Six Standards for Artistic Supervision: A concise survey of the literature and philosophies of Elliot Eisner

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Standards for Artistic Supervision

"Not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that is measured matters"

Successful artistic supervision:

I. Promotes qualitative inquiry in the assessment and supervision of teachers as opposed to limiting assessment to a quantitative measurement of predetermined standards.

II. Encourages and supports collegiality and equality between teachers and supervisors and discourages the hierarchical and managerial practice of supervision.

III. Requires supervisors to be *educational connoisseurs* and employ a rich and vibrant vocabulary to describe what they observe.

IV. Requires supervisors to be *educational critics* by practically interpreting their observations through the application of appropriate theories, models, and concepts that promote broad and encompassing definitions of teaching and learning.

V. Requires frequent observations in order to develop a temporal understanding of what is taking place in the classroom.

VI. Encourages flexibility, creativity, ingenuity, and novelty in the learning process for students, teachers and supervisors.

Introduction & Background

Elliot Eisner, in developing his concept of artistic supervision, calls for a repurposing and redefinition of teaching and learning to fully appreciate its impact and promise. For Eisner what is lacking in our perceptions of education and the roles and characters who are performing within it, is an aesthetic appreciation for the process of learning as it is practiced by teachers with students. Teaching, from Eisner's perspective and experience, is an art form. It is not something

that is done successfully by simply completing or executing a set of prescribed and formulated tasks. It is a process that is too often confused by requirments to validate learning through standard systems of measurement (Eisner, 2002). Likewise, “a focus on what students have learned is wider than determining the extent to which students learned what the teacher intended them to learn or determining if they learned what course objectives or standards [are] described” (ibid). Eisner does not want to abandon the concept of standards or for that matter a curriculum that can guide and inform the content to be communicated with students. Quite the contrary, Eisner argues that the quality of curriculum and the quality of teaching are the “two most important issues facing schools” (Pajak, 2000, p. 135). The focus then should not be on the quantification of curriculum and teaching, which seems to dominate American educational culture (Eisner, 2002). We must, more appropriately, concentrate and promote our appreciation and assessment of teaching and learning by qualifying educational praxis.

Eisner attacks the notion of what he refers to as the “scientific inquiry” of education, dominated by quantitative measures, as an “oversimplification of the particular through the process of reduction aimed at the characterization of complexity by a single set of scores” (Eisner, 1976). This reductionist mentality loses the inherent complexity and nuance of teaching and learning. In actuality, we suffer the need to compress the growing amount of data gathered from an increasing number of instruments used to isolate and experiment with a finite number of variables in a misguided attempt to understand the now distorted image created by our systems of measurement that we hopelessly refer to as “modern education.” The process of teaching and learning is wonderfully difficult and beautifully complicated in its labyrinthine constructs. With such a dense image in mind, how can one hope to navigate such territory while simultaneously

promoting improvement and growth? Here, at the nexus of frustration and inspiration we find artistic supervision.

Artistic Supervision

Eisner defines artistic supervision as a supervisory approach that "relies on the sensitivity, perceptivity, and knowledge of the supervisor as a way of appreciating the significant subtleties occurring in the classroom, and that exploits expressive, poetic, and often metaphorical potential of language to convey to teachers or to others whose decisions affect what goes on in schools, what has been observed" (Eisner, 1982, p. 59).

This definition, which is contextualized in a conversation on the importance and benefit of artistic perception and critique, promotes a diversity of techniques needed in educational supervision. Put simply, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to supervision, as there is definitively no single approach to teaching or learning. What Eisner suggests in his artistic approach to supervision is a necessity to…

> "attend to the expressive character of what teachers and students are doing, the meta messages contained in the explicit actions they engage in. [Artistic supervision attempts] to understand the kind of experience that pupils and teachers have, and not simply describe or count behaviors they display. [This will help us get to] What the situation *means* to the people who are in it and how the actions within the situation convey or create such meaning…" (ibid, p.62).

By identifying the meaning and actions of what we observe in a classroom, we are exploring a deeper level of the teaching and learning process that can become a catalyst for improving and promoting effective teaching practices. In other words, an emphasis on content or *what* should be taught does not tell us *why* or *how* such information will be taught. Supervisor's observations are too often restricted to a checklist of prescribed visual and aural stimuli e.g. is the lesson object written on the board, did the teacher ask questions germane to the topic at hand, were the students actively participating, etc. This is not to suggest that the supervisor would not

consider these things in an observation, but simply tallying the number of times such things take place, or checking the appropriate box to verify its happening undermines the subtleties of both the teaching and learning process and arguably dehumanizes the classroom. Education happens at an individual level and the diversity we recognize in the physical world i.e. color, smells, proportions, gender, age, etc. are mirrored in the diversity of interests, abilities, and engagement of every individual involved in the learning process. In order to fully appreciate such complexity and diversity a model of supervision must be used that can handle the multivariate and correlated complexities of such an environment. For Eisner, that model is realized in an artistic approach to supervision.

Eisner identifies eight features of artistic supervision in his chapter on the same topic in Sergiovanni's seminal work the *Supervision of teaching* (1982). These factors (shown in table 1) can be considered the characteristics of artistic supervision and help sculpt a reality of what the supervisory model requires and looks like in practice.

TABLE 1 – Factors of Artistic Supervision

	Artistic approaches to supervision…
1)	… require attention to the muted or expressive character of events, not simply to their incidence or literal meaning.
2)	… require high levels of educational connoisseurship, the ability to see what is significant yet subtle.
3)	… appreciates the unique contributions of the teacher to the educational development of the young, as well as those contributions a teacher may have in common with others.
4)	… demand that attention be paid to the process of classroom life and that this process be observed over extended periods of time so that the significance of events can be placed in a temporal context.
5)	… require that rapport be established between supervisor and those supervised so that dialog and a sense of trust can be established between the two.
6)	… require an ability to use language in a way that exploits its potential to make public the expressive character of what has been seen.
7)	… require the ability to interpret the meaning of the events occurring to those who experience them and to be able to appreciate their educational import.
8)	… accept the fact that the individual supervisor with his or her strengths, sensitivities, and experience is the major "instrument" through which the educational situation is perceived and its meaning construed.

From these factors and a brief survey of the literature associated with artistic supervision, six standards of "successful artistic supervision" have been identified at the beginning of this paper to guide you through the process of establishing the practice in your own learning community. Each standard can be correlated to one or more of Eisner's factors and have been consolidated to offer a more concise picture of artistic supervision in practice. The standards should not be seen as governing rules, but rather, detailed guidelines that can and should exist in fluctuation with each other. They are not hierarchical and express a necessity of interdependence to be utilized successfully. Each standard will be discussed briefly in an attempt to dispel any misconceptions regarding its implementation. Following the standards you will find a series of professional development exercises that are designed to offer multiple perspectives of artistic supervision and ultimately to encourage its use.

Standard I: "Quality vs. quantity"

Successful artistic supervision promotes qualitative inquiry in the assessment and supervision of teachers as opposed to limiting assessment to a quantitative measurement of predetermined standards. The concept of this first standard was discussed briefly in the introduction and background of this paper and serves as one of the most important philosophies of Eisner's artistic vision for educational assessment and supervision. Eisner speaks passionately and frequently about the struggle to overcome the "conventional approaches to educational evaluation [which have become] a set of profound consequences on the conduct and character of schooling in the United States" (Eisner, 1976, p. 135). The dominance of scientific inquiry in the realm of education, at the levels of learning, teaching, and supervising, have stultified the true

meaning of the nuanced art of education (Eisner, 1976, 1982, 2002). What Eisner encourages is supervision that depends and leans towards a qualitative perspective that may utilize quantitative data, but is not restricted or required to evaluate teaching and learning from one or the other. The model that is currently in place, fueled by standardized testing and assessment, weighs too heavily in the realm of quantitative measures and scales which prosecute teaching and promote instruction within a narrowly defined window of success based on scores. Even more troubling, is the conversion of qualitative observations to fit this quantitative mold. To state that the majority of what is actually taking place in the classroom is ultimately lost by this forced conversion is an understatement. Eisner articulates the process thusly …

> Quality becomes converted to quantity and then summed and averaged as a way of standing for the particular quality from which the quantities were initially derived. For the evaluation of educational practice and its consequences, the single numerical test score is used to symbolize a universe of particulars, in spite of the fact that the number symbol itself possess no inherent quality that expresses the quality of the particular it is intended to represent (ibid, p. 137).

The symbolic nature of every act within the learning process is of momentous importance in attempting to accurately capture what teachers and students are doing. What Eisner argues, is the deficiencies of numbers and words as symbols in light of what the art symbol can offer in its representation of observed reality. He continues by stating that …

> Scientific activity yields propositions so that truth can be determined in relation to its instrumental value, a value dependent upon its predictive or explanatory accuracy. Artistic activity creates symbolic forms which themselves present directly an idea, image, or feeling which resides within rather than outside of the symbol (ibid).

This argument against what Eisner believes is the objectivity of knowledge continues in his writing, but expresses overall the necessity of qualitative perspective in assessing and evaluating students and teachers engaged in the learning process. This is a huge leap for some supervisors who have been trained and entrenched in the scientific perspective of supervision.

Letting go of the dependence that has been promoted and required of our educators and supervisors on the "numbers game" in education is challenging, particularly when the alternative is seldom discussed or practiced. The benefit and fear for most supervisors is the freedom that qualitative inquiry and artistic supervision require. It is arguably simpler to check a box, or verify an expected outcome in observation, than it is to recreate the learning experience you observe using an artistic palate of words and images. Artistic supervision promotes effective teaching and assumes its presence in the classroom rather than searching for error in order to project punitive scores that demand improvement to simply stabilize a corporate gauge of success. This is not to suggest that alternative systems or designs of supervision cannot promote effective teaching, but there is a fundamental issue that must be considered when observations lack qualitative inquiry and data. We must evaluate not only how we observe the learning process, but more importantly what we are communicating, why it is relevant, how our communication promotes success and questions improvement, and ultimately what the outcome of our supervision will produce.

Standard II: "Colleague vs. manager"

Successful artistic supervision encourages and supports collegiality and equality between teachers and supervisors and discourages the hierarchical and managerial practice of supervision. According to Pajak (2000), Eisner actually dislikes the term "supervision" because "it implies hierarchical relationships that are more typically found in factories and offices than in professional work settings" (p.129). He believes using such a term as "supervisor" suggests a subordinate position or the "supervised" who must adhere to the supervisor's dictum of their role and responsibilities. Also, the term supervisor, according to Eisner, "seems to eliminate the possibility for exchange and dialogue between colleagues" (ibid). In spite of the fact that the

term supervisor has been accepted in the field of educational supervision, Eisner's sentiment necessitates the development of collegiality between teachers and their supervisors. Their relationship must be rooted in trust and mutual respect. For Eisner, this cannot be generated through the mechanistic methods currently employed to supervise teachers. What does "meets qualifications" mean to a teacher? How informative is a "4 out of 5" when reflecting on your teaching practices. Supervisors need a vehicle to express their appreciation for what teachers are doing in order to build a substantial relationship. It is important to understand the difference being suggested. It is not that quantitative data is useless in educational assessment, rather, it is not the only tool, nor does it generate a compelling communicative picture of reality for the teacher.

As an example: You may supply me with an incredibly detailed description of a mountain, with its height, geographic location, detailed descriptions of the flora and fauna that surround the area, etc. but I will not garner a personal appreciation of the mountain until I see a picture of it at sunrise or sunset, or read the poetry it has inspired in changing seasons, or witness it captured by one of Albert Bierstadt's stunning canvases. I can know a lot about that mountain, but when I am asked "what do you think about it" I can only offer my objective opinion on relative scales to the information I am supplied e.g. "It seems tall… I guess there are a lot of plants around it… it is far from the ocean, etc." When confronted with the artistic impressions of others who have been there and attempted to capture the mountain in color, words, and sounds, that speak metaphorically and symbolically to the experience of that mountain, I am supplied with a wealth of adjectives and opinions that are validated thru an aesthetic experience. What I can then communicate is so much richer and informative to the experience and value of that mountain. Imagine I was then told that the mountain would be removed from the landscape to make room

for a new highway. What information do you think would compel me to defend its current state? Likewise, as a teacher is supervised and evaluated, what kind of information do we gather to appreciate that teacher and ultimately defend their practices from the looming progress of contemporary educational reform? Eisner explains that …

> …an artistic approach to supervision would aim at the dual modes of perceiving performance; it would seek to appreciate the overall quality of the performance, including the quality of the "parts" that constitute it, and it would seek to appreciate the distinctive character of the performance. It would ask, "What are the particular characteristics of this teaching that give it special value?"; and, ultimately, "How can I as a supervisor strengthen those values that are consonant with quality education? (Eisner, 1982, p.61).

Artistic supervision promotes collegiality and depends on relationships founded in trust and mutual respect to encourage and support teachers in their autonomous practices to benefit student learning. Eisner points out that "teachers … are differentiated by their style and by their particular strengths. Artistically oriented supervision would recognize this style and try to help the teacher exploit it by strengthening the positive directions already taken" (ibid, p.60). One would hope it is unnecessary to deliberately promote collegiality amongst teachers and their supervisors, but Eisner raises a compelling argument for artistic supervision by recognizing its generative power to establish and nurture collegiality in contrast to scientific methods that objectify the teacher as the pejoratively "supervised."

Standard III: Educational Connoisseurship

Successful artistic supervision requires supervisors to be educational connoisseurs and employ a rich and vibrant vocabulary to describe what they observe. Eisner has written extensively on this concept of educational connoisseurship and its role in effectively implementing models of artistic supervision. We will discuss the concept briefly to identify its primary components, but you are encouraged to explore additional resources that expound upon

Eisner's philosophies on the topic. Defined directly, connoisseurship can be considered the "art of appreciation" (Eisner, 1976, 141). We discussed appreciation earlier as a vehicle for nurturing a collegial relationship, but what is crucial about the distinction of appreciation when discussing the connoisseur is that what is appreciated is not necessarily liked. Eisner explains "appreciation here means an awareness and an understanding of what one has experienced. Such an awareness provides the basis for judgement" (ibid, p.140). Too often we confuse our personal preference for artistic appreciation. Undoubtedly you have uttered the words "I do not like that" when referring to a piece of music, or painting, or other work of art. This personal aesthetic preference is not insignificant, but we are incorrect when projecting what is our personal opinions of art onto its larger cultural significance and value. We are all capable of offering an opinion that comes from individual experiences that subsequently justifies our preferences. When we are asked to appreciate something, however, we are challenged to look past our own individual perceptions to the larger cultural world the art lives in. Yes, you may not like it, but you should be able to appreciate the hours or even years an artist worked on their art. The dedication and struggle inherent in each brush stroke or note on the score. Appreciation taps into your understanding of the work. This is not necessarily your personal preference i.e. whether or not you would pay money to have it in your living room, but whether you have the expertise to know where the art comes from. Looking past a canvas or a concert to see the individuals behind the work is a challenging thing and one that is truly subjective, but the richness of that journey, to communicate your understanding of what you are experiencing adds immeasurable value to the art. Eisner explains further that …

> Connoisseurs notice in the field of their expertise what others may miss seeing. They have cultivated their ability to know what they are looking at. *Educational connoisseurship* addresses itself to classroom phenomena; just as individuals need

> to learn how to "read" a football game, so too do people need to learn how to read a classroom or student work (Eisner, 2002, p.187).

What must be noticed from this explanation is the necessity of expertise in the field. Educational connoisseurs must know what to look for and how to describe it. This moves past basic knowledge of the jargon associated with a specific field. We can easily confuse our technical terms with an accurate and sincere description of what is taking place in a classroom. Here is the place we can employ the artistic nuance of metaphor and symbolism.

Eisner comments on the demand for educational connoisseurship by stating we will never have a "Betty Crocker" theory of education. In other words, we cannot just follow a recipe to produce effective teaching and learning. "Teaching is an activity that requires artistry, schooling itself is a cultural artifact, and education is a process whose features may differ from individual to individual, context to context" (Eisner, 1976, p.140). Connoisseurship equips us with the tools and platform to celebrate our teachers and students in the learning process. This is, however, only half the picture of artistic supervision. As a connoisseur you develop your personal perspective of your observation, but as a critic you must effectively communicate that perspective publicly (ibid, p.141).

Standard IV: Educational Criticism

Successful artistic supervision requires supervisors to be educational critics by practically interpreting their observations through the application of appropriate theories, models, and concepts that promote broad and encompassing definitions of teaching and learning. Eisner describes criticism as the "art of disclosure" (ibid). In referencing the work of John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934) Eisner states that the aim of criticism "is the re-education of perception of the work of art (Dewey, 1934). In our schools [therefore] educational criticism is aimed at the reeducation of perception of the work of education … put another way, an educational critic talks

or writes about a student's or teacher's work, the features of the curriculum, or the life of a classroom in ways that help others see what they otherwise might not have noticed and, if not noticed, not understood" (Eisner, 2002, p.187). We must avoid the semantic trap that assumes criticism is a pejorative term. Quite the contrary, criticism simply requires the connoisseur to communicate their observations in an effort to unveil the nuance of their appreciation for the art. Eisner points out "effective criticism requires the use of connoisseurship, but connoisseurship does not require the use of criticism" (Eisner, 1976, p.141). One may develop a personal appreciation of their observations quite naturally, but the artistry of effective supervision comes from the critical lens activated in order to communicate what you observed.

As an example: a fifth grade teacher is differentiating a lesson on "ecosystems" by offering several different stations in the classroom that employ a wide array of manipulatives and products to express the students understanding of the topic. At this point already we see an amazing opportunity to support what this teacher is doing well by recognizing what we are observing. If we are shackled by a predesigned form we may simply check a box that answers the questions "is the teacher differentiating instruction? yes/no; has the teacher identified the learning objective? yes/no, etc." As an educational connoisseur and critic, however, we can exercise our appreciation by communicating our understanding of the situation by illustrating through our words what is taking place: "The room is alive with activity. I can see the learning objective written clearly on the board "describe the functions of an ecosystem" as the students are hard at work at various stations around the room. I am all at once struck by the variety of activities that are available for the students to meet their objective. In one corner there is a group of 5 students discussing characters of a play they are creating to represent the components in their ecosystem. In another corner a group of 6 students have a large poster and post it notes

where they are writing their observations of an ecosystem represented in a national geographic magazine, their post-its, each filled with observations, are organized on the poster into different categories that represent components of their ecosystem. Etc." Which observation do you believe communicates the richness of what took place in the classroom? Which observation would you rather receive as a teacher? Which observation do you believe communicates the appreciation of the supervisor for the work the teacher has done to differentiate the lesson for their students? Lastly, which observation do you think will build a relationship of collegiality and mutual respect?

Eisner outlines four key dimensions or features of effective educational criticism which are nested within the artistic model of supervision and outlined in table 2 (Eisner, 2002).

TABLE 2 – Four dimensions of educational criticism

DESCRIBE	Frist the critic must vividly describe what they have seen in such a way that someone listening to or reading what the critic had written would be able to see or imagine the qualities observed for her- or himself.
INTERPRET	Then the critic must interpret what they have described. That is, the critic tries to account for what he or she has given an account of. One does this by showing the connection between what one has described and the conditions that appear related to it. The aim of this phase in educational criticism is to explain.
EVALUATE	Next the critic must evaluate. Although description and interpretation will reveal what something is like and why, they are not used directly to assess educational value. The evaluative aspect of educational criticism requires judgement about merit based on educational norms.
THEMATICS	Lastly, the critic must draw conclusions from what has been observed, described, interpreted, and evaluated to extract from the detail of particulars the large ideas that might guide the perception of other situations like it.

These features, although represented in a sequential order, do not exist independently. One feature does not have to precede the other, and in many cases, the supervisor may evaluate their observation while they are describing it or identifying emerging themes. "Educational criticism is intended to avoid the radical reductionism that characterizes much quantitative

description. It is designed to provide a fine-grained picture of what has occurred or has been accomplished so that practice or policy can be improved and high-quality achievement acknowledged" (ibid, p.189).

Although some supervisors may be turned off by the time commitment inherent in writing prose of their observations, the artistic approach to supervision can be realized, and is encouraged, to explore multiple methods of communication. Perhaps you take pictures, or video of what is happening in the classroom. Perhaps you carry a small recording device to narrate your experience. "Good criticism… should help readers and listeners see more than they could without the benefit of criticism" (Eisner, 1976, 148). Knowing this, we must appreciate the differences in our teachers and realize that some of them may see their teaching better through prose, and others through video. As stated earlier, there is not one way of observing teachers, as there is not one way of teaching. The time commitment of the supervisor is an investment into quality teaching and learning. Although is easier said than done in most cases where supervisors play multiple administrative roles on their campus. Investing in your teachers' practices, however, yields far greater rewards than viewing the role of supervisor as an officer for compliance who completes routine walk-thrus to monitor and control deficiencies.

Standard V: Frequency

Successful artistic supervision requires frequent observations in order to develop a temporal understanding of what is taking place in the classroom. We are fooling ourselves to believe that a system of sporadic mandated observations are promoting the best teaching possible in our classrooms. Eisner contends "the one-shot 40 minute visit severely constrains what a supervisor is able to do" (Eisner, 1982, p.61). The reality of education is that learning happens over time. It is extremely unreasonable to assume that in a narrow window of time, during a

singular observation, that a supervisor will be able to assess true learning as a result of effective teaching. What a supervisor can do in that window is produce an image of what took place in the classroom generating the infamous "snap-shot" of teaching and learning. This is comprised of student work, teacher instruction, peer involvement, discourse and dialogue relevant to the topic, etc. Only after this initial observation can the supervisor return to measure any true learning. Essentially, one must establish a reference point in order to measure growth. If we have no idea where the students and teachers have started, how can we know how far they have come? To look for this in the curriculum or syllabi is naïve. One of the greatest challenges of teaching is the task of meeting students where they are and encouraging them to new places. Notice there is no prescribed definition of improvement in this explanation. For some students progress is not measured by "getting to the next unit by April." Instead, their learning consists of mastering a specific skill that will enable them to comprehend new material. This is in stark contrast to many models of assessment, that we currently work with, which assume that turning in assignments and taking tests are the true measure of learning. As Eisner so passionately argues, such a model neglects the artistry of teaching and learning (Eisner, 2003). In recognizing such complexity supervisors should be convicted to observe more often and for longer periods of time. This is not to suggest that this is a realistic expectation in the current state of educational supervision. As stated earlier, considering the growing number of administrative tasks that have been forced upon individuals that must also play a supervisory role, time is a precious commodity. What is important to note, however, is that the complexity of the classroom is not diminished by the changing roles of supervisors? In fact, it can be argued that the modern classroom is becoming even more diverse and intricate. This is to say supervisors should be observing and communicating even more, not less, in spite of their ambiguated roles and responsibilities.

Standard VI: Freedom

Successful artistic supervision encourages flexibility, creativity, ingenuity, and novelty in the learning process for students, teachers and supervisors. This last standard is crucial to the establishment and promotion of democratic schooling. Eisner has argued that "the major aim of schooling is to enable students to become architects of their own education so they can invent themselves during the course of their lives" (ibid, p. 652). This comes from educational environments that promote freedom in teaching and learning. This is not to suggest that there cannot be standards for either teaching or learning. Rather, what is required is the ability to differentiate content, process and products associated with learning. This differentiation must take place at every level and for every individual in order to be effective. In other words, teachers exercising freedom in their classroom by differentiating instruction is undermined by a system of supervision that neglects to recognize such a practice by reporting it. Furthermore, a system of administration that fails to request observations that appreciate and promote diversity compounds the issue.

Pajak (2000) speaks to this sentiment by summarizing Eisner's artistic approach to supervision and the importance of its intentions through the role of the supervisor.

> [Esiner's] artistic approach to supervision is intended primarily "to improve the quality of educational life" for students and teachers. It relies on the supervisor's sensitivities, insights, and knowledge as a means of highlighting important subtleties of classroom reality. The supervisor is the instrument, in other words, through which meaning of events is construed (p. 138).

The supervisor as instrument is an incredibly powerful metaphor as it recognizes a much larger purpose to supervision. One could argue that our current models promote the supervisor as a tool, specifically a hammer, used to pound square pegs into round standardized holes. The challenge truly lies in the instrumentation of supervisors. As an instrument the supervisor's role

is made purposeful yet artistic. This is inherent not only in the literal musical connection to the term, but the connection to detailed, precise, meticulous work that can only be performed by an artist's instrument. The composer, as it where, does not refer to the performers of his works as "tools" gathered simply to construct his masterpiece. Rather, they are instrumentalists, each unique and important in the realization of his work. Eisner relies on musical analogies often in his descriptions of artistic supervisors since music offers a perspective of standards that ensure successful performance without sacrificing the individual talents, commitment, efforts, and product of each musician. Giving artistic freedom to our supervisors creates an opportunity to significantly improve the communication and success of our teachers and students. The challenge is overcoming the standards based reform initiatives that would have us believe that freedom and diversity are somehow polarized to their efforts to improve schools.

Eisner (2002b) speaks to this directly in his chapter on the "centrality of curriculum and the function of standards" in public education:

> There is an undeniable appeal in the idea of clear, unambiguous expectations. Yet one can only wonder if our schools are in as desperate a condition as we are led to believe, and, even if they are, whether the creation and application of standards are the powerful remedies they are believed to be… Why does a nation as diverse as ours need a common curriculum? Is there only one defensible conception of a good curriculum, a good school, or a good teacher? In a nation that boasts that one of its strengths is its diversity, are differences in the way the subjects are conceptualized exempted from that diversity? (p.163).

These rhetorical questions push us to reevaluate the role of standards in our educational practices and how such standards have limited our professional freedom. Arguably, one of the greatest things we can do to improve our schools is afford the students, teachers, supervisors, administrators, and community the freedom to communicate their knowledge and expertise in a way that fully appreciates their individuality and creativity.

Professional Development Activities

The following professional development activities are designed to generate an appreciation for how artistic supervision can be implemented in your own school settings. It is important to recognize that these activities represent a small sampling of how artistic supervision can be realized and you are encouraged to explore additional methods and processes to becoming an artistic supervisor.

- Procure a copy of your current teacher assessment tools or standards and compare them to the standards outlined in this paper. Identify what is similar, what is different, what is practical (for you in your current position) and what can be further improved or explained to the benefit of the supervision process. You may use the table provided below or generate your own method for organizing your thoughts.

Artistic Standards	**Current Standards**	***Similarities***	***Differences***	***Practicality***	***Improvement***
Quality vs. Quantity					
Colleague vs. Manager					
Educational *Connoisseurship*					
Educational *Critic*					
Frequency					
Freedom					

- Use your current supervisory method or assessment forms to evaluate the following teacher based on the description provided by an artistic supervisor.

> The room invites me in. It is a large, extended room drawn at the waist: it was once two single rooms that have come together to talk. Surely I could spend a w le childhood here. A wealth of learning materials engulfs me, each piece beckoning me to pick it up. The patchwork rug that hides the floor' is soft and fluffy and warm. Some desks have gathered together for serious business. Chairs converse across semicircular tables. At the bookshelf, dozens

> and dozens of books, slouch around, barely in rows, leaning on each other's shoulders. Children's drawings line the walls. What are those masses of shiny objects growing from the ceiling like silver stalactites in the secret corners of the room? I focus in on thousands of tiny . . . beer can pull-tabs . . . crunched together, straining to pull the roof in.
>
> A massive wooden beehive called The Honeycomb, with geodesic cubicles in which to hide yourself: A towering ten-foot dinosaur-made of wire and papier maché, splotched with paint . . . blue and red colors crawling .up its body. The monster is smiling helplessly is he not ? because a convoy of tiny people have just been tickling him with their paintbrushes.
>
> In another corner, there are several 'plants growing in small cups.. An incubator with eggs. Over there a phonograph and some records. A map on the chalkboard locates the hills I just drove through the ones presided over by those houses. Next to the map there are frozen smiles on faces captured within tiny squares of paper. Strings connect the smiles with places on the map. This smile lives there; that one here. But all of the smiles, I have come to learn, live inside this room.
>
> Mostly in this room there are letters and words. Lined up on the walls: Aa Bb" Cc Dd Ee Ff. In combinations which have meaning at least for me: leave, would, said. Blue next to a dab of blue paint. The words appear on the faces of the books and gather together in great multitudes on their insides. Ori the 'map. On the material that covers the couch. Soon in my eyes, even when I shut them. And later they pd.') out of the smiles of the children and hang in the air. Caressing each other in a low murmur, the-omnipresent words pervade the room.
>
> Soon I am not alone. The other children are pouring through the door, infusing the room with life, brimming with energy hankering for release. Mostly fair-skinned, light-haired, blue-eyed, and all fresh and ebullient, these are yesterday's Gerber babies. Lots of Erics and Chrises and Heathers and Lisas. Each seems to be drawn to his own corner of the room, his energy pulling him toward a special task. One moves to the bookshelf and snatches up a book. Several take themselves to the math table. Three crawl in the Honeycomb. One tickles the dinosaur with a paint brush. Others string pull-tabs or watch a film (Barone, 1979).

- Follow up questions:
  - How easy was it to complete your evaluation based on this observation?
  - Which assessment would you rather receive as a teacher? Why or why not?

❖ Locate an assessment or observation you have performed or that has been performed on you and practice writing in the style of the artistic observation supplied above. Be as detailed as possible utilizing multiple linguistic techniques i.e. metaphor, simile, tempo, tone, etc., for

the sole purpose of securing “from the writing a vivid image of what the situation is like and to infer some of the educational values that it reflects” (Eisner, 1982).

- Follow up questions:
  - What was it like rewriting a previous observation in the style of an artistic supervisor?
  - How comfortable were you with this method and style of writing?
  - What do you believe the benefits are for the supervisor and the teacher when practicing an artistic approach to supervision?
  - How will this exercise effect your current practices as a teacher or supervisor?

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