

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

Submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
Moravian College
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
2017

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?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my parents, for encouraging me to become a teacher.

To my sister, for supporting and understanding every inch of me.

To Dr. Baxter, for continuing to make my mind wander in places of thought.

To my students, for opening my eyes to ways I can help and improve.

And to my darling husband, for listening to my thoughts, provoking my mind and pushing me till the end.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Figures.....	vii
Researcher Stance.....	1
Literature Review.....	7
Research Design and Methodology.....	21
Setting.....	21
Participants.....	22
Procedures.....	22
Observations.....	25
Questionnaires & Surveys.....	26
Data Sources.....	26
Trustworthiness Statement.....	27
My Story.....	30
Let's Get to the Good Stuff.....	30
Ice-breaking.....	31
Clicking the Keys.....	36
Digging Deeper.....	38
Studio Chaos.....	42
Letting Go of Control.....	44
Light at the End of the Gallery.....	51

Presentation Day.....	52
The Final Critique.....	54
Data Analysis.....	62
Research Findings.....	77
Implications.....	84
References.....	86
APPENDIXES	
A Principal Consent Form.....	89
B Parent Consent Form.....	90
C Student Assent Form.....	91
D Teacher Designed Rubric.....	92
E Pre & Post Survey: Exploration Days and Studio Work.....	93
F Artist Handout.....	95
G Pre & Post Questionnaire: Exploration Days and Studio Work...	96
H Post Performance Individual Critique.....	97

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Tempera Paint Exploration.....	33
2. Weaving Exploration.....	34
3. Monoprint Exploration.....	35
4. Artist/Artwork Research.....	39
5. Group Vincent van Gogh.....	45
6. Group Jackson Pollock.....	46
7. Group Wayne Thiebaud.....	49
8. Group Claes Oldenburg.....	56
9. Group Alex Monopoly.....	57
10. Group Jackson Pollock.....	58
11. Group Edgar Degas.....	60
12. Bins and Related Codes.....	76

RESEARCHER'S STANCE

It's funny how almost every graduate class I sign up for, there is always one assignment that brings me back to square one. Square one, which is the internal battle between my mind, my job, and my respect for my undergraduate work. It is the challenge between making great art and allowing choices. For letting freedom and creativity flourish instead of teaching children how to do create, and just by letting it happen. There is much more going on throughout my mind than just going to work each day. It is my hope that after this entire thesis work is done, my ongoing internal conflict is solved, or I will have at least managed to make my mind more at peace.

Let me take you back to the beginning. I am going to start off by stating how much I have always loved school and learning. One of those 'life-long learners' you could say. So in the timeline of learning and completing my early decision letter for college, my father sat me down and flipped my 'planned' world upside down. Originally, I was an early decision to Muhlenberg College, heading into the Entrepreneurial Studies program. Both of my parents owned their own businesses, so I figured obviously that was the path I was destined for as well. My dad asked me, "What do you want to do? Or own?" Sitting for a few moments I was blank. I had no idea where to go from the choice of degree, maybe I figured my studies and interests would guide me once I was there. "Listen" he said. "Bag

this idea. Owning your own business is hard, it's stressful, and if you don't have a dream it can be a long road ahead. I think you should apply to Moravian. Be a teacher. You love kids and this is your calling you just don't know it yet." Glazed over in a confused and "what do I do now" state, I sat for awhile thinking about what he just said. Call me crazy, or easily influenced, but I followed his words. I think this is one of those times people that love us can see a different point of view about things that can help our blind eyes to see.

That fall I was stepping into my first art class at Moravian College. Thank goodness I went to a liberal arts school and was required to take a class in the arts. I stepped inside of a dark art history class at 7:30 am, and lit up inside. The learner inside of me was yearning for something I haven't previously had in school, and this was it. I have always loved museums, but learning about artists, their work and specific facts and tidbits was right up my alley. Feeling this happiness, I decided for the spring I was going to try a more hands-on art class, just for fun. This is where everything changed.

"You're pretty good at this, why don't you throw on an art education certification while you're at it." Hmm, scary because I am not an artist, but the idea was definitely intriguing. The next morning I told my advisor my plan. "Well" she said, "We have only had one other girl in the history of Moravian do this. Your classes are going to be packed, you'll have to take summer courses every year and when you get to student teaching, you're going to go from January

to May with three rotations unlike everybody else. Can you do that?” Absolutely.

After all the classes and work, I was off. I graduated, and knew from my experiences that art was the ONLY field I wanted to teach in. Maybe the combination of tests, PSSAs and math projects did me in, or maybe the love and respect I had for art education fostered by Dr. Baxter, here at Moravian. Her methods intrigued me. She was teaching us art for life, art with a purpose, not just making and pleasing. I found the struggle with this theory first presented itself in my student teaching placements. In public schools, the art teachers weren’t okay with me just creating freely. “We can’t waste materials; each child has this amount for the year. We aren’t a fancy private school; half of these kids can’t even hold scissors correctly and you want to just give them out to use?” Hurdle after hurdle, I quickly fell into the world of creating art to please the students, faculty and parents. Today, I find myself teaching the same way. To my credit, I think I am doing a pretty good job. We aren’t making turkey hands or creating fifty thousand Starry Night renditions, but I yet again realized that I lost this idea of creation, freedom and “art for life.”

Working in a great academic, arts and athletics school district, there is a certain aura that must be held as educators. In my district, we have an annual district-wide art show at the high school that is growing larger and larger each year. If my work isn’t outstanding at the show, you bet I am going to hear about it. With that in mind, I need to face my internal battle, but lightly tread the water

in my nontraditional curricular changings. I love my district, I love my job, but I just feel a little lost. It is my hope that my research through this thesis project brings me clarity, understanding and more happiness than I already have.

In my classroom, aside from pleasing people at the district art show, I have several factors that come into play with wanting to change the way I teach. One of the first problems I encounter is that I CONSTANTLY have students asking me to ‘check’ their work. “Is it good enough? Is this right?” Constantly. Almost to the point where I want to bang my head against a wall because it just needs to stop. Is it a lack of confidence? Is it the changing world of parenting where we see parents helping their kids too much and creating a huge gap in their problem solving skills? Perhaps it’s something else.

Another challenge with my classroom and idea of wanting to change the way I teach is simply from personal boredom. I try so hard to make a yearly plan that includes drawing, painting, sculpture and printmaking, all jumbled up and organized so we aren’t doing similar things for three months at a time. I add in artists, art movements, art elements, techniques, all of these things under my curriculum that are deemed as ‘important,’ yet I find myself bored, and with some projects unexcited about their outcome because I know how they SHOULD look. What can I do as an educator to better my curriculum and make my students and myself feel more appreciative of the artistic process?

Finally, I want to create better students. I want to have students that can imagine and create with just a few materials. I want students to think for themselves, and be excited to solve a problem. Creating a wax resist painting can be cool, but it's easy, and typical. I want bigger things for my students, like how on their own to think of making a wax resist because of the outcome it might have. I want to help create students who create "art for life" and are life-long learners.

With these questions on changing myself also come risks. First, I think I think this process needs to happen slowly so that my students get the main idea of what is trying to be improved and accomplished. Next, I need to be aware of materials, quality work and time spent. Some students are rushed and create poor quality of work even when they are in a structured lesson. I cannot imagine what a choice-based lesson would look like for them. Then, I have students that take weeks upon weeks to finish the same thing their neighbor finished two weeks ago. We need to develop appropriate timelines and stick to them! Finally, how do I address the students that really need me. You know, the ones that cannot think for themselves. Who think they have little imagination and are unsure about what exactly problem solving is. I currently have several students that break down in tears when faced with a project they don't think they can handle, or a spot where they messed up. How am I supposed to help them?

Implementing such a theory into my classroom is a bit of a scary thought. However, starting on this journey, conducting research, observing students and discussing with educated professionals, I believe I will be able to find an answer and build myself a strong platform to find the answer to my research question, *what are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of fifth grade elementary students when implementing a choice-based, student centered, artistic and imaginative classroom?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Life is created with choices. These choices are encountered through many moments in life. Choice to believe, choice to feel, choice to see, touch or wonder. Choice to make, choice to create, think or imagine. Humans make many choices without ever even thinking deeply about the choice in front of them. The subconscious autopilot can take over many of the simple choices that the brain is already confident in choosing. However, what happens when a choice is presented and cannot be decided upon so confidently? What happens when the way of thinking needs to be changed in order for the action of choosing to occur? In this literature review, I will be looking into five main areas of research to support my thesis. These categories include, TAB™ or Choice Based Learning, Student Centered Instruction, Teaching for Creative Thinking and Problem Solving, Process Appreciation and Project-Based Learning.

TAB™ or Choice Based Learning

The evolving art education classroom presents many new theories on curriculum planning and presentation especially related to choice. One of the current educational trends found in art education is Choice Based Learning or TAB™ (Teaching for Artistic Behavior). Teaching for Artistic Behavior, established in 2001, became incorporated in 2007, in order to better serve the needs of choice-based art educators. According to Hough (2009):

The concept emerged over 30 years ago in Massachusetts classrooms through the need for more authentic art making experiences. United through Massachusetts College of Art (MassArt), teachers working in isolation discovered others who also held belief in the child as the artist” (para. 7).

One of the important co-founders of choice-based art education or TAB™ is Katherine Douglas, an educator, author and artist of the art education community. According to Douglas (2007), students in a choice-based or TAB™ classroom can work at their own pace, work from their strengths, follow a train of thought over time, learn from and work with peers, be “on task” for a greater portion of class time, develop a working style, explore their interests in visual form, form cooperative groups and engage in positive social interaction, and take responsibility for the care of materials and the classroom. Teachers in a TAB™ classroom can observe students working to determine strengths and weaknesses, work with small groups of interested students while others work independently, allowing for more in-depth instruction, offer special “scaffolding” to struggling students, get to know students through their personal styles, expect students to come to class highly motivated and ready to work.

Choice-based education puts the student at the center of learning.

Katherine Douglas & Diane Jaquith (2009) firmly state, “We must develop artistic behaviors by enabling students to discover what it means to be an artist through

the authentic creation of artwork” (p. 3). Education that is choice-based, teaches students to use their imagination, boost their creativity, increase their collaboration and cooperation with other students, and gives students the foundation to create meaningful art that is authentic and real. Frontrunners of the TAB™ and choice-based education models, Nan Hathaway and Diane Jaquith have contributed heavily to the field of education, and the TAB™, choice-based curriculum approach. Jaquith (2011) suggested an important connection between choice and independence, stating that:

Learners who control their artmaking are guided by intrinsic motivation to find and solve problems of their choosing. Self-directed learning in choice-based art classes can be pursued in a carefully designed structure that promotes independence. This permits an art teacher to function as facilitator, providing instructional support where needed (p. 16).

Independence throughout classrooms reflects autonomy. Autonomy is the connection of responsibility and choice of action. This connection of responsibility and action in the classroom shows the independence of students and confidence of their actions taken.

Clearly there is still debate in the field concerning the implementation of choice-based teaching methods, which gives rise to several questions. For instance, how is it that educators are still primarily using a teacher-based, traditional teaching method where choices, actions and authority are controlled

mainly by the teacher? Why is the field of education taking so long to recognize, accept and transform classrooms to reflect student autonomy, self-directed learning and a growth of independence level for all students?

Douglas (2007), Hathaway (2011) and Jaquith (2011) create important, thought-provoking theoretical frameworks for art education pedagogy. While these new ways of teaching are exciting, researched and successful, there are clear criticisms and questions related to choice and the way students learn. Further research connected to these ideas could solve: why educators aren't addressing the situation when the student presented with a choice cannot articulate an idea or muster enough confidence to make the choice in the first place. So, what is done when a student simply cannot choose?

Student-Centered Instruction

The importance of choice in the classroom is also reflected in the center of instruction, either being teacher or student-based. The act of providing students with choice most dominantly reflects a student-centered classroom. "Student-centered instruction is when the planning, teaching, and assessment revolve around the needs and abilities of the students" (Brown, 2008, p. 30). Inside a student-centered classroom, several shifts can be seen compared to that of a traditional teacher-directed classroom. Barbara Andrews (2010) defines the traditional views of teacher-directed learning, where the teacher mainly speaks, shares directions and objectives, and evaluates student performance. In contrast,

student-directed learning reflects a different scenario where the students are in charge of creating their own problems, figuring out how they are going to solve their problems, and working together as a community to learn.

In setting up a student-centered environment, classroom rules, management and systems must, of course, be determined. For instance, Heather Malin (2012) explained through her research study that art materials generally invite exploration. However, in a school setting there are typically guidelines that must be followed for using materials. In her study, Malin conducted research within an inner-city charter school that had a central focus for the arts, community and environment. Two visual arts classes were focused during the instruction, which based itself on the foundation of how artists truly worked. The children in her study tested the boundaries by going beyond the prescribed understanding of how the materials should be used. They were in a setting where the usual expectation was that children should solve problems with specific techniques and within expected guidelines, which created conflict when they chose to experiment with the materials instead (p. 13). The children in Malin's study learned that materials and methods are not fixed, and can be adapted to personal artmaking.

Another essential art educator, Mary Hafeli (2015) writes about the setting of this student-centered classroom and makes an important note about materials:

Teachers sometimes assume that, in art, giving kids a lot of options to work with promotes creativity. But often just the opposite is the case. Presenting

students with a single material or limited colors and asking them to invent as many different ways as possible of working within those limitations presents opportunities for developing flexible and divergent thinking, fluency of ideas, risk taking through in-depth experimentation and resourcefulness (p. 28).

Her theory is that by limiting choices and gradually introducing new materials, students are more likely to become familiar and comfortable with what they are using. It is the idea of giving them the ownership over creating, but still having the power as an educator to control what initially is placed before them. More importantly, students will learn the expressive capacities and limitations of these qualities of materials on expressing ideas.

Judith Burton (2000) takes the idea of student-centered learning and reveals the criticisms it has been connected to:

Criticism of the child-centered approach to art education has swung back-and-forth throughout the 20th century and has been multi-pronged. As products of child-centered art education, adolescents were often seen to become bored, lacking the expertise to create the kinds of images they desire, and having little insight into the larger world of art (p. 332).

Through studies, it has shown that once these students hit middle school, they mentally have run out of ideas on what to create. It is almost as if their 'creative juices' raged through their elementary years, and dried out by secondary. Has the idea of providing the student with choice and responsibility become more

important and meaningful than teaching the student how to think and use the brain to generate ideas and imaginations before actions of choice are even taken? Why are adolescents finding themselves bored in the art classroom like Burton (2000) writes? Perhaps they don't know what to focus on, or what idea they can grasp from their mind and bring to life. It seems that educators assume that their students can internalize thoughts and ideas more than they actually can.

Understanding all of the criticisms is important to successfully implementing a choice-based curriculum inside the art classroom. Andrews (2010) identifies three main differences inside a student-centered classroom compared to a traditional teacher-centered classroom,

The first difference is a shift in focus from the assignment or project to the student. The student, not the teacher, generates ideas. The second is a subtle shift in the teacher-student relationship. Students now view me as a helpful advisor, as opposed to "the boss." They realize that I am here to guide their path, not dictate it. And third, I have noticed a shift in the assessment process (p. 42).

Inside of a student-centered classroom, students are taking ownership over their work. They have a connection deeper to their work because they are in charge of what they choose and how they are making it. Hathaway and Jaquith (2012) argue, "When teachers facilitate for personalized learning, students are more likely to reach for potential that may be overlooked or obstructed by standardized

curriculum, which leaves little time for divergence and discovery” (p. 26). The idea of responsibility is placed heavily on the students in a student-centered classroom, because without their thinking and creating, the teacher or ‘advisor’, would theoretically be sitting around waiting for something to happen. Andrews (2010) writes about the growth in the love for art from students in a student-centered classroom because of this ownership or responsibility for their learning.

Teaching for Creative Thinking and Problem Solving

During art activities children face interpersonal, technical, and conceptual problems, and critical thinking helps them make choices among a variety of possible solutions. A creative child is one who would come up with many different, unusual, original, or detailed solutions to problems (Ellermeyer, 1993).

In art education, the term “creative” is so loosely defined because of its subjective background in all of its various meanings, and understandings from students, teachers, parents and administrators. It is important that students understand what these terms really mean, and how they can be applied to our everyday learning and working. Creativity isn’t the idea of adding something special to a whole group lesson was done all together. Being artistic is not following the art teacher and making an exact replica. What answer can be given for how students can think creatively in a world when so much of the thinking is already done for them? Art educator Olivia Gude quotes Arthur Efland (1976) in saying, “the

school art style does not seem to be a pedagogical tool for teaching children about art in the world beyond the school, through this is its manifest function” (p. 6).

Is it possible that part of the answer to helping students make a choice is found in the idea of creative problem solving? How can students who freeze upon making a decision, reverse their level of uncertainty and strengthen their problem solving in the art classroom?

Creative problem solving reflects the process for approaching a problem in an imaginative way resulting in effective action. Problem solving stretches upon many similarities between core subjects at school, but can also highlight the differences that creative problem solvers have from general problem solvers. Eliza Pirti (2013) argues that, “Children who solve problems creatively are focused on the task, and continuously define new problems, ask questions out loud, or appear puzzled. Committed problem solvers are children who choose a possible solution and try and stay focused on it” (p. 43).

By turning on the brain to be a creative problem solver, students certainly are using their creative thinking skills. In her conclusions and implications, Pitri (2013) finds, “In order to develop creative problem-solving skills and dispositions, children should work in environments that promote aesthetic, critical, and creative inquiry through decision making, interaction, communication and negotiated learning” (p. 45). Yet again, the idea of decision-making floats to the surface. Gude (2010) explains,

The primary objective of a creativity curriculum ought to be developing the capacity of students to instinctively respond to situations with playful creative behaviors. The objective should not be undermined by simultaneously attempting to teach other skills that will inhibit the free flow of ideas (p. 36).

In order to be a creative problem solver, one must be able to make decisions, or as previously noted, think creatively. In which ways can this be addressed in the art classroom, especially for students who recognize decision making as their biggest demon?

Process Appreciation

Another important relation to choice is the ongoing debate in art education that always poses the question: is the primary goal in art education the final product or the learning that occurs along the way? In focusing on the final product, we also have to think about quality versus quantity. According to Gude (2013),

Recognizing that quality art and quality art education are made in the context of previous artmaking practices, art education curriculum ought to be structured to carefully introduce students to conceptual, aesthetic, and technical methodologies by which various artists have generated meaning (p. 14).

Attention is consistently being brought to the internal conflict of what's acceptable and aesthetically pleasing, while being meaningfully created and

appreciated throughout the duration of the lesson. “ When the primary goal in art class is the production of a preconceived product, much of this important learning is bypassed. Teacher desire for attractive artwork can result in adult-pleasing pieces that do not always reflect students’ real abilities or interests” (Douglas, 2009, p.1).

In more technical terms, Kathy Hardy breaks down the idea of process in the classroom,

Process’ means allowing children to explore art materials with freedom without the pressure to copy a model or stay in the lines. Process is experimenting with paints, watching the mixing colors, and feeling the textures of more or less. Process is gluing various sizes, shapes, and colors of paper together to create a collage. Process is freedom to experiment and enjoy the feeling of creating without being concerned with the outcome or the product. Process is creating something that is uniquely yours and not a copy of someone else's (2015).

In connecting the idea of process versus product with choice-based learning or TAB™, art educators can organize their curriculum and classrooms in a way to foster these bridged ideas, and create a sense of harmony or balance in the creation of art, but as well as in the community of the art classroom. Process also connects threads nicely to creative thinking and creative problem solving for the use of experimentation and exploring for students while learning. Is process

necessary to prompt successful creative thinking and creative problem solving?

Or is the product most important to foster these ideas?

Project-Based Learning

An essential component to providing choice successfully in a classroom can be supported by Project-based learning. Donald Kauchak and Paul Eggen (2003) define Project-based learning as, “a comprehensive approach to classroom teaching and learning, involves students in projects: relatively long-term, problem-focused, and meaningful units of instruction that integrate concepts from a number of disciplines or fields of study” (p. 330). Throughout Project-based learning, students use their own minds and ideas to propose problems, conduct experiments, design products, collaborate with others and more. It is through these learning experiences, that students spark their own motivation and plant the seed of challenge for the learning that is to come.

“Research suggests that Project-based learning is an effective vehicle to teach basic learning skills at the same time as content. In addition, there is some evidence that this form of learning can help develop self-directed learning in students” (Kauchak, Eggen p. 334). Self-directed learning in the art classroom encourages authentic problem creating and problem solving for students. Connecting Project-based learning to a Choice-based classroom, the question again arises on if a student is provided with choice to create their own project for assessment, what can be done if the choice is too much to decide upon. What can

be done for successful self-directed learning to occur in the classroom, if the learning platform isn't steadily created for students to begin their project?

Conclusion

Choice in the end is still a huge question. Even through all of the connections by the authors and educators presented above, there are still questions that arise when linking choice to students in the classroom. By implementing TAB™ or Choice Based learning with a classroom that is student-centered and being taught around the topics of: creative thinking and problem solving, process appreciation, and project-based learning, one question still stands out. What happens when a child provided with all the choices and options available, still cannot use their knowledge and confidence to make a simple choice? What occurs when the seal of choice provided cannot be broken at first try? How far must educators look into their students' confidence, understanding and imagination levels before choice is even an option? Nan Hathaway (2013) suggests a powerful connection to the future questioning of choice:

Has authentic, original, spontaneous, idiosyncratic children's art, no longer understood or appreciated, become a lost art? Seduced by the glamour of the stage and hallway gallery, applauded by principals and parents, have art teachers forgotten their purpose? What will become of these children when there is no art-guide to lay out the materials, provide inspiration, shore-up motivation and list the required steps toward success? (p. 12)

There is further scope for research in the difficulty for students to make a choice before a TAB™ or choice-based curriculum is even implemented. What can be done for students who cannot immediately think creatively or problem solve? And does process really impact students and the choices they make, or is product more essential to the final outcome?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The intent of this action research project was to provide fifth grade students with a choice-based art project, in which they utilized their own imagination and creative problem solving skills to successfully illustrate a famous artist and his/her artwork. Student participants found a partner to work with, then researched an artist and artwork made by that artist to bring to life through materials in the classroom. Final presentation day reflected the hard work of drawings, paintings, collages and sculptures of students best reflecting their chosen artwork, and costumes and props to reflect their artist. Students came to life during the presentation day, providing their audiences with facts about their artist and artwork, sometimes even putting on an accent. The instruction took place in regular forty-five minute art periods, once or twice a week depending on the rotation, with exploration, research and studio days to work collaboratively.

Setting

The setting of this action research project was at my elementary school in Pennsylvania. There were approximately seventy-nine students in the fifth grade class that were used for the study. The population of the school varied and included students from different socioeconomic backgrounds along with students having Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans. Throughout the study, students worked collaboratively with partners on Chromebooks to research, and then with various materials and techniques to carry out their studio work. Final

presentation day took place in our school gym, and was set up like a museum walk where students were stationed with their partners, dressed up and ready to present facts to their audience.

Participants

There were seventy-nine participants in the fifth grade class, with ages ranging from ten to eleven years old. All three classrooms were heterogeneous in academic and artistic ability level. Included in the study was two Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students and three Emotional Support (ES) students. Among the fifth grade students were several Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans.

Procedures

Our classes together started off with basic instructional and organizational tasks as do all beginning of the year classes do. Along with the classroom rules and behavioral procedures, students were introduced to the action research study and made aware that our first project together would be them working and learning as well as me. I told with them that I would be collecting data in the form of notes, photos, surveys and questionnaires along the next few weeks. This data would all be used to help me complete my action research project. Students that first day did complete their consent forms, and took home forms for their parents to complete as well.

For the next thirteen weeks, students would be working for their entire forty-five minute class period in partner groups, the occasional individual and trio group as well. Activities over the next eleven weeks are as followed:

Week one

- Teacher introduced classroom rules, procedures and various materials: drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, printmaking and fiber art.
- Students completed mini project using several of the materials presented.
- Teacher discussed assessment practices through the use of rubrics.

Week two

- Today was the first exploring day, where students learned about drawing, painting and collage materials and processes.
- Students had the classroom period to explore the materials and processes presented.
- Students completed Survey 1, tapping into their thoughts, views and feelings on art.
- Students rotated from one table to another on a timer while exploring various materials and techniques.

Week three

- Today was the second exploring day, where students learned about sculpture, printmaking and fiber arts materials and processes.
- Students had the classroom period to explore the materials and processes presented.
- Teacher administered student Questionnaire 1 on feedback from material exploring.
- Students rotated from one table to another on a timer while exploring various materials and techniques.

Week four

- Today was the first day of research for my students.
- In all classes, they easily chose their partners and went to work on their Chromebooks.
- Students were working together to find their artist and the artwork they wanted to reproduce for their final project.
- Students also had the opportunity to collect some basic facts about their artist and artwork to use for reference in the final presentation.

Week five

- Students continued their research on the Chromebooks.
- This week focused more intently on the planning and organization for creating their costumes.
- Students had to figure out what materials and techniques they were going to use to create the artist representation and the artwork.

Week six

- Students started their first day of studio working with their partners.
- Students were to use their imaginations and ideas to illustrate their artist or artwork for the final presentation.
- Students had a range of materials to use throughout the upcoming weeks to create with.

Week seven

- Students began their second day of studio working with their partners.
- Students were to use their imaginations and ideas to illustrate their artist or artwork for the final presentation.
- Students had a range of materials to use throughout the upcoming weeks to create with.

Week eight

- Students began their third day of studio working with their partners.
- Students were to use their imaginations and ideas to illustrate their artist or artwork for the final presentation.
- Students had a range of materials to use throughout the upcoming weeks to create with.
- Teacher administered Survey 2, to see if their thoughts, views and feelings changed on art.

Week nine

- Students began their fourth day of studio working with their partners.
- Students were to use their imaginations and ideas to illustrate their artist or artwork for the final presentation.
- Students had a range of materials to use throughout the upcoming weeks to create with.
- Teacher administered Questionnaire 2 to document any changing thoughts on materials throughout the entire process.

Week ten

- Students began their fifth day of studio working with their partners.
- Students were to use their imaginations and ideas to illustrate their artist or artwork for the final presentation.
- Students definitely began seeing the finish line, and wrapping up their projects.

Week eleven

- Students had this day as their dress rehearsal day, and were encouraged to bring in costume and prop materials from home.
- Students had the class period as their final studio day, to put any finishing touches on their work.
- Students also had the job of collecting their facts about their artist and artwork to write on a small notecard for presentation reference. Students were able to pull facts from the first handout they completed, however a few needed updates with my help.

Week twelve

- Today was presentation day for students! Costumes, props and any artwork created was gathered, worn and presented.
- Students were to pose with their partner and had a ‘Push Me’ button that parents and teachers could use to press for any information on their chosen artist or artwork.
- Final presentation lasted for about one hour and a half. Students made sure to stay in character and wait until all parents, teachers and classes were done viewing the wax museum.

Week thirteen

- Students today participated in a whole group and individual critique, assessing their final presentation performance.
- Students were shown images from the wax museum, and answered some whole group questions about what they saw, what they thought and any questions they may have had.
- Students then completed an individual critique answering things they liked, things they were proud of, something they would change, and then they needed to get a peer review of their work.

Data Gathering Methods

Observations: Throughout the duration of my action research study, I kept a detailed digital log that included observational data, and informal student

interviews that happened while I was advising. All of this information was stored securely in my school laptop that required login credentials to access.

Observations were essential to seeing the progress being made or not made in my classroom, along with thoughts and feelings in the moment. I participated in both participant and non-participant observations to get a collection of insights and comments from my students. All notes taken during these observations were recorded in a saved Word documents on my laptop, organized by date and class period.

Surveys: Students were given the same formal pre and post survey (Appendix E) on two different class periods, to determine where their thoughts, views and feelings stood on art, and if they had changed throughout the exploration and working process. These surveys were then analyzed and results were recorded in my field log.

Questionnaires: Students were also given the same formal questionnaires (Appendix G) on two different class periods to determine where their thoughts and feelings stood on specific art materials, and if they had changed throughout the exploration and working process. These questionnaires were analyzed and results were recorded in my field log.

Student Artifacts: Student artifacts and work served as the most important collection of data for my study. Work and artifacts from my students included:

artifacts from exploration and studio days, and photography of studio days and of the final presentation.

Trustworthiness Statement

In order to ensure that the findings and results of this study were valid and trustworthy, I completed a checklist of ethical guidelines, practices and techniques before and during the study. Before beginning the study, I obtained approval from Moravian College's Human Subjects Internal Review Board. The superintendent of my school district as well as my building principal completed written consent forms giving me permission to conduct my study (Appendix A). Finally, I obtained completed written consent forms from parents (Appendix B) as well as students in my classes (Appendix C). Both consent forms discussed a brief background of the study, highlighted that data only from students who gave permission would be used, and that withdrawal from the study at any time was allowed without penalty. The consent forms also made note of the importance of student pseudonyms for privacy, along with the protected and locked storage of data during the study and destruction of all research related data at the end of the study.

Once I had obtained all of the participants written consent forms, I was ready to begin the study. With the importance of validity and trustworthiness throughout the entire study, I implemented several methods of data collection and interpretation. First, low inference descriptors will be documented through

observation (Hendricks, 2009) while students are working with their partners to choose an artist, and then their planned methodology and studio work to make their artist come to life. Data will be collected and recorded accurately and with detail and organization to ensure my analysis is clear and easy to interpret. Next, I conducted student surveys and mini interviews to collect participant feedback on happenings throughout the process of the study (Hendricks, 2009). In using pre and post surveys, I collected specific details of information on my students' thoughts and feelings. Then, I used the idea reflexive inquiry or reflexivity (Hendricks, 2009), to reflect and possibly inquire about the experiences in my classroom throughout the study and make conclusions about what I thought, believed and valued during the process. At the end of the study, students participated in reflexive inquiry through a whole class critique on the project itself and their final thoughts and beliefs attached to their and others' work. Finally, to protect my validity and credibility, I followed the method of data triangulation (Hendricks, 2009). Data triangulation is the method of collecting various forms of data to then analyze for the credibility of your study. This data was collected from my field log observations about student interactions and studio working time, pre and post survey results, mini interviews with students throughout the study and student artifacts.

As I began to interpret my data, I conducted member checks (Hendricks 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2012) to share thoughts and

interpretations with the students of my study to increase validity and credibility and contradict any false accounts. Throughout the study I also worked to analyze negative cases that presented themselves (Hendricks 2009: Lincoln & Gruba, 1985; Maxwell, 2009). By analyzing information presented by negative cases, I was able to set aside the data that seemed to contradict information from the other sources gathered. Finally, one of the most important methods to interpret data, using thick descriptors of the setting and study (Hendricks, 2009) gave my students and audience a more generalized understanding of terms, techniques and processes used in the art education classroom. These detailed descriptors of the setting and study details helped my audience to better determine whether or not the results from my study can be understood, useful and valid for their own classrooms.

MY STORY

Let's Get to the Good Stuff

Starting out a new school year is like opening up a new sketchbook. There are so many possibilities to fill your pages with creative magic. This story tells the tale of my fifth grade students and their journey towards this creative magic. One of my favorite questions people ask is which grade is my favorite from kindergarten to fifth? Being an art teacher, and seeing all the classes, you certainly learn which ages stand out developmentally and emotionally, especially in relation to the arts. My answer has always been, kindergarten and fifth grade. I love the babies and I love my oldies, which brings me to my fifth graders. Chosen for this project for their maturity, sense of development and knowledge of skills, I thought that they could best handle the challenge I had planned for them.

The first day of school for most is really the entire first week of school for me. Seeing my students once, maybe twice a week on a four-day rotation, makes my entire week to be about the same day-to-day, just with a selection of different kids from different classes. On this particular week, we had the basics most first days do. All together, we found our new seats, reviewed classroom rules and behavior procedures, and completed a mini first-day activity to help decorate one of my classroom bulletin board, as I have always done in the past.

When my students were just about to finish, I asked them to put down their colored pencils and hear the challenge I had planned for them. I spoke about learning and how as a life-long process, even teachers continue to go to school. I explained to them about the future project: The Fifth Grade Art Wax Museum, and that I needed their parents as well as their permission to use any information I took from them starting with the next class. Students then completed their permission forms checking whether or not they would allow me to use their data and filed out the door for the first day.

Ice-breaking

After our first week of “house-keeping” was officially over, it was finally time to break the ice and get our hands dirty. As I began the second week, students were instructed that this week and next week were going to be used as exploration days. These exploration days of different materials were used to help students get acquainted with and feel different materials, as well as to get a sense of what they enjoyed using and what they excelled at, and then maybe what they didn’t enjoy as much and had a harder time creating. The first week was exploring drawing, painting and paper collage. I broke down each of my five classroom tables into different centers where the students rotated on a timer. The first table was watercolor paints, second table was tempera paints, third table was paper collage with scraps of paper, scissors and glue, the fourth table was oil

pastels and the fifth table was crayons, colored pencils, watercolor pencils and art sticks.

On the first day of exploration with my first two classes, I took the time to go around from table to table and explain what the materials were, and even demonstrated on how some of them could be used. Boy oh boy did this eat up a huge portion of time! With 45-minute class periods, I spent 30 minutes getting kids settled, explaining and demonstrating, leaving only 15 minutes, or three minutes with five rotations at every table. Talk about a time crunch nightmare! With the amount of moans and groans I had because of the tiny amount of time, I knew I had to make a change. I swore I had sped all of this up for my second class, but obviously I had been wrong. For my final class on the first day, I cut all demonstration and just explained the materials at each table. In doing so, this allowed for rotations of five minutes each.

Comparing the first two classes with the last class in setup and how it ran, I noticed several things. First off, students absolutely loved the idea of creating on their own terms. There was a lot of discovery and exploration, like things mixing or changing along the way. Students were so excited and happy to have the world of choice at their fingertips. Second, I obviously noticed right away how rushed the first two classes were because of the amount of time I took up. Some of the things I heard included:

- “Four minutes does not seem like enough time.”

- “How do I make something in one minute?”

Now, at some tables like oil pastels where students had used them in the past, it



Figure 4.1 Tempera Paint Exploration

didn't matter so much, but with the more time consuming table like tempera painting and paper collage, students really were saddened to move on after such a short amount of time. Finally, because I completely cut out all demonstration from the third class, many of these students didn't know what to do with many of the materials in terms of techniques or different ways to use them other than the obvious. For example, I wrote in my field notes about how at the watercolor table, there weren't any techniques happening like wet on dry, wet on wet and dry brush like the other classes experimented with because I didn't teach them. This absence of knowledge or experimentation reflected just how important even a

little demonstration can be. Continuing onto the second day of exploration, students were introduced to printmaking, sculpture and fiber arts. Knowing that time was not on my side, I quickly went around showing the materials at the various centers and left them to work. At the first table was printmaking with Styrofoam, second table was printmaking with mono-prints, third table was modeling clay, fourth table was model magic and the fifth table was yarn weaving.



Figure 4.2 Weaving Exploration

Off the bat, I knew today would be more difficult because all of these materials required time, and we didn't possess a lot of that. After all three classes, I noticed a high level of frustration at the weaving and Styrofoam printing table because the

time allowance was way too short. Students sometimes didn't catch onto the weaving technique right away, leaving them with a minute or two to work with it once they finally understood. Also, in drawing a scene then taking the time to print it, I really had to stress to the students to make it simple and then print, instead of over thinking the process and taking all of their time to draw, leaving no time to print. I did actually have a small handful of students that looked ahead and wanted to skip the monoprint station because they needed the time to make



Figure 4.3 Monoprint Exploration

their own Styrofoam print. Overall, I think the first exploration day had more frustration over time, whereas the second exploration day had more frustration about the techniques and concepts.

After the second week concluded with all three classes, Survey (Appendix E) was administered. This pre-survey was administered to understand what the students really think about their own artmaking and to understand what they like and dislike. It gave insight to the students' favorite things in art along with favorite materials and types of art. Overall, most of the students in the beginning of the project liked clay as their favorite art material and type of art. There seemed to be a wide response in what their favorite art project was, as well as something they would like to learn. Students overall, didn't really know what creativity meant to them, and I had numerous answers that didn't make sense at all. Most students felt like they were creative, most didn't think the classroom should be quiet, most thought sometimes we should have assigned seats, two classes thought they should have choice over projects, while one class didn't think they should, and most important, almost all students think we should have grades in art class. In wrapping up, most students overall enjoyed art class with several feeling it as okay and zero children not liking it at all.

Clicking the Keys

On the third week of the project, students had quite the task. First was to find their partner in crime, second was to research which artist they wanted to use, and third was to find a work of art from their chosen artist. In thinking ahead to researching art, nudity flashed across my mind. Sure, the school had website blocking programs set into place, but in my experience I knew it didn't block out

everything. With each class, I made sure to talk about nudity, and its place in art. I sent home a note to parents, letting them know that their child may come across it while researching, but that its life and its art and that's just how it is. "Mrs. Adlard, it's just how they do it" said Andrew. I'll remember that coolness forever, that's for sure. So, after a little collection of giggles, and once students had their partners, I offered up the list of artists I put together and gave some fast facts, so that students had a platform to start.

Finding their partner was not an issue, out of all three classes, I had two groups of students that needed assistance. One of these groups included Mason a Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) student, and his chosen partner Tucker, an Emotional Support (ES) student. Worried about Mason being left out because of his difficulties with communication, I was happy and surprised to see Tucker take him under his wing with grace. To my continued amazement, once they got together, Tucker wanted to focus on Andy Warhol as their artist because Andy Warhol was known to have some form of Autism or Asperger's. Having no connection to this, Mason did not want to choose Andy Warhol. "That's okay" said Tucker, "You choose the artist and I will choose the artwork." This conversation went on without hesitation! Seeing two students come together so easily, especially when there are emotions involved makes my job so much more enjoyable.

Once with their partners, students were provided an artist handout (Appendix F) for students to write down basic information about their partner, their chosen artist and artwork, and then a few basic facts about their artist including: when the artist was born, are they still alive, what type of art did they make and any interesting facts. Throughout all three classes, students worked really hard to narrow down their artist and find their final artwork. I reminded them that they had to bring this artwork to life, so they needed to pick something that really spoke to them and didn't look too difficult to create.

Once the third week had concluded with all three classes, I had my students complete Questionnaire (Appendix G). This pre-questionnaire was administered to understand a deeper level of feelings and thoughts about their artmaking and materials. This questionnaire was mainly related to the exploration days, and after working with materials how they felt emotionally about the materials and the process. Overall, there was a range from the materials listed that students felt they were good at and the materials that they weren't. In writing about their most and least favorite material, there was a broad range in answers, hitting every material and technique along the way.

Digging Deeper

Starting the fourth week of our project, students were continuing research about their artist and artwork, thinking more creatively about how they could create their final projects, and what they could make them out of. Students had

Chromebooks at their disposal to research deeper into visuals to help them plan out and organize their studio work. During this time, students were continuing partner work, and collaborating with one another on the visions and ideas both kids brought to the table.



Figure 4.4 Artist/Artwork Research

While walking around and observing informally, I sat down with Ace who is another Emotional Support (ES) and Autistic student of mine. He explained to me that he was working alone and preferred it that way, and that he absolutely loved Leonardo da Vinci and had a kit that recreated one of his flying machines that he built at home. Ace asked if it was okay that he used this as his artwork, which I agreed to, and then with some coaxing on his costume, he asked if please, “That would be so embarrassing, I don’t know if I could socially handle it.” In

knowing the child, I agreed and let this one slide. However, my counter argument was that he must do some research on facts to present for the final day, even if he wouldn't be dressing up. Ace agreed and we were on our way to success and happiness.

During the class, I also took the time to sit down with two girls who had happened to find a painting of a pineapple from an artist on Etsy. Etsy is an online marketplace where products, art and more can be purchased from everyday people. This particular artist had illustrated children's books, so I allowed them to use his work. The girls had asked me to email him through Etsy in order to get some information about him and his work to use for their final presentation. So sitting down with them, I emailed the artist and told them to patiently wait until next class for an answer.

While walking around and informally listening to my students, I realized that a lot of the students had a harder time than I anticipated grasping the concept as dressing up as an artwork or artist. In thinking about other moments when children would wear costumes, they aren't normally wearing a costume related to art or an artist, and therefore, may not have a lot of knowledge or experience with costumes or design related to the field of art. I took this moment to use as a prime teaching moment, and showed the students on the projector a website of kids and adults dressing up as artists and various historical figures. I explained that some of the outfits represented the artists and what they wore, and then some of the people

dressed as artwork had frames, facepaint, props and more. After reflecting on this class, and having to show them visuals, I was sad at the thought that so many students had ‘mentally crashed’ at the thought of making free choices and using their imagination. It made me think that if they hadn’t seen a visual on this, what would have happened? Would the students have figured themselves out during studio time, or would the entire project went down the tubes?

During the fourth week, I took the time to show the website illustrating costumes and ideas right off the bat. In retrospect, I figured I would be saving time, but I do wonder how many students wouldn’t have actually needed this help. Was I doing more harm in assuming, or really providing my students with what they needed as well as more time to work? While working I heard several questions during my informal observations:

- “How can we be a vase? Especially a glass one?”
- “Do we choose the artist and the artwork?”
- “What do we do if our artist has short hair and we have long hair?”
- “Do I need a background as the artwork or no?”

Some of these things were such great food for thought while creating, but asking me if we need to choose the artist and the artwork? WHAT? Was this student actually saying this out loud? And where have you been the past three weeks? Sigh. “Guys, this is your project. You are the people that are going to think of an idea, create, and bring it to life. You need to maybe take the time to sit down

together and brainstorm about which artists are your favorite, and then once you can come together and agree on an artist, work together to choose an artwork from that artist together. Hopefully, once you start brainstorming and researching, ideas will light up in your heads.”

Studio Chaos

In welcoming the first day of studio work for the fifth week of the project, I went ahead and printed out color copies of the artist and artwork for the students to use as reference throughout their creating, since the Chromebooks were no longer with us. There were several groups I had to speak with to figure out the title of their artwork and what their actual image was in order to print them a visual.

Before the chaos started, I did a quick tour of the room, pointing out all of the labels and where most materials could be found. I also took the time to discuss painting cleanup with my students, and that I would be distributing paint if they needed it. I thought that with my little speech I took enough time to discuss the importance of keeping things organized and clean, however I was wrong, so wrong.

The first class I had was an absolutely disaster. Not only did I lose track of time and kept them for ten minutes longer than their class ran, but their cleanup, especially with paint, was horrendous. On my back counters were trays upon trays of paint cups and dirty brushes just lying around. No one had thrown

out their cups, stacked their trays or placed their brushes in the water cup. I was furious. I made sure to make a mental note to speak with them about this and how it definitely wouldn't be happening again.

On another note about the first day of studio work and presenting all of the materials and information, actual time was cut down again. In the end, students had about 10-15 minutes of actual working time, basically getting nothing done. In thinking about the future weeks to come, and how short the time really was, I was scared to death for my students. Were we going to pull this off? Were they going to have enough time, or was I going to have to build more time into their schedules and potentially offer recess time to work? Many questions were brought to light after the first session of studio work.

I found that while working on this entire study, I really did appreciate seeing the same grade three consecutive days in a row and how many changes I could make from one class experience to another. With the disaster cleanup from the first class, I thoroughly stressed what the cleanup procedures should look like for the following two classes, and they did a marvelous job. Wahoo! One of the small "hiccup" issues I saw between the classes was that several groups were getting so many paint colors from me in thinking they would make their entire project in one day, so when class was over and so many colors were left untouched for the day, we ended up wasting a lot that we shouldn't have. I did bring a container for the following days to put paint in to solve this issue, as well

as discuss with future classes the idea of conserving, and starting with small amounts, increasing to more amounts as needed.

Overall, the first day of studio work really opened my eyes to what needed to be accomplished for the rest of the project. Students needed to focus and have their plans in place. Materials needed to be thoughtfully used and cleaned up appropriately in order to save my sanity. I realized that presenting the idea of choice to my students was not only a challenge to them in thinking on their own, but a challenge for me and letting go of the order, control and organization that is usually found in my classroom. With all of the scariness and uncertainty, I was excited for what was to come. I felt joy in reflecting on these days, and the growth and progress I would hopefully see in later weeks.

Letting Go of Control

We continued for the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth weeks to focus on studio work. Overall, students got the hang of using materials, finding their ideas, making things come to life, fixing mistakes, and cleaning up the place like nothing had ever happened. During the studio days, I walked around to offer my assistance to any group needing it, and I also made informal observations along the way. I cut many frames with an Exacto knife for a handful of groups, helped distribute paint, offered suggestions and listened throughout these weeks. One group working with clay asked, “Mrs. Adlard, what will happen with the time we need to let the clay dry and bake, and will we have enough time to paint it and

have it ready for the final presentation?” Great question I thought. I told them that it takes ten days to dry, two to bake and cool, one to paint, and two more to bake and cool. It was then clear to me that the two groups using clay had to be on my radar, so that they met the timeline.

One group asked, “We are using van Gogh, and wanted to add something to our painting representation that wasn’t originally there, can we do that?” Absolutely! That is what this is all about people. Another group came up to me



Figure 4.5 Group Vincent van Gogh

and had black hands. “Mrs. Adlard, we really needed this model magic to be black, but it seems like the black is coming out more navy than black with this marker, and now we can’t wash it off.” Boys, why are you using a permanent marker, why? What was neat about this situation was that as he was talking to me

about his problem, he solved his own answer through thinking out loud and quickly said, “Hey! We need to paint it!”

At the end of each class in the sixth week, I took a poll, asking students how they felt about their creations so far, were they on course, ahead of schedule or behind schedule. Every group but one said they were on course. With the group that said they were behind, I quickly noticed how during studio time, one of the students seemed to be working hard and making all the decisions, while the other student just floated alongside her. When sitting down and talking with them, I suggested to the hard-working student, that maybe she should designate an area for the other girl to paint, that way they both would be putting in effort. Throughout the days, this seemed to work, even though her partner was a slower, and much less enthusiastic worker.

Meanwhile, Tucker and Mason, were using splatter paint to create a shirt



Figure 4.6 Group Jackson Pollock

and poster for their presentation based on artist, Jackson Pollock. Through the chaos of working, the first week they made SUCH a mess. There was literally paint splatter everywhere. It was on the chairs, on the tables, on the floor, on the cabinets, all over them, you name it. I had them take extra time to clean up their mess off most of the surfaces, leaving just the floor to be moped. “Next time, we will be sure to use placemats and proper techniques for splattering, right boys?” “Yes, Mrs. Adlard” they replied.

During the seventh week, the post survey (Appendix E) was given to all three classes. The purpose of administering this survey a second time, was to see if the students changed their thinking about their own artmaking and to see if they changed what they like and dislike. Interestingly, I had separate copies for one class where I saw 17 changes to types of favorite art and art materials, compared to the 18 changes in the other classes. After the fact of giving separate copies, versus have students use crayons to make their second choice (on the same paper), I thought I would see a larger number of students changing their ideas for what their favorite type of art and materials were, in seeing their previous answers already on the page, but surprisingly it didn't matter. The results from this survey found that a majority of the students had changed their minds from their previous answers to favorite type of art and materials. I found that through studio work, more students had changed their minds on their favorite materials, and wondered whether that was due to personal experience or perhaps partner influence.

Students really seemed to answer the question about what creativity meant to them a whole lot better than the first round, even though we didn't take any time clarifying or talking about it.

Connected to the string of studio days, during the eighth week, post-questionnaire (Appendix G) was administered. Again, this questionnaire was related to exploration days, and after working with materials assessed how students felt about the materials and the process. The majority of the students actually remained unchanged about their favorites in materials and types of art. However, nodding to common sense, the students that did change their favorites changed it to the material or type of art they were currently working on for their final project. This change of feeling nicely reflected the positive experience they were having with the materials and processes in current time.

During these past three weeks of studio time, I heard many things during my informal observations while walking around. It seemed that since the students began actually thinking, working and creating, they had more thoughts, feelings and feedback both positive and negative over what was happening. Some of the comments and questions I heard during these informal observations included:

- “We need to start over, this is NOT working.”
- “Mrs. Adlard our Model Magic mustaches keep breaking, how can we get them to stop?”

- “Is there any other option for molding the Model Magic, or what about another way to show I have a mustache?”
- “Mrs. Adlard, we are not getting along over here. Jack wants the Eiffel Tower to stand up off the poster board, and no one here knows how to think about making that work. What can we do? Can you please help?”
- “I don’t know, we just kind of decided it.”
- “Mrs. Adlard we are all done.”
- “How can we show our face in our painting?”
- “I am so mad at this project because the Model Magic keeps falling off the posterboard.”



Figure 4.7 Group Wayne Thiebaud

- “Do you think if I color in the felt with a scented marker, it will smell good, you know to match the flavor of the gumballs?”

During the ninth week of the study, I had several interesting topics brought to my attention by students. Leo came up to me and asked, “Mrs. Adlard, how are we being graded again? Can you consider doing the grading yourself? I think that when kids are given the chance to grade themselves, they lie and grade themselves much higher and better than if you graded them yourself.” Interesting mindset I thought to myself. In another class, Olivia and Mila were having trouble deciding who got to be the artist and who was the artwork for the final presentation. “Didn’t you decide this in the beginning?” I asked. “Yes, well Sydnee was going to be the artist but she left the school, so now we have to decide who gets to do what” said Olivia. “Well, why are you having such a hard time? Why do you want to be the artist so badly?” I asked. “I had my outfit already picked out at home” replied Olivia. “And I didn’t know the artist gets to talk with an accent” replied Mila. This argument is about accents I thought to myself! So, as a group we came to the conclusion that they were going to allow me to pick names out of a hat next class, and that was their fate.

Finally, sitting down to see how Rowan, one of my quiet students was doing, she said, “I wish I chose that female artist who painted flowers up close Mrs. Adlard” why I replied, “Well, because I have learned that I am really good at

painting flower like things instead of abstract things like our artist makes.” “That is such a clever discovery you made about yourself Rowan” I said. “Great job.”

Light at the End of the Gallery

Excitement began to fill the classroom during week ten of the project. Students were informed that this was the absolute last day for finishing touches and that the day was to be used as a dress rehearsal for the final presentation, as well as to write out their note card of facts for presentation day. Students piled into my classroom with bags of fun things from home like suspenders, clothing, glasses, books, hats and more. A small group of students forgot their items and needed to write down what they needed in their assignment book.

During this last studio day, many of the students had gathered more than enough information on research day to fill their notecard with facts to say. “Now remember students, you don’t need to bombard your audience with facts, and you do not need to memorize them. Just write down a few important things on this notecard, so that when people push your “Push Me” button, you can provide them with some information on your artist or artwork” I said. The “Push Me” button was a small printed out picture of a button that said “Push Me,” and laminated for all students to tape on their project or somewhere visible to prompt viewers to listen to their gathered facts. A few of the students came up to me asking to print them out new information pages from the internet because they either lost theirs,

or changed their artist after the research day, and didn't have access to the Chromebooks to gather any facts.

One of the most head scratching moments of this week included an email I received from a parent asking what her child had to wear for his costume. Dumbfounded by this email, I respectfully told her that it was her child's job to talk with his partner and decide what he needs. I also reminded her that they had nine weeks to gather and plan this out, so that if he doesn't know the week before the project, he needed to meet with his partner ASAP and see me if things still weren't planned by the end of class today. As soon as I replied to this email, I ran upstairs to talk with this student about what was planned. "Well, Matt is going to be the artist and I am going to be the artwork" he said. "Okay Liam, that's great! Now, did I say that the person holding the artwork has to be dressed in a costume?" "Um, no" he said. "Okay, so then it's settled. Tomorrow during presentation day, you are going to be wearing your normal clothes, and holding the artwork you and Matt designed, deal?" "Yes, deal" he said.

Presentation Day

Considered the eleventh day of the lesson for all three classes, it was finally presentation day! Backdrops were hung; all furniture was brought into the gym; I made a standing chart for my students to organize where to put them; apple cider was set up as a welcome table; and the string quartet was on the stage and ready for background music.

Our school day starts at 8:35 a.m., so students came down into the gym at 9:00 a.m., and had until 9:25 a.m. to get their costumes on, faces painted and poses ready.

During the presentation, students were in their designated areas, ready to present their facts to the parents walking through our gallery. Overall, my students looked amazing. They brought their characters to life in so many ways that I was not seeing or even planning on during the creation and dress rehearsal process. I saw props and costumes that I had not seen before this day, and was oh so surprised! Once the doors opened, we had a great turnout of parents to walk around and view the museum like a gallery walk. Parents could press the “Push Me” buttons by each of the groups to hear their facts. As I was walking around, some of the teachers said to me: “It is amazing to see the kids that really got into character. Some of them didn’t even need their notecards and had everything memorized!” This was such a true observation. Never once had I said anything had to be memorized, and they took the initiative to learn the card and speak without using it.

In my company with teachers and parents, I also had the Director of Arts, our Public Relations representative, and a Director of Curriculum for Elementary Education. It meant so much to me that people from our district, but outside of our school took the time to stop over. The Director of Arts said to me, “This is amazing Hailey. This is what the arts are. What you and your students have done

here advocates how amazing the arts are, and shows their parents and peers how excited and involved they can be in such a creative process.” His words made me feel so good. He then proceeded to tell me that he would like volunteers from this to present at our annual district-wide Festival of the Arts in May, which is a huge arts presentation at the high school.

While walking around, some of the other things I heard from students and parents included:

- “Mrs. Adlard, I am REALLY enjoying this. This is hands-down one of the coolest things I have ever done.” (student)
- “This is so great. It is such a different function for the school, and I am so glad to see that it is arts based.” (parent)
- “Wonderful presentation Mrs. Adlard. You should be so proud of all of your students AND yourself.” (parent)
- “This is such a great presentation for the arts. Thank you for doing this for the kids.” (parent)

The Final Critique

For the final and twelfth week of the lesson, students participated in a group and individual critique, as well as graded themselves on their performance using a rubric (Appendix D). I started off the class by showing a rotating slideshow of photos from the Wax Museum on our overhead projector while we answered some questions all together. Some of the questions I asked were:

- What is happening in this artwork?
- Is the art realistic?
- What is an adjective that could be used to describe this artwork?
- What materials did the artist use to make this artwork? **By far my favorite question, students seemed excited and genuinely interested in asking how things were done and why.
- What would you like to know about this project?

Some of the answers I received from these questions included:

- “Well, we used our creativity and imagination to show an artist and work they have made in their life” said Leo.
- “Ehhhh, yes and no.” Why, I asked? “Well because some of them are real painting and work, and others like the giant hamburger, just don’t make sense” said Grace.
- “Cool, wonderful, funny, awesome, interesting, strange and creative.”
- “Paper, tempera paint, pencil, colored pencil, poster, model magic, felt.”
- “How was the Eiffel Tower project made?”
 - “We took model magic and rolled it out, then put it on the poster where some of it stuck and others broke off and had to be hot glued down by Mrs. Adlard. Then we painted the picture.”
- “What did the boys use to make the badminton parts?”

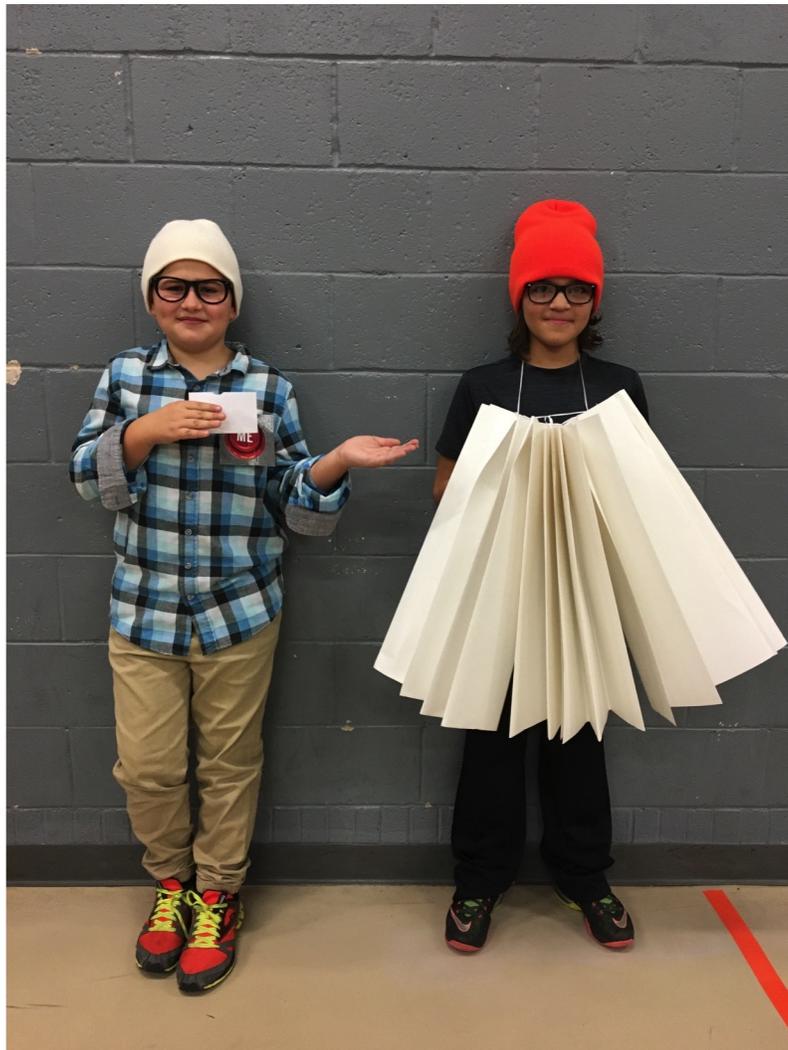


Figure 4.8 Group Claes Oldenburg

- “We took huge pieces of paper and folded them up, and then punched holes in the top and strung them together.”
- “How did Lily get her project to stand up?”
 - “Well, we took a big sheet of paper, painted it first and then stood it up and taped it. It really stood well on its own, and then when I stood inside of it for the presentation, it worked even better.”



Figure 4.9 Group Alex Monopoly

- “Did it take patience to make all of those gumballs?”
 - “Yes, haha. We spent a lot of time cutting them out AND gluing them on. But it looked really good in the end so I think it was worth it.”

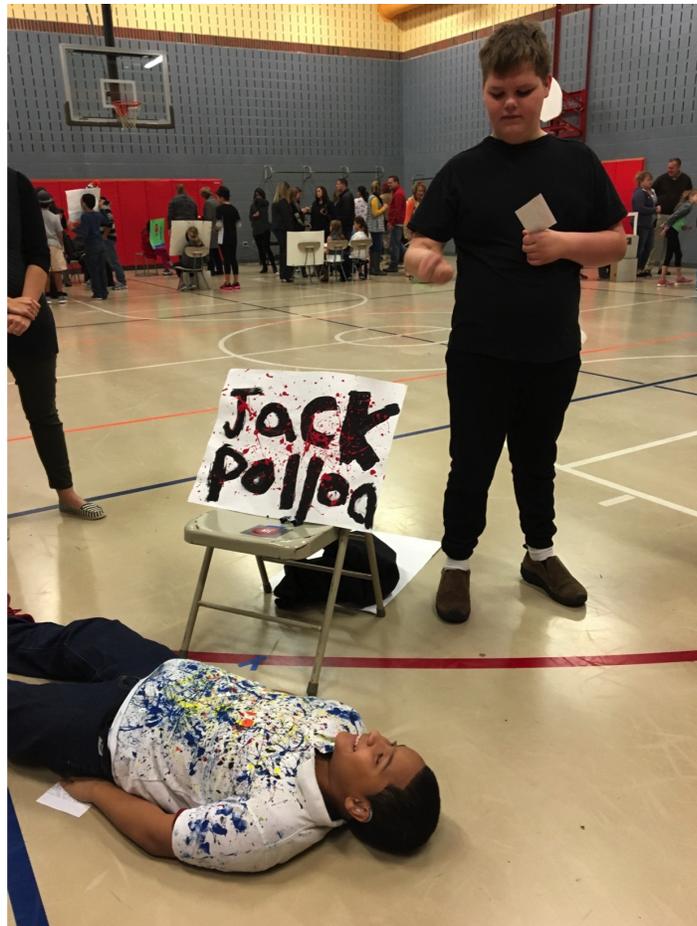


Figure 4.10 Group Jackson Pollock

- “Did you have a purpose for lying on the floor at the presentation?”
 - “Yes, I was the paper on the floor, the artist worked in a big space, and I was the art so I laid on the floor and my partner ‘painted’ on me.”
- “We made artwork” said Rowan. “Well yea, but what else” I asked? “We made artwork and artists from things inside the classroom” said Rowan. “Did I tell you step by step what to do?” I said. “No, we had to use our own creativity” said Rowan.
- “Okay, let me ask you this: Is van Gogh’s Starry Night realistic?” I asked. “Yes!” said Mila. “Good, and what about Dali’s Persistence of Memory with melting clocks outside on tree branches?” I asked. “No” said Mila. “Okay, so some were realistic and some weren’t” I said.
- “Artistic, colorful, creative, hard and unique” said Leo.
- “Paper, tempera paint, pencil, clay, poster, model magic.”
- “How did Ashton create the snakes out of clay on their clay pot?”
 - “We rolled out clay snakes and then I took a pencil and craved their faces into the clay” said Ashton.
- “How did Sky and Sara make their almost ‘cloud-like’ background?”



Figure 4.11 Group Edgar Degas

- “We just took a giant brush and dabbed the paint on circles all over to create the colorful background” said Sarah.

Next, I had the students grab a pencil and work independently on The Art Stack (Appendix H). Here they had to write three things they learned, two things they were proud of, one thing they would change, and had to ask someone other than their partner for a peer review of their project. When they were finished, students used the teacher-generated rubric to give themselves an achievement AND an effort grade, and handed in their paper. Once all the students were done,

I collected the Art Stack paper as well as the rubric (Appendix D), and used both of these documents to determine their final grade for the project.

Analyzing The Art Stack individualized critique, I learned that a lot of the students were nervous for the final presentation, but once immersed in it; loved it. A majority of my students were proud of the work they had completed, and loved working with a partner on an art project. Students also learned many things while creating that reflected positive feedback. Many materials were “cool,” or they learned they were better at painting than pastels through exploring them. I learned that many of my students were proud that they actually finished the project in time for presentation day. And that if they could go back and change anything, most of the students would change little tweaks in the production of something from their artist or artwork, like the mask, or mustache color, or material for painting. Overall, so many of my students wrote that art is fun. In a way, I should have already known that, but I think they found the fun in the idea of choice, collaboration and bringing together an idea that was created solely by them.

DATA ANALYSIS

Numerous sources of data were collected for this study. Every source of data used throughout the study had a purpose, and was meant to show the growth or change in thoughts, feelings and capabilities over the duration of the study. When all data were analyzed, I was able to deepen my understanding of change in student response from their previously chosen favorite materials and forms of artmaking before exploration day, to the experience of studio day creating when provided with choice.

Surveys

After the students had completed their two class days of exploration with materials and techniques, the pre-survey (Appendix E) was administered. This survey was given to understand what the students really thought about their own artmaking and to understand what they liked and disliked. The survey gave insight to the students' favorite type of art along with favorite materials and types of art. Most of the students in the beginning of the project liked clay as their favorite art material and type of art. There seemed to be a wide response in what their favorite art project was as well as something they would like to learn. Overall, my students didn't really know what creativity meant to them, and I had numerous answers that didn't make sense at all. I was interested in where the students stood on some basic classroom setup questions. Most students didn't think the classroom should be quiet; most thought sometimes we should have

assigned seats; two classes thought they should have choice over projects, while one class didn't think they should; and most important, almost all students thought we should have grades in art class. Overall, most students enjoyed art class with several feeling it was okay and zero children not liking it at all. One of the most interesting conclusions I derived from the first survey was that there seemed to be no correlation at all between their favorite type of art and materials they liked to use best. I thought for sure that if someone like drawing the best, obvious materials chosen would be pencils, crayons and colored pencils, not watercolors, pencils and clay. I don't believe students saw the connection between these two questions and the impact they had on each other.

The first question on the pre-survey, asked students what their favorite type of art was. In analyzing the results, sculpture was the clear winner as the favorite art type, followed closely by painting. Virtual art rounded up the back, with the least number of votes. The second question on the pre-survey was to distinguish which art materials were the favorite, and then to compare these materials with their previous favorite type of art making. Overall, clay was the favorite material, which connected nicely to the previous winner as sculpture being the favorite type of art. Watercolors and oil pastels were the next favorites, and found objects and colored pencils fell at the bottom. These findings connected nicely to sculpture and painting being the favorites with their sensible partners clay and watercolors winning at the top as well. However, in flipping

through individual surveys, so many of my students found no connection to the type of art they chose as their favorite and the materials they chose. For instance, one student said painting was his favorite type of art, but then circled watercolors, markers and clay for his favorite materials. Out of this survey, watercolors are the only materials that really make sense. Why didn't this student also choose tempera/acrylic paints? Perhaps she didn't know what these were. This sort of disconnect was found among many of my students, and really left me puzzled as to why there's a clear break in the connection between their favorite type of art and materials of art.

Overall, a majority of the students in all three classes felt as if they were creative. Only a small handful of students weren't sure if they were creative and didn't think they were creative at all. This question was important to the connection of seeing creativity bloom throughout the upcoming studio days the students would soon encounter. It was my thought that if so many students had felt themselves to be creative, then there would be little need for scaffolding and help, and that ideas and projects would easily come to fruition.

Along with the importance of the findings above, I also had reactions to feelings written about what creativity means to my students. Some reactions to this question found in the pre-survey include:

- It means a lot to me because for me it means to make something out of this world.

- It means to put together things and use your imagination.
- It means to use your specialties and your heart.
- It means to me, express yourself and draw anything that your heart desires, “Do what you love.”
- It doesn’t mean a lot in my life.
- I don’t know what it means.
- It means craziness.
- It means not copying.

The post-survey (Appendix E) was administered on the seventh week of the project, having two weeks of studio days under my students’ belts. This survey was identical to the pre-survey, and its purpose was to see if through studio work and thinking for themselves, any thoughts had changed about their favorite type of art along with favorite materials and types of art. The first post-survey question again, revealed the change or lack in change of students’ favorite types of art. One interesting thing to note about the post-survey is that the very first class took the post-survey on a brand new blank page. In falling behind on my copying, my second two classes reflected on their pre-survey and with a different color crayon, circled their post-survey answers. I was so eager to see whether or not having a clear survey like the first class yielded a majority of changed results from not seeing their first circled answers like the following two

classes had. However, in comparing all three classes, 67 percent changed and 32 percent unchanged.

This second post-survey question also reflected the change or lack of change, but this time with materials that were most liked. It was found that 65 percent of students changed the type of materials they liked most while 35 percent remained unchanged. I was intrigued to see that through studio work more students had changed their minds about their favorite materials, and wondered whether that was due to personal experience or perhaps partner influence.

Questionnaires

After the third week of class, when exploration days were complete and the first day of research concluded, the first questionnaire (Appendix G) was administered to understand if a deeper level of feelings and thoughts occurred about artmaking and materials. This questionnaire was mainly related to the materials and techniques provided solely from the exploration days as well as any emotions my students felt about the materials and the process.

In looking at the results from the pre-questionnaire, our exploration center of “sculpture” won favorite type of art by a landslide with all students with “painting” as the runner-up center. Overall, there was a range from the materials listed that students felt they were good at and the materials that they weren’t. In writing about their most and least favorite material, there was a broad range in answers, hitting every material and technique along the way. Painting (watercolor,

tempera and acrylic) and drawing (pencil, crayons and colored pencils) were close behind, and collage (cutting, gluing and assembling) fell off the deep end with only one vote as favorite.

Along with the importance of the findings above, I also had reactions to feelings about most and least favorite materials that proved important to why some students may have chosen what they did. Some reactions to the final two questions found in the pre-questionnaire included:

- I really liked weaving because it was soothing.
- I love working with crayons because they are easy to use and have a lot of great colors.
- I love sculpting because it let's me create anything.
- I love pastels, because I like the fact that I can smear them to make them my own.
- I do not like oil pastels, because they cannot erase, they smudge easily and they are super messy.
- I am not a big fan of sculpting because it puts stress on me.
- I don't like crayons because they don't always color in the white spaces left on the paper and they can't go in a pencil sharpener.

The second questionnaire (Appendix G) was administered after week nine of the project. Students at this point were two weeks into their studio days, and had enough time under their belts to potentially change their minds since working

on their own. This questionnaire also looked into the emotions my students felt about materials and process through the studio work.

Analyzing the results from the post-questionnaire, their favorite type of art changed from sculpture in the pre-questionnaire to painting in the post-questionnaire. This reflection makes a lot of sense because a majority of my students used painting for the final projects. Sculpture followed closely behind painting as the favorite, but with the choice most students made in creating paintings, it is only fitting that painting was reflected as the most favorite type of art.

The data analyzed reflects differences from the first question asked during the post-questionnaire, and highlights after studio days and working with their partners, how a majority of the students' favorite materials changed to painting and sculpture was not far behind. This reflection connects so nicely to the choices made for final projects, as most being paintings. I also had many important written reactions to feelings about most and least favorite materials that proved important to why some students may have chosen what they did. Some reactions to the final two questions found in the post-questionnaire included:

- I love pastels because of their texture.
- I really like painting because I love mixing colors and using different sized brushes.
- I like clay because it gives you freedom.

- I don't like oil pastels because they smudge and break easily.
- I make a humungous mess with paint, I hate it.
- I don't like clay because it never works out with me and always looks horrible.
- I don't like markers because I hate being able to see the line they colored.

Final Critique

After presentation day, all students participated in a whole-group oral critique on their performance, as well as completed a written individual critique called The Art Stack (Appendix H). The whole-group oral critique was used to have students reflect on other final projects and offer comments and questions for various groups. The written individual critique was used for self-reflection and how each student thought they did personally on their project.

During the oral whole-group critique, two of the classes did a great job communication with each other. One of my classes was very quiet and not into communicating or questioning at all. It took a lot of teacher prompting to help them through the process. During the whole-group oral critique, these were the prompts I asked every class to answer when looking at a slideshow of photos of their class from the final presentation:

- What is happening in this artwork?
- Is the art realistic?

- What is an adjective that could be used to describe this artwork?
- What materials did the artist use to make this artwork?
- What would you like to know about this project?

Some of the responses included:

- “How did Lily get her project to stand up?”
 - “Well, we took a big sheet of paper, painted it first and then stood it up and taped it. It really stood well on its own, and then when I stood inside of it for the presentation, it worked even better.”
- “Did it take patience to make all of those gumballs?”
 - “Yes, haha. We spent a lot of time cutting them out AND gluing them on. But it looked really good in the end so I think it was worth it.”
- “Did you have a purpose for lying on the floor at the presentation?”
 - “Yes, I was the paper on the floor, the artist worked in a big space, and I was the art so I laid on the floor and my partner ‘painted’ on me.”

In analyzing the written critiques, students had to answer three questions and then find someone to write them a peer reflection based off the final presentation. The three questions each student had to answer were: write three things you learned, two things you are proud of and one thing you would change. Overall, a lot of the students were happy to just finish on time. They learned a lot

about their artist, how to work with a partner and how to bring an entire idea to life.

Overall, so many of my students wrote that they were so proud of how hard they had worked. The majority of students were very proud of their final presentations and their partners. Finally, the item that would be changed for most students was a small detail here and there inside their project. An example of these changes included: the color of this, or the size of that. All students had a peer review from someone in the classroom that highlighted something they had done for the final presentation. Some of my favorite peer reviews include:

- I liked how you dressed up professionally and spoke with authority.
- I liked how Tommy came up with the idea of actual soup cans.

This made his project more real life.

My students did such a great job with both critiques. The purpose of doing two different critiques was to try and pull out as much reflection, feeling and information from the final presentation as possible. I felt that almost all of the students loved the idea of creating their own project, working with a partner and presenting their art to an audience. In looking back to the beginning of the project, as a group, we really have come so far with self-confidence and independence. At the end of each class I quickly asked students if I should repeat this next year with the upcoming fifth graders, and with every class I was

answered a screaming “YES.” The positivity, excitement and growth this project brought to my classroom has been nothing short of amazing.

Rubric

Once students had completed the final written critique, they were to use our universal Art Rubric (Appendix D) to grade themselves on effort and achievement. All students at my school are graded in art using the same rubric, so the students were familiar with the grades, and expectations. Students graded themselves on effort with a (-, ✓ or +) based on their behavior during the project. Students then graded themselves on achievement with a (4, 3, 2, or 1) based on how they did on the project. I made all students aware that I was giving the final grade, but their grades were my starting point. In analyzing their self-given grades, a majority of students gave themselves (3+), meaning they were proficient in achievement and consistently cooperating and participating. I had a few students who gave themselves (4)s, which is advanced on the rubric and states that you are able to show concepts or techniques in a different way than presented, which basically means they’re going above and beyond with technique and thinking on a whole new level. In our district, (4)s are hard to achieve and are reserved for those for stand out well beyond the rest. While I was blown away by my students, in looking at every group, I only awarded one group (4)s because of detailed painting they did, the extra time put in and the collection of props brought in from home that had not been seen in the classroom. On the opposite

scale, one group received (2-)s because of the lack of planning, effort and creativity that went into their final project. I felt that they wasted a lot of time being off task and could have put much more into their final presentation. Everyone else received (3+)s just like they had graded themselves as.

Field Log

As the students spent time exploring, researching and working through their studio days, I spent time observing, taking notes and photos of them. I kept a chronological field log of everything that happened throughout classes during the study. Field log entries ranged from participant and nonparticipant observations, direct quotes and photos from students during conversations and important working periods. These entries provided an internal snapshot into my students' ideas, perspectives, choices, and feelings throughout the study. It allowed me to see the progression in discourse between students throughout the study and revealed how the students directly interacted with one another while creating.

Student Work

Beginning from exploration days onward, while walking around and observing my students work, I saw the progression in ideas, and creations for the final projects from each group of students. I took numerous photos of student work throughout the study from the beginning stages till the end. Inside my field log, I took down notes and details about what I saw and heard while my students

worked together. Work from students started with little papers and creations during the exploration days, and moved into large paintings, sculptures, drawings and more with the final presentations. I had offered help to numerous groups in need of a 'frame' for their final paintings or drawings, this help was due to students not being allowed to work with Exacto knives.

In looking at the type of art created for the final presentation for the Wax Museum, photos from every group of students represented what category of work their created art fell into. In analyzing each group, a majority of the students had some sort of painting as their main creation for their artwork. Sculpture was close behind and represented with clay, model magic and even balsa wood. Coming up short, there was no printmaking or collage represented.

Analysis of Data through Coding and Bins

At the conclusion of the study, I organized my data and began highlighting common themes that I found connecting various bits of the information that were collected throughout my study. In order to code my data, I read through my typed field log and annotated the margins of each page using a color-coded system to mark specific words and phrases related to a specific action. I also read through my surveys, questionnaires and critiques to find similarities between each data set. These codes became bins of the study and linked together the pieces into overarching and coherent words and statements.

One example of the coding process appears in my field log where I have written codes like “Art Process,” “Student Interaction,” and “Art Materials” during the materials exploration days. Another example would have been codes such as “Partner Collaboration,” “Choice,” and “Teacher Support” during studio days, when many students were working together to finish their final projects, and continuing to ask for my opinions or help with things.

As the patterns of bins emerged, I listed similar and reoccurring codes to begin the grouping of codes into bins (Figure 5.1), which are collections of related codes. When the bin sorting was completed, I summarized what each bin stood for by creating a theme statement. These theme statements summarized the patterns that my code helped to identify throughout the study.

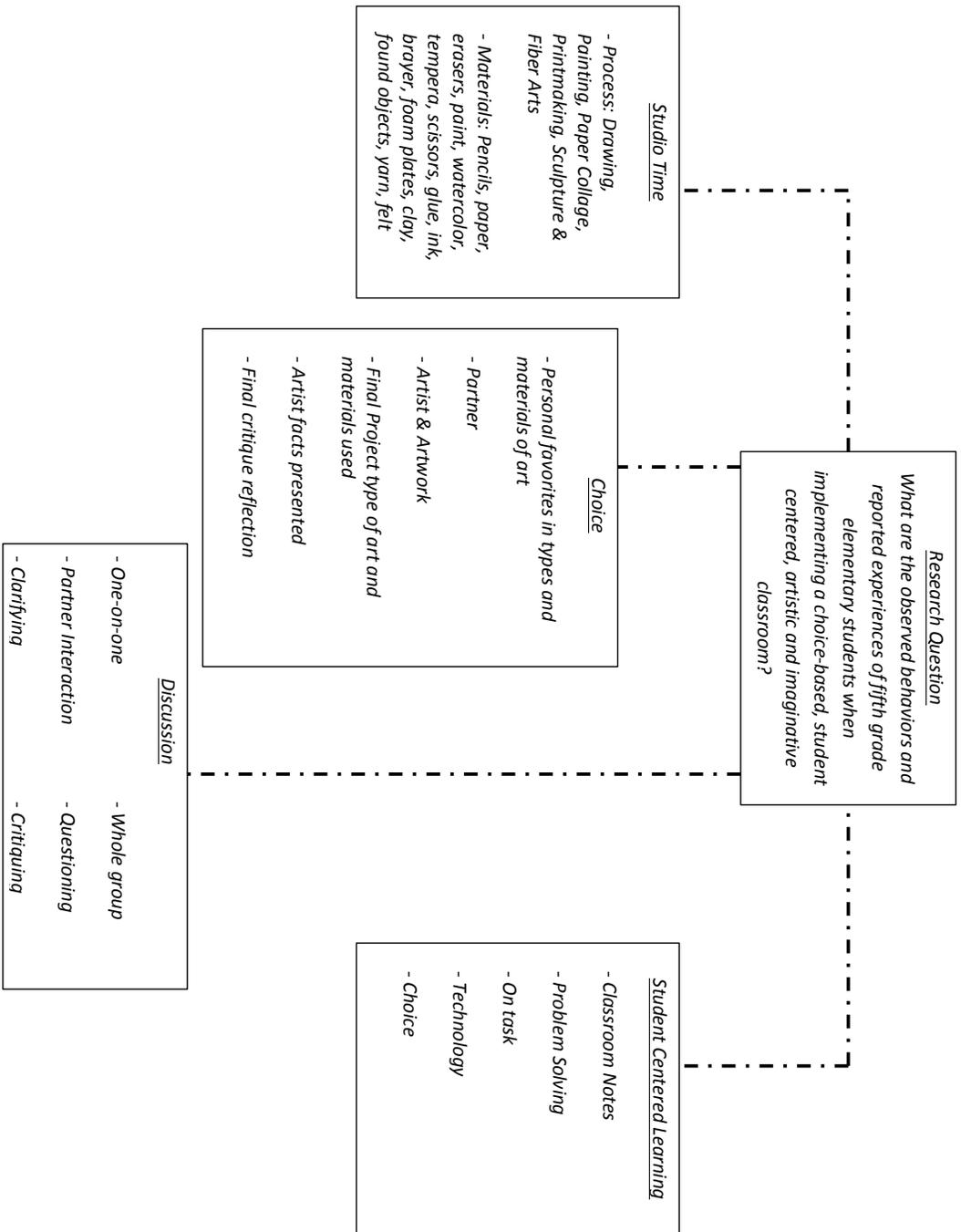


Figure 5.1 Bins and Related Codes

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of a choice-based project in an elementary school art classroom. As the teacher, I wanted to observe what would happen when students were provided with choice in topic selection and material selection of an art project instead of having the curriculum laid out for them to follow. Working in a district highly supportive of the arts, I was provided with the support to implement a new way of teaching, but was also expected to produce a final project that was aesthetically pleasing and reflective of learning. I decided to use choice to integrate a student-centered project, the Fifth Grade Wax Museum, in an attempt to see how students responded to choice, collaboration, and time and project management.

Throughout my action research study, important themes arose from the data that I collected. These different themes can be found throughout my literature review, field log data, student work samples, data from surveys, questionnaires, and final critiques. Each of the themes listed below give insight into the growth and important findings from my research study.

Choice: Most likely the major topic of the entire study, choice played a role in many of the class periods along the way. Students had to use choice to decide what they liked, who their partner was, what artist they were going to use and then which artwork from that artist they would choose, how were they were going to visually create and display their chosen artist and artwork

for the final presentation, which important facts were needed for the final presentation, and what they chose to reflect on for the final critique.

When providing my students with choice, through the avenues of artist choice, partner choice, process and materials choice, I found that in the beginning of their journey of deciding things for themselves, they had quite the difficult time. As the teacher, I was constantly being asked my opinions, ideas and thoughts on what they should chose, how they should create things, and overall, if it looked good. My students were not used to this freedom of choice, and had to learn essentially to think for themselves and be confident with what they decided. As their projects came to life, and more choices had to be made within groups, I fielded fewer questions about their opinions, ideas and thoughts. Through the process of learning how to choose, my students learned to live with their choices, and began to envision the end result, without my need for input. Choice, even though it was controlled by choice of artists and materials, gave my students free range to think, decide and create without having the potential of a complete meltdown from total choice, which could have been given.

Choice-based art is reflective of our internal thoughts and feelings and how they can be expressed and produced through external actions. The first step of choice thinking and seeing and the second step is acting and creating. My students had to have their ideas before they could create, but once these ideas were imagined, everything was painted, built, and designed. John Dewey (1938)

writes, “In thinking, he acts. Internal and external action are inseparable: imagination, interpretation and will are the internal processes carried by external action” (p, 100).

Student-Centered Learning: One of the main focal points of the project, student-centered learning provided meaningful grounds for stepping away from traditional teacher-centered teaching. In this style, students were able to inquire, problem solve, discuss, collaborate and create with their own minds and imaginations.

Through my action research, I was teaching my students to re-invent traditional teaching and learning by making a choice, and then working through their own inquiry to find a solution that worked. Paulo Freire (1970) writes, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p, 72). My students were impatient, and restless at times when directions and ideas were not provided for them, but it is with their own hope, imagination and thought that their own questions lead them to an engaged and motivated state to take the time to bring their ideas to fruition.

In taking away the traditional role of students following my lead in making an art project, the Fifth Grade Wax Museum put my students at the center of learning for themselves. Students were to decide who they were working with, what artist and artwork they were choosing and what materials and processes they

were to use to bring their project together. Their own interests and questions built the foundation for a strong learning environment. Overall, I think that my students succeeded greatly in implementing and successfully learning and creating through a student-centered classroom that was built by them. All students were creating and learning, and in the end, all students had successfully finished their final projects. Our classes overall looked a little more chaotic, messy and unstructured than a previous watch-and-learn lesson, but within this chaos so many new concepts and skills were learned.

As an educator, if I am able to provide my students with enough of a platform to leap off of the ground, then this whole idea of re-inventing traditional education to more of a student-centered environment should help them to work cooperatively together, achieve greater leaps in learning, and ultimately feel confident and proud about the work with which they were so intricately involved.

Studio Time: Studio Time is highly important throughout art in exploration of the various materials used, the techniques and/or processes that can be implemented, and the time needed to complete final projects. Within studio time, students quickly became aware of the importance of using materials they were comfortable and proficient in using, and what they could bring to the creation table.

Studio time was essential to letting my students experience art techniques and materials in a relaxing and free manner. In the first two days of my project,

students participated in stations where they had the opportunity to play with and explore materials in order to get an idea of what they were good at and not good at. The purpose of exploration was that they would be able to bring to the table with their partner their strengths and weaknesses decided from their own experience. This experience allowed the children to be their own teacher through their execution, reflection and presentation to their partners. These moments provided each and every one of my students with quality exploration of important art materials needed to begin their projects.

Through the study, students immediately learned the importance of studio time for the completion of their projects. Throughout all the weeks of working, most of the groups successfully managed their time and completed every aspect of their projects on time for the final presentation. Only a small handful of students did need extra studio time in order to complete their projects. This extra studio time was needed not due to off-task behavior during the allotted studio classes, but more of a reflection of the slower pace these few groups seemed to need. During the exploration days, students were highly successful in trying everything, and then later analyzing what they excelled at and could offer as their own creations in the project. Overall, the experience in which students created freely throughout class was highly successful not only to this particular project, but to their entire art and artmaking experience.

Dewey (1938) states, “Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had” (p, 27). Often, we as educators find ourselves too wrapped up in curriculum and testing, losing sight of the creative activities that add quality to every child’s educational experience. Quality is essential for the success of many things in our world. Dewey writes about the idea that everything learned is dependent on the quality of the experience by the learner. Quality is the basis for a strong foundation in education. Students’ happiness and appreciation in the journey of learning is dependent on the quality of education that we provide for our students.

Discussion: Discussion plays an important part during creation.

Throughout learning, students participated in one-on-one, whole group and partner interaction. From these groups, students participated in questioning, collaboration and critiquing throughout the study. Students had to understand communication was key into forming their ideas, working together and bringing them to life. In the end, students also had to use their minds and words to create a snapshot of facts about their artist/artwork to verbalize for their final presentation.

In my study, students learned to understand and accept their roles as partners. They used collaboration to their advantage where they had double the ideas, double the plans and extra hands to create. Through the process of working

together, they learned the importance of communicating their thoughts and needs in order to be successful and get the job done.

Overall, the projects succeeded because of great discussion. Through a welcoming environment, students were encouraged to speak their minds, which I believe was an essential component for setting the foundation for the project. Students had to communicate with each other to find a partner, voice their opinions and feelings on artists and artwork, and then continue their discussion throughout the remainder of studio days to successfully complete their final project. At times I heard questions or arguments between groups about how something should be painted or sculpted. However, most of the opinions and suggestions made by one partner were met with open arms by the opposite partner.

Lev Vygotsky (1978) contributes to the idea of social importance by writing, “Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (p, 88). Teachers, textbooks and curriculum all play an important role in learning. However, it is also the social environment that contributes to the development of learning. Interacting, playing, creating, discussing, and collaborating with others taught my students more about the lesson in front of them than many required texts or tests could have provided. The importance of communication and collaboration was essential to the success for my students.

IMPLICATIONS

Upon completion of this study, I have been left with a large unanswered question. What can be done for curriculum, a project or for a student when inside a choice-based learning environment, a choice cannot even be made? Whether due to lack of knowledge, lack of confidence, little experience with imagination, or personal anxiety to make a choice. I find myself lost in the thought of giving my students a project like the Fifth Grade Wax Museum and implementing the action to choose, and what this might look like for a student that becomes so overwhelmed at the entire thought and just cannot move forward. What can I do to help my students from Kindergarten and up to have the confidence and ability to imagine that when faced with choice can choose and not need my approval or opinion on what they have created? Is there some sort of curriculum that can be created to help students imagine and make choices?

This study really opened my eyes to the world of choice and imagination specifically with children. This disconnect found in the art classroom with students always being told what to do has made significant losses with self-confidence and imagination. What can we do as parents to encourage choice for our children? What might our playrooms look like to encourage imagination from early on? Choice related to children has affected me so greatly during this study, that I find myself pondering my future with children, and resonate deeply with the

idea of what I can do to make choices easier, and to make imagination second nature.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, T., & Milbrandt, M. (1998). Authentic Instruction in Art: Why and How to Dump the School Art Style. *Visual Arts Research*, 24(1), 13-20.
- Andrews, B. H. (2010, July). Student Ownership: Learning in a Student-Centered Art Room. *Art Education*, 63(4), 40-46.
- Blatt-Gross, C. (2013). Toward meaningful education: Investigating artful behavior as a human proclivity in the classroom. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 14(7). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v14n7/v14n7/>.
- Brown, J. K. (2008, May 1). Student-Centered Instruction: Involving Students in Their Own Education. *Music Educators Journal*, 94(5), 30-35. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00274321080940050108?journalCode=mejc>.
- Burton, J. M. (2000). The Configuration of Meaning: Learner-Centered Art Education Revisited. *The Configuration of Meaning: Learner-Centered Art Education Revisited*, 41(4), 330-345. Retrieved from JSTOR.
- Das, S., Dewhurst, Y., Gray, D. (2011). A teacher's repertoire: Developing creative pedagogies. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 12(15). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v12n15/v12n15/>.
- Davis, J. H. (2005, July 23). Framing education as art: The octopus has a good day. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 6(3). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v6r3/v6r3/>.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Douglas, K. (2012, September). The Scribble Stage. *Arts & Activites*, 152(1), 14-15. Retrieved from <http://teachingforartisticbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/Sep-12-Choice-Based-Art2/>.

- Douglas, K. (2012). Visit to a Choice-Based Art Classroom. *Arts & Activities*, 152(3), 11.
- Douglas, K. (2007, December). Starting with the students: Choice-based art education. *Art Beat*. Retrieved November 1, 2009 from <http://teachingforartisticbehavior.org/articles.html>.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gude, O. (2013, January). New School Art Styles: The Project of Art Education. *Art Education*, 66(1), 6-14.
- Hardy, K. (2015). Children's Art: It's the Process, Not the Product that Counts. In *The Alliance for Early Childhood*. Retrieved June 25, 2016, from <http://www.theallianceforec.org/library.php?c=1&news=36&print=1>.
- Hathaway, N. E. (2013, May). Smoke and Mirrors: Art Teacher as Magician. *Art Education*, 66(3), 9-15.
- Hathaway, N. E., & Jaquith, D. B. (2014). Where's the Revolution?. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(6), 25-29.
- Hendricks, C. (2013). *Improving schools through action research: A comprehensive guide for educators*. (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Heid, K., Estabrook, M., & Nostrant, C. (2009). Dancing with line: Inquiry, democracy, and aesthetic development as an approach to art education. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(Portrayal 3). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v10p3/v10p3/>.
- Hough, J. H. (2009, December). DBAE vs. TAB. In *Art Education Methods*. Retrieved June 25, 2016, from <http://artedmethods.blogspot.com/2010/01/blog-post.html>.
- Jaquith, D. B. (2011, January). When is Creativity? Intrinsic Motivation and Autonomy in Children's Artmaking. *Art Education*, 64(1), 14-19.

- Kauchak, D. P., & Eggen, P. D. (2003). *Learning and Teaching Research-Based Methods* (Fourth ed., pp. 330-335). Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Louis, L. (2013). "No one's the boss of my painting:" A model of the early development of artistic graphic representation. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 14(11). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v14n11/>.
- Malin, H. (2012). Creating a children's art world: Negotiating participation, identity, and meaning in the elementary school art room. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 13(6). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v13n6/>.
- Nevanen, S., Juvonen, A., & Ruismäki, H. (2012). Art education as multiprofessional collaboration. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 13(1). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v13n1/v13n1/>.
- Pitri, E. (2013, March). Skills and Dispositions for Creative Problem Solving During the Artmaking Process. *Art Education*, 66(2), 41-45.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Process*. London: Harvard University Press.

APPENDICES
APPENDIX A
PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

September 3, 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

In addition to teaching art education, I am also currently a graduate student working towards my Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. Through my reflection and personal questioning, I will be conducting a study on how implementing a choice-based, student-centered environment to create a more artistic, meaningful and imaginative classroom.

The goal of my study is to grant students more freedom and instruction from myself, in order to create final projects that are rich in creativity and imagination. It is my belief that students need to escape from tight structure and come into an environment where we can lessen the grip on what is expected and take a look closer into the process that is traveled on. It is important to note that not all structure will be set aside and that structure is important in keeping my class running smoothly.

Throughout the research study, I will be collecting data in the form of student surveys, evaluation rubrics, educator notes and observational logs along with work samples of completed art projects. All research materials and data collection tools will be kept in a secure location in my classroom and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Please note that all students' names will be kept confidential as well as the names of their teachers and other associated staff in the school. All students and faculty involved in my action-research study will be given a pseudonym.

It is important to note that all of the students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments aligned with the [REDACTED]. There are no associated risks for the participation of the study and all IEP and educational accommodations will be adhered to throughout the entire period of the study. Students will have the option to participate in this action-research study, but it will be mandated that all students will participate in the instruction and assignments inside my classroom. Students that chose to not participate in the action-research study will not be compromised of their grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by informing me through writing. This study will take place from the months of September-November 2016.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. Please feel free to contact my Moravian College professor, [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED].

Please cut along the dashed line above and return to me as soon as possible!

Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form:

- I give permission for Hailey Adlard to conduct this action-research study
- I **DO NOT** give permission for Hailey Adlard to conduct this action-research study

I have read the information above and fully agree with my decision.

Signature

Date

Sincerely,
Hailey Adlard

Art Educator, [REDACTED]

**APPENDIX B
PARENT CONSENT FORM**

September 3, 2016

Dear Fifth Grade Parent(s),

In addition to teaching art education, I am also currently a graduate student working towards my Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. Through my reflection and personal questioning, I will be conducting a study on how implementing a choice-based, student-centered environment to create a more artistic, meaningful and imaginative classroom.

The goal of my study is to grant students more freedom and instruction from myself, in order to create final projects that are rich in creativity and imagination. It is my belief that students need to escape from tight structure and come into an environment where we can lessen the grip on what is expected and take a look closer into the process that is traveled on. It is important to note that not all structure will be set aside and that structure is important in keeping my class running smoothly.

Throughout the research study, I will be collecting data in the form of student surveys, evaluation rubrics, educator notes and observational logs along with work samples of completed art projects. All research materials and data collection tools will be kept in a secure location in my classroom and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Please note that all students' names will be kept confidential as well as the names of their teachers and other associated staff in the school. All students and faculty involved in my action-research study will be given a pseudonym.

It is important to note that all of the students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments aligned with the [REDACTED]. There are no associated risks for the participation of the study and all IEP and educational accommodations will be adhered to throughout the entire period of the study. Students will have the option to participate in this action-research study, but it will be mandated that all students will participate in the instruction and assignments inside my classroom. Students that chose to not participate in the action-research study will not be compromised of their grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by informing me through writing. This study will take place from the months of September-November 2016.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. Please feel free to contact my Moravian College professor, [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED].

Please cut along the dashed line above and return to school as soon as possible!

Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form:

- I give permission my child's data to be used this action-research study
- I **DO NOT** give permission for my child's data to be used this action-research study

I have read the information above and fully agree with my decision. Please note that you have the option of withdrawing your child at any time during the study.

Signature

Date

Sincerely,
Hailey Adlard

Art Educator, [REDACTED]

APPENDIX C STUDENT ASSENT FORM

September 3, 2016

Dear Fifth Grade Students,

In addition to being an art teacher, I am also a student too! I am going back to college to learn a little more about being a better teacher and I need your help! This fall, I will be teaching, watching and collecting information about the fifth grade art project we are going to start off the year with. The goal of my study is to create a final project that gives you freedom to be creative and use your imagination.

Throughout the project, I will be collecting information like: student surveys, rubrics, and notes along with samples of your work. All materials and information will be kept safe in my classroom and will be destroyed at the end of the study. During the study, all students' names will be kept confidential. All students involved in my study will be given a pseudonym, or fake name.

All of my students will receive the same instruction and project idea. Students that chose to not participate in the action-research study will not be compromised of their grade in any way. You may withdraw (or leave) from the study at any time by talking to me, so we can make a note of it. This study will take place from the months of September-November 2016. I can't wait to get started!

Please cut along the dashed line above and return to me as soon as possible!

Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form:

- I give permission for my data to be used this action-research study
- I **DO NOT** give permission for my data to be used this action-research study

I have read the information above and fully agree with my decision. Please note that you have the option of leaving the study at any time.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D
TEACHER DESIGNED RUBRIC

5	Collaborative Choice-Based Project
Objectives: Students will be learning how to create more choice-based art projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn to understand and work in a collaborative/group based art project. - Students will have the choice of which medium to create their project with: drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, sculpture and fiber arts. - Students will learn to stretch their imagination and create art with a purpose, focusing on the process not the final project. - Research will investigate the observed behaviors and reported experiences of elementary school students (fifth grade) when implementing a choice-based, student centered, artistic and imaginative classroom. 	
Assignment: Students will be creating a collaborative, choice-based project reflecting a specific medium, artist, technique or idea. National Art Standards: 9.1.3.A, 9.1.3.B, 9.1.3.C	

How Did I Do on The Project? (Demonstrates Knowledge of Objectives)			
Advanced 4	Proficient 3	Basic 2	Below Basic 1
I followed all the project directions (showed understanding of concepts and techniques being taught) and worked extremely neatly on my artwork. I was also able to show the concepts and/or technique taught in a different way than the teacher showed us on my project.	I followed all the project directions (showed understanding of concepts and techniques being taught) and worked extremely neatly on my artwork.	I followed the project directions (showed understanding of concepts and techniques being taught) and worked fairly neatly on my project. I could spend a little more time on my work before turning it in.	I did one or all of the following: -I did not take my time and work neatly when making my project. -My work was incomplete - I did not follow project directions (did not show understanding of concepts and techniques being taught)
How Was My Behavior in Class? (Demonstrates Cooperation and Participates Actively)			
Consistently +	Sometimes V	Needs Improvement -	
Every class during this project.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was safe in the art room with materials and stools • I helped others around me • I am accountable by listening and following directions, double checking my work, and using my class time well. • I am respectful, by raising my hand to speak, quietly listening, clean up after myself, use a quiet voice, and take care of the materials and furniture in the art room. • I am kind in art class by helping the teacher and other students, treating and speaking to others kindly, sharing, and using good manners 	Most of the time during this project.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was safe in the art room with materials and stools • I helped others around me • I am accountable by listening and following directions, double checking my work, and using my class time well. • I am respectful, by raising my hand to speak, quietly listening, clean up after myself, use a quiet voice, and take care of the materials and furniture in the art room. • I am kind in art class by helping the teacher and other students, treating and speaking to others kindly, sharing, and using good manners 	I needed several reminders to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be safe in the art room with materials and stools • to help others around me • to be accountable by listening and following directions, double checking my work, and using my class time well. • To be respectful, by raising my hand to speak, quietly listening, clean up after myself, use a quiet voice, and take care of the materials and furniture in the art room. • To be kind in art class by helping the teacher and other students, treating and speaking to others kindly, sharing, and using good manners 	
			Comments:

APPENDIX E
PRE & POST SURVEY: EXPLORATION AND STUDIO DAYS

Name: _____

Art Survey

1. What is your favorite type of art? Circle one.

Drawing (Pencil)

Sculpture (Clay or Found Objects)

Pastels (Chalk or Oil)

Virtual (Computer)

Painting (Paint)

2. Do you have a favorite art project that you have completed? Perhaps on your own or in art class?

3. What is one thing you would like to learn in art class?

4. Choose three mediums (materials) you like to use the most:

Markers

Crayons

Pencil

Watercolor

Oil Pastel

Chalk Pastel

Tempera/Acrylic Paints

Colored Pencil

Clay

Found Objects

6. Do you think you're creative?

Now circle the best answer:

7. Do you think art class should be quiet?

Yes Sometimes No

8. Do you think students should have assigned seats in art class?

Yes Sometimes No

9. Do you think students should choose what projects they will make?

Yes Sometimes No

10. Do you think grades are important in art class?

Yes Sometimes No

11. How much do you appreciate art? Circle one.

Art is awesome!

Art is alright.

I don't like art.

APPENDIX F
ARTIST HANDOUT

Name: _____

Partner's Name: _____

Artist Chosen: _____

Artwork Title Chosen: _____

1. What is his/her name?
2. When was he/she born?
3. Is he/she still alive?
4. What type of art did he/she make?
5. Any interesting facts?

APPENDIX G
PRE & POST QUESTIONNAIRE: EXPLORATION AND STUDIO DAYS

Name: _____

Art Questionnaire

1. So far, what is your favorite type of art? Circle one.

- Drawing (Pencil, Colored Pencil, Crayon)
- Painting (Watercolor, Tempera, Acrylic)
- Collage (Cutting, Gluing, Assembling)
- Sculpture (Clay, Model Magic, Found Objects)
- Printmaking (Ink on Foam)
- Fiber Arts (Yarn, String)

2. Do you find yourself better using certain materials, compared to others? Yes or No

What are the materials you're good with? _____

What materials are you not so strong with? _____

3. Have you worked with a partner on anything? Yes or No

4. Tell me something about your favorite material: _____

5. Tell me something about your least favorite material: _____

APPENDIX H
POST PERFORMANCE INDIVIDUAL CRITIQUE

Name _____ Teacher _____

The Art Stack

