APPENDIX B: AN ART LESSON

An Art Lesson

It was spring. Mrs. Gardner never ceased to be touched by the children’s spontaneous gifts of fists full of dandelions and, occasionally, a pilled tulip or daffodil. Painting flowers just had to be the art lesson today! She pulled from her file folder a sample of flower paintings her students had done over the years and hung them around the room. After her aides distributed the painting materials, Mrs. Gardner told the children to look at the paintings but also to try to remember what the flowers they had seen on the way to school looked like and how they made them feel; then to try to paint a bouquet to please someone at home. As the children worked, Mrs. Gardner moved among them encouraging the reticent, praising the productive, helping those who had problems, and drawing the children’s attention to the beautiful variety of colors and flowers that were growing on all their papers.

Mr. Potter, in the next room, had also decided it was a good time to give his very successful flower painting lesson. He knew the children had not yet mastered the mixing of colors and this lesson would help them form that skill. Because tulips were in bloom around town, it was an ideal time to distribute the tulip templates for the children to use to trace four flowers on their papers. This would also strengthen eye-hand coordination and give them all some immediate reinforcement of success. Each table had only three paint pots: red, yellow, and blue. Mr. Potter told the class that they were going to learn to do something they had not done before—create colors. The class was excited. He had them watch as he mixed a little red paint with yellow on his paper palette. The magic of orange was greeted with a chorus of “Oooh!” The same squeal came with blue and red making purple. Then, after painting his four flowers red, yellow, orange, and purple, Mr. Potter painted a blue stem on each. As the children began to object, he covered the blue paint with yellow, thus making green and raising one last chorus of “Oooh!” "Now try it yourselves," Mr. Potter said, "and remember, you can make your own colors if you ever need to.”