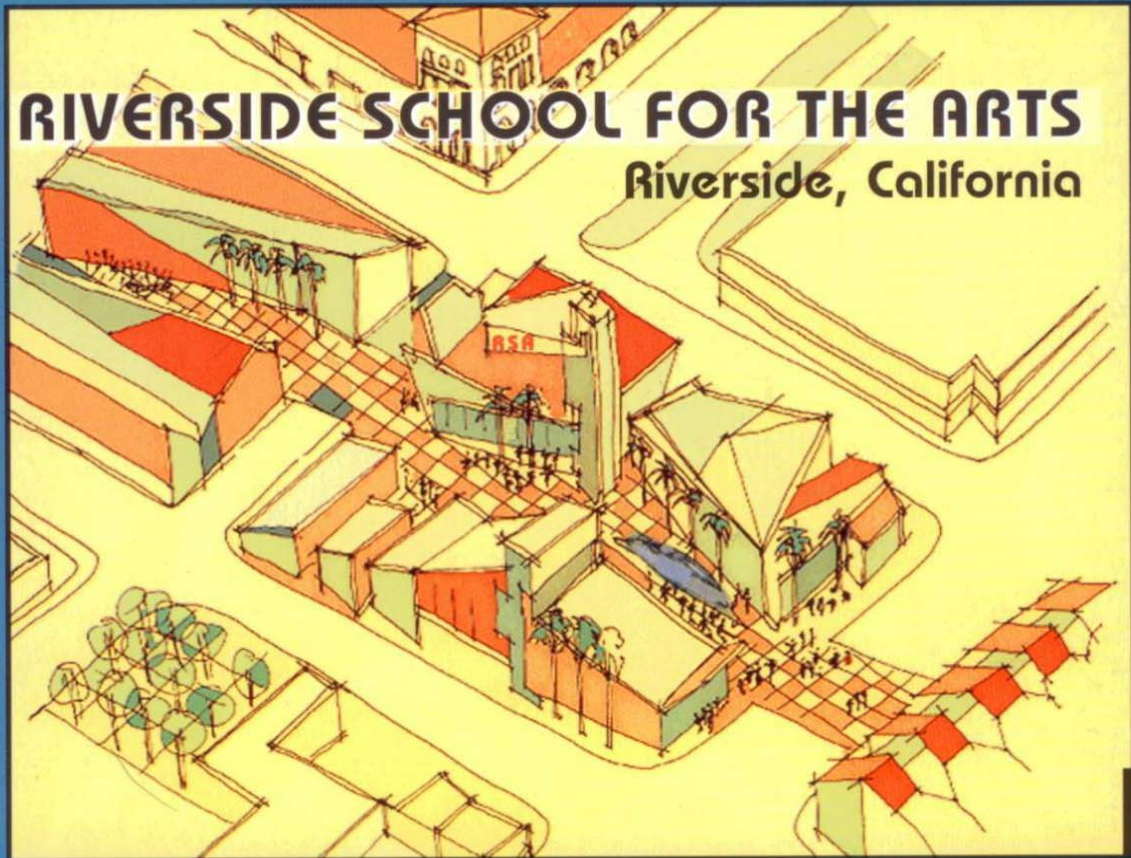


THE RIVERSIDE SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Riverside, California

RSA



Cover Sketch: Sigrid Miller Pollin AIA

Riverside Community College. University of California, Riverside. Riverside County Office Of Education

Curriculum Design and Strategic Planning

February 15, 1999

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Riverside School for the Arts
Riverside, California
Curriculum Design and Strategic Planning¹
February 15, 1999

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Riverside School for the Arts

Riverside, California

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February 15, 1999

Introduction

This document is the third in a series of substantial planning efforts on behalf of the Riverside School for the Arts. The first involved several visionary local educators and developers visiting novel schools of the arts in Florida, North Carolina, and California to begin to get a sense of the leading developments available as models. The general idea was first-rate education for youngsters and young adults aged 14 through 22 in areas that had potential ties to industries seeking world class artistic talent. A driving force for the school was producing skills across the arts -- drawing, painting, music, movement, animation, film effects, digital sound, and video production, to name several -- that had links to jobs in industries that were growing around the world and expanding in southern California.

This first planning exploration produced an extensive document focused on potential facilities needs of such a school – the requirements of music programs, dance, theatre arts, and painting studios, as examples. What these early planning efforts also illustrated was the fact that planning for real schools requires an understanding of the curriculum that will be offered.

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This realization spawned phase two of the planning process, which took place in the winter, and spring of 1997-98 under the facilitation of UCLA Professor James Catterall. Dr. Catterall hired a team of planning consultants representing both leading arts education institutions and also arts related film and related technology industries. This team worked alongside arts faculty and administrators from Riverside Community College, the University of California at Riverside, and the Riverside County Office of Education to create a curriculum planning and strategic planning guide for the school. This document, summarized immediately below, created continued enthusiasm for the concept of the school in the Riverside community and in turn spawned a third, more detailed planning effort that was designed to achieve more specific plans for what the school would offer, to whom, and with what facilities and staffing needs. In a nutshell, that is the purpose of this document. Its message unfolds as a narrative of the planning process engaged to deliver on such a promise. Its starting point is the basic curricular principles and premises created by the planning team last winter, since these served as the foundation for everything to follow.

The Mission of the Riverside School of the Arts

The previous curriculum and planning guide offered both short and elaborated versions of the mission of the planned school. The short version was this:

Mission Statement 1: The mission of Riverside School for the Arts is to provide students from grades nine through sixteen with an arts education comprising liberal arts and sciences education, arts education, and technology education, endowing graduates the opportunity to excel in both their fields and professional careers.

As will become apparent when the ongoing planning process is described below, this short mission statement proved inadequate in its ability to capture additional crucial elements of the intended mission for the school. So here is an elaborated short mission statement that augurs the planning elements to be described shortly:

Mission Statement 2: *The mission of the Riverside School for the Arts is to provide students from grades nine through young adulthood authentic, integrated project-based arts education experiences leading to the most advanced levels of technical, aesthetic, and reflective skills needed to be creatively competent in a knowledge-based economy. The span of experiences students will need to undergo to excel as learners will necessarily comprise liberal arts and sciences education, arts education, and technology education of the highest quality, endowing graduates with the opportunity to excel in their fields and in their professional careers.*

What More Can We Say About RSA's Mission?

We turn here to an elaboration of the core purposes of the proposed school. We first describe the two core elements of the mission -- artistic and liberal arts and sciences education and their ties to technology -- and then describe some of the more detailed thoughts of the design team regarding the mission of RSA.

Cultivating Artistic Excellence -- a first purpose. A primary mission of RSA is to educate students to high levels of competency in the visual, performing, and media arts. (We use the term "media arts" to refer to specific basic and applied artistic skills that are experiencing significant demand in high technology, media and communications, and entertainment related industries -- especially drawing, painting, writing, digital film-making and film effects, music, sound technologies, video, interactive and communications technologies, and World Wide Web applications. We elaborate on the media arts agenda for RSA below.)

All RSA students will aspire to high levels of accomplishment and a high pace of skill acquisition in a chosen artistic specialty or cluster of specialties. This means that RSA will seek to serve two types of students: students with high levels of artistic accomplishment at the time they enroll, and students with demonstrated strong interests in pursuing an arts concentration. Many students are quite accomplished in artistic fields by the age of 14, having excelled in several years of instruction in music or drawing for example. RSA seeks to offer a pathway for such students to soar to the heights of professional accomplishment. Other students may seek RSA because they and their parents are beginning to recognize the strength of an artistic interest and forming a

resolve to place artistic development high among their learning priorities. RSA will serve these students as well.

Cultivating Academic Excellence -- another first purpose. The complementary strand of the RSA mission concerns academic development. The artistic education we propose will take place in the context of a high quality academic program. While students will come to RSA because of strong interests in the arts, and with intentions of developing artistic skills to very high levels through a concentrated and specialized program, they will also pursue a strong liberal arts and sciences program in parallel, typically through integrated projects that require inquiry and reflection in BOTH the arts and in other academic domains, such as history and visual art, literature and sculpture, mathematics and visualization, or philosophy and the theatre arts.

Why arts and academics in a school for the arts? Our rationale for a balance between artistic and academic development, even for students whose main passions in life run to the artistic, is twofold: first, we feel that a strong academic program is a must for any young person finding his or her way to adulthood, even for those who presently feel they are most interested in a life tightly focused on an artistic discipline. Breadth in training and strong general learning, collaborative and creative problem solving, research and information seeking, and communication skills are a must for all RSA students.

Second, the imperative for a strong academic program at RSA also came to us by courtesy of the media-arts industry members of our design team. In our planning discussions, we heard emphatic pleas from representatives of the worlds of animation and film/special effects arts, for example. And what was the message? These industries are in unrelenting need of artistic talent and often seek artistic employees from beyond USA borders. But their need for productive artists, perhaps ironically, is not focused solely on artistic skills. Our media industries want young people with both artistic skills and with a broad base of high level learning and social skills that can serve as a foundation for their creative endeavors, and as a foundation of their being able to learn continuously on the job -- which is so essential. The demand is for visual, musical, and performing artists (e.g. choreographers or designers) with knowledge of history and literature and science, and with strong communication and storytelling skills, who are resourceful learners as well as accomplished artists.

Our industry advisors maintain that there are plenty of people "out there" who can draw and paint or move their bodies with precision and skill. The critical shortfall is artistically trained young adults who have important and/or aesthetic things to say, who can choose and use appropriate media to

communicate their ideas and knowledge effectively, who can make connections to the enduring human themes ("a good story, well told"), and who can connect to cultural and literary traditions when inspired or called upon. Also lacking are artists who can work as effective and adaptive members of teams and who can plan and meet deadlines on complex projects -- laments echoed across the work force and not confined to the arts.

Finally, academic development which focuses on depth of understanding as well as traditional content learning is important for all young artists in training because there are simply no guarantees that artistic skills and pursuits will remain the central activities of their lives as they proceed through adulthood. It is estimated that most people will have more than seven jobs during their work life in the next century, including multiple changes within career tracks. Interests change, and a professional career in the arts is not a guarantee for even the best-trained individuals or a life-long assurance for the best of young talent. Some artists "make it" and use their talents as a primary purpose and livelihood, while others turn their artistic interests and sensibilities into allies for other pursuits. Some will become arts teachers and work in environments requiring academic as well as artistic accomplishments. Some RSA students will eventually turn away from formal artistic endeavors and decide to be lawyers, or doctors, go into business, or devote significant time to family rearing.

Thus the academic side of the RSA mission is fundamental to our thinking. It is not a purpose cavalierly appended to this design in order to appease constituents skeptical about the merits and needs for a school devoted predominantly to the arts. We propose a school that does both, and does both with excellence.

The total institution. Our vision is the creation of a dynamic "community" of practice centered around what it means to be an artist, with active participation by students, teachers, mentors, professionals and the Riverside community at large. We propose a school that will become a full life for its young people and more than a routine job for its faculty, certainly if both artistic and academic ends are to be pursued for all they are worth. To deliver so total and encompassing a curriculum, the RSA design calls for a **residential school**, probably at least a 5-day boarding plan, beginning in grade 9. Students would live on campus Sunday evenings (or perhaps Monday mornings) through Friday afternoons, and have schedules of classes, rehearsals, and laboratory and studio sessions running early morning to mid-evening when in residence. A residential format would also permit the school to draw widely from the communities of Riverside County for students. An even wider student drawing

area is possible. A seven-day, full time boarding program may be necessary for some students; and if offered, the student market becomes global.

The Importance of Informal Learning. We cannot overemphasize the importance of encouraging informal learning and social activities, as well as formal classrooms, and projects, and performances. According to the recent "Teaching Firm" study of EDC's Center for Workforce Development, more than 70% of learning the takes place in today's work environments is informal learning, and through peer-to-peer communications.

This approach is validated by over ten years of research by the Institute for Research on Learning (IRL) that shows all learning is situated in both social and environmental contexts. The implications for schools such as RSA are that the social lives of students, faculty, and the community are the key environments where most of the learning occurs - and the design of the school should maximize this fact. This is the key connector in which RSA will solve the current "school-to-work" problem, so there is little separation between learning, work, and participation as an artist.

The Evolving Vision for the School

This second planning retreat brought new ways to describe the excellence RSA aspires to and the ways the curriculum would function. Some of the points raised in the continuing planning process brought specific guidance on their ultimate fulfillment and others should be placed on an agenda reserved for live administrators and on-the-spot academic leaders to see through to implementation.

Additional Proposed Qualities of the RSA Curriculum

Collaboration and Integration. The twin values, *collaboration* and *integration*, would be preeminent at RSA. Students would work largely, but not exclusively, at collaborative projects. This is because so many projects in industry involving the arts -- from set design, to electronic game development, to film effects, to characterizations and musical scoring -- involve collaborations among artists. Collaboration skills are a must.

Integration. Integration of artistic skills stands as tall as collaboration in the line-up of curricular needs for RSA. Music, movement, live action, and film

effects, for example, exist not only as collaborative events but as integrated learning experiences with meaning brought through that integration.

Community involvement and standard setting. RSA must look to the community for the skills it seeks to advance in its learners. We mean by this the pursuit of the following critical question:

What portfolios must RSA graduates carry with them to the offices of prospective employers in order to find ways to use their skills in the work force, or in the productive artist's studio?

Ongoing Assessment is Essential

Only by regularly assessing and comparing the skill levels of graduates against the skills demanded in the external world can RSA be sure it is producing needed and valued skills.

Community involvement in the assessment process extends to the use of community juries on a regular, even monthly, basis to appraise the work of RSA students. The annual open houses or back-to-school nights simply do not provide enough reason for critics to offer serious feedback or frequent enough opportunities for such feedback to have direct and positive effects on student skill development. RSA needs connections with industry professionals to keep the programs current on market and labor trends, particularly in the fast paced industries of entertainment and computers.

A culture of assessment and reflective practice. This requires not only new models of assessment by faculty but critical peer feedback on a regular basis. A variant of community involvement in the critical feedback process is a student mentoring system whereby all student work is exposed to student feedback on a regular basis. We advocate a scheme where each student solicits and receives multiple formal peer reviews of his/her work before going to an adult instructor for feedback. Students learn standards very quickly under such a regime, and faculty time can be used very efficiently where it is most needed.

The planning team also advocates a school where there is a balance of joy and rigor in student work. This will produce projects and performances of the highest possible quality. There may be such joy in the work that a student team would commit many evenings and added hours to ensure, for instance, that a particular ensemble music passage works just right, or that a special effect in a film scene hits the desired mark.

Additional RSA Curriculum Design Principals

The RSA concept remains true to the design principals emphasized in the spring 1998 planning document. Here is a recap of the main elements:

An Eight-Year Program. The school would serve students from grade 9 (or about age 14), to age 22 or 4 year college graduation.

Non-grade-sorted arts; grade-sorted academics. The school would have the traditional grade levels for organizing 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade status, as well as traditional progress markers at the college level. This is for the benefit of students who wish to transfer in or out at various conceivable points that recognize explicit student grade levels. However, artistic placement, where called-for, would be based on skill level, not primarily on student grade level.

One implication of this scheme is that some studio learning environments would be vertically organized -- with learners at different ages and skill levels involved; some other classes would be organized by skill level.

Residential High School. RSA will maintain boarding facilities for most or all of its high school age students. The planned curriculum is so demanding that it will take long days to complete projects and classes effectively. We also expect the boarding community to bring special social cohesiveness to RSA, along with some inevitable social challenges.

Boarding Cautions. The planning team believes the boarding concept brings extraordinary challenges along with opportunities to the RSA concept. A boarding component for 9th graders requires special measures to assure safety of the environment and the confidence of student parents. A boarding environment involving 14 and 15 year old art students also brings special temptations to both young and older students. Among other issues, such as supervisory arrangements, the boarding feature brings demands on the physical layout and structure of the facilities.

Overlapping Levels. RSA plans to serve youngsters at high school, community college and upper division college levels. We expect overlap as these levels interact -- with students taking advantage of offerings across levels and faculty crossing instructional levels to teach, with suitable incentives.

Virtual Learning Institution. Some of the RSA experience will be shared by interactive technologies -- courses or special experiences brought in via distance learning on the Web, dissemination of special programs or lectures on the Web, list serves (e-mail conversation capability for multiple users simultaneously and asynchronously) built into specific courses, design problems assigned to be solved with Web resources, and so on. This is especially important for involving professionals who cannot be in residence or who would like to be mentors but cannot afford to leave their jobs to do so. This listing is a surface scratch on the possible roles for technologies as RSA comes to realization.

Vertically Integrated Learning Studios. Some classes operate well when attended by students at varying levels of development -- certain basic dance or movement classes, some drawing classes for example. Such vertically integrated studios allow more experienced students to teach novices and for novices to move up to more senior status over time. This is already a traditional learning structure for theatre, dance and performance groups.

Drawing as a foundation for painting, 3-D arts (sculpture, for example), and film effects. The planning team feels that drawing skills are absolutely fundamental to a school for the arts and support many other skills. Drawing should be a basic requirement for all students and a continuing requirement for many.

A central role for technologies. A supporting premise of RSA is that the arts are being bombarded by technological ways of doing business and in ways that are impacting the roles of the arts in many commercial enterprises. RSA should become a hotbed of technological applications to the arts, never forgetting that strong foundational skills in the arts for all students are indispensable.

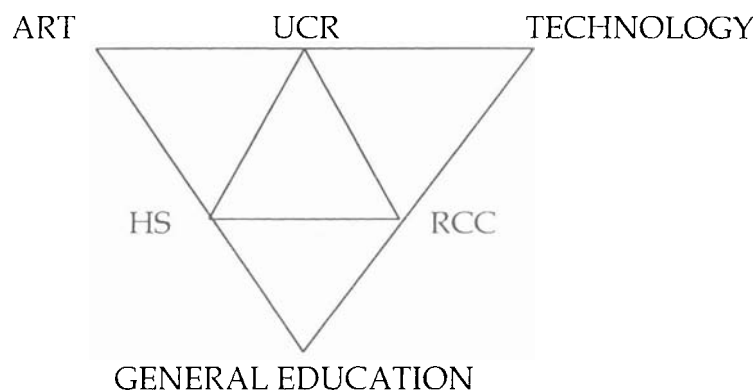
Multiple Curriculum Pathways. A hallmark of RSA is that the curriculum will be built with assumptions that students may enter and exit at various points and still find their skill developments rewarding and marketable. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates how RSA will admit students on the strength of both talent and interest in the arts to start, mostly on the strength of their portfolios in the middle years, and that all students will have multiple options lying before them as they study. They will have access to expert guidance in thinking about their pathways as they proceed with their studies.

The model also shows how student might enter RSA at various mid-stream points, particularly at grade 13. Entry mid-stream will largely be based on student auditions and portfolios along with academic credentials.

Student Sabbaticals. Students will be encouraged to take sabbaticals as part of their courses of study -- these will be designed for students to reflect on current and alternative directions for themselves, as well as to take advantage of internship opportunities in studios and industries.

Industry Partnerships and Internships. RSA intends to cultivate placement opportunities for students to practice their skills in the world of real artistic production. At the same time, RSA will cultivate opportunities and incentives for professionals from the worlds of the arts to offer classes and workshops on campus or through technological media.

Figure 1
Institution Design



A Model

"Grade Level"	Lead Institution and Program	Exit Choices
Post-secondary:		
16	UCR-RSA Art major	>Graduate School
15	Upper division Academics Internships/visiting faculty	>Studio >Industry >Teaching/tchr. train.
14	RCC-RSA Integrated Art Major/ Academic program Internships/visiting faculty	>University Transfer >Studio >Industry
Audition/portfolio & academic portfolio (90%)		Promise/interest & academic portfolio (10%)
Two Entry Paths to Post-Secondary level		
Secondary:		
12	RCOE/RCC High quality Art/Tech major Integrated/academics Internships/visiting fac.	>Art Institute >Alternative Tech >College of Choice >Entry level job
Audition/portfolio (50%)		Promise/interest (50%)
Two Entry Paths to RSA		

Roles for returning students. A traditional mission at RCC is to serve the training and growth needs of non-traditional mature students. It is anticipated that there will be spaces at RSA at the post-secondary level for non-traditional older learners who aspire to career shifts into appropriate artistic domains.

Meeting a demand for art teachers. California will need tens of thousands of teachers in the coming decade. It is also apparent that there is some sort of (not precisely documented) resurgence of interest in the arts in the past couple of years. These forces should combine to mean that well trained arts professionals might find work in the state's schools, either under provisional or emergency credentials, or through taking a fifth year arts credential program beyond the BA. Returning teachers with teaching credentials may also find their way to RSA to become qualified as arts teachers through certificate programs.

(Frankly, the planning team finds some amusement in the notion that the state of California might certify arts teachers with emergency credentials. Despite the fact that emergency certification usually means underpreparation for teaching in a subject, the declaration of an arts education emergency in California is gratifying and overdue.)

Community service and interaction. RSA students and faculty will actively engage with the surrounding community through performances, exhibitions, and community-sponsored internships or commissioned projects. RSA students will also use their talents for campus activities as a form of community service, as well as for technical training. For example, a campus store of student created art, video CD's of performances, etc., could be run by students for the community. Students may also learn additional technical and media skills in service of group performances and other school events planned for community audiences.

**Continuous learning assessment and reflective
practice by the faculty.**

This item stands as one of many in a list of RSA curriculum guidelines. In fact, it deserves a large box around it to guarantee its emphasis. If there is one legion problem with schools and colleges who try to assess where they are, conceive plans to grow, implement plans for change and improvement, and assess what they have achieved, it is that **FEW IF ANY INSTITUTIONS BUILD THE NECESSARY TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES INTO THEIR INFRASTRUCTURES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR FACULTY AND STAFF.**

If one single recommendation in this document is heeded, it should be that RSA institute a culture of professional assessment and growth and that this culture be realized through the implementation of real policies and realistic job assignments that can make this happen. No one thing we have said in this or other documents describing RSA is so critical to its long-term success.

More on How the RSA Curriculum Would Work

We turn here to elaborations of the core ideas of an integrated curriculum driven by *constructivist* notions of how individuals learn.

Integrated projects. Students would focus their energies on three deeply interrelated areas: Liberal arts and sciences, a chosen art focus, and group projects. An assessment culture sketched above would be present within each of the three areas through peer critiquing and teacher evaluation, as well as through direct interaction with arts industry professionals.

Planning team members suggested that each student would be involved in two annual projects: a project in their major concentration, and a supportive role in a project outside their concentration that reinforced a differing aspect of their chosen skills -- perhaps technological applications. Projects would include integrated academic skill building in ways that advance high quality academic preparation and skill acquisition toward academic requirements.

It may prove untenable for all students to begin with involvement in more than one project, as some students may wish to begin with great concentration

on focused “disciplinary” or “compulsory” studies -- 20 hours of weekly work on the violin, for instance. However, we propose that even such “solo” concentrators would find their way into a group project quickly and that the advisement structure would push things in this generally desirable direction.

Total commitment to a total institution. Being an artist means actually living and participating in artistic activity on a daily basis. It requires a full and unflagging commitment. RSA will support the growth of this commitment in all students. The residential feature will reinforce this aspect.

Building from where you are. Key to successful curriculum planning is knowing who your incoming students are, and what experiences and skills and desires they bring with them -- their initial skill levels affect how courses will be structured.

Organically growing programs. Organically growing programs means starting with students first. This means not trying to work out full pedagogical specifications of programs in advance, despite the best skills of our planners and inaugural faculty. Considerations must be taken: Who are the students? What are their entry-level knowledge, skill levels and talents? What are their native languages? What do they *need* to learn, and when? What are their individual target portfolios? What are their best initial learning pathways, or sets of learning pathways?

Integrating arts and academics. Integration is a basic concept that helps frame what the school is; a shared vision across all curriculum boundaries, a collective feeling and experience as well as an individual one. Being an integral part of a whole.

Faculty are the key. How do we design a school that allows these to be naturally integrated and facilitated? Great, great care must attend the recruitment and selection of all faculty. We don't raise this as a Herculean caution here. It seems that many of the design team already wish to send their children to RSA, or would have enrolled their grown children in the school if it had existed earlier. Teachers will vie for places on the faculty. Talented youth and young adults will apply in good numbers.

RSA will make use of art to teach other subjects: Using arts as vehicles for increased academic understanding in context e.g. art, music, dance, theater as means for learning history, literature, rhetoric, or creative writing.

Businesses, arts related and otherwise, are calling for the knowledge worker who can think, solve problems, learn new skills on the job. A well-integrated arts education teaches these very things.

A realistic view of student outcomes. Experience in other academies would suggest that high levels of performance across the spectrum are reasonable expectations. Experience also suggests that the very best artists are sometimes NOT the very best academic students in such environments (nor are the very best artists necessarily the best teachers), and that the very best academic students are not always the best artists. What we do know from a number of exemplary programs and related research studies, is that education in the arts AND liberal arts and sciences with high standards, expectations, and commitment to quality can prove very complementary.

Conceptualizing a Curriculum in and Through the Arts

History of Culture Thread. The planning team suggests that a common thread weave its way through the school curriculum -- this is the history and continual evolution of culture - broadly construed.

A set of roughed-in student and class scheduling possibilities presented below and sketched in Appendix B suggest that a set of integrative seminars ground the academic program which focus broadly on the history of art and the history of cultures expressed through their arts. Their details must remain the responsibility of a founding head and initial on-site academic leaders and teachers.

Most, but not all subjects would be taught through the arts. We may not be able to or want to teach all academic disciplines through the arts, but we can assure high arts integration with academic learning if the school community insists and if RSA has faculty who are so disposed. Research has shown, however, that there appear to be positive linkages between involvement in the arts broadly, and doing well in other academic subjects; this body of work includes some specific connections between involvement in music and growth of mathematics skills.

Conceptualizing a curriculum through the arts. It is possible to conceptualize an entire curriculum around artistic principles rather than

organizing around ideas stemming from the liberal arts and sciences side of the school. Learning can be seen in the cultivation of:

- Ways of seeing -- visual arts, graphics, design, technical theatre, diagramming, and drawing
- Ways of doing -- dance, music, theatre, film
- Ways of composing/designing -- visual arts, composing, writing
- Ways of thinking -- critical analysis, aesthetics, creative problem solving
- Ways of understanding -- history of culture, making meaning, symbol systems, academic, movement.

All of these principles can be structured in cultural contexts and an academic thrust can carry all the way through: ongoing assessment, benchmarks, definitions of continuous progress can be established. The arts can be tools and vehicles for better academic learning/understanding in context. For example, using art/music/dance/theatre as a means for learning and experiencing history. The arts teach us how to live the full human experience.

More on Project Based, Constructivist Learning

Particularly noteworthy in the discussions of the second planning retreat was a deepening emphasis on project based, integrated, constructivist learning and “teaching for understanding” that could pervade the RSA curriculum. This was part of the original design draft, attaching specifically to the section on media arts applications. However, it is apparent that a project-based approach could be a central theme throughout the entire RSA curriculum, encompassing both the arts and liberal arts and sciences agendas.

Education systems too often take what is natural and whole about a system, process, or phenomenon and break it down into separated, unlinked parts that mean little in and of themselves. Much of ambient learning theory, at least that revealed in popular textbooks and despite their thematic protestations, runs in this stream.

Project-based learning and teaching for understanding reverses this current. The students are not just making art, or solving fractional equations, or exploring the behavior of great leaders at the helms of their ships: they are constructing life.

Decentralized learning and teaming are essential -- teachers become facilitators. Students meet and read about leaders and workers from all facets of production and life. In RSA instructional designs, students cultivate their own leadership skills constantly: they call in community experts; they create the learning communities they need to get things done with high levels of mutual reinforcement and strong community pressure for high standards.

Launching the curriculum for new students. A project based-course for 1st year would include students becoming familiar with all art departments and members of the RSA staff. This could be some type of foundation/interdisciplinary course. There are key disciplinary understandings that all students need to know for each/all art forms.

The focus would be on seizing individual student interests from the beginning, then backing up that interest with the acquisition of needed skills and pertinent academic knowledge, thus setting a basic infrastructure for the student's experience at RSA.

A beginning level project could be something like: Re-creating a Greek Chorus-based dramatic event, using dance to express a period or event in history, creating a brief young person's guide to the woodwinds, or designing a futuristic, never-before-seen civilization on Mars. The project acts as a gravitational pull on the individual arts focuses, encouraging the students to excel and at the same time to think, participate, create, co-create and traverse traditional boundaries.

Learning through participating in multiple communities of practice

Access and opportunity for integration would generally come through student commitment to 2 projects, although we introduce this idea with some caution about student time demands.

- The **primary focus project** would reflect their individual commitment to an arts focus or cluster of arts concentrations.
- A **secondary role project**; typically a project outside the students' chosen discipline, would most likely comprise of a supporting role that would allow students to learn a complementary or new skill set.

Example: Student A makes a 90 second digital film or choreographs an 8 minute ensemble dance as his/her individual project. Student A also assists in Student B's musical theatre production number via set design/painting. Or works on Student C's dance costuming as a team member. Students constantly ask themselves, "What do I need to know or learn in order to successfully participate in this project?" RSA provides an environment in which students can seek and develop answers to such questions.

- **Compulsories (specific art/academic training courses)** will be provided within RSA's regular course offerings and also through imported instructional resources. Examples of external sources are community courses, Web technology, an RCC or UCR course offering, RCC and UCR faculty giving private lessons, and importing guest specialists to teach master classes and short courses. The Idyllwild Arts Academy brings specialists in, for example, 15- year principal Joffrey Ballet dancer and Phantom of the Opera cast member Carole Valleskey, to teach periodically and RSA could collaborate with this program. IAA also transports van-loads of students to Los Angeles for lessons with top area professionals, and some collaboration could be sought for this program. Students help shape their courses of study by discovering what they need to know in order to improve their work.

Added Thoughts on Student Projects

The context of projects has to be sufficiently large in order for process-based teaching to occur. Projects MUST touch on many ideas and dimensions, involve several arts, and embrace problems worth solving. This leaves very critical questions that are ultimately tied to the faculty advisory and sponsorship processes. Who chooses projects? What projects are worth undertaking?

Student choice is a big component, but experienced project centered teachers must be part of the propulsion process. Lots of choice must be built into the structure. "Free movement" among projects that change every year, along with follow-through and completion of projects to satisfying finishes are musts.

Added Thoughts on Project-Based Learning and Constructivism:

The planning team identified additional guiding ideas through its discussions of what is meant by project-based learning and how knowledge is constructed over time by learners. These guiding ideas bear on how courses are

physically organized as well as on how content is structured. They are enumerated here as guides to real course planning as RSA becomes a reality

- 1) Adapt big (universal) ideas as conceptual frameworks, not just local situations, as every set of situations and circumstances is different. Project ideas can then more easily be customized and adapted to fit other departments, areas, and organizations.
- 2) Recognize and build on social structure. Set up a studio, socialize students into the community, and induct them into the club. **Be inclusive.**
- 3) Don't start with rigor as THE project launch requirement. Don't say, "Learn all principles before you make film". Start with the joy of ideas and back into the rigor of making them work with lots of mutual reinforcement and learning; and team energy. Say, "Make a ball bounce for 10 seconds on a video screen -- now give it this quality or that characteristic, make it a poodle's face, now make the ears work right --- figure these things out!"
- 4) Begin with end products and work backward toward what skills need to be developed. For example, animation is an integrated art form. It involves acting, drawing, dancing, painting. Thus, the artist must take all of these classes in order to draw because mechanics and kinetics are crucial to the final product. Based on experience in a well known animation training program at Rowland High School, acting, painting, drawing, sculpture, and animation all come together because teams want to create whole projects. Different team members learn and specialize in specific, isolated skills, but the central motivation and way of realizing those skills is team production.
- 5) The project-based, constructivist approach is analogous to the teaching of reading beginning in first grade. Even in phonics based programs, the larger context of reading is presented as part of the instructional design and experienced right off the bat; what grows in subsequent time is an increasing order of complexity.

The Central Place of Narrative, Clarity, and Visual and Digital Literacy Broadly Construed

The planning team recognizes that **visual literacy** broadly construed is a primary objective of the “learning by doing” format. Students create a story line (this may be literature-based, dramatic, movement-based, figure-based (drawing, painting, or sculpture), musical, or mixed-media in its conception. Students then struggle with connecting the written story to visual images and present their plans to the class for consideration. Before any production takes place, the individual and the class analyze projects from every angle. Questions of audience interest and story clarity are consistently being addressed. This process, by nature, requires an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum, one that emphasizes analysis and the application of knowledge and techniques along with collaboration.

Constructivist learning in this environment.

- Constructivist learning and teaching begins from where your students are, *not where you hope or want them to be.*
- This approach can be demoralizing at times because it demands realism about starting points and realism about the fits and starts of growth patterns.
- The process takes students from wherever they are and assumes each student has the potential for continuous intellectual growth and artistic development.
- Faculty and students must always keep on top of what are the essential skills that need to be embedded in this curriculum as well as what the world outside is demanding as skills.
- Constructivism doesn't just mean a lot of playtime and endless exploration; it also means *rigor*. This in turn means doing whatever is needed, over whatever time is necessary, to get it right.
- **Construction of understanding** – long-term projects involve embedded skills development as well as depth of understanding of “the big ideas”. Students start out grasping the big picture and gain motivation for learning the needed skills and knowledge in order to do their chosen projects.

- **Contextual learning** - students work in the context of actual projects and in real artist (or studio) communities. In traditional art schools, many students experience a lack of connection between what they were taught and the environment in which they eventually work - there is no linkage. In project based learning, students construct knowledge through practical processes.

In like manner, business leaders no longer want robots. They want people who can work in a human team and make critical decisions as they face them.

- **Connectivity** - In the real world, one subject is related to the next. But in the traditional classroom different subjects are too often taught in isolated, non-contextualized ways. Projects allow the natural interweaving of topics such as art and design to work hand in hand with computer knowledge and math, science and humanities, with multi-sensory, multi-disciplinary, and multi-cultural modalities. Connectivity also means access to professionals, mentors, and members of the community - both in person and through electronic communications.
- **The order of complexity is a primary organizing idea in the curriculum.** Rather than having topics change over time, many of the same skills are taught repeatedly and over many years in an arts curriculum, with complexity ranging from naïve to mastery. Thus from grades 9-12, the same basic outline may drive a class and what changes is the order of complexity -- from naïve to mastery. An analogy might be teaching a youngster to play catcher in baseball. All the same skills are involved at some level whether you are a 14-year-old Pony-leaguer in Moreno Valley or 24 and catching for the Dodgers. What grows with time is subtlety and complexity and mastery of the required skills.
- In general, the skill levels recognized in the industry are the following:

SKILL LEVELS	
• NAIVE --	prior understanding; little or no disciplinary understanding
• NOVICE --	rules based, disciplinary understanding, and rigid application of rules/techniques
• APPRENTICE --	flexibility; the emergence of professional creative, quality work
• MASTERY --	fluency & connectivity; expert quality work.

- In general, it is the “apprentice” level that begins to indicate promise for professional work in arts-related industries; and it is only a fraction of all trainees in given areas that attain apprentice levels (perhaps 30 percent in excellent training environments).
- **Students teaching students.** Students teach each other frequently in this environment, since all from novice to expert are included in many classes. No student asks a question until they have asked five other students, then if the question is still not answered satisfactorily, the asker and the five students have a discussion with the instructor.
- **Students have their own divisions of labor within project communities.** Students have their own budgets, inventory, their own staffing specializations, e.g., an assistant who is in charge of power cords and hook-ups. Some students specialize in particular software and can troubleshoot or teach others what they need to know for a particular project. The focus for computer instruction is not so much on learning the software program, but rather how a student applies it in context. In this way students create a collaborative/cooperative classroom where the teacher does not have to be the repository of all knowledge.
- **Advantages of student-centered learning and responsibility.** Making the students the leaders in the classroom gives them a chance to take control in a responsible manner, to work with other people, to organize everything, and to come out with a good product of which they can claim complete ownership and experience pride in their work.

A Culture of Constant Assessment and Reflective Practice: The *Sine Qua Non* of Pushing Students and Teams to the Limit

Embedded assessment - The RSA planning team spent much time on the topic of assessment -- who does it, when, with what standards, and with what purposes. The overriding principle was that assessment of work lies at the center of the learning process.

Assessment is a change agency element that must be built-in from the beginning as part of the philosophy of the school. It is a system that involves all stakeholders in students’ learning: parents, students, teachers, school administrators, service/content providers, community members and policymakers.

- **Reflective practice.** Assessment is generally seen, especially by students, as negative or irrelevant. We might hear from an articulate student, “Assessment and tests are not about my learning or getting better. They are about you, the teacher and whether you are up to snuff, and about sorting me into the appropriate class so a general peace will prevail.” This is not a scenario we envision for RSA.
- If **assessment is embedded**, then reflective practice can occur constantly and continuously. Rather than emphasizing tests as the only measure of performance, RSA should provide continual opportunities for assessment and feedback.
- **Use of outside evaluators.** RSA must face the question: “Who can truly say - once you think you have it right and think you have a working formula, that this is necessarily true?” The work may produce attractive pictures for the wall or full auditoriums when student productions are rolled out. But RSA must call experts in and assess the products, for both students AND for teachers. Every month professionals would come in.
- **Accommodating fast-moving developments and standards.** Since the demands in some industries are so fluid, appraisal standards will inevitably change periodically, even during the course of a school year. There is NO substitute for attention to industry standards if programs are to remain connected and meaningful to what artists have opportunities to do in the outside world.
- **Personal reflection**-through writing and verbal sharing is part of the exhibition and feedback process.
- **Exhibition** is a two-way street; it shows people what you are doing and produces evaluation. It also gives you opportunities to win over politicians, board members, community, and teachers. It is beneficial to provide rationales for the *way* students should learn, and for *what* they should learn. We suggest a major annual exhibition and festival.

Student Admissions and Courses of Study

We turn here to what qualifications RSA expects in its entering students and to the curriculum students will engage once enrolled.

Two levels of entry: High School and Post-Secondary

High school entry. As in our original pathway model, the planning team felt that access to RSA at the high school level would be based on one of the following, more or less in balance:

- Portfolio and audition criteria. These along with academic skills demonstrated by school transcripts would decide about half of early admissions. RSA may use standardized high school achievement tests such as the SSAT, the ISEE, or the UCLA mathematics placement test².
- Interest and passion criteria. These along with academic skills would decide half of early admissions.
- If any imbalance between the two types of admissions is shown, RSA should err to the side of the first criterion -- admitting students with demonstrated artistic skills. The arts side of RSA simply needs a good jump-start.

Post-secondary entry. Basic entry will be by audition and or portfolio (with academic standards also considered). A high school diploma will be prerequisite.

Access to all students. Entry at any level must be accessible to low-income students.

Admissions for balance of specialties. The admissions process will strive to yield a suitable distribution of students across the various artistic specialties at the school. In a given year, there will likely be more openings in some specialties than others. Some concentrations are expected to be in larger demand than others on a continuing basis and school facilities will grow and adapt to accommodate such differences.

²Secondary School Admissions Test, Independent School Entrance Examination, UCLA's mathematics project test for algebra readiness.

Upwardly Fluid Admissions Criteria. Admissions Criteria can change over time; the bar may rise each year as demand dictates, for example as competing training institutions get better at what they do and as interest in RSA expands. There should be a process in place for assessing the method of student selection each year; making sure the criteria still fit the reality of incoming students and perhaps the external market demand (we can't take on too many mellifluous cellists at any one time; the literature for cello quartets is very thin). And some instruments get more displaced than others do by synthesizers in the world of professional musicianship.

Staffing and Scheduling

Organic growth of programs. Teachers must come to RSA with knowledge and a willingness to start small, high quality programs that manage to think big about the not too distant future. They must be willing to organically grow their departments as student needs and industry needs shift.

The culture of faculty learning and collaboration emphatically highlighted above would set this program apart from most.

Core technological specialists and/or consultants will be needed -- for each group and department. We refer to specialists in sound, various digital applications, video/editing, programming/technical directing and stage managing, theater managing.

Essential Early Staff Development. RSA faculty and staff will require particularly early training to get them working as a team. It is necessary to avoid high attrition of faculty and staff in the early years (through both nurturing the staff and not hiring misfits in the first place). Consistency in staffing is seen as an important factor for success of RSA in its early years.

RSA can take advantage of teacher training and professional development courses and program offered by Riverside County Office of Education. Possible areas include workshops in integrating curricula or instructional technology.

Search for Key School Leader and Personnel. Members of the planning team could take an active role in generating candidates and selecting a school leader, administrators, department heads, and eventually faculty. A board of advisors should be traditionally active in the independent school sense: all should be major donors of (both financial and other resources) as well as bear expertise.

What Specialties will RSA Offer?

Artistic concentrations for study were considered and recommended by the planning team by applying the following criteria:

- Are they foundations for many of the other arts focus areas?
- Do they constitute a spawning ground for future possible programs?
- Do they present a number of opportunities to apply and integrate learning?
- Is there a projected market for these and related skills?
- Do they respond to founding faculty and administrators' unique passions and interests?
- Are they cost feasible?
- Are there funding opportunities to mount such programs?

The planning committee also felt that ALL of the programs described below should be offered right from the start, even though there may be only a handful of students in a given area at the start. That is what start-up is about -- making some highly educated guesses and expressions about where you want to be several years down the road and planting the right seeds in the right soil directly from the start. In addition, it may be a somewhat smaller version of RSA in its full operation and regalia that makes it the attractive place it must be to draw student, family, community, and donor interest.

The Artistic Curriculum at RSA

Suggested Arts Specialties for RSA. The design team discussed questions concerning which artistic specialties should be central to the RSA curriculum. There was agreement that the specialties implemented should respond to various concerns facing RSA. These include anticipated demand for training among student families, anticipated employment opportunities, RCC and UCR faculty interest in participating in RSA, industry partnership opportunities, and faculty recruitment opportunities. The cluster of specialties chosen for implementation should also be responsive to opportunities and desires for creating an integrated set of artistic training experiences -- for example the integration of visual art skills with certain media development technologies, or the integration of music and dramatic arts.

While additional discussion of this important topic should be part of the ongoing planning for RSA, the planning team recommends that the following specialties be included in the RSA curriculum:

Music -- music education in various traditions including classical, jazz, composition, musicology.

Theater arts -- acting, directing, play writing, set design, art direction, lighting, and sound.

Visual Arts -- painting and drawing, sculpture, ceramics, photography, and art history. **Related media arts:** interactive multimedia design and development, visual resource design for the Web, on-line publishing, graphic design and production.

Dance -- modern dance, jazz, tap, ethnic dance, choreography; some ballet, digital media effects concerning the movement of the human body.

Design -- An intellectually oriented design major could incorporate the fields of visual arts, architecture, music and sound design, sociology, anthropology, computer and information sciences, and social, environmental and cognitive psychology. Since there are widely varying conceptions of what a design course should and could consist of, this concentration needs live planning by RSA administrators and faculty as the school begins planning and operating with its actual staff.

Film -- Digital filmmaking, special effects, animation effects. The film industry is increasingly utilizing digital filmmaking. A film school needs to be able to accommodate that change. The use of digital techniques is growing, but the essentials of filmmaking remain important. Most traditional schools do not offer specific training in digital filmmaking. **Digital filmmaking could prove a key strategic niche for RSA.**

Creative writing -- writing, storytelling, poetry, editing, script writing for various media including educational and entertainment; technological media, television, theatre, and film.

Transdisciplinary arts -- RSA should encourage students and faculty to design customized arts specialties that draw on more than one art form or discipline -- courses which cross specialties listed above, or focus on specific and strong connections between the arts and other disciplines -- for example history and creative writing, or science and educational media development.

More about the Media Arts at RSA. We have discussed media arts in rather general terms thus far. Here we turn to a clearer statement of what we mean by *media arts* and our recommendations concerning which particular media arts RSA should focus on and why. RSA must thoughtfully consider what fields to embrace, especially because of rapid changes in both technology and also in industry needs in the media arts areas. The challenge of building a curriculum in media arts goes quite beyond selecting a list of courses or specialties -- by all accounts it requires designing a multi-faceted and integrated course of study.

For example, a recent labor market analysis concluded that both the entertainment and interactive digital media industries require, "...professionals with an underlying foundation in artistic and technical theory and techniques, as well as an understanding of the production process, communications, creativity, teamwork and problem-solving."³

The following families and skills areas seem to be especially important areas for focus and growth over the coming years:

Career and Occupational Families in Visual Effects and Animation⁴

- Visual Development -- exploration of literary or musical properties for visual content.
- Story Development -- visualizing a script in storyboarding.
- Layout -- breaking storyboards for visual production into scenes, camera set-up, lighting, etc.
- Painting -- painting in a variety of media including water color and gouache; painting backgrounds for animation and mattes for live action and special effects. Painting is a key skill in the digital film program.
- Traditional Animation -- cell animation, character drawing, effects and clean up.
- Computer Arts -- 2D/3D images using computers and special (effects) software.
- Interactive digital media design and execution⁵
 - Human-computer interface design.
 - Computer programming (e.g., C++, Java, and database programming).

³ A Labor Market Analysis of the Interactive Digital Media Industry, 1997

⁴ Making Digits Dance, 1997.

⁵ A Labor Market Analysis of the Interactive Digital Media Industry, p. 13.

- Web design (visual arts, interactive design, and Java programming).
- Sound design.
- **Video production**, editing, and digital special effects.
- Digital storytelling and communications arts.
- Animatronics and model design.
- **Instructional design** (for both K12, higher education and corporate training).
- Entertainment design (games, theme parks, exhibits and media events).
- Producing, technical directing, and art directing (including related management skills).

We note that during the past two or three years, the explosive growth of the Internet and the World Wide Web has resulted in a large shift of emphasis toward either Web-based interactive design or hybrid media forms (Web+CD-ROM, Web+television/video/audio, etc.). This growth has resulted in adding digital literacy, or information literacy (ability to effectively find, evaluate, share, use, and create new knowledge for use on the Internet and Web) to the list of basic skills needed in both industries. As media converge into a common digital form, this shift has also placed a higher emphasis on the need for trained professionals in the fields of information design and interactivity design.

The Collaborative Work Environment of the Media Arts. Finally, we offer a note about the context in which media arts skills are used in the workplace: media arts production environments are places in which many or all of the skills and specialties and the different people who have these skills listed above must interact to create a major product. The central workplace feature is the project or production team. Thus, the learning environment for aspirants to this world needs to reflect the interactions among the specialties contributing to finished media products. While teams may work on each separate area, they also interact frequently (with each other and with the producers and directors, as well as with end-users throughout the design and production phases). It is for this reason that partnerships with community/industry sponsors and a project-based learning approach in a "studio" culture are important parts of how a curriculum needs to be designed to best meet industry technical and content skills and collaboration needs.

Students can choose what course to follow within an infrastructure of interdisciplinary learning. I.E. rather than top down, disciplinary learning meaning: "You learn 'this'," RSA will facilitate bottom-up curriculum building

meaning, "You decide what you want and need to learn." This of course in an atmosphere of professional guidance and senior role models.

a) Rigorous training will be offered in basics, or compulsory skills within arts disciplines, such as drawing or playing a musical instrument. Sometimes this would occur in single level classes and sometimes in integrated workshops.

b) Specialized courses will be offered -- some as workshops for advanced students and some as vertically integrated studios.

The Planning Team advises that the following should be integrated in every course where appropriate:

- Internships
- Collaboration/Teamwork
- Technology – word processing, database, spreadsheet, digital imaging, multimedia communications, and Internet use
- Creative problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Related historical and cultural studies
- Communication – organizational, interpersonal, visual, writing
- Learning-acquisition skills.

Liberal Arts and Sciences and Integration with the Arts Through Seminars and Projects

The curricular scheme is proposed in four organizational formats which would run continuously: (1) the traditional academic core, (2) the specific curricular sequences of the individual arts disciplines, (3) a set of integrative blocks, and (4) a sequence of immersion blocks.

The Academic Core

Briefly stated here, the academic core would proceed mainly from the necessities of the A-F requirements of the University of California (a summary of these A-F requirements is attached as Appendix C). The structuring of the particular courses which satisfy these requirements, however, will take into account the other curricular levels and opportunities. The labels may look quite orthodox; the organization of the curriculum will be significantly augmented by the connection with the arts through the integration program.