. "Why should children be denied exposure to the arts and music, history and science" (Kozol, 2005, p.277)? Schools in inner cities have lost art and music programs and "teachers feel that they are engaging...in some sort of treachery...to extract examples of official skills that have some testable utility" (Kozol, 2005, p.77). The removal of the arts is hindering the educational process, which will equate in no aesthetic experiences and education will lack meaning.

Standardization is a quantitative way to measure student achievement, which does not allow for individuality and independence. An injustice is being done when comparing students across the county, state, nation, or world. When students are given different amounts of time and have different standards and curricula, the comparisons become questionable and invalid. So what! Students are different and should be taught differently! But when this is done, then comparisons cannot be made and the quantitative aspect is being removed from education. How then can each student be monitored and compared? How does the state handle the funding if they do not have some type of

testing to base their facts upon? Eisner (2005) states that different teaching approaches, different time allocations, and different cultures of the students make it impossible for accurately making comparisons of achievement. Measuring student achievement and productivity are important to measure student growth, but this should be done with the individual student in mind. Students need rubrics to know their destination, but students should be allowed to enjoy the journey in their own individual ways.

In my little Utopian world I would get rid of national standardized tests all together. But, I realize that this would cause havoc with funding issues in the public schools. I also realize that this would impact admission to certain colleges and schools. Testing companies would be impacted and how else would the government try to monitor the progress of our students? I am sure another way would be designed to measure and compare all students. Abolishing standardized tests is not going to happen, so why not use alternative methods of assessment? Why put so much emphasis on the scores? At Porter-Gaud the standardized testing occurs, but the running of the school does not stop the week that the students take the test. The test is just another method of assessment. Throughout the school year there is not a testing tip given daily/weekly with test-prep time taking away academic time from the regularly scheduled classes unlike in public schools in Charleston County. The standardized test is a tool to help monitor student progress. That's it. It is a tool; one of many used to accurately assess each student in the school. Throughout the school year at Porter-Gaud the teachers teach the students study skills and well as test taking skills. They teach life skills. The focus is on how to make good decisions, to be organized and prepared. All schools can teach these skills as well as make learning meaningful. Using portfolios and alternative assessment are options that

all schools can use.

Aesthetics is a concept that can be incorporated at any school, no matter the SES of the parents or the resources the school has. This can be done with innovative teachers who have a passion for education. Aesthetic inquiry promotes exploration into broader questions that can promote discussions and higher level thinking skills. Porter-Gaud School is a perfect example of this. The teachers focus on critical thinking, group work, and cooperative learning. Those three aspects do not compare with money, but with exploration of a concept within the classroom. Lampert (2006) advocates for critical thinking to be a part of the educational process for all students by teachers focusing on aesthetic learning and critical inquiry (p.47). The focus on community within the classrooms and school helps the students at Porter-Gaud to build confidence and grow as individuals. Social skills and character education is a focus just as academics are a focus. The love for learning that the Porter-Gaud students exude shows that they have the natural high that comes from meaningful experiences. The teachers have a passion for being educators and the students have a passion for learning. Dewey (1916) believes “that every subject at some phase of its development should possess, what is for the individual concerned with it, an aesthetic quality” (p.249).

Teachers have to be willing to continue their growth after the schooling is over and use their colleagues as resources. Teachers need to continue to learn and develop their teaching skills. Porter-Gaud teachers are not the only teachers who are willing to continue their growth as educators. This can be done in all school systems. Too many teachers teach the same way that they did twenty years ago. Freire (2003) describes education as the banking concept because information is deposited into the students’

minds and they are expected to withdraw it whenever needed (pp 73-75). “The capability of banking education to minimize or annul the students’ creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed” (Freire, 2003, p.73). In the classroom, it is the students who are becoming lifeless because they are the objects that are being taught or narrated to, often without consideration of learning styles or interests. Teachers are also protective of their own classroom, which may mean that they are hesitant to let others in to observe and collaborate. Some teachers may feel threatened. Eisner (2002) believes that “privacy ought not to be our highest priority [and that] we ought to hold as our highest priority our students’ well-being” (p.576).

The preparation of teachers is crucial to the success of the students. If teachers are in the mindset that education is identical for all students, then the students become the victims. Eisner (1995) stresses that the competency of our teachers is central to educational success of the students (p.99). At Porter-Gaud the teachers attend conferences regularly, take continuing education courses, and pursue advanced degrees. Some of the conferences attended this year included *Responsive Classroom*, SmartBoard training, and the National Technology Conference. Monies are allocated in the budget for each subject area and section of school (Lower, Middle, and Upper) to attend conferences and take continuing education/graduate courses. According to the teacher handbook, teachers are reimbursed a set amount per course. This is an incentive for teachers to continue learning new teaching styles and techniques. When the school makes it a priority, then the teachers know this and want to attain the high standards set for them. I realize that public schools may not be able to fund every conference or graduate course.

If there is no funding then why not have a session where teachers share their own skills. There is a wealth of knowledge already on staff in schools.

After teachers at Porter-Gaud take classes or attend conferences, then they share their new information with the faculty. There are scheduled faculty meetings where teachers present information from their conferences or classes. There are even times when the teachers become presenters and train the rest of the faculty, as with *Responsive Classroom* information. In that situation the administration purchased the *Responsive Classroom* book for every teacher in the Lower School and made this a focus of several in-services. Eisner (2002) believes the kinds of schools that we need will allow teachers to share their work among colleagues, which will allow for a “higher quality education than is currently provided” (p.577). Sharing work among colleagues provides opportunities for teacher growth. When teachers can go in each others’ classrooms and share ideas, then the students will be the ones who ultimately benefit. “The image of the teacher isolated in a classroom from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. for five days a week, 44 weeks per year, is not the model of professional teaching practice that we need” (Eisner, 2002, p.576). This sharing can occur at any school; it just takes initiative and interest.

At Porter-Gaud School, the teachers in each grade level plan together at least one time per week in an additional planning period set aside for that specific purpose. The administration and guidance counselors often attend this weekly grade level meeting to keep the lines of communication open and discuss any topic of need. During this planning time, teachers design cooperative and interdisciplinary lessons as well as discuss discipline and managerial issues. This is where the focus on community shines. The classes are not individual classes but a part of a grade level, which is part of the Lower

School, and ultimately part of the whole Porter-Gaud campus. This line of thinking is a paradigm shift, which means that it is a change in conception. Often teachers in public schools have limited planning with a focus on mass producing academic information. There is not time for an extra planning for discussion among teachers. It is not the teachers' fault; they are a product of the school. Garrison (1997) states that "if nothing is there but prefabricated bulletin boards and standardized worksheets stacked up on the desks, we can be sure that learning has become...something removed from what interests teachers and students" (p.62). The school systems have to make community a priority and give the teachers time to share ideas, plan lessons together, and time to make learning meaningful and joyful.

The incorporation of aesthetics and community in education is not a new idea; it is just one that does not allow for quantitative data to be easily accessible and that is why it is not a popular idea in public school systems. We live in a time where test results are a key aspect in education. Porter-Gaud students take standardized tests each year as a tool to monitor individual progress. The emphasis is not put on the test scores like it is in public schools. Eisner (2002) believes that "standardized tests still prevail" in American schools and that taking the scores of the tests seriously can be detrimental (p.50). Our classrooms are still based on concepts that Ralph Tyler designed. Tyler stressed the importance of the question of schools preparing young people to fit in society or to develop young people who will seek to improve society (Jones & Maloy, 1996, p. 37). Tyler is well known for creating "measurable outcomes...to define clearly the types of behavior which we are trying to teach" (Kliebard, 2004, p.180). This equates with writing educational objectives and lesson plans. Tyler advocated for purposeful learning that is

measurable, which authorizes accountability and stated that “evaluation and objectives should be driven by objectives” (Rubin, 1994, p.784). In today’s educational system there are people who want national standards and scripted lesson plans. “The format of numerous curriculum guides, teachers’ editions of schoolbooks, lesson plan books, evaluation instruments by accrediting agencies, course syllabi, and many curriculum books that appeared in the next 30 years are organized around Tyler’s four topics” (Schubert, Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002, p. 98). With a standardized curriculum the students become faceless and almost robot-like. “The message that we send to students is that what really matters in their education are their test scores” (Eisner, 2001, p.376). Students spend about eight hours a day for ten months of the year in schools. The system in which they are a part is standardized with the expectations that everyone meets the same criteria by the end of each year and especially by graduation. Even the admittance exams to higher education are standardized. Can we ever get away from it? Is it sometimes justifiable? When is standardization appropriate? Eisner (2001) notes that within a specific grade level the performance range spans years (p.369). “A student marching through the grade levels towards fixed targets in unison promotes standardization and uniformity” (Eisner, 1999, p.658).

There are ways that Porter-Gaud continues to try to improve aesthetics in education. The Art department continues to work to incorporate Arts across the curriculum. A goal of the curriculum mapping is to look at graduation requirements and to see if the Arts can be incorporated more within the schedule. Since the meeting with the teachers and the aesthetics discussion, teachers are trying to share more ideas that correlate with creating aesthetic experiences and moments in their teaching. This alone

will help this area to grow. By no means has Porter-Gaud mastered aesthetics, but they have a model beginning and a goal to continue the growth.

Community in schools is the second elements of focus in this study with Porter-Gaud. Porter-Gaud puts an emphasis on community and goes to tremendous lengths to teach and cultivate these beliefs among students, faculty, and parents. There is a pride and honor to be a part of the Porter-Gaud community.

In Porter-Gaud there are really two types of communities: inclusive and exclusive. The inclusive community encompasses all who have relationships with the school. This is the overall Porter-Gaud community. To be a member of this inclusive community means that there are exclusive groups. The students are an exclusive group because not just anyone can walk into Porter-Gaud and become a student on any given day. There are tests to take and tuition to pay. This makes the school an exclusive, private educational facility. The parent group in turn is also exclusive, as with the alumnus of the school. By Porter-Gaud being exclusive, it separates itself from the general public. But that does not mean that the school does not interact and support the general public. Service learning activities as well as volunteer programs take place to be active in the community. With exclusiveness equates elitism. People tend to believe that because there is limited membership then there is elitism associated with the club or institution. In this case financial and academic elitism are linked with Porter-Gaud.

Think about any community. All of the communities have inclusive and exclusive aspects. A member of a professional baseball team is an exclusive part of the team. But anyone associated with the team is an inclusive part, including the fans, the workers, and

all who support the team. These aspects are a part of all communities. Any school can obtain these qualities.

There are many different aspects to take into account in regards to the community at Porter-Gaud. There is a sense of community among the students, the faculty, and the families. There is also a sense of community that bonds these different groups together. There are historical ties that have created the foundation for the school. Porter-Gaud is a model school for the community concept because community is a focus and a priority. At Porter-Gaud the students know the importance of being a member in a community and working with others. If other schools could focus on the concept of establishing and fostering a sense of community, then the school as a whole would benefit. Starting with building a community within the classroom would benefit the school immediately. Taking it a step further and generating communication between parents and teachers would help build a community. Letting teachers share ideas with each another would build community. The communication throughout the entire school population would increase, which will help develop meaningful relationships. With a focus on community, the support will help students find ways to succeed academically and socially. The students will experience success, gain confidence, and be productive members of society. There are numerous studies and programs for communities in school. Finding one that is right for your school will require a little research and communication. It does not cost money, it takes time and effort. The results are worth it, just ask anyone at Porter-Gaud.

Once a community is formed, the work does not stop there. This study focused on the community in the Lower School. With the results shared, there are goals being developed to foster more of a sense of community among the school. The Tribes

Learning Classroom Model (Gibbs, 2006) is being shared at scheduled faculty meetings. The amount of parental involvement is set to increase with room mothers now creating schedules for parent volunteers to help in the classrooms. The Middle and Upper School are going to begin a research questionnaire to assess the feelings of community among and within their schools. Porter-Gaud is not content and satisfied with their community level. They are looking to improve and continue to grow, which is another reason they are a model school.

All Schools can focus on Aesthetics and Community

It is easy to assume that because Porter-Gaud School charges a hefty tuition and because their budget is in the millions every year that the school has everything it needs to be an elite institution. Well guess what? The amount of money that flows through Porter-Gaud is not millions more than in public schools. In 2004-2005, the per pupil expenditures for Charleston County School District was \$10,662.33 In the same year tuition for Porter-Gaud School was \$10,335 for kindergarten and \$11,605.00 for grades one through five. In 2004, the money spent per child in public schools was very close to that spent at Porter-Gaud. But was the money spent the same way? I feel sure it was not. The public schools have expenses that Porter-Gaud does not. There are services that the public schools are mandated by law to require, such as special education and meal programs. Porter-Gaud has learning services, but nothing remotely close to the public school system. There is also a cafeteria at Porter-Gaud, but once again it is very different than the public schools. In public schools there seem to be so many new schools being built or buildings that are run down. I can only assume that the construction/maintenance costs are astronomical.

The average person could assume that the same amount of money per student is going into each school, but that is not entirely true. The money may be close to the same, but the expenditures are not. The money is not being allocated per each student the same way in public schools as it is in Porter-Gaud. It would be a copout to say that because the per-student expenditures are close that every school should be like Porter-Gaud. That is unrealistic and frankly absurd. But I do want to make that point that Porter-Gaud has money that is spent with the students' best interests in mind. They are not burdened with all of the issues that public schools are, so the money is spent more efficiently. Hopefully, one day the same can be said for the public schools system.

Public schools are burdened with many more issues that have nothing to do with budgetary means, than Porter-Gaud, such as more special needs students, more behavioral issues, and poverty. I believe there is a word would explain some of the problems in public school: bureaucracy. Too many people want to have a say where the money is spent and in turn the people who are suffering are the students. There are currently approximately 42,725 students in the Charleston County School District with 41 elementary schools, 13 middle schools, 8 high schools, 12 magnet schools, 7 charter schools, and 7 Program Schools. There are more magnet, charter, and program schools than middle and high schools combined. Twenty-six extra schools/programs have been created to remove students from their designated public schools. I attribute that to white-flight. The new schools do not model the demographics that naturally occur in those areas. Several of those schools require testing or special applications to attend and the ratio for ethnicity is skewed from the actual ratio in the district, hence the white-flight comment. And yes, there are actually public schools where students have to pass a test to

be admitted. How can a public school have testing requirements? Doesn't that conflict with the concept of being public? Of the twenty-one magnet and charter schools in Charleston County, seven of them did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements. Forty-one schools in Charleston County did not meet AYP standards for the 2007 school year with a graduation rate of 62.3 percent— the lowest in three years. I think it is safe to say that schools in Charleston County need to rethink the education process that is currently taking place, dismiss bureaucratic issues, and put the students at the forefront of education. But, once again, that would be a major paradigm shift and is not something that can be accomplished quickly or easily. So, my thought is to change what can be changed within the school systems. Dramatic changes will and can occur with focusing on community and aesthetics in education.

Please let me make myself clear in this section. I do not want all schools to be like Porter-Gaud. I do not think that is possible or at all realistic. There are too many factors that differentiate Porter-Gaud from other schools, mainly the financial elitism, and with that is academic elitism. But, there are quality aspects that Porter-Gaud uses that other schools can also use. The focus on aesthetics and community can be fostered in any school with the right training and support.

Finding joy in learning occurs for both the teachers and the students because of interactive lessons and the focus on the way the lessons are conducted, not just the product of what it learned. This joy leads to aesthetic experiences. This interaction and creating meaningful lessons can also be done in any classroom. Porter-Gaud School is not the only school with passionate teachers. Come on, that would be crazy to think or even say. Public schools house some of the best teachers in the nation and they are chomping

at the bits to be creative. These teachers need to have the opportunity to teach in ways that will bring in aesthetics and the arts. By giving the students a voice in their own education, allowing for creativity and aesthetic experiences, the students will achieve academic success. The teachers need to trust in themselves and in the students. The knowledge will be obtained and will generate more meaning than if conducted in a mundane manner. Teachers creatively facilitating lessons, cooperative learning, character education, arts across the curriculum, and having a focus on community within schools is attainable for any who are interested. “Working from within, we will teach the children according to our own inner standards, and in doing so, reconstruct the public sphere in America” (Pinar, 2004, p.239).

How can schools help? This means that time must be given to teachers to plan and communicate. They must be able to foster a community sense among themselves and then be able to carry it over into the classrooms. Parental involvement may take work, but it will be worth it when the sense of community is fostered. Building a sense of community can be a challenge, but there are numerous resources on how to do so. Porter-Gaud uses Responsive Classroom as a focus. Jeanne Gibbs calls her program *Reaching All by Creating Tribes Learning Communities (TLC)* (2006). Finding the right program for a school means research and knowing what your school population would benefit from the most. But it is attainable for all. Building a community and using arts in teaching does not cost millions and should not only be for private school.

Maybe this is where my next journey begins. Maybe I need to get the word out to other schools and share the success that Porter-Gaud has experienced. I need to leave my exclusive community and journey out and share this line of thinking....

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APPENDIX A

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Teacher Focus Group:

There are seven questions that will be asked within the interview. These questions will be asked to a focus group so time needs to be allowed for discussions and answers. The discussions that stem from the questions will be used to create the narrative for the study.

1. How can you describe the community atmosphere within your classrooms?
2. Please describe how these students are a part of the larger Porter-Gaud community.
3. Please describe how aesthetics is used in your classrooms.
4. I have given you all a transcript of notes of my observations, is there anything that you want to add or clarify from what I observed?
5. Explain how you think joy is a part of your classrooms.
6. In what ways do you think tradition influences what happens at Porter-Gaud?
7. How do you think the outside community views us?

APPENDIX B
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

Community Focus Group:

There are seven questions that will be asked to this group of interviewees.

1. Please describe how you feel a part of the Porter-Gaud community?
2. How do you believe that community is a focus within the Porter-Gaud School itself? Explain.
3. How do you believe that aesthetics is a focus within the Porter-Gaud curriculum? Explain.
4. What do you feel is the most important element in the education at Porter-Gaud School?
5. Explain how you think tradition is valued at Porter-Gaud School.
6. In what ways do you think tradition influences what happens at Porter-Gaud?
7. How do you think the outside community views us?

APPENDIX C

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Student Focus Group:

There are five questions that will be asked within each interview. These questions will be asked to a focus group so time needs to be allowed for discussions and answers. The discussions that stem from the questions will be used to create the narrative for the study.

1. How can you describe the community atmosphere within your classrooms?
2. Please describe how you are a part of the larger Porter-Gaud community.
3. Please describe how aesthetics is used in your classrooms.
4. Explain how you think joy is a part of your classrooms.
5. How do you think the outside community views students at Porter-Gaud?