CHAPTER 1

THE CONCEPT OF CREATIVE CAPITAL: A NEW VIEW OF TALENT AND OPPORTUNITY

In the context of Thriving Minds, creative capital is the capacity of a person, family or community to imagine and express new possibilities through creative activity. It is the human effort, learning and work behind dance, music, theater, art and creative writing. It is also the insight and experimentation that brings new products to market (think about bio-fuels or nano technologies) and the out-of-the-box thinking that addresses challenging social issues (think about wind turbines, charter schools, or the racks of rental bikes that reduce traffic and pollution in cities). As such, creative capital is both a personal and civic asset that can increase the effectiveness of individuals, the strength of families, and the health of communities. But more revolutionary still is the conviction that creative capital can be developed. While it may be rooted in individual talents, creative capital is nourished by individual effort and agency and by families-think about growing up in the Marsalis family-and by social communities like neighborhoods and cities-think about Florence in the 1400's or about Harlem or Chicago's Bronzeville in the 1920s).

In some respects, this concept of creative capital is not new. With growing force and frequency, thinkers and researchers have been urging a revolution in how

we think about the resources that fuel individual, community and national development. These thinkers have been arguing that the most developed nations are not necessarily those rich in the traditional forms of capital (cash, minerals, industry, etc.), but those who have invested in multiple forms of human capital – their peoples' health, education, political participation and sense of well-being which may well include elements like creativity and spirituality (Gordon, 2001, 2005; Sen, 1989, 2006). The work of Thriving Minds builds on exactly this commitment, and the growing bodies of research that suggest that investing in creative capital has high yield for successful children, strong families and vibrant neighborhoods.

Successful Children

Studies of early childhood demonstrate that the ability to create is profoundly human. The vast majority of children around the world re-invent the basic grammar of their native languages between the ages of 1 and 5. Odd utterances like "I goed," "I swimmed," "geeses" and "ten-teen" are all proof of this capacity to infer and apply rules that were never explicitly taught. Moreover, by five, children have invented how to draw, build with blocks, and tell fabulous stories." Further, research into the variations in human development points to the importance of a vital set of non-cognitive factors – including forms of imagination - in determining who thrives and who struggles in life. There is growing evidence that thriving is not just the result of native endowment (e.g., health, IQ, inherited wealth, etc.). Effort, curiosity, agency – and the ability to plan ahead and imagine new possibilities - turn out to be among the strongest predictors of children's development into productive adults (Carneiro & Heckman, 2003; Harris, 2002; Little, 2002; Seligman, 1996, 2002, 2004). In

fact, those same capacities for imagining a different future turn out to be key resources in adversity: sickness, individual trauma, natural disasters or wars. Musicians survived concentration camps by playing actual – and imaginary -- concerts. Bosnian women tell stories of knitting, unraveling, and re-knitting different sweater patterns for their missing relatives as they endured the war. Think about Kimberly Roberts, the young woman in New Orleans, who in the midst of the flooding, grabbed her video camera and began her career as a feisty documentary filmmaker.

> *I purchased the camera I had used a week maybe or so before the storm came. My purpose for purchasing the camera was to record family events. I had never used a camera before in my life until the day before I started recording. That's not in the movie, but I was just playing with it. Once we realized we were going to stay, I figured that it would be history. Once we realized we couldn't leave, it was like we have no other choice but to stick it out. If it's going to happen how they say it is, we're going to record it. We were like, we can sell this to the news if we get something good. (Audience laughs out loud.) Another aspect was if we die, people would know exactly how we died if they found the tape somehow….I cry every day. It's deeper now than it was when it was actually happening. I've been seeing psychologists. Through this movie I was able to see myself as a great blessed person.* [1]

These are all examples of unusual agency on the part of individuals. However, there is mounting evidence that these kinds of skills are not purely matters of native endowment, they can be taught. Effective youth development programs involving young people in meaningful creative activity that is autonomous, significant, and sustained, regularly produces both an internal sense of agency and capability as well as cognitive and leadership skills that allow young people to give back to their communities (Eccles & Grootman, 2002; Heath, 1994, 1998; Heath & Roach, 1999; Heath & Symth, 2000; Jarrett, Sullivan & Watkins, 2005, Larson, 2000;

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[1]http://www.thefilmpanelnotetaker.com/labels/Trouble%20the%20Water.html. Accessed September 19, 2008

Larson, Hansen & Walker, 2005; McLaughlin, 2000; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994; Mahoney, Eccles, & Larson, 2005).

However, in Dallas, as in other major cities, a very difficult set of facts lies between the basic human capacity for imagination and realization of creativity for many children. The opportunity to invent, to create, to be recognized and celebrated as an innovator is currently highly correlated with race, ethnicity, income, and address – factors that it is either impossible or very difficult to change. At present, in this nation, even high-achieving, low-income students struggle to get the skills, opportunities and supports that would help them to be the immunologist who invents a vaccine, the novelist who tells the stories of immigration, or the mayor who breaks new ground in urban development. As Malcolm Gladwell (2008) has recently commented:

> *What we think of as talent is actually a complicated combination of ability, opportunity and utterly arbitrary advantage."*

Changing this "apartheid of the imagination" is the work at the heart of the Thriving Mind's Initiative.

Strong Families

Even as we recognize the power of individual imagination, it is increasingly clear that the inclination to wonder, to explore and to invent is often contagious, children exhibit it, not solely because they are gifted, but because it matters to people who matter to them, and because it is noticed, valued and celebrated in their communities (Latour, 2005; Moran & John-Steiner, 2003). Research on early family relationships has demonstrated the role of sharing imaginative activities in forging close attachments and habits of affectionate back and forth exchanges (Slade, 1995;

Slade & Wolf, 1994;). Therein lies the enormous potential of creative learning opportunities to strengthen relationships and families.

For example, at the most intimate level, a teen-ager and her mother talk about how the two sisters in the family play "designer fashion games" on a cold Saturday morning, even though one is fifteen and the other only seven.

Daughter: *We went outside but it was too chilly so we came in. Me and my sister. So we played dress-up. Trying out dresses for the next time to church. Making up new outfits with our real clothes. My little sister she puts on new heels and little scarves, hat and glasses. We're imagining we was modeling and in competitions in a reality show on TV.*

Mother: *They make up all kinds of stuff. They were imagining that they were at a tea party…and I already got the tea party stuff. With me having a lot of kids we have like this little talent show going all the time***.**

Daughter: *And if we don't like the clothes we already have, we will take a sheet and make like we have long dresses.*

Mother: *They have these made up words they call out, like "Camilo, camilo," like they are some famous dancers.*

The same mother and daughter also share how creative activity knits their family together across three generations and the physical distances that increasingly separate American families:

Daughter: *For my grandma's ninetieth birthday we went to Houston to do a praise dancing competition last year with our family***.**

Mother: *For special occasions, you know. I found that for kids from like about five and eight they love, they love dancing. It is great for their health, they burn it off, you know. It was through my sister in law, so with all the cousins.*

Daughter: *So we had to learn specific dances to do together, we do the main part and then we can do the adding in part.*

Mother: *She is very structured, you know. She'll be sure to do the main part but then put in some of her own flavor.* [2]

[2] These quotes are excerpts from interviews with the same Dallas family, conducted in the spring and fall of 2008.

Further, this interview, and others like it, suggest that to secure opportunities for their children – particularly ones they know that they missed – parents "step up to the plate," taking on the roles of "connectors" and activists in their apartment complexes and neighborhoods. A mother and apartment resident talked about how she and some other parents put together an area where children could come and experience creative opportunities.

> *I got them (other residents) to open up a Dream Center in my apartment- Where your dreams can be made true… The dream center… I have seen a lot of youth… in bad off neighborhood… they need somewhere to go where they can learn, open opportunities… If we reach the whole family, it could be a difference… I wish they had something like this when I was growing up… I would have made better choices in life... That's why I'm really behind my kids in education and bettering themselves. The dream center was basically for younger kids… but I never thought about after school programs cuts off at 4/5 grade… but we have adolescent kids don't have anything to do… being influenced by wrong crowd…(so) we put together a dream center where all age kids can come up to 18 can express themselves… you'd be surprised by all the creative things that kids can do if we just give them a chance and put just a little bit time into and I guarantee it can produce something big.*

Vibrant Neighborhoods

Many contemporary economists and futurists argue that the 21st century will belong to those communities, industries and nations that invest in innovation (Estrin, 2008; Friedman, 2007) through education, research and investment. For instance, the author Tom Friedman (2008), argues:

> *…the greatest economic competition in the world going forward is not going to be between countries and countries. And it's not going to be between companies and companies. The greatest economic competition going forward is going to be between you and your own imagination. Your ability to act on your imagination is going to be so decisive in driving your future and the standard of living in your country. So the school, the state, the country that empowers, nurtures, enables imagination among its students and citizens, that's who's going to be the winner.*

Since the 1980s, a number of economists and planners have proposed similar investments as critical to the economic development of individual cities and regions. The argument is that such locations attract entrepreneurs, artists and thought leaders, as well as a broader group of creative professionals who work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries (e.g., high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and healthcare professions, and business management) (Florida, 2002).

However, a second wave of research on creative economies has challenged the earlier strategies often proposed for developing the creative profile of a community – such as downtown cultural districts, loft-style housing and other amenities catering to a specialized class of creative professionals. There is growing evidence that these kinds of strategies often polarize opportunity and benefits, dividing communities into designers, artists, entrepreneurs and their nannies, maids, waiters and dry-cleaners.

> *Perhaps the most salient of what I consider the externalities of the creative age has to do with rising social and economic inequality. Less than a third of the workforce – the creative class – is employed in the creative sector of the economy. ... Even more discouragingly, inequality is considerably worse in leading creative regions. … The creative economy is giving rise to pronounced political and social polarization*. (Florida, 2005)

But there is a powerful alternative to the earlier emphasis on a particular class of citizens, selected cultural zones, and a few industries. This shift reframes the search for the energies and benefits of creativity in terms of the vitality of much wider creative communities throughout a larger city where policies, infrastructure and funding support the widespread engagement of many citizens in activities that range from informal engagement (attending a festival, singing in a faith-based choir, making crafts to raise money for a neighborhood elementary school, etc.) to formal

cultural activities (e.g., purchasing tickets to attend the theater, enrolling in a web design class, attending a museum, etc.). In this framework, cultural vitality becomes "the evidence of creating, disseminating, validating and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities." (Jackson, Kabwasa-Green & Herranz, 2006). Here the emphasis falls on developing wider access to creative activities for greater numbers of individuals with two major goals. The first of these goals is "raising" both a current generation of mentors, models, and activists and a next generation in which a person's origins. The second goal is confronting the crippling and unfair "apartheid of the imagination" discussed earlier.

Across US communities there is evidence for the benefits of thinking, planning and working towards creative communities. For example, SIAP's research on Philadelphia neighborhoods (2008) has documented links between cultural engagement, social diversity, and community capacity-building. Residents who participate in the arts and culture tend to engage as well in other types of community activities. Moreover, the presence of cultural organizations in a neighborhood stimulates local community participation overall. This kind of community cross-participation helps stabilize heterogeneous communities as well as enhance overall community capacity. During the 1980s and 1990s, low-income neighborhoods in Philadelphia with many cultural providers or participants were three to four times more likely to revitalize as other at-risk areas. Between 2001 and 2003, distressed neighborhoods rich in cultural assets were more likely to see a dramatic improvement in their housing markets. This suggests that, if cities were to support wider access to creativity through culture, they could have additional means to heal the growing polarization of cities into gentrified and poor neighborhoods.

In Chicago, in neighborhoods were new immigrants had opportunities to pass on their cultural knowledge and creative skills, they more quickly became acknowledged, productive and contributing members of their adopted neighborhoods. Alaka, Contractor and Severson (2007) reported that Mexican immigrants

> *use artistic and cultural practices to break down social isolation, create new social networking relationships, strengthen bonds among group members, and … create local and transnational ties with [outside] institutions..*

In Los Angeles neighborhoods where artisan workshops and small businesses clustered, owners and employees thrived, contributing dollars, stability and hope to surrounding blocks (Scott & Rigby, 1996; Stern & Seifert, 2005).

Thus, there is an exciting and accumulating body of evidence that points to the benefits of investing in a community's creativity. There could be significant benefits for children and youth, families, and neighborhoods throughout the city. It is in that spirit that Big Thought and its community partners have invested in a sustained citywide partnership designed to translate the fundamental human capacity for imagination into realized forms of creativity.

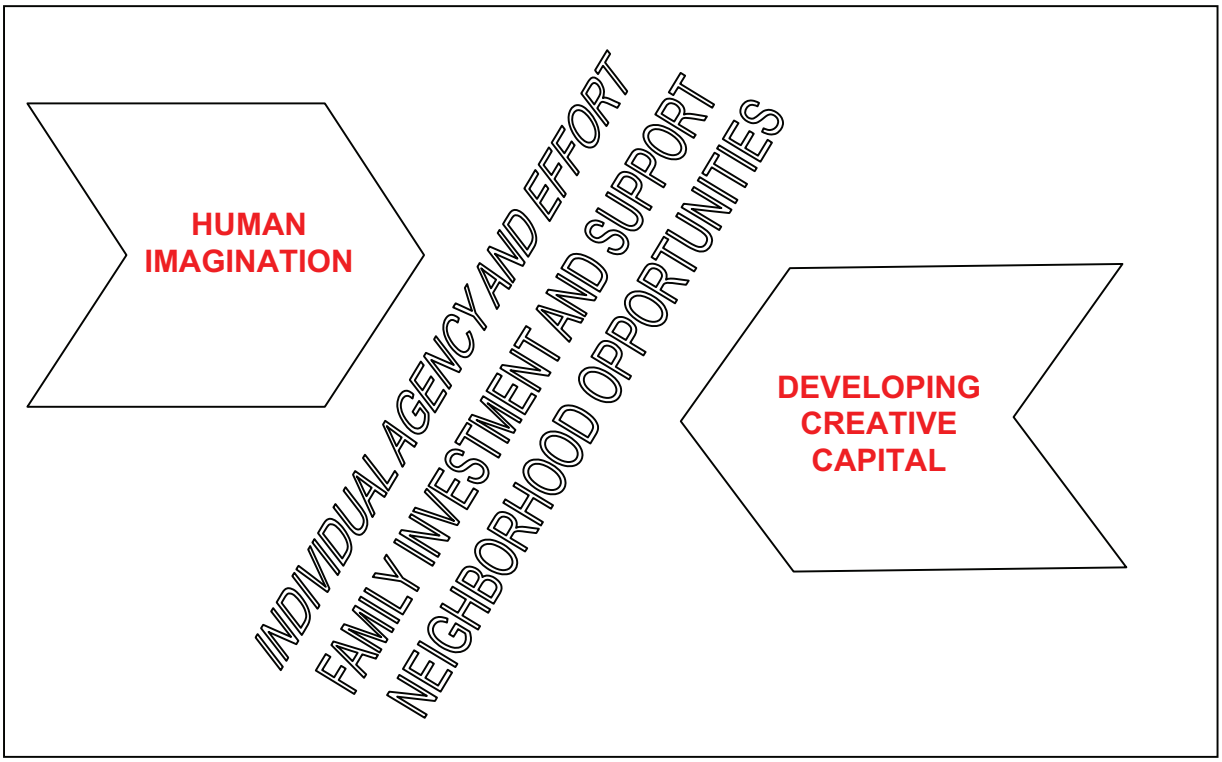

Figure 1-1. The benefits of developing creative capital.

ArtsPartners' Programs and Research:

Understanding Creative Learning

In addition to the national research on creative capital, a decade of work at Big Thought has created a framework for understanding and supporting creative learning: the process through which children and young people learn to translate what they can imagine into full-scale, or realized, creativity.

Beginning in 1998, Big Thought, together with Dallas ISD and a collaborative of over 60 cultural organizations, operated ArtsPartners, a program designed to engage both students and teachers in academic learning enriched by additional resources and educators drawn from institutions as varied as the Dallas Art Museum, Dallas Black

Dance, Teatro Dallas, and the Dallas Science Center. From the outset, ArtsPartners was based on the belief that all children have talents and gifts and that equitable access to developing those gifts was a part of what a city should offer its youngest citizens.

From 1998–2005, the community invested in a longitudinal study of the effects of this program, looking closely at how participation in ArtsPartners affected children's classroom engagement, their academic performance, and their conceptions of themselves as individuals with powerful imaginations. In particular, a set of focus children sat down with interviewers twice a year to talk about their creative work and its spillover into their lives. A major finding in the study was that it was these same children who showed the most significant and lasting effects. In addition, the careful analyses of the interviews taught researchers key lessons about the kinds of experiences that help children convert their native imaginations into creative learning.

Having a Mind

Here is a reflection from one of those fourth grade students who was thinking out loud following a field trip to the Dallas Arboretum's Pioneer Village. The interviewer was amazed at how he pulled together what he had seen, read, and enacted with a theater artist. The boy, given this chance to think about his own thinking, explained by comparing his mind to a well-organized library full of different experiences.

It's because I think that in my mind I have something that separates each thing that I learn. Kind of like math and science. And they go in different piles like in the library. And in that pile, all science; and in another, all math, reading, social studies, like that. (He went on to explain the many different piles in his library-brain.)...I think that I have kind of like a printer in my mind, and then I keep getting copies for each one that it goes in. And the printer helps me by getting copies so I can put them in each pile in the library. And the library helps me know where everything is. And I think I'm a little person in there, and then I go looking for each thing I learn. It makes it easier because …when I went to the field trip, I go into the field trip area, and if I need the social studies, I go in the social studies area.

Thus, an unanticipated outcome of the ArtsPartners experience was the understanding that the most effective forms of creative learning include more than the immediate experience (e.g., the artist residency, the field trip to the planetarium, etc.). There is another, equally critical ingredient: the opportunity to be and be regarded as a person with a brain – someone who can think and imagine.

Intergenerational Imagination

As part of the study, students told the "story" of what they did the day before, including who was with them, what they were doing and thinking and feeling. Their accounts could not be more articulate about the role that their families – across the economic spectrum – play in the development of their children's imaginations. These stories spoke to the way that many low-income families in Dallas fuel their children's imaginations by discovering potential in ordinary circumstances and materials. Here a boy describes the end of his day, explaining how he can read in the shower.

Student: *I took a shower.*
Interviewer: *Okay. Anything else?*
Student: *I got to read a little; then I went to sleep.*
Interviewer: *Okay. Did you read while you were in the shower?*

Student: *Uh, yeah. Cause I have this thing that you can read while you're in the shower?*

Interviewer: *What is it?*

Student: *My mom, she works at this place where they make trampolines and Jacuzzis.*

Interviewer: *Uh-huh.*

Student: *And she brought it from there. And she didn't know what it was called. And I call it, uh, the shower reader -- the shower protector reader***.**

For low- to moderate-income families many of the items that surveys count as investing in children's creativity are out of the question: buying tickets or purchasing admissions, paying for formal lessons, renting or buying instruments. But the stories children told researchers opened up a much less material understanding of how families invest in their children's creative learning through time, modeling, and passing down the skills and values that their parents had given them.

Creative Learning beyond the Arts

Finally, the interviews opened up a definition of creative learning that included, but went beyond, the fine arts. In their interviews, young people described such things as

building from scrap materials,

make-believe games at home and in the neighborhood, and

taking apart and re-assembling family appliances with their uncle.

Thus, the analysis of the interviews from first through sixth graders in ArtsPartners built the foundation for understanding several key aspects of a much wider concept of creative learning.

1. *Imagination is a basic – and vital -- human ability.* While the Toni Morrison's or Mozart's or Einstein's are rare, many people - not just a talented few - have the ability to imagine. Think about young children playing invented games, young people planning their future, or adults imagining how an election could change their city or nation. This capacity to envision new possibilities is an enormous resource for change and hope. Thus, a major task in Thriving Minds is to change people's ideas about the importance of imagination and to open up people's beliefs about who can be imaginative.
2. *Imagination is only the beginning of creative learning*. While everyone imagines, it takes effort, teaching, high standards and encouragement to translate what you imagine into a powerful song, poem or invention. Thus, building the creative learning of current and future generations requires that a city offers young people opportunities to learn and practice the skills and understandings that will allow them to realize what they imagine. Thus, a second task in Thriving Minds is to build systems for creative learning that begin in early childhood and continue through young adulthood.
3. *Creativity can be learned in circumstances where it is valued*. In circumstances where it is valued – the Harlem Renaissance, the Skunkworks as the birthplace of modern aircraft, among the craftspeople of Mexico – large numbers of individuals, at many levels of expertise, learn how to invent, innovate and contribute. But for that to occur, creative work has to be valued and supported by a wide range of partners – families, educators, neighborhood role models, and employers. Schools, libraries, parks, and museums all have a role to play in

creating a city-wide campus for learning to think and to work creatively. Building this social network of values is a third task for Thriving Minds.

4. *Creative learning takes many forms*. While ArtsPartners was focused on learning through the arts, interviews with students made it clear that they spontaneously engage in youthful versions of construction, design, engineering, gaming, science and experimentation.
5. *Access to doing original and creative work is the equity challenge of the 21st century.* But not all the students who participated in ArtsPartners thrived. Stress, vulnerability, and disappointment – the frequent correlates of poverty and lack of status within a society – clearly erode young people's capacity to imagine and create. Thus, the greatest challenge is to change the current correlations between poverty, gender, race, first language and the opportunity to translate imagination into creativity. Just imagine a city where, across the next decade, creative achievement begins to correlate with interest, engagement and effort.

Thriving Minds Initiative: Understanding the Role of Families in Creative Learning

ArtsPartners research revealed much about creative learning – but chiefly from the perspective of young people. As the Thriving Minds Initiative has developed, there has been a growing effort to understand how families nurture creative capacities. The team collaborating on this work has expanded to include:

Creative Community Liaisons: Big Thought staff who work closely with specific communities to build and connect opportunities.

Community Researchers: A cadre of 30 individuals recruited from across Dallas communities in order to create a trained group of diverse interviewers who share cultural, ethnic and linguistic experiences with families who are participating in the research.

Research Colleagues: This group includes additional advisors from Dallas ISD, the Williams Institute, and the University of Texas at Dallas who have helped to design, content and analyses of each of the major portions of the research on creative capital.

The net result has been research that is directly linked to families and children living in Dallas' neighborhoods, and informed by researchers with long experience and a nuanced understanding of the many communities that make up the city of Dallas.

Focus Groups with Families

In the spring of 2007, staff and community researchers interviewed 74 caregivers about their children's current creative activities at home and in programs outside of home. These conversations yielded a number of important themes that reinforced earlier findings about families' roles in creative learning.

Many caregivers form special bonds with their children through creative activities. The creative links that bind families together include drawing together, building things together, preparing traditional foods together, and dancing to music after dinner.

Creative learning programs are also opportunities for caregivers to form social bonds with other caregivers (typically parents of their children's friends) who share their interest in the arts and creativity.

Caregivers are anxious to involve positive role models into their children's lives, both peers and adults, and see creative learning activities as an opportunity for their children to develop supportive relationships with positive role models outside of the family, especially males.

Caregivers expressed strong interest in providing children with more physical activities that channel undirected energy (e.g., dance, making things, working with materials), which is rooted in their concern about over-emphasis on standardized testing and safety issues which keep children indoors after school, leading to unproductive, unsupervised activity.

Families seek creative learning programs that help to solve social and civic problems, as well as awaken the imagination. For example, caregivers want programs that address their children's the lack of communication skills, as well as programs that introduce children to the work environment and help teens transition into the workforce. Other caregivers were most interested in creative learning activities that provide opportunities for them to communicate with their children about sensitive issues like drugs and teen pregnancy.

The Student Activity Survey: The Importance of Informal and Home Activities

While the caregiver focus groups provided rich information about the family dynamics and other social aspects of a family's creative development, a major piece of the puzzle was still unsolved. No one had asked children directly about the creative activities that they value.

To address the question of what creative activities children value, a major survey of almost 5,000 young people attending Dallas ISD schools was fielded in the fall of 2007.

Students in grades 4 – 12 were asked to indicate where they do various creative activities and to approximate the number of hours that they spend in a typical week doing different categories of activities. They were also asked to indicate any "favorite" activities. Students in grades 1 – 3 were given a shorter 10-question survey.

Results paint a nuanced picture of the creative activities of Dallas youth and provided the initiative with a higher level of understanding of how children and youth construct creative capital. The most significant findings follow.

Compared to older children, younger children reported higher levels of activity and salience of a wide range of arts activities within all four disciplines. The gap between elementary and middle school is especially severe for some activities, suggesting broken pathways.

High percentages of students reported observational participation in music (listening to music on iPods) and watching dance on television, as well as high levels of engagement in digital photography (cell phones with cameras). Results suggest opportunities to achieve scale of impact by repurposing universal content delivery vehicles (iPod, DVD player, boom box, cell phones) for creative learning purposes (e.g., providing students with free access to a wider range of digital music for their iPods).

Activities that allow students to select and organize art in their lives are likely to be valued, as well as programs that allow students to remix and remake art that they like.

Dance is an important avenue of creative expression for children, especially children in the older grades, and mostly females. Perhaps because of the reality

TV shows about dance, students are interested in learning to dance many different styles.

Significant disparities between boys and girls were observed, although boys were equally interested in inventive and curatorial forms of music participation.

Hispanic youths tended to attach more value to visual arts and crafts activities (e.g., drawing) while African American youths tended to be more interested in dance and music activities.

In addition to these findings about student-level preferences, the survey results also highlighted two key points about the role of families in supporting creative learning.

With respect to settings for arts activities, the study found the home to be the dominant setting, and the only place were some children do arts activities.

A great deal of arts learning happens informally, and within the context of the family. Activity levels were consistently higher for informal learning as opposed to instructional learning. The findings suggest further thinking about peer-to-peer instruction outside of school and illustrate the central role of out-of-school learning.

The Community-based Family Interviews: Understanding the Origins and Supports for Creative Learning

The Student Activity Survey provided a detailed overview of young people's interest in and desire for creative activities, and in particular the results highlighted the importance of home environments for creative learning for young people of all ages. In order to complement the broad view provided by the survey, in the spring of 2008 the

research team conducted a set of community-based family interviews in three distinct Dallas neighborhoods. The interviews were designed to dig deeper into how different families nurture creative learning.

Identification of families. Families were identified as being possible interviewees in several different ways. Lists of home telephone numbers of students who took the fall 2007 Student Survey (see *The Arts Activities of Dallas ISD Students*) were generated for the three target neighborhoods (Far East Dallas, Oak Cliff and Pleasant Grove). To include students not served in Dallas ISD, Creative Community Liaisons from the neighborhoods also identified families to participate. Big Thought staff called families to set interview times. The results of this broad-based strategy was a sample of 69 families that are economically and demographically representative of the three neighborhoods first targeted by Thriving Minds , as shown in Table 1.

Data collection. Members of interview teams received training regarding interview techniques and the interview script to be followed. The script for all sections of the interview can be found in Appendix A. Illustration 1 on the following pages describes the family interview process. Interviews were conducted with at least one caregiver and a focus child.

For each interviewed family, several types of data were collected. While families waited, they completed Screener 1, which asked for family demographics, mobility, income and education. Questions were based on research about risk factors that have been shown to affect a range of developmental outcomes for children and youth (Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002).

Data for Screener 2 was collected during the interview, asking about creative resources in the home, neighborhood risk and social supports. The focus child and

caregivers talked about different aspects of their family's creativity. These are described in Illustration 1.

Table 1-1. Characteristics of Interviewed Families

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Neighborhood		
Pleasant Grove	16	23.2
Oak Cliff	26	37.7
Far East Dallas	27	39.1
Total	69	100.0
Ethnicity		
African American	33	47.8
Asian	1	1.4
Hispanic	23	33.3
White	9	13.0
Other	1	1.4
Home Language		
English	38	55.1
Spanish	23	33.3
English and Spanish	5	7.2
Grade Level of Focus Child		
Preschool	5	7.2
Elementary School	44	63.8
Middle School	11	15.9
High School	9	13.0
Marital Status		
Single	30	43.5
Married/Living with partner	37	53.6
Number of Children Under 18 in the Household		
One or two	39	56.5
Three or four	18	26.1
Five or six	6	8.7
Educational Level of Interviewed Caretaker		
Less than high school	12	17.4
High School or GED	15	17.4
Some college	18	26.1
Bachelors or higher	11	15.9
Family Yearly Income		
Less than $9,999	12	17.4
$10,000 - $14,999	7	10.1
$15,000 - $19,999	7	10.1
$20,000 - $24,999	7	10.1
$25,000 - $29,999	5	7.2
$30,000 - $34,999	4	5.8
$35,000 - $39,999	5	7.2
$40,000 - $44,999	3	4.3
More than $45,000	9	13.0
Mobility of Families		
Years lived in the Dallas area	64	12.5
Times family has moved in the last year	60	1.0
Times child has changed schools in the last year	60	1.0

Note. Percents may not add to 100 due to missing data.

Illustration 1. The Family Interview Experience

Interviewing as a Way to Gather Data

There are many ways to gather information about people. Interviewing is a strategy that is particularly well-suited to understanding what fuels and motivates the choices people make and how they experience their lives. Interviewing lets researchers understand what is behind behavior; for instance, the values, beliefs, and aspirations that inform the choices families make for and with their children. Essentially, an interview asks people to tell their story – from their perspective. As a result, interviewing is a dynamic and often unpredictable activity.

The Family Interviews

The purpose of the Family Interviews was to gain a personal perspective from children and caregivers about the creative experiences that children have had, are currently having or would like to have. The interviews were also designed to get an understanding of the values, choices and obstacles that keep children and families from engaging in creative activities.

Three sessions of interviews were conducted by teams of researchers in the neighborhoods initially targeted by Thriving Minds, Far East Dallas, Oak Cliff and Pleasant Grove.

Interview Training

To make the experience the best possible for *both* researchers and families, a six-hour training for researchers occurred before the evening of each interview session.

Before the training, all interview team members received a training manual with background information on topics such as Creative Capital, What Counts as Creative Activity, Modes of Participation in the Arts, Interviewing: What It Offers That Other Research Does Not, and How to Interview.

The majority of training time allowed for interviewers to become familiar with the interview script and to discuss the roles that each participant played in the evening interview sessions.

Dennie Palmer Wolf explains a specific part of the interview script.

The Interview Script

The interview script was written in both English and Spanish to address four aspects of family life and creative activity:

- *Background Supporting Conditions*: An inventory of family creative resources in the home, income, education, neighborhood risk and social support
- *Family Creative History*: An inventory of the creative activities in grandparent and parent generations and the degree to which these were passed on to the focus child
- *Child's Creative History*: An inventory of the formal and informal creative activities that the interviewed child had engaged in since pre-school
- *A Weekend Journal*: A log of family activities for the most recent weekend

An overview of each portion of the script was followed by practice and role-playing sessions. The training emphasized how to conduct a conversational interview that included both the adults and their child and elicited personal and detailed accounts of past and current experiences.

Roles of Family Interviewers

Fourteen experienced researchers from the Thriving Minds Research Team, Big Thought, and Dallas ISD Evaluation and Accountability conducted interviews. Thirty community members, staff from cultural organizations, neighborhood leaders, private citizens and graduate students, completed the interview teams and held other interview

site positions. Two people comprised an interview team, a more experienced researcher who asked the questions and led the interview, and a novice researcher who documented the interview and recorded the session. Teams were matched as closely as possible to the ethnicity of the family. Interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish, based on a family's preference.

Other roles included greeters, a sign-in monitor, the greeting room monitor, the greeting room Neighborhood Map monitor.

The Family Experience

As families arrived at the interview site, the Greeter helped them find their way to the sign-in monitor who gave caregivers some paperwork to complete. Families were invited to bring any other children to the interview site, if necessary. Dinner or snacks were served and a community artist worked with children who were not being interviewed.

Families were invited to have dinner before or after their interviews.

Families and children could also help build the Neighborhood Map, spotlighting locations where family's or children's creative activities occurred.

Families Tell Their Stories

Interviewers took the caregiver(s) and the focus child to a quiet location to talk with the interviewer and documenter. The interview began with looking at a large poster of photographs that portrayed a deliberately wide range of creative activities, not only the arts.

A sample of pictures on the creative activities poster.

When families were certain that they understood the definition of *creativity*, interviewers used a conversational style to go through the survey script. Caregivers and the focus child were given posters that they could write on, if necessary, to help them organize their thoughts about each section of the interview. Documenters used a similar format to record the conversations.

The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour. When families had completed the interview, the researchers walked them to the cashier. A family of one caregiver and a child received an incentive of $40 to participate in the interview, $60 if two caregivers and the child attended.

Interviewers Tell *Their* Stories

A total of 69 families were interviewed across the three neighborhoods. Families seemed to enjoy the experience, but so did the interviewers.

I learned so much about what it's like to collect real data. It meant a lot to me to actually hear families.—Michelle Smith, Graduate Student

As a documenter, I found out that dancing wasn't cool for boys, but drawing was. We added a time for students to draw the beautiful dancers and costumes to our summer programming.—Ana Herrera, Community Researcher, Anita Martinez Ballet Folklorico

Follow-up phone calls. In July and August 2008, team members conducted additional phone interviews with the families who had participated in the community-based interviews. In these calls, they filled in information that was missing from the original interviews and tracked the family's creative activities during the summer months. The community interviews will continue annually, supplemented by three individual phone interviews as part of a three-year longitudinal study of creative capital in families and children.

Integrating the Research: Developing a Model for Family Creative Capital

Family members live out their investment in creativity in daily ways: making choices about what to pass on to their children, how to spend their time, use their resources, and what to encourage their children to do when they say, "I'm bored." Drawing on the personal stories and examples that families shared during their interviews, the Research Team sketched a portrait of families' creative capital as a complex network of behaviors, experiences and values including:

1. **Positive Family Social Dynamic around Creativity**: A child who has had the opportunity to take dance lessons organizes her younger brothers, sisters and cousins into a "class" where she teaches them what she has learned.
2. **Caregivers' Creative Values**: A family saves up to buy a video camera, using it to record their children's music performances at school and at family gatherings. They watch their videos with other family members who couldn't attend.
3. **Accessing Creative Resources Outside of the Home**: A mother goes early to pick up her children at their after-school program in order to read the bulletin

boards and talk with other families about what they are planning for their children's summer activities.

4. **Creative Tools and Resources in the Home**: A father who works construction brings home scrap materials so that his boys can experiment with designing and building. When he gets home early enough, he joins them, sharing his woodworking skills.
5. **Family Creative History**: A Spanish-speaking mother teaches her young children the folksongs she learned growing up in Mexico from her father as a way of connecting them to their grandparents and their cultural heritage.

In each of these five domains, researchers were able to identify a set of concrete indicators. Figure 1-2 lists all of the indicators for each of the five domains. Those printed in red were used to create the scores that comprised the Family Creative Capital index. Those in blue were used to enrich the scores with qualitative descriptions of family activities, choices and values. Indicators printed in black will be used in future analyses when follow-up phone interviews are completed. In each domain, family members also talked about the specific barriers that made it difficult to realize their aspirations with and for their children.

In this first round of interviews, many families used a very broad definition of creative activity. For many families, creative activities included all kinds of constructive, enjoyable free time activities: finding a good fishing spot, going shopping for special occasions, or watching a favorite television show together. While in some respects, such a broad definition "overshot" researchers definition of creative activity, it provided a clear picture of the proportion of these free-time constructive activities that were

creative, i.e., that provided young people with the opportunity to make or interact with original work (e.g., designing a new fishing lure, shopping for material and trim to sew a bridesmaid dress, or teaching each other new dance steps).

FIVE DOMAINS OF FAMILY CREATIVE CAPITAL

Domain	Definition	Indicator
DOMAIN 1: POSITIVE FAMILY SOCIAL DYNAMIC AROUND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES	Evidence of the extent to which the social dynamic within the family supports students' creative development	Frequency of at-home creative interactions [i.e., activities that caregiver(s) do with children on a regular basis]
		Specific recent creative activities done with family members (e.g., during a recent week-end)
		Number of creative role models in the family apart from caregiver(s) (e.g., aunt, uncle, grandparents)
		Frequency of creative activities extended family members do with the child
		Specific recent creative activities that extended family does with the child
		Family friends (not family members) include the student in their creative activities
		Frequency of sibling/peer (youth-to-youth, without adults) creative activities
		Barriers: Events, experiences and problems that families experience preventing or discouraging them from engaging in creative activities with the student
DOMAIN 2: CAREGIVERS' CREATIVE VALUES	Evidence that one or more caregivers in a family value creative activities	Caregivers believe in the importance of student's creative development (i.e., see the importance of current creative activities and/or envision these activities as important to the student in the future)
		Caregivers use discretionary resources (free time, skills, funds, etc.) to support child's creative interests
		Caregivers have displayed and/or saved children's creative work (e.g., poems or writings, drawings, videos)
		Family members attend when the student is involved in performances, shows or science fairs
		Relative time and resources that caregivers give to creative activities vs. other activities, like sports
		Caregivers give children presents, or plan special occasions around children's creative interests
		Caregivers invest in their own creative activities, independent of children
		Barriers: Caregivers concerns or doubts about the student investing time and energy in creative activities

figure continues

Domain	Definition	Indicator
DOMAIN 3: ACCESSING CREATIVE RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE HOME	Evidence of the extent to which caregivers access information and activities offered in the community	Caregivers seek out and find information about creative activities from multiple sources
		Caregivers pass along information to other caregivers (i.e., act as conduits of information to others)
		Family participates in community events that have creative activities for students
		Caregivers access creative materials, supplies and equipment through schools, work, and community providers
		Family belongs to, or regularly visits, community places where creative activities happen (e.g., YMCA, church, library, Rec Center, community center, museum)
		Barriers: Caregivers' doubts or concerns about the creative activities available to them and their children
DOMAIN 4: CREATIVE TOOLS AND RESOURCES IN THE HOME	Presence of physical materials, equipment and supplies in the home	The devices available to the family for accessing creative content
		Presence of a working computer and Internet connection at home
		Rules are in place for watching TV
		Caregivers involve children in creative activities
		Student has and uses a Park and Recreation card
		Student has and uses a library card
		Student has a supply of books that reflect his or her current reading level and interests
		Other creative supplies and materials available at home
		Barriers: Lack of creative supplies and tools (i.e., things family members would like to have but cannot get)
DOMAIN 5: FAMILY CREATIVE HISTORY	Historical involvement of family members in creative activities	Frequency or depth of creative interaction between caregiver and caregiver's caregivers
		Caregiver is still doing one or more creative activities taught by female caregiver
		Caregiver is still doing one or more creative activities taught by male caregiver
		Caregiver has kept original poems, quilts, crafts, art works or other things that were made parents, grandparents, or older relatives
		Caregiver has taught the student to do creative activities that were passed down to caregiver (evidence of continuity across three generations)
		Barriers: Broken family customs or traditions (interruption of family creative history)

Note. Text in red means the indicator was used to compute the Family Creative Capital index. Text in blue means the indicator was used to describe families in ecologies. Text in black means the indicator will be used in future analyses.

Figure 1-2. The five domains of family creative capital.

The following table summarizes the overall process in the development of the concept of creative capital. These steps and their major implications for a model of creative capital are summarized in Figure 1-3 on the next page.

The Development of the Creative Capital Concept		
Date	**Format and Content**	**Major Insight/Findings about Creative Capital**
ARTSPARTNERS		
1998 - 2005	**Programs and Research in ArtsPartners**	This initial work laid the groundwork for the Thriving Minds' definition of creative capital, notably: Imagination and creativity are fundamental human capacities The importance of opportunities to learn and practice The ethical dimension of who has access to doing creative work and whether there are pathways that will sustain that development
THRIVING MINDS INITIATIVE		
August 2007	**Focus groups and individual interviews** with 74 families, representative of the city's neighborhoods and demographics	Family members see their children as having gifts and talents. They want more opportunities to develop those talents and gifts. They experience multiple barriers in providing those opportunities.
September 2007	**Student Survey** of 4,700 students in grades 1-12, representative of the public school population across the City. This survey focused on the range and frequency of young people's creative activities during in- and out-of-school time.	The high levels of informal and at-home creative activity. The extent of students' engagement with areas like dance which are typically learned outside of school settings
Spring 2008	**Family Interviews of 69 families**, with children aged pre-school – high school, attending a range of Dallas public, magnet and charter schools. This was an hour-long interview with caregivers and a focus child in each family to learn about their family's and child's creative history, and the current social dynamics around creative activity in their household. Community researchers also collected information on the family's resources and supports (e.g. income, education, social networks, etc).	Many families work hard to provide creative learning opportunities for children, independent of their income, education level or living situation How seriously issues such as neighborhood safety, communication and public transportation affect which children get to develop their gifts There are as many as four distinct "creative ecologies" in which young people in Dallas grow up. This has major implications for planning and programs.

figure continues

Date	Format and Content	Major Insight/Findings about Creative Capital
Summer 2008	**Follow-up phone interviews** with families who were interviewed during the spring. This half-hour interview explored what additional creative activities family members engaged in during the summer months. The interview also served to keep in touch with families, in order to keep them as part of a longitudinal sample.	The high need for substantial, but affordable programming, especially programs that build advanced skills and thinking The lack of coordination/sequence between summer and school programming The high, even unmanageable, costs of good programs for families with multiple children
Summer 2008	**Development of models of Family and Youth Creative Capital:** Based on the cumulative body of research, the Team developed formal models of creative capital that described multiple domains and indicators for each.	These models: Distinguished between family and youth creative capital Defined the different dimensions (domains of each) Developed a set of indicators (examples of the actions and attitudes that provide evidence of how families and young people build their creative capital Specified the types of barriers that obstruct or depress creative capital

Figure 1-3. Summary of the development of the ideas of creative capital and creative learning.