

Sponsoring Committee: Dr. Richard Grove, Moravian College  
Dr. Kristin Baxter, Moravian College  
Mrs. Megan Tucker, East Penn School District

LIVING ART CONSTRUCTED BY CHOICE

Hailey R. Adlard

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of a Choice-based project in an elementary school art classroom. The participants were fifth grade students in the art classroom who received art instruction on a four-day rotation, either once or twice a week for 45 minutes. Through action research, the curriculum focused on student choice was implemented over a thirteen-week period. Students worked through material and technique exploration days to find where their art strengths resided. With a partner, they then chose an artist and work of art from that artist from a predetermined list to create their final project: The Fifth Grade Art Wax Museum. Students participated through numerous weeks of studio classes to bring their ideas to life.

The final presentations reflected the hard work and choices students had made together to best represent their artist and artwork. Students were then situated around the school gym, in a circular formation, to provide parents, teachers and other students a gallery-like experience while viewing the fifth grade projects. Students then participated in a whole group verbal critique as well as an individual written critique, to offer their insights and thoughts on the entire project.

Data recorded for this study were collected in the form of surveys, questionnaires, observational data, student work, final critiques and rubrics. The findings suggest that students can excel at collaboration, studio work and

discussion, when presented with choice in monitored amounts and the proper scaffolding by the educator. However, this study reflected a lack of imagination and self-confidence in elementary-aged children when provided with monitored amounts of choice, and raised the question of what can be done for curriculum, a project or for a student when inside a choice-based learning environment a choice cannot be made?