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VERBALIZATION IN THE ART ROOM: TALKING ABOUT WHAT TO
CREATE BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE CREATION OF A PROJECT

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MY STANCE

I have always loved creating art with paint, colored pencil, or, more recently, digitally on the computer. To me, creating a piece of artwork is like writing a book. The artist gets to be the author of a unique creation.

I can remember back all the way to my own elementary school experiences. I loved starting new projects. I had ideas pouring out of me before the art teacher even passed out the supplies. I remember once in second grade we were learning about silhouettes and warm colors, such as red, yellow, and orange, as we created a silhouette of something in the sky. As soon as the teacher said sky, I knew I was going to do a hot air balloon. And that is just what I did. Believe it or not, I still have that picture at home today.

I was like this all the way through high school. I always knew what I wanted to create. I was sometimes stuck on how to go about it, but the initial idea was always there. It came so naturally to me, that I guess I just assumed it did for everybody. In fact, I didn't realize that it didn't until I became an art teacher.

Throughout my three years of teaching, I have begun to notice a common occurrence in lesson after lesson. I see the topic of the example that I show my students turn up on their final copy of a project. Clearly, many students have a hard time thinking of their own creations to make. When I create a picture as an example of a technique I want students to learn from the lesson, I want my

example to be only a guide for them. For example, if I draw a bird to show a class how to outline around an object before painting it in, I will usually get birds for the final project from the students. Too many times, I see students use my example for their final project without developing their own ideas or thoughts about what they might like to create. Many students simply feel that they are not talented.

Most times, the hardest part of art class is coming up with an idea. This is where students tend to freeze up. I can see that they are stuck because they either start to fool around or they tend to sharpen their pencil way too much. They feel that if they have no good ideas to start with, then they can't possibly draw a good picture. I want them to create for themselves. I am always looking for ways to make my students think creatively. When I first started to think about a research question, my immediate thought was to focus on creativity.

I wondered what might happen if my students and I would at least occasionally talk about what to create before, during, and after a lesson, rather than looking at examples of what to create. The idea of only talking about lessons and not demonstrating what the project should look like, appealed to me.

I carefully examined my approach to lessons and found that I am the one doing most of the talking about the projects that we are going to make, and I am always using examples to go with what I have said. It seems to me that the only thing the students take away from my lesson demonstrations is the picture that I

demonstrated. There are a lot of my ideas in my students' artwork, but I also want to see their ideas in their work. I felt that if my students talked more about their ideas, they might be more focused on creating a project.

With this idea in mind, I envisioned students sitting at groups where they would be able to share ideas with classmates and ask each other for ideas and help. What would happen if I didn't show them any examples? How would they think independently of my examples? How would they imagine and verbalize ideas of what they wanted to create? Where else might their ideas come from?

As I prepared to begin a teacher action research study to begin to answer these questions, I realized I also had some worries about how verbalizing project ideas would work. I worried that students might hear what others have to say and then take those ideas as their own. I worried that they might feel that they need not verbally contribute. I also worried that the talking I would encourage might become too off subject. While I wouldn't expect all of the talking to be about the project, I would expect the beginning conversations to help everyone get started. I hoped that the students would ask each other a variety of questions as they worked, about how to do something, how to make something, or what else might they do.

There is also the issue of students visualizing what they want to create, but being too afraid to take the idea from their mind and put it on the paper because they are unsure of what the project is "supposed" to look like. If this happens,

would they just take the risk and create the picture or would they ask their classmates or me for help?

Talking to other class members could reinforce that their own ideas are good. I always tell students that there is no wrong answer in art. They can't get it wrong, especially when they are creating from their imagination. Will talking about what to create help them to come up with ideas without any preconceived examples to compare their work to? With all of these questions in mind, the focus for my action research became:

What happens to students and their art projects when examples are discussed verbally at length before, during, and after creation of a project?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

When I began to search for research on the topic of *not* using examples in the classroom, I could not find many sources on the subject, but as I began to examine art journals more carefully, I became intrigued by the idea of verbalization in the art classroom.

Bensur (2002) reminds us that the creation of art is as unique as the individual who creates it. She quotes Victor Lowenfeld who says that "it is more important to develop creativity than competence in children" (p. 20). David Gamble (1999) concurs, noting that few art teachers talk about or try to help their students understand the unique process the mind goes through to create a piece of art. Gamble, who points out that an individual has approximately 65,000 thoughts

a day, finds it inconceivable that students can't think of something to make, saying that they overuse the statements "I don't have any ideas" and "I can't think of anything to do."

Creativity is the ability to bring something into existence, to create it. C.A. (2000) says that adults view children's artwork as spontaneous, free, and powerful, and that no adult can really teach a child to draw the way a child naturally does. George Gow (2000) identifies two kinds of creativity. He defines type B creativity is the special set of mental traits that can be discovered or developed in a classroom, such as brainstorming, visualization, imagination and mind mapping. He defines type A creativity is the unobstructed experience of something purely observed.

McKean (2001) reminds us that the presence of artists from differing cultures offers a wonderful window through which teachers and students can engage in critical conversations surrounding multiple ways that the arts can reflect different cultural traditions and values. Perceptions of creativity, special ability, and talent often pervade teachers' beliefs concerning what is required to participate in any form of the arts. Gordon MacKenzie says that to be creative you must not be afraid of being creative. Schlossberg (1993) agrees, pointing out that you need to not be afraid of what others might think about your creativity.

Language and its importance to children's development in observational drawing, is receiving recognition from researchers in art education (Runco &

Johnson, 1993). Gilbert (1998) identified the characteristics of language strategies that can promote learning in children within the art classroom. One of those strategies is working in groups. Gilbert (1998) claims that the groups help the students to practice talking and asking questions about art. One of the best tools for bringing out creativity in children is story-telling (Ramakrishnan, 2001). The more enthusiasm used to tell a story, the more imaginative children will become (Ramakrishnan, 2001).

Research conducted by Runco & Johnson (1993) indicates that parents and teachers use words such as ambitious, artistic, capable, curious, dreamy, energetic, enthusiastic, and imaginative to describe creative children. Research conducted by Morgan-Fleming (2000) claims that teachers themselves may fail if they lack oral, improvisational skills, since teaching is predominately an oral art form (Morgan-Fleming, 2000). A teacher must have the confidence to speak and have a real voice in articulating discussions with students. Gilbert (1998) shares the example of a study that examined the drawing of flowers. Results showed that the group that discussed the flowers at length took the time to really look at the flowers and draw them on their papers. The other two groups did not show as much interest in the flowers and many of the students copied each other's drawings.

So then, should conversations be allowed to flood the art rooms? Only if it is about the art, some researchers say. Szekely (1982) found that sixty eight

percent of conversations in the art classroom are on topics other than art. Talking about art may imply learning from the teacher, but it may also imply learning from others in the classroom. Szekely (1982) discovered that talking about art before beginning a project can help students to plan out a project and pre-visualize what the project might look like. By expressing ideas through language, students may clarify their ideas and make these ideas more concrete. Talking about art while in the process of making art can help students take a step back and see what they are creating. By discussing the final outcome of the project when it is finished, students may share their ideas and concerns about the project. Peterson (2002) concurs, noting that teachers of art can help students harvest recordings from the mind and help them to use those images in their art. These records may, of course, come out through conversations.

Lansdown (1995) reports that creativity happens at many different speeds and through children's own different personalities. Rostan (1998) agrees stating that older children about eleven years old, begin to realize that they can draw things exactly as they see them, while nine year olds tend to use what they know, like techniques, to make things look real, and eight year olds tend to be more concerned with the shapes and colors things are made from. Koroscik, Desmond, & Brandon (1985) report that visual art can be processed and verbalized by noting line, color, and shape, and by translating implied meanings within the art.

Koroscik, Desmond, & Brandon (1985) also say that art educators have emphasized the importance of talking about art to enhance the quality of art experiences. McKenna (1999) reports that visual versus verbal intelligence is the opposition between art theory and art making. Research conducted by Koroscik, Desmond, & Brandon (1985) also suggests that verbal contexts are linked to the retention of different art subjects when verbalization is used to describe the art. Research conducted by Heuvelman (1996) did not conclude whether the use of visualization has an affect on retention, though schematic visuals were found to hold the image in a mind longer than realistic visuals or no visuals at all.

A study of six and seven year old students in a clay class, showed that the group of students who received six hours of instruction and practice, were shown modeled techniques, and had a high level of directive verbalizations, increased quality and creativity of their clay work, as opposed to the second group which was limited to direct clay instruction verbalization (Anderson & Yates, 1999).

Tuman (1999) states that art curriculum must be designed effectively to take into account children's artistic processes as well. Tuman (1999) also suggests that children should have the opportunity to visually critique their artwork so that they and others can see the meaning in their own drawings and analyze their own use of creative images.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

To collect and keep track of data gathered for my study, I maintained a field log. Included within the field log were participant and non-participant observation entries, transcripts of student interviews, copies of select student work and reflective memos.

Arhar (2001) defines a field log as a written record of observation. MacLean and Mohr (1999) describe participant observation as a combination of teaching and learning through participating. Through the data collection period, I often sat at the table with my students to write, talk, listen and, most importantly, learn from what they were discussing.

As I walked around the art room carrying my field log, I was able to jot down notes from what I heard the students conversing about as they worked. MacLean and Mohr (1999) call observing from a distance non-participant observation. Non-participant observation allowed me to stand back and just watch what the students were doing. Sometimes to their surprise, I caught them off task and sometimes, to my surprise, they were very much on task and working hard.

Within my participant observations, I included observer comments. Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul (1997) guide us to “bracket preconceptions, prejudgments, beliefs and biases as observer comments” (351). It was important to separate my feelings about what I was observing from what I actually observed.

This way, as I typed my notes into log entries, I could differentiate between what I observed and how I felt about it.

I conducted informal interviews from the start through the completion of the projects so that the students could let me know about how they felt throughout each stage of their work. Arhar (2001) says that informal interviews are great ways to understand the perspectives of the students. Arhar (2001) also suggests checking that an interpretation of what was observed is correct by going back to the students and asking them. This is known as participant checking. By going back to the students after reading what I had written, I was able to ask them questions based on what I had previously observed as they were working on each project and also have them describe their finished pieces to me.

The part of the data that didn't verbally speak, but visually spoke wonders was the student artwork itself. Arhar (2001) says that collecting student work is like building a portfolio for students to see their growth over time. In the picture data, I looked to see if what the students talked about during the making of the projects was represented in their work. I looked to see if they made changes based on what others had come up with for ideas, and how their own ideas appeared in their own work.

To validate myself within the study, and to make sure that my thesis was trustworthy, I shared my findings with my teacher research support group to get different perspectives. Support groups gather to discuss logs, data, and findings.

MacLean and Mohr (1999) state that “the group challenges each other’s assumptions, proposes alternative interpretations, offers suggestions about research methodology, responds to drafts, and often lends personal as well as professional support” (21). I also wrote reflective memos about how I felt personally during observations and lessons. MacLean and Mohr (1999) feel strongly about reflection saying, “observations are not complete without reflection” (28). They also note that reflections on observations and the ideas that can come as a result of the reflection are the start to analyzing the data.

By doing all of these, I was using triangulation. MacLean and Mohr (1999) define triangulation as examining data from at least three different perspectives to validate one’s findings.

I explored the meaning of my data in a variety of ways, including the construction of pastiches, vignettes and patai poems from the raw data. Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul (1997) define a pastiche as “experimenting with juxtapositions, layered additions, multiple tellings, parody, mixed forms and experiments with layout-to emphasize ambiguity and uncertainty. Pastiche invite the readers into paradoxical stances, seeing two viewpoints simultaneously within the limitations of the layout of printed text” (97). Within my story, I included pastiches in which I created layered stories from the students’ dialogue, which was taken from my log entries.

According to Arhar (2001) vignettes are “small literary sketches of life that often fade gradually into larger pictures; they are segments that begin a story, and they are smaller stories within a story” (242). I included vignettes within my story to bring the students closer to the readers. Each vignette is a personal tale about a particular student.

Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) explain that a patai poem may be more accessible by turning spoken narrative into dramatic poetry. Basically by having the researcher remove his or her interview questions from a transcript, a person’s answers are highlighted. I included patai poems within my story in my attempt to capture my students’ reactions to particular questions.

Before I could begin any data collection, I needed to obtain permission to conduct my study. First, I needed the consent of the college’s Human Subjects Internal Review Board, known as HSIRB. I submitted a formal proposal of my study for review. Once approved, I needed the consent of my school principal and the students and parents or guardians of those who would be involved. I wrote a consent form (see Appendix A) stating my question for my study, the duration of my study, my methods, and my procedures to reduce risk, how students could benefit from the study, and stated that it was strictly voluntary to participate in my research journal.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define data analysis as “the process of systematically searching and arranging interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials you accumulate to increase an understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others” (157). I kept everything that I collected in an organized field log. I arranged passages of my log into pastiches, patai poems, and vignettes.

Since analysis is ongoing, data should be reflected upon as they are collected rather than only at the end of the process. Without thinking and making judgments about your data, or analyzing it along the way, data collection has no direction (158). While constantly reflecting upon the data, research designs will change in process, a concept that Bogdan and Biklen (1998) call emergent design. Often while analyzing my field log, my designs and plans changed, as explained in my findings.

To analyze my data as I gathered it, I followed several methods. I used participant checks (Arhar, 2001) to make sure that what I was conveying about the students and their feelings was accurate. To do this, I asked the students if I had captured correctly how they were feeling and what they were saying. I also paused frequently along the way to reflect on how I felt during a particular day of the study and why. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define this as a reflective memo. Some of my topics for my reflective memos reflected different experts’

viewpoints, including Vygotsky (1978), Dewey (1938), Delpit (2002), and Freire (1993).

I also wrote personal field notes to myself called analytic memos. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define analytic memos as a reflection of what you are learning, themes you see emerging, patterns that are present, and connections you may notice between pieces of data. To help make new connections between my study and the research literature, I wrote analytical memos where I analyzed my data through coding, bins, and themes.

Within my log, I also set up a coding system. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) refer to a code as a word or phrase, like a topic or pattern that stands out from a particular passage in a log. For example, in my log, a student was talking about different ideas to make, so I created the code word 'ideas'. Every time I read about someone in my log talking about ideas I would code the passage 'ideas'. I coded my journal entries each week after entering them into my log so that I was familiar each week with the codes that I had used. Once my log was coded, I created categories in which similar codes fit together. Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul (1997) call these categories bins. After developing my bins, I created a graphic organizer to help see relationships within my data. As I began coding my students' questions and making bins for the questions, I began to see themes emerge. I created theme statements to describe and interpret the relationships and patterns of my data within each bin.

MY STORY

After going over the rules of art class and chatting about our summertime adventures, I began to explain the research that I would be conducting with the students by explaining that I go to school just like they do. I explained that I have to do a project and that my project is like a science experiment. I would study what happens when we don't see examples of projects before we start, but instead, talk about ideas for how to do them and ideas for what to make. I asked the students if they sometimes watch what I do and then want to copy what they saw me do. A few hands went up.

Mrs. Smale: Why do you think this is?

Buffy: Cause you're good at art

Rob: Can't think of anything else.

Halli: You draw good.

Mrs. Smale: What do you think about this idea of not seeing examples?

Buffy: It's good, we need to learn anyway.

Rob: Yeah, we need to learn.

Mrs. Smale: Is anyone scared of this new approach?

Pepper: A little

Mrs. Smale: There are no right or wrong answers to what you draw, as long as it is within the project guidelines, so I hope you won't be too scared.

"You will be able to choose your own seats next week," I continued. "You need to choose people to sit with that you can work with and talk about ideas with. Not someone who you are going to talk to about T.V. and video games." There was laughter and big smiles came over their faces. The students were excited that they could choose their own seats.

My room has five, big round tables in it for the students to sit at (see Appendix C). Each table is named after a color and can seat five students comfortably. Around my room, I have three rectangular tables set up. One holds all of the supplies the students will need for a particular project and is in the front of the classroom. One is for my desk and computer, and the third is the table that the students gather around to learn about the projects we will make. That table is located in the back of the room. There are three large sliding doors on one wall that lets in lots of sunlight. Around the room, shelves are piled from top to bottom with supplies of paint, paper, and other odds and ends.

"Our first task for today is to choose our assigned seats," I said at the start of our next session. "Remember to choose your seats carefully," I directed as the students stood before me in the art room eager to find a table. "Find a seat." I gave them the order as though they were going on a scavenger hunt. The students

walked around looking for certain classmates with whom they wanted to work. Most of them already knew the fellow students they were going to choose, and they were all seated within a matter of seconds. I suspected that they would choose wisely, and as I quickly gazed around the room, I noticed that they had.

Seventeen inner city white, black and Latino students make up the class, which is pretty evenly divided between boys and girls. I observed that two tables were filled with all girls and the other two were filled with all boys, a prediction I had made to myself earlier. I gave them a nametag for the table and asked them to write down their names on it.

I called the tables back one at a time to the lesson table. When they all arrived, I asked them why I had no paper or crayons at my own table.

“Because you are not going to tell us what to do,” answered Dana.

“Close,” I said, “I am not going to show you what to do today. I have some words on the board. Who knows what they mean?”

I had prewritten the words *terrain*, *climate* and *atmosphere* on the board. We talked about the meaning of each of the three words. After discussing them, I shared with the class what our first project would be.

“We are going to be creating a transportation vehicle. What is transportation?”

“It takes you somewhere,” answered Buffy.

“That’s right. We are going to use our imagination to create a piece of transportation that can go anywhere and do anything. But it cannot be something that already exists, but ideas can be taken from things that already exist.” I heard sighs, gasps, ohhs, and ahhs. The students were excited.

Mrs. Smale: What is your first step before you begin practicing today?
How do I want you to help one another?

Seth: OOOOhhh, talking, we have to talk.

Mrs. Smale: That’s right.

Buffy: We can do total spy cars.

Dana: Hot air balloons!

Sally: I’m stuck. I get seasick and I don’t like to fly. I don’t ride my bike that much.

Seth: Maybe a submarine that is a matchbox car.

Mrs. Smale: OK, let’s get our sketch paper and start sketching our ideas.

Mark: I don’t know what to sketch.

Mrs. Smale: Well what did you talk about?

Mark: We talked about a car becoming a submarine.

Mrs. Smale: Ok.

Mark: But how do you draw it?

Mrs. Smale: That is for you to decide. Remember use your imagination.

Dave: You can make it a submarine that shrinks to match box size.”

Mark: But how?

Dave: Like this.

Mark: Wait, I can add this here.

Before I knew it the two of them were on a roll. As I walked by Randy, he said to me that he should draw more. I had noticed two ideas already on his paper, but he was insistent that he had not yet found his favorite idea. As I continued to observe, I noticed the yellow, orange, and purple tables on task. The green table seemed not to be as focused on the task at hand. I reminded them to talk about the project. Marie asked me how to draw an eagle so I showed her. She worked to place it on a flag, explaining the eagle had to get somewhere.

“Maybe it can be a form of transportation,” Marie told me.

“Good thinking. Ask your group for some ideas about it,” I told her.

“I want to do a hot air balloon,” said Dana.

“That’s fine, but what can you do to it so that it is not an ordinary hot air balloon?” I asked her.

“Maybe it is something else besides a basket,” one group member said.

“Or there is a fan to cool you off,” Dana said aloud to herself.

At the end of class, I reinforced what a great job the students had done by talking and helping each other out. “Did you enjoy it?” I asked. They all smiled

and answered that it had been a fun class. I was quite pleased for our first run at it.

At the beginning of our third class, a new student, Kevin, arrived. This was the perfect opportunity to have the students tell him in their own words what was special about this particular art class. “Who can tell Kevin about our special art class?” A bunch of hands whirled up in the air. “Seth, can you tell him?”

“You can’t show us examples. We need to talk about what to do.”

“Good, what else can you tell me? How about why we are doing this.”

Buffy responded quickly without raising her hand, “You are going to school.”

“You’re taking classes,” Sally added.

“And you are going to take notes of what we do and say,” said Franky.

“That’s right. You guys remembered a lot. While we are on the subject, let’s talk about what I am going to send home. I am going to give your teacher a paper for you to take home to your parents so that you and they can sign it. It explains to them the same things that you just explained to Kevin. Remember, even if you choose not to participate in the study, you are still required to complete the projects. Tell your parents they can come and see me at open house as well. What should you do with the papers when you get them?” I asked.

“Show your parents.”

With that, we began our projects. I brought the kids to the back of the room to the lesson table. They were surprised to be going back there since I wouldn't be showing them examples. I explained that while I wouldn't give them drawing ideas, I would show them new techniques that we hadn't yet learned about. We had not used watercolor pencils up to this point, so I needed to show the students how to use them. I gave a demonstration on how to use the pencils, mix the pencils together, and how to add the water on top of the coloring with a brush.

Buffy said "Wow, so you didn't show us a picture, just how to use something. There are only blobs of colors on the paper, nothing we could copy anyway."

"Good observation," I said to her.

As the students finished drawing their transportation pieces, I could already hear discussions of how they were excited to use the new pencils. Randy said to his table that his piece was very big. "I'll have lots to color," he said with a smile. Sally thought hers was a little too big, but Lina said it was a good size. I mentioned to Dave that his helicopter was a little small for all of the leftover paper he had. He told me that he and his table already agreed that he would join two helicopters together.

"Do we need to sketch with the regular pencil first?" Dana asked.

“Use whatever you feel more comfortable using, regular pencil first to erase, or use the watercolor pencils only,” I said. The class continued to work, and again most conversations I found to be about the artwork. Here a variation of a patai poem illustrates a conversation between Seth and Dave. Dave’s responses are italicized.

Wings

a big helicopter
lots of wings

seems neat

can go through a mountain

an airplane can too

two tiny planes to make one larger piece

an idea for the landing feet

connect them maybe by string

or metal wire

as long as

there are lots of wings



I observed Buffy asking for some help at her table on how to draw doors. Halli helped out by showing her some examples that she could use. As I passed by the orange table, I noticed how quietly Pepper was working, rarely talking to her table. I also noticed the entire yellow table hard at work. Don decided not to use the wheels he had drawn, but instead to add a bubble to the top of his vehicle.

Keith liked what Don did and commented, “nice change.” The green table once again was slightly loud and off task. They assured me that their outburst of laughter had been the response to an idea.

Sally was stuck on her hot air balloon, so I gave her some ideas and before long I saw her imagination working overtime as she began to create a green, red, and white Italian balloon.

After we were cleaned up and lined up to leave, I did a quick hand survey. “How many people asked their table for help today?” Seven hands went up. “How many people gave someone some help today?” Ten hands went up. “Who thinks talking to each other is helpful?” All of the hands went up.

“What have we been working on?” I asked as the class came in the following week.

“Coloring our transportation pictures with watercolor pencils,” said Sally.

“You have to draw it big,” shouted Keith.

“And colorful,” added Don.

“That’s right. Today we will add the water to our pictures. I will quickly review that process with you and then we can get started,” I said.

As they began to work and color, I observed the tables. Buffy was very much off task during this session, talking about mashed potatoes. Halli told her I was listening and writing down notes, but Buffy kept right on with her mashed potato story. The other four girls worked over her talking. As Buffy talked about

mashed potatoes, she continued to work, but she did not talk much about her project.

I moved on to observe the yellow table interested in getting their pictures colored.

Rob: We want to do the water

Rob: Tyler, look what I mixed together.

Tyler: Oh, I want to do those colors too!

Rob: See I told you they would be neat. I want to see them together with water!

As I circled back around, I noticed Buffy still talking and laughing and very off task. I decided to visit her table again. When I got there Halli asked me if she could try another hot air balloon next to her first one. I suggested that she do so as long as they connected to make one picture. “Oh like with a string or rope,” she answered. “Make your rope thick enough,” said Jean, referring to the fact that these would have to be cut out. Before we added the water to our projects, I let some of the students describe their transportation vehicles. The pastiche, which follows on the next page, illustrates some of the details students explained adding added to their projects.

Sharing some creations in progress



I DID A LIMO. IT'S BLUE AND LIGHT BLUE AND IT HAS TWO DOORS.

Mine's an Italian hot air balloon. It is only one around like it, and it's very expensive.

I made a helicopter connected to a fish. It runs off of water.

Mine is an airplane rocket. It can fly from house to house or country to country in no time. The pink nose on the front of it means it can go very fast.



My limo drives from New Jersey to Hollywood. That's why it says Hollywood on it.

I have two airplanes that are both little. I need to connect them by a wire.

“I will give you many opportunities like this to describe your creations to the rest of the class. Ok, lets add the water over top of our coloring.” The class was very excited to do this. As they were busy doing so, there were a few students still coloring. The more I looked at what Dana was doing, the more I noticed it looked very much like Halli's work. Both girls even had the same word written in their hot air balloons. When I asked Dana to modify it, I noticed that she used the same word that I had used with the water example. I hadn't given a picture example, just a demonstration on how to apply the water to the watercolor

pencils. I had used the word *school* to show them that if you put a lot of water over it, it will fade away, and now Dana too used the word *school*. Clearly, I would need to help her to think more independently.

When students arrived for our fifth session, some were quite eager to start because they had not yet added the water to their pictures. Others were still finishing up their hallway conversations.

Mrs. Smale: Today we are starting our backgrounds. They will include the three words on the board. Jean, will you read them to us.

Jean: Oh, terrain, climate and atmosphere.

Mrs. Smale: Who can tell me what they have to do with?

Seth: The environment.

Mrs. Smale: Good, what else?

Nick: Parts of the environment, like the sky, space, mountains, sand, grass, all things like that.

Mrs. Smale: Great job. Here's the paper we are going to use for our background.

The students: What? No way!

Students seemed excited by the fact that I showed them the large triangles on which we would place our transportation vehicles. I think they liked the idea of the background being different than the everyday rectangle. "We are using crayons, ripped paper and cut paper to create our backgrounds. What is that

called when we used mixed materials to make a picture? It starts with the letter C.” I thought someone would have remembered since we did it last year. All of a sudden, Buffy’s hand shot up.

“Collage,” she said eagerly.

“I am so excited that you remembered the word. You can cut out your pictures first or start on your background. While I am getting water for those that need to finish that step, use this time to talk to your group for background ideas.”

As I got the water ready, I heard the yellow table mention mountains and outer space. I heard Sally say something about the sky for her hot air balloon. I wanted to make sure to go over to her to let her know that she could consider choosing other places besides the sky for her hot air balloon.

As the students took their seats the next week, I noticed that Buffy was not present. The class informed me that she had moved to a new school district. They also informed me that there was a new student named Eric. I had previously met Eric because he had attended our school for kindergarten, so I actually remembered him quite well. Because this was the last day for us to finish up our projects, I let the students begin right away. I wanted to focus on what they were doing and also get ready for some group interviews that I would conduct later in the period.

Seth drew mountains around his bird airplane, and put snowcaps on the tops of his mountains by coloring them in with a white crayon. “This is the cold part. My plane has no problems flying here.”

As I walked around the room, I was amazed to see Pepper talking and interacting with her group. I had not seen this happen up until this point, and I had also never seen her so engaged. The vignette I share below describes the enthusiasm I witnessed as Pepper gave Marie some great new ideas.

Vignette- Pepper’s Ideas

Marie can put a starfish or shells in the water. She can use paper or this sandy yellow crayon that I dug from the crayon bucket for her. She can also give the sun a face and add some clouds. Clouds are neat. I would add the clouds if it were my picture. I hope she adds the clouds. I am leaning over Marie’s paper, so excited to have her start and use my ideas. I also thought that she could put a person on the boat, since she has a bird on the flag already, a person would work. I am so glad that Sally agreed with me about the person. I am glad my ideas were accepted by my group.



As I watched, I didn't see Marie as excited as Pepper. "What is wrong?" I asked Marie. "I can hear some great ideas the girls are giving you. Why aren't you responding to them?"

"I have a cold. My nose is runny. It bothers me."

"Well I don't think we should let our nose stand in the way of great ideas."

The girls all laughed and Marie slowly began to get started on her work.

"You're right. They are good ideas," said Marie.

Over at the yellow table, Kevin worked on an outer space sky. He ripped black paper and glued it down with a bit too much glue. "How's that?" he asked Rob.

"Ok, I can tell its space."

Even without Buffy, the green table was still silly. I moved closer to see what they were laughing at. "My yellow building looks like a banana," said Jean.

"Who said it did?" I asked her.

"My group," she said.

Halli replied, "No, we said it could look like a banana if she didn't add windows. We gave her the window idea." As I told them to just settle down a little bit while they are working, I saw Rob talking and pointing a green triangle at everyone at his table. "What are you doing?" I asked him.

"This is my steering wheel for the bus. I am showing them how it works. It's too big to glue on."

“Yeah it’s bigger than his bus,” said Kevin.

“We told him to make a smaller steering wheel,” said Mark, “but he doesn’t want it smaller.”

I could see Dave and Seth hunting in the scrap box for the perfect scrap. I asked them and they both exclaimed, “It’s for a special tree.” Rob was so busy on his project that he had barely talked to his group during this class period.

“I have so much to finish on here. I don’t have time to talk,” he answered when I asked him why he was so quiet. That’s a response I love to hear.

While students worked, I began to conduct group interviews. Now that we had completed our first project without using my customary example, I wanted to get an idea of how the students felt about the process of talking about projects before we began our next one.

Student Interviews

HOW DOES NOT SEEING EXAMPLES MAKE YOU FEEL?

You do such nice stuff. I like what you do. You are good at it. I usually do my own thing, but it helps when I see what you do first.

I thought it would be hard at first. I didn’t know what to expect because I was new anyway. I didn’t know how you did it.

I am used to examples. I like what I did here though.

Examples help me see how it should be.

I can see what it is that I need to do so that I am not wrong.

DO YOU LIKE TO GIVE IDEAS?

I do.

It's nice to help others.

Sometimes I have good ideas to give. Not always.

I feel like a teacher doing this in our groups.

DO YOU LIKE TALKING AND HELPING EACH OTHER OUT?

Yes. Absolutely.

I don't think I asked for ideas, but I helped them and gave them ideas.

I didn't ask for ideas either.

I thought of this all myself.

I looked at his picture and recalled a conversation about Mars being red, but then remembered that Kevin did help me with that.

I like to hear what they have to say.

It helps if I'm stuck.

Even if I don't use the idea, sometimes it gives me something to think about.

Keith has good ideas, but he is not here today.

Lots of good ideas. Our pictures would be boring.

Not always because they give me too many ideas. I can't make them all and then it is too

hard to choose what to do.

They have good ideas that we can use.

Yeah, lots of good ideas and its fun.

I like to get advice.

It is neat to ask each other if it is cool what we are doing.

The ideas are too good, and I can't make everything.

IS IT HARD TO USE YOUR IMAGINATION WHEN YOU CREATE YOUR PROJECTS?

I always use my imagination. I like to. Sometimes what I think up is too detailed, like my bird. It took me too long, but I thought of it then did it.

Sometimes there are too many things to think about. I get confused.

I love my imagination.

I have so many neat ideas. I love to share them!

WAS THIS PROJECT EASY EVEN THOUGH YOU DIDN'T SEE ANY EXAMPLES TO GUIDE YOU?

The topic was fun.

It was something I could think about.

And it wasn't girly, like flowers

As I reflected on the students' answers, I was glad to see that they had enjoyed the first project. It was important to me that they liked the topic. That made it easier for them to want to create something. I was also happy to see so many ideas and so many students willing to share those ideas with each other. I was afraid that perhaps some students would be too shy to share their ideas.

Now that our transportation projects were finished, we were ready to begin our second project. I chose animals as the topic our second project since this is a general topic with a huge range of options for creating a picture. Unlike the first

project where the transportation could have been anything, even made up, the animals needed to bear at least some resemblance to the actual animal itself.

Mrs. Smale: We are going to make animals that have human characteristics. Our animals can work, play, talk, etc. They are even going to be dressed with clothes.

Seth: Cool.

Dave: No way.

Sally: Sounds fun.

Mrs. Smale: Now I am not going to show you any examples, but one of your classmates is going to. Who wants to draw an animal for us?

Jean: [hand flies up]

Mrs. Smale: Jean, what animal will you draw for us?

Jean: An ant. [laughter]

Mrs. Smale: Ok draw it big so we can see it and think about the ant as though it was human and could walk like a human maybe instead of crawling like an ant.

Jean: I can't.

Chloe: I will. [Chloe draws a big ant, standing up.]

Halli: Neat!

Mrs. Smale: Does everyone understand that you don't draw the animal as it is, but how it would be to be able to do some of the things that we can do?

The Students: Yup

As students went back to their seats, they began discussing what they were going to do before I could even remind them to talk to their groups about ideas. Rob said he wanted to make a cat in a cop car. "You have to change the cat a little bit," Kevin told him.

"I know, but I want his job to be a cop."

Sally asked me if she could do an Italian panda.

"You can do any animal you want as long as you follow the requirements. It needs to have some human traits and it has to be doing something. Either a job or shopping or something."

"Good" she said.

I heard Seth and Dave giggling, so I walked a little bit closer. "A mustache," Dave said laughing.

"Yeah, a long one" said Seth. They both looked up at me. "That's a trait right?" Seth asked.

"Sure you can add hair too if you want," I said.

Someone had an idea at the green table to make a cheetah, and by the time I got there, there were three people trying to make cheetahs. “Why are we all doing Cheetahs?” I asked.

“I’m doing a cat,” Halli quickly told me, as though she didn’t want anyone else to take her idea.

“I wanted to do the Cheetah,” Chloe said.

“So did I” responded Jean. I could tell Chloe had the initial idea because she had a few attempted sketches of cheetahs already on her paper. Jean’s paper was still blank. Halli’s cat looked nothing like Chloe’s, and I allowed the two girls to continue. I asked Jean to think of an animal that she likes. She had come up with the ant idea, but she decided that she didn’t want to do that. Dana still had no animal on her paper yet either, and I expected that I would see some kind of cat when I returned to the table again.

“I’m making a duck,” Seth told me. “Dave’s doing a turtle, maybe with the mustache. Mine might have a mohawk.” Eric was still thinking of what to do.

“I don’t know,” he told me. “Something that can be a cop. I definitely want a cop.”

“I want a cop too,” Randy said. “I am stuck on an animal. Maybe a ninja turtle cause they can fight.” I waited to and see what he would come up with.

At the yellow table, Kevin was making an alligator spy. “He works for the CIA,” he announced.

“What can you give him for accessories so that I know this?” I asked him.

“A badge, maybe a briefcase with spy stuff in it?”

“Good! Draw it,” I responded. “Keith, what are you doing?”

“I am doing an elephant cop. He wears his badge on his ear. He has a longer arm to steer a car with and a longer leg to reach the pedals so he can drive.” I wondered if that whole table was going to have their animals all doing the same job. Don was still stuck for an idea.

“I did an alligator, but I drew it wrong,” he said to me as he pointed to his drawing.

“Well try it again,” I said, knowing that Kevin had already done an alligator. When I came back a little later, I saw a purple alligator on Don’s paper.

“I still don’t like it,” he said.

“Well what else is out there? You don’t have to do what your table does.”

At the orange table two girls worked separately on their own pictures, but Marie and Pepper had matching animals. I questioned the two girls, already having a thought that the animal ideas were originally Pepper’s. “How come we have the same thing on our papers? There is a bunny with carrots and a bear?”

“They look different” Marie responds. I knew they looked different, but they had the same things. Each bear had a hat and dress on. Each rabbit had carrots, although one did have hair.

“I don’t mind that you girls give each other ideas. That is part of the lesson to help each other, but to both do the same thing isn’t going to help us. Maybe one person does the bear and one does the rabbit. Remember, the same ideas don’t always look the same, but in this case they are very similar. I want you girls to work together, but create individual pictures.”

“Ok” said Marie.

Traveling back to the green table, I found that Dana wanted to make a horse, so I helped her with it. When I asked her what her horse did for a job, she looked at Halli’s cat and said that her horse was a teacher. At least her animal was different though.

Back at the yellow table, Don had decided to draw an ant. The ant was the example that Jean had given us in the beginning of class. “I think I might want to do an ant,” he said.

“Ok, what will your ant do? Let’s think of something besides police work.”

“Maybe a teacher,” he says.

“Good,” I replied. “Work on that idea.”

I heard Eric laughing at the purple table. “Look,” he said to the boys, “My duck is getting a haircut before the police rabbit catches him.” This was a creative picture, even though Seth was also doing a duck. I didn’t see anyone doing a rabbit at the table.

“Did you ask your table for some ideas?” I asked.

“Yeah, Seth said do a duck too. I saw the hair on his duck and got the idea for him to cut hair.” I was pleased at the origin of his idea. His group members had suggested he do one as well, so he was following his group’s lead. I was surprised by how many of the same animals I saw when there were limitless ideas for animals.

Randy made a red turtle, which was different from Dave’s brown and green spiky turtle. Dave’s turtle was a doctor; Randy’s was a cop. I could see both differences and similarities in the group’s work. Most animals were cops, but Dave’s was different by being a doctor. Each animal looked quite different in comparison to how the bunnies and bears each looked so similar at the orange table. “I might want to do a mad cow though,” said Randy. “I’ll decide next week.”

Sally had her hand raised. “My Italian panda owns a castle. Can it hold a key and a sign to show that is what he does?”

“Sure, is his job at the castle?”

“Well all he does is own it, no other job,” she answered.

“Ok, then show me how I know he owns it.”

“Ok,” Sally said smiling.

Over the next few weeks we continued to work on the animals. I brought the class to the back table to demonstrate how to outline. Since the ant was the example that Jean had given the week before, I used it to show the size that I wanted the animals to be. I drew the ant so that it stretched from the top of the paper to the bottom. “We want them to be drawn big,” I explained. “When we go to dress them it will be easier to make large clothes than teeny tiny ones.”

I then reviewed with them what outlining was. I told them they had to outline their animals in marker and then use either marker or colored pencil to color them in. I outlined my ant in red. “You can make your animal any color. It does not have to be the animal’s natural color. While I get supplies ready, add any other ideas you need to add on your practice paper.”

Back at their seats, Lina already told me she was ready for white paper. “I don’t need any more practice. I want to make my cat.” As they began enlarging their animals, I was pleased with how well they did. Their last projects had mostly been too small for the paper. This time, they were right on target.

“Does my panda look like a boy?” Sally asked me. “Lina said it didn’t.”

“Well I don’t think it does either.”

“I do. I think people will think it is a boy, too.”

“Well put a dress on it next week,” I suggested.

“Maybe I will make the hair longer,” Sally replied. “Do you think the heads of ours are too big? Lina thinks hers is.”

“I think they are a good size,” I said.

“How about my nose?” Sally asked me. “I redid it twice because Lina and Pepper said it was too big.”

“Looks good, too,” I reply.

“Ok”. Sally looks at Lina and says, “It’s good size, but it’s lopsided.”

“What does that mean?” Lina asks her.

“It’s when it’s tilted like this,” she answers as she turns her body in a twist to illustrate this.

As I continued walking around, I noticed Dave making a giraffe. “What happened to the turtle doctor?” I asked him. He shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t know.”

Earlier in class, Jean questioned what would happen if she made an animal (like a giraffe) too big and it didn’t fit on the paper. I think this sparked Dave’s desire to create a giraffe. I really liked his unique turtle so I encourage him to keep it. This taught me that sometimes students compare their ideas to others and feel that their idea is not as good. They just need a little bit of encouragement, like Dave, to keep going.

“Why don’t you want the turtle?” I asked.

“I messed up,” said Dave.

“But that is on your practice sheet, that’s fine. Draw it again on your good sheet. I really like the spiky turtle.”

“Yeah, I guess so do I,” he said.

I glanced over to notice that Dana was hard at work. She usually asks me to get her started, but she had started her horse body on her own. No sooner did I think this, and she asked me if her horse’s legs looked ok.

“They look good.” I said.

“Can you help me with the arms?”

“Ask someone at your table for a pointer,” I encouraged her.

“I’ll try,” she said. I was glad to see her opening up more and trying more things on her own, such as drawing the arms. Halli heard me tell her to ask someone, so she said she would show her how she could make the arms.

Pepper had a hard time enlarging her bear’s body. Her table told her to make a big square and then put the body in the square. “That’s good advice,” I told Lina and Sally.

“It helped us,” Sally told me.

Pepper had finally made her bear large enough, so I asked her “did the square help?”

“Yes,” she told me.

“Why did you choose your animal?” I asked Sally.

I created a vignette, incorporating many of Sally's responses throughout the log entries so that a deeper connection could be made to better appreciate her work. Included are Sally's Italian inspired pictures that she created.

Three Italian Projects

It's all because I am studying about Italy at home. My hot air balloon that I made for my transportation project is an Italian hot air balloon. It is red, green and white and a very expensive balloon. I made an Italian panda for my animal project. My Italian panda has a unique Italian color to it so I had to blend three colors together, red, orange and brown together. It was not easy to make it. At first it looked like a boy, but Lina suggested I make the hair longer and add a dress. I even dressed my panda in Italian fabrics. I like to speak in Italian as I work. It gets me in the mood to create, but it seems to bother some of my classmates so I was told speak it quietly to myself.

It's all because I am studying Italy at home. Surprisingly my panda owns a castle for her job, not even knowing that castles would be our next project. So you guessed it, my castle is an Italian castle complete with an Italian flag. It's all because I am studying about Italy at home.



I overheard an interesting conversation taking place at the purple table.

“My turtle has metal armor all over his shell,” Randy said.

“What can get through it?” asked Dave.

“Nothing. Sean, look. He is well protect for his job,” Randy said.

“Nothing can get through him?” Sean asked again.

“I’m telling you boys, he is well built.” Eric laughed at the comment.

“Oh,” said Dave, “I need to add wings to my turtle.”

“Neat,” Eric said, still laughing. Eric had made a huge yellow duck on his paper and started to color it in yellow. His duck’s wings were off to the side, whereas Sean has his duck wings, one on each side, for arms. I saw two very different ducks.

“Can my dog have spots?” Chloe asked me as I neared the green table.

“Sure.”

“Chloe, is this a good cat body?” Halli asked.

“Yeah,” said Chloe.

“I don’t know. It doesn’t look right,” Halli responded.

“I think it looks good,” I told her. Chloe was busy working on her own picture now, a dog, when I noticed Jean was doing a dog as well. “Is that a dog?”

I ask Jean.

“Yes.”

“Does he have ears?”

“Oh, I knew I forgot something,” she yelled in excitement. Both dogs now looked different, so I moved on. I noticed that Halli had outlined her cat in brown and had given it pink colored ears.

Kevin asked me if his picture had to exactly match his practice sheet. I told him that it didn’t have to, but I hoped that it would. “I am still doing the same animals, I just want to change his accessories and maybe his clothes,” he told me.

“Oh, that’s fine,” I said.

“Can we change the colors from last week?” Don asked.

“Of course,” I said.

“Good, I got a good idea from Nick,” exclaimed Don.

I was pleased to see these changes occurring as the students genuinely helped one another with their ideas.

“I have a few tips to share with you on how to safely cut your cloth and then you can get started,” I said. I showed them how to draw their pattern on the material and how to tug slightly at the material when cutting. I instructed them to discuss what they were going to make with their groups before they got started. I could already hear their conversations.

“I want a dress,” Sally said.

“I’m definitely doing a tie,” said Don. The students scurried through their material bins looking for patterns and colors.

“Do you think this will look right?” Sally asked Lina. “Do you want to use some of this color too?” she also asked her.

“Maybe,” replied Lina.

“How would this look?” Sally again asked Lina, but I noticed that she changed the material color.

“I don’t like it,” they both responded at the same time and giggled. Pepper looked over to see why they were laughing. Marie didn’t even notice. She was busy enlarging her bug and outlining it since she had been absent earlier and was now catching up. I noticed that she was not doing either the bear or bunny that she made in practice.

“Why are you doing an ant and not one of the two animals you practiced?” At first she didn’t answer.

Then she said, “I didn’t want to mess them up.”

“But why an ant?” She shrugged her shoulders. Her ant was just like the ant I had used when I showed them how to make the pattern fit on the animal before they began to cut. She even had her ant decorated in stripes just like my example.

Over at the purple table, Eric decided his duck was going to be the haircutter instead of the racecar driver as he had suggested the week before.

“Nothing fits him. He is so round,” he told his table and me. Eric’s duck, colored in bright yellow, took up his entire 11X18 piece of paper.

“You can glue pieces together,” Randy suggested to him.

“Does this quilted piece look good on my turtle?” asked Dave. Randy said yes, and I noted that it looked like it covered a bit too much of the turtle’s shell.

“Maybe you can cut it into tiny triangles to fit into the design you made of marker on the shell,” I said to him.

“Or just use some of the material,” Randy said.

“I like it,” replied Sean, who didn’t even look over to see the material on the turtle.

Pepper continued working quietly. “I only have this skirt done so far,” she said to me as I walked over.

“Well what does your bear do?”

“She works at an oil factory,” Pepper answered.

“Well what else can she wear so that we know this?” I asked.

She paused and then said, “Maybe gloves, so that her hands don’t get dirty.”

“Good idea,” I responded to her.

“Make green gloves like for the garden so we know they’re gloves,” suggested Sally. “I can help find you a piece,” she offered Pepper.

Dana: Am I coloring nice?

Mrs. Smale: Yes.

Dana: I don’t think I am.

Mrs. Smale: It is looking really good. Keep going.

Dana: That purse is not big enough, Chloe. Make it bigger.

Dana: I'll show you.

Chloe: Neat, thanks.

Sally raised her hand. "We need more material. Do you have anything that looks Italian?" she asked me.

"Let me check." I came back with a dark red and green material.

"Great," she said. "I need shoes.

"Wait," said Lina. "You have to think before you cut. Remember the pattern drawing. You should plan the shoes first."

"Ok," said Sally.

Keith raised his hand. "I need help cutting my shirt."

"Ok," I said. As I cut his shirt out, I took notice of the uniform Rob had made. His bug was wearing a brown hat with the initials E.A.P.D. He was also wearing a brown jacket and an E.A.P.D. badge. It looked really neat.

I walked over to ask Randy why there is a cat glued onto his turtle's throat. "My turtle eats cats. That's part of his job. Seth said it was a good job.

"To eat cats?" I asked.

"Well some animal has to taste them for the other animals," Seth informed me.

"OK," I responded.

“Let’s not forget to create a background for our animals’ work environment,” I reminded the class.

Halli was making a blue patterned suitcase, for her cat, with a tiny brown strap, to match the brown top that she has already made. “I want to make a scarf, too. I like the material that Chloe used for her skirt,” Halli said to me as she showed me her suitcase. Chloe had chosen a bright pink material with white flowers on it for her skirt. “Do have any material left?” Halli asks her.

“Yeah, it’s pretty, right?” asked Chloe.

Here, a Patai poem illustrates Halli’s thoughts while she created her background. To create this poem, I used responses that I had heard Halli say while I was note taking in my field log.

Halli’s Dilemma



*I need black paper.
I should have covered my
background in black
and then put my cat on top. I have to
cover around her in black. It’s for the
blackboard. Remember she’s a teacher.
Maybe she can have a desk too.*

I noticed that Dave had removed the big square that previously had covered his turtle. “I didn’t like it,” he told me when I asked.

“I might do smaller pieces over it.”

I was glad that he saw that the material had taken up too much of his turtle's body.

“Did anyone help you to decide it was too big?” I asked.

“We all agreed it was,” he said, referring to his purple table.

Marie continued to work quietly by herself, creating a tan top with a matching skirt, a very original design.

Here, a Patai Poem helps to illustrate Marie's thoughts on why she decided to give her ant the job of a pencil seller. I gathered Marie's thoughts from entries in my field log to create the poem.

Marie's Ant

My ant has a unique job. She sells pencils.

She carries around pencils to sell. She is very cute.

No other animals sell pencils. It's her own unique job.



We used the beginning of our next class session to discuss how and what the students had created for their projects. They did amazing work, with everybody sharing ideas and helping one another out. I had hung the purple tables' work up at the blackboard so that we could start right away when they came in. The boys were excited to see their work displayed as they quietly walked in. "There's mine," said Dave.

"Mine too," said Eric.

"We are going to discuss what we did to produce these finished projects. We will spend about fifteen minutes talking about our ideas and where some of them came from. I want you to listen to each student and hear how each idea was thought about and used in the project. Each one of you influenced someone else's project just like someone influenced your own project. Purple table, you guys are first. You can come up or talk from your seat."



Eric

Well it's a duck

He cuts hair

He is a little too big

I couldn't fit a background really

Sometimes my table helped me with ideas



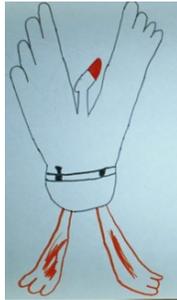
Randy

Well, he eats other animals

He's a turtle

He is wearing a t-shirt, with a fork and spoon in the background.

My group liked his job and Mrs. Smale helped me with the background



Seth

My duck is a cop

He is standing by the cop building

He doesn't have too much on

He is small

Dave suggested maybe I use handcuffs, but I ran out of time

Dave

My turtle is a fighter cop

He fights bad guys that rob diamond stores

He is wearing a costume.

He is in disguise

My group said to make him a tough fighter

I made him have a tough costume to show this



Each of the boy's statements told of at least one other student helping them with their animal. With two projects completed, the discussions each group had really seemed to be helping the students create their projects.

After we discussed our animal projects, it was time to practice for our next project, the creation of castles. This project allowed the students to draw larger than they were used to and to push their imaginations, especially when it came to the topic of dragons. "We are going to do something a little bit different with the rest of the class time we have today. We usually practice on practice paper, right? Well today, this is your practice paper."

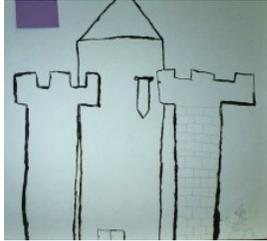
"Wow," they said as I held up a big piece of paper the size of each round table.

"You will be doing one practice sheet for the table. You can individually draw ideas, or do one group idea. You can use the back as well. Next week we will start painting our good copy. How many people like to paint?" All hands went up. "Good. Here's our new project topic. Castles."

I compiled the following pastiche from a conversation that the purple table immediately had when they heard the next project topic was going to be castles.

Conversation amongst purple table group

Castles?



Castles, cool, dragons, cool,

Can it be haunted?

Sure

He's doing a horse

Why?

Well who rides them around a castle?

Oh, maybe kings.

Or knights

Good!

I'm doing a dragon.



I'll do the water and birds in the moat.

I'm doing a dragon, too.

Are they real?

It's part of the castle.

I guess maybe they thought some horses were dragons.

Maybe my horse can breathe fire

Like a dragon?

Why not, if dragons didn't exist, then my horse can have fire, too.

Yeah that's cool!



“She is telling us what to make.”

“No, I gave suggestions,” said Sally. “We decided to do one picture,”

Pepper chimed in, as she was making a red carpet for the princess.

“I’m doing a dragon with fire, I think,” said Marie.

At the green table, students were stuck on ideas. “What comes to mind when I say castle?” I asked them.

“A castle,” says Dana.

“What else?”

“I was making the earth. I don’t know why,” said Chloe, “I guess I could do a princess.”

“Water around the castle,” said Halli.

“What is it called?” I asked.

“A moat,” Kevin said. “That’s what I’m doing.”

“How about some other things to a castle?” I asked again.

“Horse or dragon,” Jean said.

“Ok.”

The yellow table’s paper was filled by the time I arrived. “These are steps and lots of guards on my castle. There are lots of levels,” Keith explained.

“See my moat with alligators?” Kevin asked me. “I’m practicing water and alligators and dragons, too,” said Mark. “I started with the castle and a king and flags. There are lots of flags, right?”

“Sure,” I replied. Rob’s castle was filled with kings and knights.

“Its name is Cool Rob’s Castle,” said Rob.

“Now I am going to do a king, queen and dragon,” explained Kevin.

“That’s a dinosaur,” he told me and pointed to Mark’s picture.

“That’s what I am doing now, the dragon,” responded Mark, as he drew it.

“We can both do dragons,” suggested Kevin, “ I thought it was a dinosaur, though. Ok lets both do them,” he continued. At this point, students continued working on independent pictures of dragons and horses. No castle yet.

“Is anyone going to do a castle for practice?” I asked.

“Yeah, later,” Rob called out. “The dragons are neat to draw.”

The orange table was working on one large castle, but Lina was still upset. “She is still telling us what to make,” Lina told me about Sally. I could see Sally had added both an Italian flag and an American flag to the castle. I saw Pepper added her own part to the castle, and Marie was drawing away, too.

“I’m doing a dragon now,” Marie said.

“With fire?” asked Sally.

“A fire in the castle?” asked Marie.

“No, no fire for the dragon,” said Sally as Marie drew another room on to the castle.

“What is that for?” Sally asked her.

“The dragon,” Marie said.

“Oh, like his own room?”

“Yes,” replied Marie.

“We are stuck,” Halli cried when I come over because her hand is raised. “I tried to do a castle. It looks like a square.” I showed her some ways to make one, reiterating to her that there were no right or wrong ways to make a castle.

Before the class left I asked them a few questions. “How many people liked the big paper to draw as a group?”

“Oh, this was fun,” the purple group said.

“I think this was hard,” Halli said.

“But isn’t it just like small paper, just bigger.”

“No, it doesn’t seem like it.”

“I like having my own paper, because if I mess up, it won’t effect my group,” said Halli. Again, coming back to messing up and being either right or wrong.

“But Halli, there is no right answer to the castle drawings,” I replied.

“Just enlarge what you want to make so that it is big enough on the large paper. Once you draw it, you are going to be painting it.”

“Paint, but I still don’t know how to draw a castle,” Halli replied in a scuff.

“You never saw one?” Chloe asked her.

“No. Well I guess I did,” replied Halli.

“I still can’t make a castle,” said Halli.

“Make a big building,” said Chloe.

“Go like this”, Jean directed as she showed Halli on her own paper how to make a large box, “then just add windows and stuff.”

“I’ll try,” said Halli.

She had seen a castle before she was just having a hard time remembering what they looked like. As she discussed it more with her group, she started to recall more. I realized that the cue to remembering Cinderella’s castle was a great way spark Halli’s memory. Sometimes other students are able to help each other remember things because they are on the same level. Myself, being the teacher, I am not always on the same trend wave as the students are with each other. The vignette on the following page describes Halli contemplating how to make a castle. I used dialogue from my field log to create Halli’s vignette.

Halli's Thoughts

I cannot think of what a castle looks like.

Someone asked me if I had ever seen Cinderella. I can't even remember what Cinderella's castle looked like. Well I think I might remember a little of what it looked like. I was asked to think about a big palace filled with lots of knights, princesses, kings and queens. All that came to mind was a big house. But I don't think that is right. But Mrs. Smale asked me to start by just drawing a big house. It will probably look like a big square just like my tries last week. Here goes nothing.

As students started drawing their castles, the conversations I heard really took off.

"Can you do alligators and dragons today?" Mark asked me.

"Yes."

"How about a moat?" Kevin asked.

"Sure."

"Rob said that my castle is small," Kevin said.

"I didn't say nothing, so don't blame me," Keith said.

"I'm not," said Kevin.

"I just said it should take up more paper," Rob said in defense.

"I will with the moat and dragons and maybe horses," Kevin answered.

"Oh, well see ok," Rob replied.

"Mine has a moat," Kevin said.

“Are you making sharks?” Keith asked Kevin.

“Yup.”

“Me too,” Mark chimed in.

“Maybe I will do a shark or two,” he added.

“Can you help me with a shark?” Keith asked Mark.

“Sure.”

I was glad to see that the yellow table was able to come up with ideas to put around their castle if they had made it too small for the paper.

“I am getting the paint ready. You will paint over your pencil lines so that your castle is outlined in black paint. Take your time,” I said.

“Neat,” Keith replied.

“See this is as good as I could make my castle,” Keith said to me as I handed their table paint.

“I told him it looks good,” Kevin commented.

“Am I outlining ok?” Don asked me.

“Looks nice,” I said.

“How is mine?” Rob wanted to know.

“Good, just take your time and stay on your pencil lines,” I replied.

The orange table was busy deciding what colors they would paint their castles. As they were talking, I was glad to hear all of the positive comments that they were giving each other.

“Maybe blue, orange and yellow,” said Lina.

“Neat,” responded Sally.

“I want colorful ones too.”

“Colorful what?” Pepper asked.

“Curtains,” said Lina.

“I am not a good painter,” Lina commented.

“It’s a good castle,” pointed out Marie.

“I know, but I can’t paint good. My lines aren’t straight.”

“Try your best. Go slow,” Marie offered.

“Ok. We have to stop painting for today,” I said. “Next time we will continue. I noticed a lot of castle talk but not so much help talk. Why?”

The following pastiche was created to capture the students’ answers when I asked them why they were not asking each other for as many ideas as they were before.

Here is what they had to say.

Why are you talking less about ideas

'Cause we wanted to start painting

Yes, No, well maybe

We got lots of ideas last week, so I knew what I wanted to do today

I still had a hard time with castles, even though my table helped me with ideas. I think I needed to see one to make one

I liked the idea because my Italian panda owned one as her job for our last project. So I knew what I wanted to do right away

We have our ideas, now we are drawing and painting them

Yeah, I was stuck last week, but I know what to draw, so now I need to draw it so I can paint

Painting is easy

Their responses answered the question quite well. They had reached a point where their drawings were complete and it was time to paint. They had done such a great job of communicating with their groups when they started to draw their castles, so that when it was time to paint, they could just paint.

We continued our painting the following week. As the students continued to work, they continued to talk about castles.

Mark: I'm gonna make another dragon, a baby one this time.

Kevin: Neat, I like the idea of a little dragon.

Keith: I'm making a little one too.

Rob: Who likes my big dragon? Kevin, do you?

Kevin: Yes.

Seth: I am doing a camel in armor.

Eric: A camel?

Seth: Sure.

Randy: Hey why not? If dragons didn't really exist and we are still drawing them, why not draw a camel too, that breathes fire?

Eric: There were dragons, weren't there?

Mrs. Smale: Well we hear about them in medieval times, but there is no proof of them..

Eric: Well did knights exist?

Mrs. Smale: Sure, they fought back then the way our armies fight today.

Randy: I'm drawing a knight.

"This week is the final week for the castles," I informed the students as they came into the art room. You have done such a great job so far. Any questions?"

"This should be with colored pencil, right? Keith asked me.

"Sure if it is too small to paint," I replied.

"I have a princess and a queen looking out of my windows," Lina told Marie.

"Nice. So are Pepper's bricks," said Marie.

"I like her bricks, too," Lina said. "I'm going to make them."

"I don't know how," cried Marie.

“I’ll show you. You use straight lines, but scatter them,” directed Lina.

“I’ll try them,” said Marie.

It seemed that once Halli had her castle drawn the painting came pretty easy to her. “Oh, I like the purple color,” Halli said excitedly.

“Me too, I’m using that and pink,” Jean said.

“Me too,” again replied Halli. “I may use the gray for the stone.

“Neat idea,” Jean told Halli.

“My castle is going to be bright yellow,” Sally told me and her table.

“Let’s put each brush by the right color,” she added.

“Mine will be pink,” said Lina about her castle.

“Ohh, pink” Marie responded.

“Sure, castles can be all colors,” Lina pointed out.

“See, I’ll ask. Can castles be pink?” Lina asked me.

“Your castle can be any color you want,” I replied.

“But are real castles pink?” Marie asked.

“You see lots of different colored castles. It depends what they make it out of or paint it. Kings and queens usually got what they wanted.”

“Neat” both girls replied.

“Besides, we can use our imaginations to paint our castles any way we want to, right.”

“That’s right Sally,” I replied.

As we cleaned up and put our castles away to dry, I thought to myself that this group had done such a great job talking and sharing ideas with one another, teaching me a lot along the way.

FINDINGS

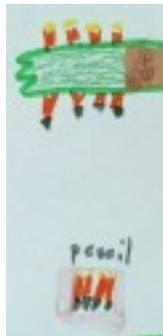
As a teacher action researcher, it is my job to observe and record what happens in my classroom. If I do not record and reflect upon the activities, actions and conversations of my students, then I cannot learn from them what they are learning. Dewey (1938) states that “activity that is not checked by observation of what follows from it may be temporarily enjoyed. But intellectually it leads nowhere. It does not provide knowledge about the situations in which action occurs nor does it lead to clarification and expansion of ideas” (p. 87). I have nothing to expand on if I do not monitor what happens. Hence, the only way I know what new action to take, as a teacher, is to observe closely and learn from my students and my own reflections.

Going into my study, I was interested to see what students would create on their own without seeing conventional examples from me. Our transportation project went surprisingly well. I did not show any examples, but some of the students from the same groups did develop similar ideas, such as the hot air balloon.

During the second project, I had one student choose an animal so that I could demonstrate how to outline. She chose an ant, and three students drew ants.

By sharing this example, everyone knew what I meant by outlining.

Unfortunately, I got three non-unique ants. I decided to observe and see what these students would do with their ants, and I am so proud of the results because each one is unique with the material clothes, accessories and their jobs and backgrounds. One student even morphed his ant into a cat, so the students did wind up creating unique ants, without too much pressure from me. The pictures shown include my example (far right) as well as a close up of Marie's pencils that she made for her ant to sell. Her entire ant is shown with her Patai poem.



While the animal project revealed to me that some students continue to copy ideas, it also showed me that they could take those ideas and add their own ideas and thoughts to the project to make it unique. Another great example of this is Dave and his turtle. He had his ideas for this from the previous class, but when it came to enlarging the animals, I again had a student choose an animal for me just so I could show the class how to enlarge it. The giraffe was the animal

picked, and soon that is what Dave wanted to do. Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that “play continually creates demands on the child to act against immediate impulse. At every step the child is faced with a conflict between the rules of the game and what he would do if he could suddenly act spontaneously” (p. 99). I really wanted him to do the turtle, so I encouraged him to stick with it and he did. It turned out that he really liked his turtle idea, but he was just afraid to enlarge it. I think he thought that the giraffe example followed the rules because it was an example, and his turtle, not being an example, may have been too spontaneous.

This example yields insight into the idea that maybe some students are not sure that what they are doing is right unless they see me doing something like it. I try to encourage the fact that there is not a right or wrong way to do something.

The following pastiche shows the many different ideas from the students when I asked them to tell me what they made.

What did you make?



This is Mrs. Mom, my cat doctor. She has a zebra patient in the background. She is wearing a flowered skirt and orange top, and carries a bag.

Mine is a dog nurse. She has an eye chart in the background and wears a skirt.

It's a zebra teacher. She has a bag with stuff in it.

My cat is a teacher. She is in a top and skirt with a matching bag. She has lots of blackboards. Her bag holds supplies.

My elephant is a policeman and he wears shorts. There is a car in the background.



My dragon is in the army. He has a tank and plane in the background

It's a cop cat. He has a badge. I was the first to come up with the cop idea.

My alligator is a fireman. He has a red truck in the background. He used to be CIA, but there were too many cops at the table. I wanted to be different.

I suspect most of the students chose the animal that they felt most comfortable making. There were so many different animals created for the project. The students successfully talked through their ideas with their peers and with myself to achieve such great final projects. Their talking allowed them to come up with ideas for outfits and animal jobs. It allowed them expand their original ideas into something beyond just their own thoughts.

This is evident again with Halli's story about not remembering what a castle looked like. After talking through it with her peers, she was able to create

her drawing. In similar instances like Halli's, Vygostky (1978) noted, "children initially draw from memory. If asked to draw their mother sitting opposite them or some object before them, they draw without ever looking at the original-not what they see but what they know" (p. 112). Halli knew what a castle was, but she needed assistance to pull those pictures out of her memory. The students had all seen a castle before. Halli just needed to be reminded by a classmate where she had seen one. Vygotsky noted that what children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone. Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). It is the collaboration with peers that really stood out when I examined all of the questions that appeared in the log. Theme statements from what these questions had in common began to emerge.

In the following pages, I share the bins, theme statements, and questions, and then explain the significance of each of the themes.

In the following pages, I share the bins, theme statements, and questions, and then explain the significance of each of the themes.

BIN: Teacher asked questions:

Theme Statement: The students give the teacher explanations.

“What can you give him for accessories so that I know this?”
“Keith, what are you doing?”
“Well what else is out there?”
“Ok, what will your ant do?”
“Why don’t you want the turtle?”
“Why did you choose your animal?”
“Did the square help?”
“Is that a dog?”
“Does he have ears?”
“To eat cats?”
“Well what is his job?”
“What is your animal?”
“What is he wearing?”
“Why?”
“No?”
“How?”
“What is she holding in her hands for her job?”
“Why does she have gloves?”
“Sure, is his job at the castle?”

“Well what did you talk about?”
“That’s fine, but what can you do to it so that it is not an ordinary hot air balloon?”
“What makes it special?”
“What makes your hot air balloon different than other hot air balloons used for transportation, Sally?”
“How do we know that by looking at it?”
“What else can you create?”
“Great, how can you make Chicago for me?”
“How did you come up with that?”
“Is it the shape of the paper?”
“What is wrong?”
“Why aren’t you responding to them?”
“What are you doing?”
“why?”
“What is it?”
“Good idea. Didn’t he want to cut hair anymore?”
“Well what does your bear do?”
“Well what else can she wear so that we know this?”
“What happened to the turtle doctor?”

Theme Statement: The students explain who is helping them and how.

“Ok, who can help?”
“Who said it did?”
“Do you like to give ideas?”
“Did you ask your table for some ideas?”
“Where did the ideas come from?”
“Did anyone help you to decide it was too big?”
“Did you get ideas from the table?”
“Did your table help you with ideas along the way?”

“What ideas did you get from your table?”
“Nice job, did your table give you ideas?”
“Did you get ideas from others at your group?”
“Did anyone help you with background ideas?”
“Anyone else help,”
“Did your group help?”
“Marie, has the group helped you?”
“Do you like to talk and help each other out?”

Theme Statement: The students give the teacher their opinions.

“Did you enjoy it?”
“Who liked our first project?”
“Lina, what do you think?”
“How many people liked the big paper to draw as a group?”
“Who likes the regular practice paper?”
“What do you think of?”
“Is it hard not to see me do an example?”
“How does it help you?”
“But does yours have to be like mine?”
“Is it ok not seeing examples?”
“But isn’t it nice that I am not the only one who does the art talking?”
“Is it hard to use your imagination when you create your projects?”

“Why do you think it is twice the size we usually work with?”
“So you work harder knowing you are going to paint?”
“Did we like this project?”
“Why?”
How many people like to paint?”
“Why don’t we round your dress at the shoulders?”
“Was this project easy even though you didn’t see anything to guide you?”
“Does everyone understand that you don’t draw the animal as it is, but how it would be to be able to do some of the things that we can do?”

Theme Statement: Some students explain why they were doing the same topic for a project.

“Why are we all doing Cheetah’s?”
“Why are you doing an ant and not one of the two animals you practiced?”
“How come we have the same thing on our papers? There is a bunny with carrots and a bear?”

Theme Statement: The students share their ideas.

“Who wants to draw an animal for us?”
“Jean, what animal will you draw for us?”
“Why do we see movie stars with sunglasses on?”
“What about the CIA?”

“What comes to mind when I say castle?”
“Well who rides them around a castle?”
“What is it called?”
“How about some other things to add to a castle?”
“Is anyone going to do a castle for practice?”

BIN: Student questions to teacher:

Theme Statement: The students want the teacher's OK on their projects.

"Can it hold a key and a sigh to show
that is what he does?"
"Can I make her a castle, too?"
"Can I have black paper, too?"
"Can it be haunted?"
"Why?"
"See my moat with alligators?"
"There are lots of flags, right?"
"I need a straight line, can I have a ruler?"

Statement: The students want to know if they are right or wrong.

"Can I throw it away?"
A badge, maybe a briefcase with spy stuff in
it?"
"That's a trait, right?"
"Can we change the colors from last week?"
"Can my dog have spots?"
"Like what?"
"Can you do alligators and dragons today?"
"How about a moat?"
"Am I outlining ok?"
"How is mine?"

Theme Statement: The students ask the teacher for her opinion.

"Mines to big, right Mrs. Smale?"
"Does my panda look like a boy?"
"Do you think the heads of ours are too big?"
"How about my nose?"
"Do you like them?"
"Well did knights exist?"
"Do you like mine?"
"Do they look like bricks?"
"There were dragons, weren't there?"

Theme Statement: The students ask the teacher for help.

“But how do you draw it?”
“But how?”
“Can you help me with the arms?”
“Do you have anything that looks Italian?”
“Will you cut it for me?”
“What can go in the background?”
“Well where is mine?”

BIN: Student questions to students:

Theme Statement: The students want to hear what others have to say.

“Is it a dress, pants, skirt?”
“How’s that?”
“What are you going to make?”
“Why can’t we see her face?”
“What is that for?”
“You never saw one?”
“Not even in Cinderella?”
“Are you making sharks?”
“Colorful what?”
“A camel?”

Theme Statement: The students ask each other for ideas.

“Why not?”
“Do you think it is looking neat?”
“How did you say I do this?”
“How about a person on the boat?”
“What can she carry?”
“Any ideas for that?”
“Why?”
“Like a dragon?”
“A fire in the castle?”
“Oh, like his own room?”
“Like a tunnel or passage?”

Theme Statement: The students ask each other their opinions.

“A big helicopter with lots of wings?”
“What?”
“Do you think this will look right?”
“Do you want to use some of this color, too?”
“How will this look?”
“Does this quilted piece look good on my turtle?”
“If dragons didn’t really exist
but we are still drawing them, why not draw a
camel too, that breathes fire?”
“Do they look like bricks?”

Theme Statement: The students ask each other for help.

“ Can you help me with a shark?”
“Can you tell these are stairs?”
“But do they look like stairs?”

The bins, which I created by categorizing the questions asked throughout my study, really helped me to analyze my students’ experiences. It was through the questions that were asked, that I began to see how the students were helping each other and how they had sought to hear each other’s opinions.

The first bin, labeled teacher asked questions, showed my involvement with the students while they were creating their work. I asked a variety of questions to determine what they were doing, how they were doing it, and who was helping them to do it. In response, the students provided extended responses in the form of explanations. For example, I asked them questions about what they

could add for accessories to help their animal's job appear clearer. I also inquired about each groups' conversations and what made their own project special. These questions allowed me to see the thinking that was going on as the students were creating. I wanted more substantial answers than just yes or no. By regularly joining each group, I was able to ask a variety of questions to mediate or act as the go between for student response. According to Applebee (1996) the teacher's ability to mediate has a substantial impact on the learning that occurs.

The second theme to emerge from my analysis of my questioning patterns within my classroom was that the students explain who is helping them and how. This allowed me to focus on the collaboration of the groups. When I asked students if they liked to give ideas, some responded by saying yes, they liked to help each other out. When I asked them if they liked to ask each other for ideas, many said yes, there were lots of suggestions made to help them. These responses showed me that the students were learning to collaborate with each other to offer and help one another with ideas as well as receive ideas openly.

The third theme statement, the students give the teacher their opinions, enabled me to get a better understanding of how the students felt about the projects and the process through which they were creating each project. Student responses to questions about their experiences in an art classroom without teacher examples were largely positive. Most students enjoyed playing both the helper-teacher role and the listener-creator role. Some students answered that they did

not like not seeing an example first. They wanted to know what the project should look like first. Some students answered that they were excited to just create a project without seeing anything first. I explained to them that sometimes it is appropriate to see an example of how to create a particular technique, and that I was not getting rid of showing them examples all together. I further explained that I wanted them to be able to collaborate and work together to come up with ideas on what to create instead of always seeing an idea first. Knowing how they were feeling about this throughout the study was important to me. I wanted to make sure no one was feeling scared or intimidated to ask or answer questions. By just asking them to share their feelings every once in awhile, I was able to sense their comfort levels.

In the beginning I did sense that one or two students were not comfortable making the ideas that were offered to them, so I approached them and verbally described the offered idea in more details. The students usually picked up on one of the details and would work from there.

I also learned that in response to my questions, students sometimes explained why they had chosen the same topic as their peers. This helped to focus me in on students' explanations for their actions. For example, they were able to explain to me why they were all doing Cheetahs and why they had the same ideas on their papers. I learned from their explanations that they had all wanted to make Cheetahs, but then one student decided it was too hard to make, one student

came up with another idea, and another student changed her mind completely after talking to another peer. I found out that they originally had all wanted to do the same thing and then realized that they did not have to. When I asked open-ended questions such as why movie stars wear sunglasses or what things students might add to a castle, I received detailed responses. They were able to expand their explanations by sharing with the class the details in their pictures and why they created them. This again, helped me to see the thinking that went on while the projects were being created. I received some insight on their thoughts about their work, instead of just getting a yes or no response. I learned the reasons behind the details that they added and how having conversations with their group led them to those details.

The second bin, student questions to teacher, focused on the students wanting my opinion, approval, and help on their projects. Looking back over the questions that they asked me, I noticed that many students wanted to know if it was right or wrong to do something. For example, the first theme statement that emerged from this bin, namely that the students want the teacher's OK on their projects really focuses on the students' use of the "can it". *Can it be haunted? Can it hold a key and a sign to show that is what she does?* Questions like these suggested to me that they wanted me to ok the idea before they started it. I liked knowing that they wanted my ok on their ideas. It showed me that they cared about what others thought of their work. Delpit (2002) stated "teacher talk and

student talk are essential components that determine the quality of learning in the classroom” (p. 147). The conversations that I had with my students to OK their ideas led them to expand their own creativity. After knowing they were on the right path, they became more creative with the details they added next.

They also asked me a lot of questions to determine if they were doing something correctly or not. The second theme statement to emerge from this bin was that students want to know if they are right or wrong, again, suggesting that they were looking for my approval before they got started. Here students asked a variety of questions. *Can my dog have spots? Am I outlining ok? Can you do alligators and dragons today?* These questions implied to me that they wanted to seek my approval to move forward on different ideas, not that they necessarily needed my help to create or draw these new ideas. I liked the fact that they checked with me about certain ideas, but again I responded to them that it is their project to create it as they see they need to. The students could ask me any kind of questions they felt they needed to. By having someone ask me if their dog could have spots, it showed me that they wanted to add spots, they just weren't sure if they could. I knew that is when I had to reinforce to them that there was no right or wrong way to create their picture. Questions like those asking whether or not they were outlining ok meant a lot because that suggested to me that students were taking pride and ownership in what they were creating to make sure it looked good.

Questions from the next theme statement, students ask the teacher for my opinion, seemed to focus on the topic of ownership and pride. *Do you like them? Does my panda look like a boy? How about my nose?* These questions illustrated to me that the students wanted my approval for their work. Perhaps if I thought it was a good nose or a good panda, they too would think that and feel proud.

Of course they still asked me for help with their pictures, even though as the study went on they asked each other more often than they asked me. The fact that students asked the teacher for help is the last theme statement to emerge from the student-questioning bin. *Can you help me with the arms? How do you draw it? Will you cut it for me?* Questions like these showed me that they still needed me to guide them with their projects. As I mentioned before, as the study progressed, they turned to each other for help more than to me. That made me appreciate the help questions when they came my way and also allowed me to appreciate the fact that they had become more confident and comfortable with each other and were able to ask one another for more help.

The last bin, student questions to students, was where I really invested much of my focus. I was most interested in how the groups were collaborating. Cazden (2001) referred to the work of Zina Steinberg when suggesting that teachers can learn about their students' competencies by observing and listening to interactions in which students take on authoritative roles. *How's that? What are you going to make? What is that for?* These questions were just asked out of

the students' curiosity for what their peers were doing. They were not asking for ideas or opinions as in the next two theme statements, they just wanted to hear what each other had to say. I was so glad to come across this. This class seemed to genuinely care about one another's artwork and ideas and the questions that they asked each other really back that up.

One reason I think they worked so well together is that I let my students choose their groups providing an incentive for them so that they would interact with each other. The individuals at each group created the situations that occurred at each table. It was up to the students to work together. Dewey (1938) reminds us that "control of individual actions is effected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are co-operative or interacting parts" (p.53). I think that my students knew that they were in these groups to help each other. They put forth their best effort to collaborate and succeed in their projects.

Studying my students' questions to one another helped me to see that students ask each other for ideas and students ask each other for their opinions. These questions illustrate the interest that the students have for one another. *What can she carry? How about a person in the boat, any ideas for that?* These next questions illustrate the students wanting various opinions from one another. *Do you think this will look right? Do they look like bricks? Will this quilted piece look good on my turtle?* There was a general interest for the students to ask and

give their ideas and opinions. They were helping each other critique their own work. Cazden (2001) stated that a critique should be about work still in progress, not like criticism, which should be about finished work. She went on to state that a critique is a two-way, reciprocal relationship. This kind of group critique helped students to be successful in my classroom because it was a way for them to learn reciprocally by having four classmates together ready to help, listen and give ideas to one another when needed.

I was particularly pleased to discover that when students questioned one another that sometimes this was to ask each other for help, again showing the trust and collaboration among them. The questions below, asked for the purpose of making their work better, are an example of my students' knowledge-in-action. *Can you help me with a shark? Can you tell these look like stairs?* Applebee (1996) stated knowledge-in-action is the knowledge that is socially negotiated through the process of conversation itself. My students asked each other these questions and little conversations among them began to happen. They would talk about how to make a shark or how to make the steps seem a bit more real. I was glad that they were starting to see that there was another resource beside myself that they could go to.

Freire (1970) acknowledged that "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-

who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (p. 80). My class very much emerged into the students-teachers. They were teaching each other new ideas as well as receiving new ideas from each other. I also learned from them, not only new ideas, but how they came up with these ideas. I realized their ideas grew from all of those questions that they had asked each other and all of the conversations that they had had with one another. One student already said that he feels like a teacher. It was great to see that they were experiencing how they could help each other to learn.

CONTINUING MY RESEARCH

Walcott (2001) says that you never really conclude a qualitative study. He says there should not be a grand flourish at the end. I agree. I feel that my study will keep going as I try new things with each new school year.

Of course, I will continue with my verbalization of ideas and questions. I now have the courage to use conversation to support student learning with all of my third and fourth grade classes next year.

Caswell and Foshay state “a rich, stimulating environment is an essential basis of creative expression. All learning is a direct reflection of the environment which the learner is placed” (p.212). I am going to try to continue to create this type of learning environment for all of my students. In doing so, I would like to again have the students be able to choose their own seats so that they feel

comfortable talking and interacting with each other about their artwork. I want them to know that to critique work in progress is a very positive way for everyone to learn.

Part of creating this environment is for me to be aware of how I present new techniques to the students. Using an example such as the ant to show outlining proved to me again why I must be cautious in doing so. Caswell and Foshay conclude that “closely organized programs often are set up to introduce the child to various techniques used by the different modes of expression, with the result that copying predominates and individual potentialities are lost in the routinized mass procedure” (p. 213). I want my students to celebrate creativity.

I would also like to expand the project presentations next year and devote a little bit of time each week or every other week to have a few students discuss their projects with the entire class. I think it will help them to build confidence in themselves about their work and allow the other students to see different ideas and new ways to approach the projects.

The questions that the students will ask will again be a huge focus for me. I am going to try to capture those questions within the environment in which they were asked so that I can again record the experiences of my students. It is the action of these experiences where the students are learning that is so important.

Most of all, I hope by continuing my research, my students will see the importance of being creative for themselves. I want them to realize that everyone

is unique and has something special to offer someone else. I hope they will continue to realize that we can all learn from each other.

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am completing a Master of Education degree at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to learn about the most effective teaching methods. One requirement of the program is that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. This semester, I am focusing my research on verbalization. The title of my research is *Verbalization in the art room: Talking about what to create before, during, and after the creation of a project*. My students will benefit from participating in this study by being able to talk about and express ideas for creating their projects without seeing examples of the projects. They will benefit from other students' ideas as well as ideas from myself.

As part of this study, which will run from September 9, 2003 until December 19, 2003, students will be asked to complete an interview telling me how they felt sharing their ideas about creating projects instead of seeing examples of projects. To minimize the risk to students when completing the interview, since some students feel pressure when asked to complete an interview, I will hold the interview in small groups, assuring the students that there are no right or wrong answers.

A student may choose at any time not to participate in this study. However, students must participate in all regular class activities. Regular class activities involve creating three projects: one colored pencil project, one collage project, and one painting project. Listening to and talking about ideas for projects before, during, and after creating the project are also part of the regular class activities. Students will be asked to talk thoroughly about the projects and about ideas for the projects during the art class. No examples of finished projects will be shown. Ideas will be generated from the class conversations. In no way will participation, non-participation, or withdrawal during this study have any influence on any aspect of the class.

The data will be held in the strictest confidence. No one except me will have access to the data. My research results will be presented using pseudonyms- no one's identity will be used. I will store the data in a locked cabinet at my home. At the conclusion of the research, the data will be destroyed.

We welcome questions about this research at any time. Your child's participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or consequence. Any questions you have about the research or the rights of a participant may be directed to myself, Jennifer Yatko-Smale, (number), or my advisor, Dr. Joseph Shosh, Education Department, Moravian College, (number).

Sincerely,
Mrs. Smale, Art Teacher

Please sign and return one copy of this letter to me and keep one copy for your reference.

I agree to allow my son/daughter _____ to take part in this project. I understand that my son/daughter can choose to withdrawal at any time.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

To Whom It May Concern:

I am aware of Jennifer Yatko-Smale completing a Master of Education degree at Moravian College. One requirement of the program is that she conduct a systematic study of her own teaching practices. This semester, she will focus her research on verbalization.

As part of this study, which will run from September 9, 2003 until December 19, 2003, she will be observing and documenting how students are working together and talking about art to help create ideas for art. She will be collecting artwork and interviewing students regarding their feelings on talking about art.

All children in her classroom will be involved in regular class activities such as creating three projects: one colored pencil project, one collage project, and one painting project. Listening to and talking about ideas for projects before, during, and after creating the project are also part of the regular class activities. I understand that students will be asked to talk thoroughly about the projects and about ideas for the projects during the art class. No examples of finished projects will be shown. Ideas will be generated from the class conversations. Participation in this study means that Jennifer will be allowed to write about and use students' work in her research report. In no way will participation, non-participation, or withdrawal during this study have any influence on any aspect of the class. A student, or their parent, may choose for them, at any time, not to participate in this study. However, students must participate in all regular class activities.

I understand that the data will be held in the strictest confidence. No one except Jennifer will have access to the data. Her research results will be presented using pseudonyms- no one's identity will be used. She will store the data in a locked cabinet at her home. At the conclusion of the research, the data will be destroyed.

I give Jennifer permission to conduct this research study here at school.

Sincerely,

David Hightower, Principal

Appendix C Seating Chart

