

COLLABORATING TO CREATE ART CURRICULUM  
THAT IS RELEVANT TO STUDENTS' LIVES

by

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## ABSTRACT

Collaboration is explored as a means for making relevant connections between the curriculum and students' lives outside of school. High school students participate in several preliminary activities in order to gather data about their interests and concerns. Some of the methods used to collect this information are an initial questionnaire, a visual art project which centers on bookbinding, and student journaling. This data serves as a reference for students while collaboratively working with their teacher to determine the outline for a lesson plan that is then implemented. Additional information is gathered at the end of the project in the form of a final questionnaire which asks students to elaborate on their experiences as collaborators. Teacher reflection through action research is also used to interpret this collaborative experience analyzing the teacher's role in the process and ultimately the impact of collaboration on students' motivation and empowerment in learning.

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### Introduction

My interests in graduate school were guided by the disconnect I witnessed during classroom observations between what teachers wanted to teach and students wanted to learn. I was also drawn to less traditional methods of instruction and wondered if their use could alter students' responses to learning. In trying to better understand how to bridge types of instruction used and subject matter taught with issues relevant to students' lives, I decided to first reflect on my own experiences as an art student growing up and take note of how my reality differed from that of students typically enrolled in art classes today.

My personal experience as an art student was similar to what I believe many people in smaller mid-western cities might have been exposed to during the same time period. In the 1980's and 1990's, many of the schools in Iowa employed full time art teachers. While I don't recall many of the principles behind the projects we did, I do remember the variety of materials I was introduced to and the studio techniques I was taught. My high school art classroom provided the setting where I was able to grow in technical control of materials. While I realize now that our resources were somewhat limited, my teacher, through traditional instructional methods of standing in the front of the room and outlining the process step-by-step, introduced us to stippling, contour line, shading, design, portraiture, modeling, computer graphics, and conceptual art to name just a few genres and techniques. We were also given the opportunity to work with a

variety of materials such as clay, charcoal pencils, watercolors, and silver (as a part of jewelry making). During the course of my high school art classes, I was the student who was happy to be involved no matter what the project was. Through my contentment with the opportunity to make something, I was able to make a relevant connection between what I was learning and what I wanted to know. It wasn't until recently, when I began observing in classrooms, that I came to realize that my attitude about art and personal experience with art was something of an anomaly.

During the fall semester of 2004, I enrolled in a course through the College of Education requiring forty-five observation hours. Through the class I had the opportunity to observe in a local high school art classroom. It was during this experience that my perceptions about the content taught in art classrooms and the nature of students enrolled in art classes changed drastically. It was an awakening. The classroom I observed reflected nothing of what I experienced in my own education and I was alarmed at the differences. The art teacher seemed uninvolved in working with the students and unconcerned about their progress on assigned projects. The projects themselves were mostly self-taught. Students would receive a handout about what was involved in the project, gather the needed materials, initiate the work and continue at their own pace. Very little, if any, instruction was given by the teacher. The students, reflecting what I believe was a lack of involvement on the teacher's part, demonstrated an attitude of disinterest and rarely worked on the projects that were assigned. They were unmotivated and seemed unable to find connections between what they were being asked to do and its importance or *relevance* to their own lives.

In observing this classroom, I came to believe that part of the problem rested with the content that was being taught and part with the nature of the students enrolled in the class. While my personal experience was of someone who wanted to be in art class, my observations alerted me to the fact that not all students enrolled in an art class actually want to be there for the enrichment they may be able to derive from it personally. Instead, students are often placed in the art room in order to meet a school fine art requirement or because they need a class to complete their schedules. The study of art may not at first seem inherently relevant to these students. From understanding this issue I came to the realization that, as a practicing art teacher, two concerns need to be addressed: how to help all students invest in art, and how art content can be taught that will relate to issues and topics students are interested in. My thesis study was designed around these problems and their potential solutions. It explores areas of high school students' interests and concerns as well as provides suggestions for ways to make current art curriculum more relevant.

Webster's Dictionary defines relevance as that which "bear[s] upon the matter at hand; pertinent." It also describes something which has "practical value or applicability." The word relevant has multiple meanings depending on the context in which it is placed and the matter to which it is applied. The idea of "relevance," and what is and what isn't, is a concept that is often evasive, especially when applied to the field of education and subject matter that is taught. In reflecting upon my own experiences as an adolescent and juxtaposing those memories with the realization of the differences in lives led by

teenagers today, I became more aware of the need to alter the way curriculum is being taught in the art classroom in order to be made more relevant to students' lives.

The nature of art instruction and how it can be used to strengthen students' engagement in their learning is an issue that has been recognized by others as needing to be addressed; for example Berry, 1998; Check, 2000; Freedman, 2003; Giroux and McLaren, 1986; Goodson, 1998; Hicks, 1990; and Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998. As a future art educator in a high school setting, I approached my research with the hope that my findings would lead me to an understanding of how to engage students regularly in the content being taught. Through my initial reflections and observations I was able to develop three questions that would be central in guiding my study.

Out of a desire to learn ways of better incorporating student input in lesson planning my primary research question evolved: how can teachers use topics related to high school students' interests and concerns to create curriculum relevant to students' lives? Two secondary questions that focused on students' involvement arose from my initial question: how can students act as collaborators in this process, and how might collaboration lead to a heightened sense of student empowerment and participation? As my study progressed and I began to gain an appreciation for the research process I found it important to include another research question: how can I as a teacher use action research to better understand the importance of process to my teaching practice rather than looking only for a finite end point? In my search for answers to these questions, I hoped to add to the research that supports a need to test alternative approaches to teaching and curriculum building and look at their effect on student engagement.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how collaborative instruction might enhance student engagement with learning and emphasize the importance of teacher reflection to this process. Action research is central to this project because it illustrates the relevance of teachers' reflections to their practice and how this process can enlighten and enrich their teaching. The collaborative nature of this study aims to show how, with student input, curriculum can almost inherently be made more relevant to students' interests and concerns. Benefits of collaboration and utilizing student interests in the classroom are proposed as foundations to the study.

Many high school teenagers bring a variety of personal concerns with them to school that arise out of their peer/family relationships and everyday life situations. Students also have a wide range of interests that fall into the categories of popular and/or visual culture, yet these topics are rarely included in the school curriculum. Milner (2004) states in *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American teenagers, schools, and the culture of consumption* that part of the reason students have the tendency to act out in schools is because "they have so little real economic or political power" in the larger social world (p. 4). Another focus of my study is to research how student collaboration in lesson and curriculum planning might lead to building students' sense of empowerment in the classroom in addition to their interest in art. Several art projects have been developed by other art educators that served as inspiration for this study: for example, Olivia Gude's *Spiral Workshop* (2000) and Tim Rollins' work with the *Kids of Survival*. These teachers demonstrate the importance of working to connect interests and concerns

relevant to students' lives with the study of art. With the anticipation that some could be resistant to a collaborative classroom and the presumed "loss of control" that might result, I hope to encourage such practice by addressing steps that can be taken to initiate a more collaborative environment with students.

### Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. It is based on data that was collected during my experience as a student teacher in a high school art classroom during the fall semester of 2005. Because the project is based on action research and is reflective in nature, most of my feelings and memories of certain events were recorded through a personal journal kept during the course of teaching. Additional information came from my observations of students prior to and during the course of instructing them. Data was also collected from students during three main stages of the study.

Initial data was collected from students in the form of a questionnaire about their interests and concerns. The questionnaires were distributed to three classes of high school art students. Data was also gathered in the middle of my inquiry from one class through a bookbinding project. Students were asked to visually represent a personal story of their choice that allowed them to narrate an issue important to them. This same class participated in the collaborative portion of the project when they helped generate a lesson plan related to their interests and concerns. Slides were taken of student art work in order to document the project and journals were kept by students asking them to analyze and comment on certain aspects of the process as they occurred. The journals were handed

out several times during the collaborative part of the lesson and were collected at the end of each class. I also documented the process of creating a lesson plan collaboratively with students with observations and notes in my journal. At the end of the lesson, this group of students filled out a post-participatory questionnaire that asked them to reflect on the nature of the collaborative process, commenting on their experiences and perceptions of designing a lesson plan together. These questions attempted to uncover whether or not students were invested in the lesson and felt empowered by collaboratively designing their learning experience. The outcome of this project will be a resource for me and other art teachers that will detail methods for learning about student interests and concerns. It will also include suggestions for ways to involve students in collaborative curriculum building and analyze the collaborative process for its benefits and limitations.

### Significance

Research exists that suggests a need to integrate the daily lives of students into curriculum content, however little in the literature actually discusses methodologies for doing so. My study suggests ways teachers can begin the process of researching methods to create more relevant curriculum for their students. It offers examples of methods for data collection which can be used to gather information about students' interests and concerns outside of school. It also details a lesson plan that could be used to encourage students to visually and narratively explain a personal interest or reaction to a problem that concerns them. While research has suggested the importance of teacher-student

collaborations in creating curriculum, few sources actually detail the process of collaboration and also show the potential limitations and benefits of this type of teacher-student engagement. My study also demonstrates how a teacher's reflections on her practice and during the action of collaborative curriculum building can help enhance one's understanding of teaching as a process.

### Limitations

This study includes a specific group of students at a select time at one school. It attempts to show these students' reactions to and opinions of the collaborative process and evidence any changes they might feel with regard to their role in the classroom. What I do not purport to do through this study is suggest that all high school art students share the same interests and concerns as the students polled. I also do not intend to suggest that all high school students would respond the same way to being asked to work as collaborators in constructing their own art curriculum nor would they take away the same experiences from their participation in the study.

Other limitations involved in this study lie in the personal nature of the information requested from the students relating to interests and topics of concern. Any students except those participating in the study would likely list different interests and concerns that would result in altering the nature of the lesson that was created. Additionally, the initial part of this study was conducted in the first weeks of the school year when I was a student teacher in the classroom studied. The responses of the students might have been different if the research were conducted by a teacher the students had

already known or could have been effected by a different teacher's personality and style of presentation. Being that at the time the study was conducted I was also a student teacher and new to the profession, I feel that it is necessary to point out that one with more professional experience working with students might have garnered a different result.

### Organization of Chapters

Chapter Two will provide a review of current related literature from the field of art education as well as general education, psychology, popular culture, visual culture and critical studies. The methodology of the study with regard to data collection, study participants, and the classroom environment will be detailed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will offer a description of the relevant data collected from both personal journal entries and students' responses. Chapter Five will present an analysis of the data in an attempt to make meaning of the research questions and is also where I will investigate the implications of the study to the field of art education.

## CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

This overview of the literature locates my study within the context of current practices and theories in art education. The literature I have examined draws from art education, general education, psychology, popular culture, visual culture and critical studies. In aligning my study with this research I am looking to better understand topics typically taught in art education and methods of instruction in general education. In researching the field of psychology I hope to learn more about the thought process of the American teenager in order to later make sense of their interests and concerns. By researching popular and visual culture I hope to shed light on the abundance and persuasiveness of these interests outside of the educational setting. Finally, in looking at research on critical studies I hope to show the importance of recognizing alternative instructional methods to heightening student engagement and empowerment in the classroom.

My review of the literature will be broken into three sections. First, I will be looking at several interconnected alternative methods used to guide current practices of curriculum building in art education. For the integrity of my inquiry, these methods will coalesce under the topic of *connectedness* and include integrated curriculum, authentic instruction, and democratic curriculum. I will also present ways in which popular and visual culture play parts in these teaching methodologies. I will then look at research that focuses more specifically on the idea of *collaboration* in art education. In this section, I

will look at the definition of collaboration as attributed to art education, examine how it has been utilized in the high school classroom thus far, and explore its potential outcomes. In addition, because my study was carried out in a high school classroom during my student teaching practicum, the personal research I conducted in the classroom was necessarily more reflective in nature rather than observation based. Because of this I incorporate an examination of literature on the topic of *action research*, looking at its function as a tool for research and analyzing the nature of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983).

### Connectedness

I chose to center the following sections of this study on the topic of connectedness for several reasons. In 1916, in his highly renowned paper *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey warned of a notable problem facing education: “There is the standing danger that the material of formal instruction will be merely the subject matter of the schools isolated from the subject matter of life-experience” (p. 11). My initial examination of the literature uncovered a great amount of research describing the prevalence of this more formal approach to teaching that lacks the inclusion of life experience. Such an approach, which lacks connectedness to student life, can be characterized in the following quote by Szekely (1990):

In a typical art classroom, the teacher comes to school with ideas and lesson plans. He or she brings materials and tools, which may be distributed to an unsuspecting class. The teacher demonstrates a technique, work places are

assigned, and the art “project” begins. The bell stops student activities, and grades are critiques, pronouncing judgment on specific solutions to the assignment. At this point, the art work has essentially been completed. (p. 223)

Drawing from my recent observations in the schools and incorporating accounts detailed in a variety of education and art education texts (Szekely, 1990; Check, 2000; Efland, 1976; Hurwitz and Day, 2001), I have found that Szekely’s statement represents much of what one might find in a school setting where a traditional approach to educating children is proffered. Little, if any, attention is given to input from students regarding curricular content. Thus, I saw a need for researching how curriculum content might be made more relevant to students’ experiences outside of school.

In traditional educational settings, most students produce work that is fairly consistent with other students in the class and in accordance with the expectations of the teacher. This style, which is a process for art making different from how professional artists work, can be related to what Efland (1976) called a “school art” style. Goodson (1998) attributes these predetermined outcomes to the “transmission” method of teaching. He states that transmission teaching is known for “characterizing any educational incident that sets the learning of knowledge *previously* planned or defined by the teacher as the basic objective...The transmission pedagogue works to defend this prior definition against interactive redefinition” (p. 27). As a result of this method of teaching, students’ artwork tends to “reflect school culture, not their lives” (Check, 2000). In most school settings, even in the art classroom, students are expected to learn what the teacher presents to them. Often students aren’t allowed or prompted to question why certain

material is regarded as more important than other material. They also don't learn to question why the teacher's perspective or the perspective of the textbook is perceived as more valid than their own. Most often, even when reluctant, students accept the transmitted knowledge from the teacher without question. However, no teaching method is perfect and each has its own particular downfalls.

The failure of the transmission model is that while many teachers believe the information they have to offer is important to teach students, most students don't reciprocate that understanding. Instead they are uninterested in the lessons and thus not invested in the education with which they are being provided. When considering the context of art education and the multitude of interpretations and meanings that can be deduced from artworks, one needs to realize how limited the vision is that is offered to students when the teacher, working alone, decides what content needs to be taught and how. There are numerous ways students can be creatively crippled by such a limited attention to and interpretation of art subject matter. Thus, it is important to ask, why is it that this method of teaching seems to prevail (Check, 2000)?

In most schools, instruction is transmitted in traditional ways that don't readily allow students to see how the coursework might be beneficial. The information provided and the method through which the material is presented does not relate directly to students' life experiences. Most teachers believe "real life" to be far too dangerous, chaotic, and controversial to be incorporated into art content (Check, 2000). Yet, in order for students to be invested in their education, teachers have to experiment with ways in which the transmission model can be adapted to better accommodate their lived

experiences. In response to this call for an alternative to traditional or more modernist teaching methodologies, educators have developed several postmodern pedagogies that work to address students' and teachers' desire for curriculum connectedness.

### *Authentic Instruction and Integrated Curriculum*

“Authentic Instruction” and “Integrated Curriculum” are two terms used to describe pedagogies that aspire to present students with more relevant curriculum. The potential impact of these pedagogies on the field of art education is profound as they work to “enhance students’ learning through the vehicle of personal concerns and social issues” (Fraser, p. 3). By placing the focus of education not on the prescribed content to be learned, but on how students’ experiences can be better utilized to encourage learning, art education is demonstrating a new commitment to making curriculum more relevant.

Authentic Instruction is a model of “spiral learning” that is embedded in the framework of constructivism (Dever and Hobbs, 2000); a method for creating knowledge that is based primarily upon the research of Piaget and Vygotsky. The first wave of constructivism, also referred to as Piaget’s version, centers on the individual making meaning from life experiences. Vygotsky’s constructivism, on the other hand, puts learning in a “social and cultural context” (Woolfolk, p. 324). His view deals with the idea of a “zone of proximal development” or a cognitive structure for learning that owes the responsibility for the creation of knowledge to the participation of multiple persons with differing levels of knowledge. Vygotsky believed that both culture and cognition play an integral part in learning (Woolfolk, 2004). Constructivists also believe that

“knowledge (is) constructed by the learner in a particular context, and (is) not pre-existent or given from an expert or authority” (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, and Abghari, 2004, p.20).

Proponents of Authentic Instruction believe that children have a natural curiosity for their world that can be enhanced through teacher and peer support of their learning. One way to implement an Authentic Instruction teaching strategy in the classroom is for the teacher to facilitate several steps of learning (Dever and Hobbs, 2000). They must first find a way to *engage* students through a topic of interest; they must ask students to *investigate* their world; they must provide a setting in which students can *share* the information they have learned; and they must *assess* student learning with the help of the students. These methodologies for learning and providing instruction in the classroom are vastly different than more traditional “transmission” models. Students are asked to generate their own areas of study with regard to their interests, which would allow them to incorporate personal and cultural focuses into their learning that might not normally be addressed in the classroom. When students discuss, debate, investigate and explore multiple viewpoints on a given topic rather than accept the input provided for them by the teacher, they are engaging in active learning and making connections to the world outside of the classroom (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, and Abghari, 2004).

Nuthall & Alton-Lee (1997) explain that with the growing diversity in American schools, many students have to learn to live in two very different cultures: the culture of the school and the culture of their home. This dichotomy can result in the student falling into a pattern of failure as they are unable to adapt to the school culture required of them

for success. An additional plight of many art students today is that what they are learning in schools cannot be taken home or shared with their peer groups (Lockstedt, 1978).

There is a disconnect between what the educational institution feels they should know (for example, elements and principles of design and historical artworks), and that which pertains to the culture in which they live and rely on for survival. For these students, the openness of being able to direct learning in a capacity that reflects their personal interests and cultures is important. All students have “unique interests, concerns and experiences from which their art should emanate. The particular dreams, fears, and hopes of teenagers today leads [*sic*] to a singular art, with its own voice and its own images” (Szekely, 1990, pp. 227-228).

Curriculum Integration, although similar to Authentic Instruction, is a more structured method of teaching that relies on teacher integration of students’ ideas to subject matter taught. Focus is placed more on the teacher instructing through topics of interest to the students rather than on allowing the students to formulate the nature and direction of each daily lesson. As another alternative to a more traditional approach to generating curriculum content, curriculum integration is a way to bring issues into the classroom that may affect students on either a local or a global level. Considered a form of “negotiated learning” (Fraser, p. 4), this type of instruction necessitates that a teacher be open to suggestions during the planning process in order to incorporate aspects of student interest into their lessons. Szekely (1990) points to the importance of this in relation to art education. He states that learning occurs when students are “encouraged to turn to their own experiences and observations in discovering art” (p.224). Students help

search for ideas so that they too become “generators of invention” (Szekely). But what does this mean for art education?

Teachers who embrace the curriculum integration model will be providing an environment where students will be responsible for creating some of their own learning. Rather than allowing for creativity to be compromised and emphasizing control (Check, 2000), teachers in this role will relinquish some of their power over curriculum decision making in order to question students about changes they would like to see and then include their suggestions. Sole responsibility for learning is not entrusted to the student, yet they are encouraged to bring their own personal experiences and cultures into the classroom in order to tailor their understanding of the art curriculum in a way that is applicable to their lives. P.S. Wilson (1971) states that a child’s “education [as opposed to schooling] can only proceed through the pursuit of his interests, since it is these and only these which for him are of intrinsic value,” and further, “whatever enables him to appreciate and understand his interest more fully, and to pursue it more actively and effectively, is ‘educative’” (p.67). As well as asking students to bring their personal stories and cultures into the classroom, teachers can search for ways to make their lessons inherently more meaningful. There are different ways that teachers might try to accomplish this. However, one that is utilized often and would appear to tie directly to students’ interests outside of class is the incorporation of popular and visual culture into art lessons.

### *Use of Popular Culture and Visual Culture in Schools*

Milner (2004) offers an explanation for the challenges faced by teenagers today in his book *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American teenagers, schools, and the culture of consumption*. He states that because teens have so little real economic or political power in the world they exercise the one kind of power they do possess: being able to create an informal social world in which they evaluate one another (p. 4). Milner believes it is this near obsession with social groupings, status and peer relationships that drives the teenage culture.

Questions arise that surround the daily thought patterns of teens: who is sitting with them at lunch; who is dating whom; and what the latest fashion or music trend is. Whether or not one is preoccupied with attaining the status of a certain clique, almost all teenagers have some investment in the answers to these questions. Again, Milner ties this back to the importance of status: what group a teenager belongs to, associates them with abiding by a certain value system. According to Erikson (1968) and Epstein (1998), adolescence is the period in one's life in which choices begin to be made and identities are formed. It is through this process of identity formation that cliques and subcultures tend to flourish.

One only needs to look around and study the students in any high school classroom to realize that this is true. Differences in dress and bodily decoration (i.e. piercings, tattoos, hair color, etc.) and who associates with whom announce the differences present in social relationships among today's teens. While some teachers may be aware of the vast personal and cultural identities among their students, more of an

attempt needs to be made to create curricular content that allows for the expression of these individual differences. Many teachers have found that they are able to create this link between schooling and their students' lives with the introduction of popular and visual culture as teaching tools used in the classroom. As stated by Duncum (1997), "Although art educators believe in educating through art, students live through mass media" (p. 69).

Giroux (1995) describes the essence of popular culture in the following way:  
Popular culture was where the action was- It marked out a territory where pleasure, knowledge, and desire circulated in close proximity to the life of the streets... We felt rather than knew what was really useful knowledge. And we talked, danced, and lost ourselves in a street culture that never stopped moving. Then we went to school.

Something stopped us in school. For me, it was like being sent to a strange planet... what we learned had little to do with where we came from, who we were, or where, at least, we thought we were going. (pp. 6-7)

Teachers have attempted to harness the energy and interest level invested in popular culture by incorporating aspects of what their students enjoy doing outside of school in the classroom. Degge (1982) suggests that teachers can begin to assess the important aspects of their students' lives outside of class through "observation, eavesdropping, informal interviews, questionnaires, assessments of class work, and performance" (p. 24). Attention is paid specifically to how information is transferred to students, such as through music, television, video games and comics.

Temple University psychology professor Laurence Steinberg is quoted in a New York Times article by Mansnerus (1993) as saying, “If you want to cut up the socialization pie, the parental slice is getting smaller and the television slice is getting larger” (p. 14). Instead of dismissing the popular culture of teens as unworthy of attention, which is synonymous with underestimating their belief systems and culture, educators should instead embrace its potential to act as a motivator, stimulator and transmitter of information in the classroom (Witkin, 1994). As a teaching tool, television cannot only serve as an intriguing, concise and understandable method for getting information across to students, it can also be used as a tool that teaches students to build their critical thinking skills by learning to deconstruct and interpret the visual messages they absorb everyday (Kincheloe, 1980).

In an art classroom the same can be done with the mediums of music, fashion, graffiti, and any visual product defined as popular culture. This relates to the study of visual culture in that if teachers can educate students on the effects of visual imagery, students can learn to recognize how they are manipulated into being defined as a culture and as individuals. By failing to teach them to analyze how they are affected by the visual imagery present in society, students are allowed to succumb to the messages they are confronted with. Smith-Shank (2004) states that, “if we passively interact with images, then just as passively, we accept their messages” (p. ix). The thoughtless acceptance of some of the misrepresented visual messages present in our society could lead to racial and sexist stereotypes and other forms of intolerance if unchecked. These are not the ideals we want to promote in our students.

Broudy (1987) talks about the building up of a personal “imagic store.” He believes that many stereotypical images comprise this “mental reference book,” and that while these images are useful for making meaning of the world, they can often be detrimental in that they are usually constructed before we have been taught to critically examine their place in our belief system or learned to deconstruct their origins. The role of teachers, then, is to help students deconstruct and interpret their visual culture in a way that promotes greater learning and understanding of the role imagery plays in shaping culture and individual identities.

In order for teachers to continue relating popular and visual culture to their instructional practices, they need to stay current. Some educators utilize television as a “social common denominator” (Kincheloe, 1980) when interacting with their students although the same could be done with current music and fashion trends depending on student interest. Showing that teachers too are updated on current trends can help to initially establish a rapport with students. In addition, understanding and absorbing popular and visual culture can clue a teacher into the common experiences of their students. In trying to create a curriculum that is more connected with students’ lives, teachers can use their knowledge of popular and visual culture to better understand some of the worries, thrills, angers and excitements teenagers experience on a regular basis in an effort to become more empathetic with their students’ lived realities (Helmrich and Woltjer, 1999). Better understanding of and attempting to incorporate the lived experiences of students is essential to a democratic curriculum.

### *Democratic Curriculum*

Democratic Curriculum, like Authentic Instruction and Curriculum Integration, is a pedagogy that places an emphasis on relating content studied to students' lived experiences. Democratic curriculum builds upon these previous two pedagogies in that it is additionally concerned with a conscious critique of power, both economic and political, within fields of culture, education and the art world. This power is critiqued from the standpoint of teacher knowledge and culture, student knowledge and culture, and content learned. A democratic curriculum also enables the critique of its own philosophical position and its process as a part of the social world (Griffin, 1996). Critical pedagogy, which forms the basis for democratic curriculum, "is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state" (McLaren, 2001, p.28). Although this literature review does not delve deeply into theories of critical pedagogy, it is necessary to have an understanding of how it affects the idea of democratic curriculum.

In the art classroom, this pedagogical approach is central to creating a critical and democratically conscientious student population. Originally considered more of an individualistic endeavor (Dewey, 1916/1944), the idea of a democratic curriculum grew and was strengthened after World War II with the effect of having a more positive societal impact. In the 1970's and 1980's students were educated with the hopes that they might be able to positively contribute to their world by using higher-order thinking to instill the qualities of democracy into society (Oliver and Shaver, 1966). Today, a

more postmodern reading of democratic curriculum knows that democratic ideals are “difficult to achieve in practice” (Freedman, p. 108). This is partially due to the fact that, as Freire believed, in order for educational change to occur, it needs to be accompanied by “significant changes in the social and political structure in which education takes place” (McLaren, 2001, pp. 26-27). Thus, in order to create a curriculum that is truly more democratic in nature, the climate of schools would also have to change. What can be taught to students instead are the principles of democracy and the critical skills needed to evaluate what they are learning through the culture in which they live and the education they receive in schools. Some questions arise with regard to the art curriculum such as whose curriculum is being taught, whose art is being made, and how does that represent, or fail to represent, students’ lived experiences.

Much of the research that comments on curriculum currently being taught focuses on groups of people that are either included or excluded from artistic study. Often this translates to popular white, western artists being included in the curriculum while multicultural, women, folk, and differently abled artists are relegated to the margins. Determination of who is included in the art curriculum can be looked at from the perspective of who is afforded the power to decide. Foucault (1970) acknowledges the ways that institutions and socially powerful groups often determine whose knowledge or which version of history is deemed educationally worthy, overriding the interests and desires of others lacking such power to decide. Applied to the art classroom, it could be said that those who determine what is taught in the art classroom are typically those wielding the most power. This power can in turn be used to either include or exclude

certain topics from the art curriculum. When we look at a typical classroom, the person in charge of controlling the curriculum and thus exercising a certain agenda is the teacher. Foucault believes that those who exert their power at the expense of others could have the effect of establishing social control by subliminally suggesting that some cultures and groups of people are worth studying more than others.

Teaching our students how to become aware of the imbalance of what is typically taught through curriculum begins with critical thinking. Berry (1998) believes in creating investment in the learning process by teaching students to question the texts (i.e. pre-existing knowledge) that they are often confronted with in the classroom. “In the classrooms in which students create their own knowledge from pre-existing knowledge they learn to create and to value their own questions. From their questions, they attempt to create knowledge by challenging and opposing the status quo or mainstream thinking of the authoritative texts before them” (Berry, p. 46). Rather than teach students to accept the knowledge before them, students are charged with the responsibility of deconstructing that knowledge so that they can reconstruct it in a way that is valid and sensible to them and their lived experiences. Students are taught that what they think does matter and they are encouraged to voice their opinions and be actively engaged in seeking and creating knowledge. Building upon students’ awareness of their own cultural experiences, a teacher can begin to expose them, through choices made regarding the artists and themes that are included in the curriculum, to the diversity of cultural perspectives that make up our society (Krug, 2002). An understanding and embracing of

diverse perspectives and realities will help students become open to the realities of social inequities and the potential for social change (Weisman and Hanes, 2002).

These three alternative pedagogies are the gateway to creating curriculum that is more relevant to student experience outside of the classroom. To further work toward the engagement of students in the learning process, teachers can introduce the practice of collaboration.

### Collaboration

Collaboration is a term that is heard often in the field of education. However, all too often its meaning lies within the realm of adults: teachers collaborating with other teachers, principals collaborating with district supervisors, principals collaborating with teachers, and school board members collaborating with the community. Curriculum is planned, and content standards and learning objectives are decided upon. However, the one element often left out of the process of collaboration is the group of people that are most affected by the decisions being made.

Research shows that as an alternative to the transmission model, one of the best ways to interest students in what they are learning is to enlist them as collaborators in the process of determining curriculum (Goodson, 1998; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998; Olsen, 2000; Bolin, 1999; Check, 2000). While some teachers try to build students' interests into the methodology of their lesson plans, depending on how they are used, students' interests as a teaching method can end up working in favor of a more traditional learning experience and not in the best interest of the student. The students' "interest can

be used as a method yet [have] little relevance to content: The teacher defines the content and uses the child's interest to transmit it to him or her" (Goodson, p. 31). A more successful way to include students' ideas and interests is to collaborate *with* them to create curriculum.

Central to this alternative teaching approach is the belief that all students can and should be part of the educational process. All students' voices should be heard when trying to find the best ways to reach the widest variety of students. While traditionally a teacher might pre-plan a lesson for an entire group of students, this alternative pedagogy challenges educators to consider the needs, learning abilities, and interests of all students individually. In a collaborative classroom, the teacher becomes more of a consultant instead of a leader; education has the opportunity to be more interest-led where the interests being taken into account are those of the individual students. Sometimes a teacher may initiate the structure of a lesson, but the ultimate decisions that guide the direction of that lesson are up to the students. The focus is centered more on how the students are constructing knowledge and less on them mastering prescribed information (Goodson, 1998). Through participation in the decision making process students' interests, life experiences, and knowledge can then begin to form the basic structure that is the curriculum (Check, 2000).

There are several types of collaborative teacher-student interactions that would lead to a more student-directed classroom environment. An example of this could be demonstrated through students having complete freedom to choose and create work that is of interest to them, without regard for what other students in the class are working on

or what group learning goals might be. Such a structure or lack thereof is an example of child-centered progressivism where the student is allowed to personally direct his or her own learning (Goodson, 1998). In this model the teacher acts merely as a “consultant to students in their self-directed enterprise” (Goodson, p. 32). Another version of collaboration as described by Eisner (1969), allows for the goal of learning to be established at the outcome of the lesson rather than at the beginning. He explains an example scenario as the teacher identifying:

a situation in which children are to work, a problem with which they are to cope, [and] a task in which they are to engage; but it does not specify what from that encounter, situation, problem or task they are to learn. (pp. 15-16)

Planning is concerned with the process of learning and does not prescribe what is going to be produced by the student. Eisner considers this type of learning an “educational encounter” and collaboration occurs in the sense that the teacher has established the problem and the students determine the solution and its educational value. For the purposes of my study, I am interested in yet another type of collaboration: that which asks the teacher and students to both contribute to the learning process by establishing the goals and objectives for a lesson, determining the direction, and planning for assessment. This specific type of collaboration will be further explained in the following sections.

### *Definition*

Olsen approaches the issue of collaboration from a constructivist perspective and looks at collaboration as a process where teacher and student are building knowledge together (2000). This definition compliments the one given by Webster where to collaborate is “to work, one with another; cooperate” (definition #1, 1997). Some teachers believe that the act of collaboration happens only at the beginning of the lesson when decisions are being made as to the direction the lesson will take regarding the topic studied. Other teachers embrace collaboration so thoroughly that they work with their students to determine lesson objectives, materials to be used, strategies for assessment, and work with them as co-researchers throughout the process of the entire project. For those beginning to incorporate collaborative practices into their classrooms, the level at which this integration occurs is often one of personal preference and comfort. However, to fully embrace the potential that is collaboration, teachers will inevitably need to step out of their comfort zones.

### *How Collaboration is Utilized in the Classroom*

As mentioned previously, there are several relevant teaching pedagogies being employed that work to integrate students’ interests into the curriculum. Some of the teachers using these methodologies might even feel they are collaborating with their students. However, a disconnect is witnessed between what many teachers feel is collaboration and the actual practice of giving up power as a teacher to build knowledge with the students; to cooperate and work with them.

One of the first things that need to occur in order for collaboration to succeed is for teachers to critique their own practice. By looking at how curriculum is being built, and how students respond to and interact with it, teachers can begin to see how collaboration might have a positive effect over what and how their students learn. In order to fill the gaps between collaborative rhetoric and reality (Fraser, 1999) teachers will also need to critique their classroom environments. Too often, the environment in which learning takes place is dismissed as not being a factor in how it affects education.

Stepping inside a traditional classroom, one is often confronted with a familiar format: the teacher stands at the front of the classroom to administer instruction while the students are seated in some type of rowed or other structured pattern. Degge (1982) states that the environment of the classroom can encourage students to prescribe to expected roles. If a classroom is dominated by the presence of the teacher and the sense of an inflexible learning arrangement (i.e. structure of desks, direction students face for instruction, or how the teacher presents information), students may feel uninspired to be actively and personally involved. An example of a classroom that could work to promote greater student engagement and provide for a more collaborative environment is one where the teacher moves around the classroom while offering guidance. Sometimes the teacher might even sit with students while engaging in dialogue with them. Desks may be arranged in more of a circular or horseshoe shape that encourages the sharing of ideas with other classmates. Students might also sit together at large tables in groups of four to six; this also works to promote collaboration among students. These are just some

examples of ways the structure of a classroom environment could be altered to be more inviting and accepting of collaboration.

As is demonstrated above, for collaboration to be successful, both teacher and student roles need to be altered. In a collaborative classroom, the teacher tries to engage students in the quest for knowledge by making the classroom a place where students are more in control of what they learn. Airasian and Walsh (1997) suggest that:

teachers will have to learn to guide, not tell; to create environments in which students can make their own meanings, not be handed them by the teacher; to accept diversity in [student] constructions [of information], not search for the one “right” answer; to modify prior notions of “right” and “wrong,” not stick to rigid standards and criteria; to create a safe, free, responsive environment that encourages disclosure of student constructions, not a closed, judgmental system.  
(p. 448)

Similarly, student agency is achieved as students are allowed to be responsible for how and what they learn. As Dever and Hobbs (2000) stated, students are asked to engage, investigate, share and assess their own performance. The role of teacher as facilitator of learning becomes critical to student success (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, and Abghari, 2004). The increased freedom and challenges students encounter allow them to tailor the curriculum more to their interests and life stories.

Students will have a greater understanding of the goals of the lesson if they are actively involved in its planning and will be better able to gauge how successful they are at completing an assignment if they play a role in determining assessment. Because

students are capable of contributing to their own assessment and that of their peers, one of the best ways to determine how successfully a student has completed an assignment is to sit down with the individual student and have a conversation about their previous art performances in relation to the newly completed assignment (Hurwitz & Day, 2001, p. 387). Students can be asked to critically reflect on their work and the work of others, talk about what they might have done differently, what they could have spent more time on, and offer suggestions for improvement. Similarly students can be asked to help create assessment rubrics for their projects (Huffman, 1998). The rubric ties into the collaboratively established goals and objectives of the project and helps to reinforce student learning and direction because the students have helped determine what the outcome of the project should be. By collaborating in most, if not all, of the planning stages of creating curriculum, students are able to make connections between what they are to learn and how it can be related to their personal interests and concerns. One way in which teachers can help students begin taking on the role of curriculum collaborator is to introduce them to their role as a questioner of their experience in the art classroom. Similar to students being asked to question texts and sources of knowledge under democratic curriculum, questions related to collaboration will enable students the freedom to begin asking what they want to know and how they can best learn it.

Berry (1998) states that a “call for authentic questioning” needs to occur that “returns the responsibility for the creation of knowledge to the questioners [*sic*] in this case, students” (p. 47). She and others (Fibkins, 2003; Bolin, 1996) place the act of questioning at the heart of empowering students to take more control for their education,

while Hamblin (1984) stresses the importance of the questions teachers ask to engage their students in learning. Bolin (1996) believes that “the depth of thought given to the formation and distillation of our questions becomes a measure to reveal the mindful consideration we bring to the world....Critical questions become powerful tools for examining who we are, where we have been, and who we desire to be (p. 7). Similarly, the complexity of the questions our students ask will determine what and how they learn in a collaborative setting. Will our students seek to find the meanings of complex conceptual issues; or will their experiences relate more to the questioning of daily life, which is also potentially complex? This aspect of collaboration can testify to how successful students will be in the process of creating knowledge that is relevant to them.

#### *Desired Outcomes or Benefits of Collaboration*

There is the potential to have several positive outcomes from engaging in collaboration: student empowerment over their learning/student agency, enhanced student motivation, increased confidence in the student in their role as co-constructor of knowledge, more relevant curriculum, and greater student interest in lessons created. Agency, as defined by Webster, is “a means of exerting power or influence” (definition #6, 1997). Lusted (1986) suggests that pedagogy should have three agencies: that of the teacher, that of the learner, and that of the knowledge which they produce together. When all three of these are engaged at once, it is representative of a truly collaborative environment. Both the teacher and the student are being held responsible for the construction of information and the knowledge which they produce is indicative of their

collaborative efforts. When students are able to bring their experiences and personal interests and concerns to the context of their learning environment, the power or agency that is expressed is exponentially diverse when compared to that which the teacher alone would bring. This also relates to how students, through the expression of their own agency, can be empowered in their ability to create relevant curriculum.

Hicks (1990) describes how, “enabling individuals to participate in the cultural traditions of the mainstream can only be equally empowering to all if that cultural tradition does not itself marginalize and disempower particular groups, ways of life, and social experiences” (p. 37). As we have already discovered, the typical curriculum taught in educational settings is discriminatory in the content that it covers, often omitting information on a variety of people, cultures, and experiences that are outside that of the norm (i.e. the white, middle-class male). Therefore, teaching only a limited curricular content to the diversity of students in our classrooms does nothing to empower them. Instead, we are able to empower our students by acknowledging that there are more stories, by people who are often marginalized, that also need to be told. Barakett and Sacca (2002) believe it is this potential for expressing our own narratives and having a dialogue about our differences that leads to a critical consciousness of our world. Asking our students to engage in questioning that directs their own learning and to collaborate in all aspects of planning the curriculum that is learned are two of the ways in which we can empower them.

Students also can experience increased motivation for learning from their participation in the collaborative process. Hamachek (1990) suggests that for curriculum

to truly be motivating it needs to address both students' academic and personal concerns. Collaboration to create curriculum that is relevant to students' lives would ideally achieve both. Himes (2000) states that there are more personal steps teachers can take that would lead to a more inviting and thus a more effective environment for student motivation in the collaborative process: understand student perceptions of the teacher and use this understanding to guide teacher behavior; concern themselves with students' reactions to their teaching efforts rather than with teaching methods; recognize that students have the capacity for independent thinking and problem solving; and embrace the belief that all students possess dignity and value. Himes continues that they should also recognize the desire for students to be understood, appreciated and accepted by their teachers and peers, and have their ideas respected in the classroom.

In a study conducted in 2003 by Richards, a high school art teacher, she describes the method of collaboration explored with her students. First she:

brainstormed numerous lesson criteria, which were then written on the board. Next she asked the students to determine the most important objectives. The choice of vocabulary and the use of terms were debated, but eventually the students reached a consensus....In this case, the students agreed on the objective of "create a collage," but left the choice of media open to opportunities for independent personal choices. The students understood that their lesson objectives would be used as criteria for evaluating their projects. (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, and Abghari, 2004, p.22)

In this example, Richards found that giving students the freedom to utilize open-ended production objectives with regard to materials heightened the sense of student motivation towards their projects. When students are given the opportunity to make decisions regarding how their assignments are structured they are more likely to want to spend time creatively investing themselves by engaging in the project. In essence, they are more motivated to learn.

As research shows, collaboration to incorporate the diversity of perspectives that are represented by the student population into the curriculum is a great way to engage student interest in learning. It is the challenges and potential benefits of a collaborative pedagogy that I was most interested in researching through my own work with students.

### Action Research

The collaborative nature of this project and the fact that I was conducting research with the students I worked with during student teaching necessitated that I practice action research. Action research is the study, leading to the enhancement, of one's own practice (May, 1997). In essence it is when a teacher acts as a researcher of their own practice. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) offer a rationale for conducting action research where the researcher should be *committed* to their study by their "personal and professional values," have a desire to participate in guiding action that is *informed* by "consideration about its appropriateness," and investigate action that is *intentional* and "undertaken by [the teacher] to achieve the objectives [they] have set" (p. 71). Other terms used to describe action research are reflective teaching, teacher-as-researcher,

teaching as inquiry, and critical praxis (May, 1997). Because I was interested in my ability as an instructor to work collaboratively with my students and build curriculum relevant to their interests and concerns, I found the tenets of action research an ideal way to support the methodology of my inquiry.

May (1997) outlines six general guidelines of action research held by most teachers-as-researchers: (1) Teachers develop theories based on their own practice. These theories are practical and grounded in action as well as teachers' personal histories and experience. (2) Teachers do not always aim action research at problem solving or improving practice, although that may be the outcome that is achieved. Action research often begins as a way to answer a question of interest or as a search for meaning, but what one searches to better understand may not be improvable. (3) Anyone who is interested in conducting research into his or her own practice can engage in action research. (4) The methods used in research matter. Action research is "qualitative or interpretative" field-based research. Methods of data collection such as observation, keeping field journals, engaging in dialogue, audio and/or videotaping, interviewing and analyzing student work are useful. In addition, action researchers can gain a better understanding of their beliefs and practices by becoming more conscious of what they are thinking and feeling as they plan for and engage in practice, as well as by paying close attention to their students and their responses to learning. (5) Action research can be collaborative in nature. Questions of shared interest can foster collegiality, produce more thoughtful direction and planning, and encourage the need to explore newly raised ideas. (6) Changes regarding social reform are possible and desirable. There is the belief that

findings concluded in action research can lead to reform of inequitable structures, policies, and practices that oppress people through gender, race, ethnicity, social class or age discrimination. While all action researchers do not desire this proposed outcome of social reform, McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) suggest that teachers engaging in action research initially should aim to answer the question, “How can I improve...?” (p. 52). Finally, after conducting action research and evaluating what has been learned, it is suggested that educators replan for further action (p. 72). The cycle is renewed as teachers work to continuously better understand and enhance their practice.

### *Reflection-on-Action and Reflection-in-Action*

As previously stated, the nature of action research asks that the teacher reflect on their practice in order to answer a question of intrigue to them. Dewey (1933) explains reflective action as that which involves active, diligent, and careful consideration of any practice with regard to the reasons that encourage it and the results and further study to which it leads. Zeichner and Liston (1996) state that reflective action is a “holistic way of meeting and responding to problems, a way of being as a teacher” (p. 9). Reflective action is also a process that involves more than logical and rational problem-solving processes. Greene (1986) states that reflective action involves bringing intuition, emotion, and passion to one’s teaching and is not something that can be neatly packaged as a set of techniques for teachers to use: it too needs to be practiced. Schon expands on Dewey, Zeichner and Liston, and Greene’s beliefs on the nature of reflective teaching with his theories of reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action.

Schon (1983) relates reflection-on-action to the type of reflection that occurs before and/or after action. It can encompass anything from the planning and preparation stages that occur before a lesson is taught to post-instruction when a teacher reflects on what occurred. In terms of reflection-on-action, a teacher might analyze teaching methodology and practice through journaling, interviewing, reviewing audio/video tapes, analyzing student work, and engaging in dialogue about the lesson. Schon also considers another type of reflective teaching called reflection-in-action, identified as occurring when a teacher tries to understand and solve problems within the context of teaching a lesson. As teachers, it is often necessary to be aware of how students react to the information that is being learned or the way in which it is being taught. Schon defines the adjustments in instruction that take into account “unexpected student reaction or perception” of a lesson as reflection-in-action (p. 14). As a teacher prescribing to reflective action research during my inquiry, I employed both reflection-in and on-action in an attempt to better understand the nature of my inquiry and its effect on my practice.

### Summary

Chapter Two provides the theoretical basis for my study. The research that was analyzed supports the nature of my study in that it outlines methodologies used to begin making curriculum more relevant to students’ interests and concerns. It also discusses the benefits of using collaboration to build students’ feelings of empowerment and engagement within the learning process. Finally, it offers an overview of the structure of action research and how it can be employed in reflective practice. Each of these research

areas propelled my inquiry and helped support my findings as I looked at ways in which I, as a teacher, can collaborate with students and utilize their interests and concerns to create curriculum that is more relevant to their lives.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodologies used to gather information needed to begin answering the research questions posed at the beginning of my inquiry. The primary question to which I am seeking answers is:

- How can teachers use topics related to high school students' interests and concerns to create curriculum that is relevant to students' lives?

Two secondary questions related to my research are:

- How can students act as collaborators in this process?
- And how might this collaboration lead to a heightened sense of student empowerment and participation?

In my search for answers to these questions I came to a greater understanding about the nature of research in a classroom setting. Taking into account the variables that might lead to the success or detriment of a research project I began to realize the importance of understanding the process, as well as the end result of my research. Because of my increased awareness of the fluctuating nature of research and how the means of a project can sometimes lead to another beginning, not just an end point, I decided to formulate another question related to my topic.

- How can I, as a teacher, better understand the importance of this process rather than looking only for a finite end point?

I have broken this chapter into six distinct sections that will offer an in-depth explanation of the methodologies used in my study in an attempt to answer these questions. The sections include Research Process, Qualitative Methodology, Research Setting, Study Participants, Data Collection, and Strengths and Limitations.

### Research Process

Throughout the course of my studies at the University of Arizona I have been acquiring an interest in the idea of *relevance*, and how it can be important to teaching. Of the numerous texts I have read, whether the focus is on postmodernism, gender studies, visual problem solving, or current traditions in schooling, they all incorporate teaching art in ways relevant to students' interests. These beliefs, held by educators with experience teaching in their fields, changed how I feel art can and should be taught.

A foundational belief that I possess is that teachers cannot instruct students objectively on aspects of art and art history. Educators, especially art educators, must teach what is required but in ways that will more effectively engage students. As expressed by educators such as Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr, 1996; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998; Fehr, Fehr, and Keifer-Boyd, 2000; Collins and Sandell, 1996; Lampela and Check, 2003; and Vieth, 1999 and 2004, contextualizing the information so that it relates to students' interests and concerns is one way to accomplish this. As a future art educator, I wanted to take this idea one step further and try to understand how student participation in the planning process, i.e. working with students as collaborators to plan

curriculum, might work to further engage them in their learning. This process became the basis for my study.

Knowing the topic I was going to research, I decided to use my experience as a student teacher to collaborate with students in the age group (high school) that I would ideally like to work with as a future teacher. I felt that the student teaching environment would be perfect for my study because it would be one that was nurturing of my learning process and open to experimentation. My mentor teacher was wonderfully accepting of my project and acted as a sounding board for questions on when to incorporate the group of lessons I had planned, when to distribute the initial questionnaire, and how to structure the questions on the questionnaire in order to elicit more open-ended responses from students. I had permission from the principal to conduct my study in his school and also obtained permission from students who wished to participate and their parents. What I didn't anticipate was the change in direction I would experience during the implementation of the collaborative lesson plan. Rather than complete my study with a polished and finalized collaborative lesson plan, I ended up focusing on understanding the process of collaboration and my role as a teacher in that process.

### Qualitative Methodology

For the purposes of my study, I chose to conduct qualitative research through the method of action research. Action research is a cycle of learning where the researcher is trying to better know their own practice. This cycle traditionally leads the researcher through the following steps:

review our current practice, identify an aspect we want to improve, imagine a way forward, try it out, and take stock of what happens. We modify our plan in the light of what we have found and continue with the 'action,' monitor what we do, evaluate the modified action, and so on until we are satisfied with that aspect of our work. (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 1996, p. 47)

Whitehead (1989) points out that the teachers who engage in action research are aware of themselves as "living contradictions." This means that in some area of their teaching, teachers have noticed a contradiction between what they would like to teach and what they actually find themselves doing in their classrooms. The values that they hold are not being translated into their practice.

Action research complements my research project in that I am trying to understand how to improve an aspect of my practice as an art educator. Specifically, I want to engage students as collaborators in order to create curriculum that is more relevant to their issues and concerns. Action research allows me to investigate the creation of curriculum in this way by working with students as co-researchers or participants in the study who will provide feedback on the process (Stokrocki, 1997). The one aspect of the action research cycle that was not carried out during the course of my study due to time constraints was the act of re-action, or modifying my plan and continuing with the action. After analyzing my data and the implications of my study, I will use my findings to re-act in a future classroom, engaging the collaborative process again until the students and I are satisfied with the process.

## Research Setting

### *The Town*

The setting where I chose to conduct this study was at a high school in a town on the outskirts of a mid-sized southwestern U.S. city. The town where this school is located was originally inhabited by Hohokam Indians. Through the years, the town has expanded beyond ranching and railroad work to include mining copper ore and growing cotton. It has also grown in size. The town of ten square miles was not incorporated until 1977, when it had a population of 1,500 people. Today, the town is nearly 120 square miles and has an estimated population of 20,000. The town's demographics are described on the Community and Economic Development webpage as being a:

population [that] is very diversified, with several neighborhoods of low to moderate-income families, several large regions of middle class working families and some golf communities which are characterized by age-restricted and non-restricted middle to upper income families...[the] percentage growth [of the town] has averaged over forty percent per year over the past ten years.

([www.marana.com/comecodev-demographics.html](http://www.marana.com/comecodev-demographics.html))

The town is also committed to helping its lower class families find affordable housing, and has begun a project that completes one to two homes a year for families in need. In addition, the town is also working with a "comprehensive community-wide substance abuse and violence prevention project" ([tucsonlinks.org](http://tucsonlinks.org)) that aims to reduce the use of methamphetamine and other drugs and illegal substances.

Demographics from a 2000 census report offer more information about the inhabitants of the town. Approximately one-eighth of the population speaks Spanish at home, while over three-quarters speak English. A majority of the town's inhabitants work in managerial and professional positions, while individuals in sales and service-related positions make up the second and third most popular occupations, respectively. The median household income for the area is \$52,870; however, a majority of the population makes below that figure.

#### *The School District*

The school district was founded in the 1920s, and as of 2004 included over 13,000 students, 1,700 employees and 17 schools ([www.maranausd.org/info.html](http://www.maranausd.org/info.html)). The school district is constantly striving for improvement and is currently working on employing only "highly qualified teachers" as defined by No Child Left Behind [NCLB] legislation. At the present, approximately 97 percent of the teachers employed in the district are considered highly qualified. The district believes that these teachers should:

have the necessary depth of knowledge to help children develop deep and meaningful understandings. We know that children are inspired by teachers who are passionate about the content and who engage students in active inquiry and exploration. Teachers with in-depth knowledge of content are better able to make critical instructional decisions that high quality teaching and learning demand.

([www.maranausd.org/community/2005winter.pdf](http://www.maranausd.org/community/2005winter.pdf), p.2)

At the school where I conducted my study, three of the teachers have emergency certification and 96 percent of the core classes are taught by *highly qualified* teachers. The district also emphasizes the importance of ongoing growth and learning of their faculty and offers several professional development opportunities throughout the school year including collaborating with colleagues from other schools in the district.

Information on the district from the state “Report Card” for the 2004-2005 school year states that all of the schools in the district are either *performing*, *highly performing*, or *excelling*. These categories are determined by NCLB and relate to the level of adequate yearly progress the school has made and whether it has met the criteria for percent of students who tested and met the objectives on the AIMS test. These categories also account for how well schools have met the attendance and graduation expectations outlined by NCLB. The school at which I conducted my study is considered to be “performing” by NCLB standards.

With regard to the integration of art into the curriculum, the district has the full support of Superintendent Horne who stated that “we must enrich every student with a thorough exposure to the arts. A student who has not been taught the deeper forms of beauty has not received an education. And numerous studies have shown that students involved in the arts actually perform better in other academic subjects” ([www.ade.state.az.us/asd/arts/initiative.asp](http://www.ade.state.az.us/asd/arts/initiative.asp)). The comprehensive curriculum supported by the district indicates that a:

school curriculum should include all of the content areas covered by [the state’s] Academic K-12 Standards, including the arts. All students will achieve the

essentials level in the four arts disciplines (music, visual arts, theatre and dance) and attain the proficiency level in at least one art form on or before graduation.

([www.ade.state.az.us/standards/arts/arts-rationale.asp](http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/arts/arts-rationale.asp))

This visual art curriculum for the state also stipulates that in order “to be truly educated, one must have knowledge and skills in *Creating Art*, *Art in Context*, and *Art as Inquiry*.”

### *The School*

The school at which I conducted my study has over 1,700 students enrolled. It is nestled in the middle of an open expanse of desert and has had building construction within the last ten years, adding a finished swimming pool and a new gym to the grounds. The school consists of individual buildings with outdoor walkways, allowing the students an open-air experience while traveling from class to class. All buildings are one story except for the old gym/cafeteria, which has an upper level dance studio and weight room. Both the main office and the counseling office are housed in a building separate from the rest, and sit near the road so that individuals wishing to enter the school have to stop there first. The entire campus is fenced in, discouraging unwanted people from coming in during school hours and allowing the staff to keep a tighter watch on students that might want to leave campus during the day. The school and grounds are kept relatively clean, which is somewhat of a surprise considering how many students eat lunch outside and how much dirt can blow in from the surrounding countryside. The school buildings are of a cement block construction and most of the classrooms have low ceilings and are painted white. The exception to this is the art classroom, which actually includes two

spaces that have been joined by one entranceway. The ceilings in these rooms are at least eighteen feet high and one classroom is decorated with a modified handprint motif. The other classroom, and the one in which I student taught, is considering designs for a tile mosaic to be installed on the back wall.

The school has been given several prestigious awards in the past few years including the *A+ School Excellence Award* in 2003 and the *District Teacher of the Year Award* for 2004. The school also received a Smaller Learning Communities Planning Grant from the Federal Government, which they have been using to develop a new curriculum structure that incorporates Smaller Learning Communities. This program, due to be implemented in the fall of 2006, will change the structure of how the school functions academically. Smaller Learning Communities aim to target areas of interest for students and plan instruction according to these areas. Course offerings are centered on a few main subject areas for example, the sciences, the fine arts, or mathematics. Students select one “community” to focus their studies in and all coursework in that community will relate to the topic of choice. For example, if a student were enrolled in the fine arts community, all of their science, math, language arts, and art curriculum would be taught through the vehicle of the various fine art forms, including music, theatre, art, dance, etc. In addition to Smaller Learning Communities, the school is trying a peer mediation program that allows students to first attempt to work out a problem between two parties with a peer, before going to an administrator.

In order to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment, there is also a full-time School Resource Officer on campus, who in addition to increasing safety has

become a friend to many of the students. The school has an attendance rate of 95 percent, a dropout rate of only 6 percent, and a graduation rate of 79 percent. The school has a Future Farmers of America (FFA) program, as well as a program that supports teen parents by providing day care in exchange for the parent(s) working several hours a week with the children. The school also has a strong special education program that involves the students participating in numerous fundraising and performance activities.

In the fine arts department there are two full-time visual arts teachers and one full-time photography teacher. Both of the visual arts teachers have been working to develop new curriculum standards for their classes that are aligned with the content standards of the state. The standards and objectives they have developed are descriptive and in-depth enough to require students' full participation in their learning, while clearly showing students how their efforts will be rewarded.

The teachers put on an annual art display in their classrooms for open house and are currently working on getting display cases installed in the hallway by the main office to showcase student art work. Both teachers are also practicing artists outside of the school – either making and exhibiting their own work or doing commissioned projects for the community. Many of these community projects have been joint endeavors including student volunteers. Upon my first experience visiting the school, I knew that I would enjoy doing my student teaching there. Once inside, the environment and the people that I met kept inviting me to feel welcome and comfortable. I was excited to have the opportunity to conduct my study in this environment and under the guidance of such a wonderful mentor teacher.

### Study Participants

I chose to involve three classes in my study. All three of the classes were given the initial questionnaire, which I will describe in more detail in another section. Two of these classes were chosen because they were the first ones I began teaching when I transitioned from being an observer in the class to being a student teacher. I felt comfortable asking these students to be involved in the study because I had interacted with them the most at the earliest stage of my student teaching. I also felt that because we had interacted early, these students might be willing to put their trust in me and thus participate more fully in my study. The two classes were both ceramics courses, each having a combination of beginning and intermediate-level ceramics students enrolled. One class had 34 students, while the other had 32 students. The students enrolled in each class ranged from sophomores to seniors. The ethnicity of the students was predominantly Caucasian (60 percent), with Hispanic students making up approximately 30 percent of the population. Students of African-American, Asian, and South American descent made up the remaining 10 percent of the population. Forty-six of the students were female and twenty were male.

The class that I asked to participate in the majority of my project was a second year art class (Art 3-4). These students were asked to participate in the initial questionnaire, a bookmaking project, and a final collaborative project. These students were also asked to keep a journal during the collaborative project, and were asked to fill out the final questionnaire at the completion of the project. I chose these students to participate because they were recommended by my mentor teacher as individuals who

might take the project more seriously and be more willing to participate. All of the students in this class were sophomores through seniors, but they differed from students in the ceramics classes in that they had all gone through the first year art course (Art 1-2). Knowing that all of these students had opted to take a second year of art gave me confidence in that they had more experience with art and might bring more knowledge, interest, and self-direction to participating in my study.

I didn't begin teaching these students until the middle of the semester, so when I began the project I didn't have as good of a rapport with them as I did with the ceramics students. However, I was encouraged by their willingness to take art two years in a row. The Art 3-4 class was made up of 34 students – 16 of them female and 18 male. The ethnicity of the students was again predominantly Caucasian (70 percent), with Hispanic students making up approximately 15 percent, and African-American students approximately 11 percent. Asian students made up the remaining 4 percent of the class population.

### Data Collection

I used a variety of methods to collect data for my qualitative study. Stokrocki (1997) refers to using multiple research methods as “triangulation” and believes this process is necessary to qualitative research as it increases the validity of the data gathered. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) believe it is especially important to triangulate data when collaborating with others. By incorporating different views of a single event, an argument can be made stronger if participants' viewpoints corroborate.

In choosing methods of data collection that would triangulate the circumstances of my study, I was also trying to keep the identity of my students anonymous and cause the least interference with their normal course of study. Because of this, I opted to not videotape the class involved in doing the art projects and also chose not to interview individual students. I felt that these methods would interfere too much with the collective class time and would eliminate students' anonymity in the project. The data collection methods that I chose to utilize were participant observation, journaling, questionnaires, preliminary art project, student journaling, and photography.

#### *Participant Observation*

This method of data collection was important to my study in that it allowed me to view the interactions between my mentor teacher and her students and between students themselves before I began teaching. These moments of observation allowed me to see the normal procedures for class instruction, how students responded to this structure, and the type of artwork that was being created. It also allowed me to compare how the lesson was structured in a written format, with how it was literally carried out by the teacher. In addition, I was able to witness how the physical environment of the classroom affected the lesson and how my mentor teacher and the students patterned their movement within this space.

As I was initially trying to keep track of many things at once, both learning from my mentor teacher's interactions with the students and observing information that would be useful for my study, this process of participant observation was fairly informal. After

I had begun working with the Art 3-4 students on the lessons that would be a part of my study, I was able to use this process of observation more as it related to action research. I attempted to reflect on my practice as much as possible during the action of teaching, similar to what Schon (1983) referred to as “reflection-in-action.” During these moments I tried to gauge the students’ responses to my instruction and tailor my interactions with them accordingly. This method of observation became especially useful when coupled with another method of data collection, referred to as journaling.

### *Journaling*

I decided to incorporate journaling, or keeping a “research diary” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 1996) with my observations of the class and my own teaching practice. I followed several of McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead’s (1996) suggestions on how to organize my journal, deciding to use it for three primary purposes: to illustrate general points including “thick descriptions which enable a reader to empathize with a situation,” to record raw data that could later be “subjected to analysis,” and to “chart the progress of [my] action research including successful and unsuccessful action and the personal learning that emerges from reflection on this” (p. 88).

Much of the data that was recorded in my journal was informal in nature. I used it to reflect on my observations after witnessing my mentor teacher instruct the class, to record my plans for instruction and collaboration with the Art 3-4 students, and to reflect on the progress of our collaborative efforts. My journal was also a place to record my general feelings about the student teaching process, what I was learning as a teacher that I

would like to embody in the future, observations of the students' behaviors and hypothesized reasons for their actions, and reflections on how the other lessons I was teaching were progressing. In addition, I used my journal to reflect upon what I believed was my presence in the classroom and how it might be affecting my interactions with the students. All of these entries informed my reflections on the process of teaching and the results of my efforts to collaborate with students to create a lesson plan involving their interests and concerns.

### *Questionnaires*

I administered two different questionnaires during the course of my study, both of which were approved by my mentor teacher prior to distributing among the students (see Appendix A). She assisted me in altering my questions so that they would be more student-friendly with regard to language and thus be easier to understand. She also helped me structure questions that would allow me to gather information more specifically related to my study, and directed me away from questions that might allow students to provide information that was more revealing than I would want to deal with during this particular study. For this reason, I included a verbal and written warning to students when administering the initial questionnaire that they be cognizant of the information they were providing, knowing that I was required to report any information that was suspicious or revealing in nature.

McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) offer two scenarios when administering a questionnaire is justified: when one needs "to find out basic information that cannot be

ascertained otherwise,” and “to evaluate the effect of an intervention when it is inappropriate to get feedback in another way” (p. 98). Following McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead’s initial reasoning, I chose to give students the preliminary questionnaire because I was new to the environment as a student teacher and hadn’t yet had much interaction with the students. This first questionnaire was given to the three art classes mentioned previously: two ceramics classes and one Art 3-4 class. The purpose of this initial questionnaire was to gather information from students about some of their interests and concerns both outside of school and related to school issues. The questionnaire attempted to be open-ended in order to avoid leading students in their answers and offer them the freedom to interpret the questions as they saw fit. I was advised by my mentor teacher to administer the initial questionnaire soon after the start of the school year because she believed the students would be more likely to respond honestly if they hadn’t yet had a chance to form peer bonds and thus be tempted to impress their friends with their answers and potential humor. The initial questionnaire allowed me to gather information from students that I could use for future aspects of my study.

The second questionnaire was administered only to the Art 3-4 students and came at the very end of the collaborative portion of my study. This questionnaire was given following McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead’s reasoning that it is faster and less intrusive to the normal course of instruction to administer a questionnaire than to conduct individual interviews with students. This final questionnaire also attempted to be open-ended, allowing freedom of interpretation and a variety of responses to be given by students. The questionnaire asked students to reflect on the collaborative lesson planning

process and offer their insights on areas that were successful and those that could be improved upon. Both questionnaires were informative in that the first one provided information that could be used for future planning, and the second one allowed the students to share their perspectives on the process and outcomes of the study.

### *Preliminary Art Project*

I chose to include a preliminary art project as part of the data collection in that it added to my knowledge of the students' interests and concerns in a visual, rather than a written, format. It also prepared students for the final collaborative project. I had only recently begun teaching the Art 3-4 students when I asked them to participate in this project as part of the normal course of instruction. The preliminary art project focused on the art of bookbinding and the study of zines, which are "self-published periodicals with small press runs, often photocopied, frequently irreverent, and usually appealing to audiences with highly specialized interests" (zinebook.com). Zines can be "extraordinary and ordinary...obsessed with obsession," and offer narratives that are "more personal and idiosyncratic than glossy magazines" (zinebook.com). I asked all students in the class to participate and made them aware that the information gathered would be used for the collaborative portion of the study.

I had written a lesson plan for the project that was aligned with state content standards, and incorporated objectives that fit in with the learning objectives of the art program (see Appendix B). Students were first asked to learn a bookbinding stitch in order to make their own small journal. They were then asked to create a narrative that

used both visual imagery and written text, to illustrate how they would choose to solve a problem that they had posed earlier relating to an issue that concerned them. The other option given to students was to narrate “a day in the life” of themselves, where through their mundane or extraordinary daily happenings they would provide insight into what they do on a daily basis. This project was successful as a resource in gathering further information into students’ interests and concerns in a format that was perhaps more organic than a questionnaire. A potential limitation of the bookbinding project is that students might not have taken it seriously knowing that it was being used to gather information for a future project regarding my study, rather than it being given as a graded, or “normal,” assignment.

### *Student Journaling*

In addition to completing the initial questionnaire and participating in the preliminary art project, I asked the class of Art 3-4 students to keep journals during the collaborative part of the study. I was interested in learning how students perceived the process of collaboration and how that might differ from my perception of the situation. I also wanted the students to keep a journal during the process so that their responses to the situation could be more immediate. Students were asked to record their responses to questions I posed on the white-board every three or four days. Some of the questions students were asked to respond to were:

- What was your initial opinion of being presented with the option of designing your own project as a class?

- What are some of the benefits to deciding the direction of your own project?
- What are some of the challenges?
- How has free choice affected your motivation during this assignment?

In total, students responded to six questions that related to the process of collaboration and their perceptions of their own role in the classroom (see Appendix C).

### *Photography*

The final method of data collection used in my study was photography. I decided to utilize photography for its ability to record and document events that can later be evaluated. Rob Walker (1993) states several ways in which photography can be incorporated into research. One of the methods he offers that was useful to my study includes how photography can “provide evidence that an event has taken place.” I had opted to refrain from using more intrusive methods of collecting data that would readily identify the student participants such as audio or video recording however, I still wanted a way to record projects students had completed to allow me to analyze their progress after my student teaching practicum had come to an end. Once the process of collecting data and collaborating with students for my study was complete, I photographed the bookbinding project and the collaborative final project. All identifying factors have been eliminated to allow for anonymity of students in my presentation of photographic data.

## Strengths and Limitations

### *Strengths*

As outlined in McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) and Stokrocki (1997), the multiple methods of data collection I chose to use during my study will allow for the triangulation of data and thus will work collectively to increase the validity of my findings. The questionnaires I administered to students were worded in such a way that they attempted to allow for the most open-ended interpretations. My journaling process was informal yet focused on the issues I learned about, regarding my own teaching process as well as information I gleaned before I began teaching about the structure of the classroom and my mentor teacher's interaction with students. The bookbinding project provided secondary data in a visual format that was central to students' issues and concerns, and could be used as an additional resource for the final collaborative project. Student journaling was a way to encourage the immediate recording of opinion and response to the project and was different from, yet added to, the final questionnaire which allowed students the opportunity to respond to the collaborative process in a more reflective manner.

### *Limitations*

The questionnaires were handed out early in the school year in hopes that students would respond more honestly and thoughtfully to the questions. However, there were some students who did not take the questionnaire seriously and responded more with humor or sarcasm. With regard to students' responses on their questionnaires, it should

be noted that the responses are not universal and do not attempt to stand for responses that would be given by all high school art students. Responses reflect the interests and concerns of three specific classes of art students in a specific environment. Although I aimed to make the questions as open-ended as possible, there is the potential that students may have felt directed to respond in a certain way being that the questionnaires were administered by a teacher-figure in a structured environment.

Although they are informative as they relate to my project, my journal entries should also be recognized as the perspective of one individual responding to one particular situation, and can be regarded as subjective in nature. Students' journal entries are also subjective and relate to specific questions they were asked with regard to the process of collaboration. However, students of a different population, in a different setting, might not have responded in the same way.

I think the most important thing to point out with regard to my data is that it was collected during my student teaching practicum. The students were interacting with a new teacher and being asked to participate in volunteering personal information. I was new to both the classroom environment and working with the students, and therefore my experience, preparedness and nerves could have played a role in the success of my collaborative interactions with students and their desire to trust me in the process of collaboration.

### Summary

Chapter Three outlines the methods of data collection used during my study and provides rationale for their use. In addition, this chapter provides the strengths and limitations of using the data collection methods I have described and how they may have affected the potential outcome of my study. Chapter Four will present the summarized data from my study. Chapter Five will provide an analysis with relation to my research questions and address the study's implications to the field of art education.

## CHAPTER FOUR THE PROJECT: A PRESENTATION OF DATA

### Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of relevant data gathered during the course of my study. The setting in which the project was conducted was a high school art classroom that instructed students on all levels in introductory and intermediate art history and techniques. The specific classes chosen to participate in the study were one Art 3-4 class and two Ceramics classes. These classes consisted of students from 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. No ninth grade students were involved in the study. This chapter sequentially follows the process of preparing for and executing the collaborative project that was undertaken. It is divided into two sections, the first of which explores my role in the classroom as I transitioned from being an observer to being an action researcher. The second section focuses more on the students' responses to the collaborative portion of the study.

The first section, which aims to portray the environment in which I conducted my project, details my experiences as both an observer and action researcher through a series of *thick descriptions* (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 1996), and is accordingly divided into two parts. In the first part, I begin with an account of my mentor teacher's interactions with students at the beginning of the school year, who will later be participants in my study. The selections chosen for this section highlight the observed interaction between my mentor teacher and her students and intend to offer a general idea of the classroom atmosphere and the type of teacher/student exchanges that occurred in

the classroom during instruction. It is important to note that these selections were taken from my notes during the first few weeks of school at the beginning of a new year. This section presents my perceptions of my mentor teacher's teaching style and that which will come to be considered "normal" by the students, setting a standard for future expected teacher/student interactions. Through observation of student response to my mentor teacher's style, I begin to understand the relationship between teacher and students in this classroom before I begin student teaching. For ease of presenting this data and to conceal the identity of my mentor teacher, I will refer to her in this section as "Joan."

The second part of this section is made up from reflections of my experiences as an action researcher. These short excerpts are descriptive and detail my interaction with students (both successful and not) and offer examples of my reflections of lessons taught to students prior to conducting my study. These excerpts begin to explain my role in the classroom and will be helpful in later analyzing my effectiveness in planning, preparedness and execution of the collaborative portion of the project. Data for these segments was collected through observation and journaling.

The second section of this chapter outlines the project as steps in a collaborative process and portrays the resultant data gathered from students from all aspects of the collaborative portion of my study. The data was selected in order to present a range of responses received from students and offers well-rounded examples that both support the aims of my project and shed light on areas of needed improvement. The data is presented

in the order it was gathered and is divided into five categories: initial questionnaire, preliminary art project, art topics and tools, student journaling, and final questionnaire.

In addition, I have added an account taken from my journal during the act of collaborating with students that revisits the process of reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983). This section is included between the presentation of data gathered from student journaling and the final questionnaire. This journal entry will provide a broader picture of my experiences with this project as a teacher and co-collaborator.

This chapter also offers a brief commentary on the results from each section. A more in depth analysis of the reflections recorded in my journal during the process of conducting this research, as well as of students' responses gathered through all methods of data collection, will be elaborated upon in Chapter Five. That chapter will also address the implications of my study to the field of art education.

### Section One: From Observer to Action Researcher

#### *Part One: Adapting To a New Teaching Environment*

The following three passages are accounts from my journal from observations of Joan teaching during the first few weeks of the new school year. These selections aim to shed light on the type of teacher-student interactions that occur in the classroom prior to my conducting my study. They also suggest the learning environment Joan has established for the students and describe her personal interactions with them.

*Journal Entry 8/17/05*

My mentor teacher, Joan, is introducing a new lesson today to a class of Art 3-4 students, all who have taken a year of art before. Joan begins instruction by standing in the front of the room. Most of the students sit clustered in groups of four around large round tables and face her, however, others who have their backs to her don't turn around. The lesson Joan is introducing centers around the artist Keith Haring and his line drawings. She begins the lesson by showing the class a video but prefaces it with a handout, guiding students through the questions they will be asked to answer during the film. She also takes this time to remind the students not to fall asleep and instead to bring their chairs closer to the front of the room if they can't see.

While watching the video, I notice several students talking, however for the most part, the class of thirty-six students are being quiet and watching the video. When students do talk, I notice that Joan doesn't look up from her desk at the front of the room. After the video, Joan begins to go through the questions from the handout with the class. Joan gently reprimands those students who occasionally interrupt the flow of the lesson by telling the class, "Maybe you can get out of here early today if I don't have to take up all of your time getting you to be quiet." Students seem to respond to this line of reasoning and begin to get quiet. Joan waits until the class is completely silent before she begins talking again.

During the remainder of the lesson there is playful banter back and forth between Joan and the students. She has had many of these students in class before and they feel comfortable joking with her. Joan usually teases them back but in a playful, motherly way. At the end of the class period, Joan ends up letting the students out two minutes early.

Through watching a series of classes where Joan has to deal with students who are misbehaving, I have learned that her methods are varied. Sometimes she demands or pleads for the class's attention, although always remaining friendly and kind. Other times she talks to the class quietly, civilly, and patiently in order to get their attention. She said she doesn't ever yell or get mad because it doesn't seem to make a difference in the behavior of the student and the teacher just ends up getting frustrated. She considers herself a laid back teacher and claims that her best method of discipline is to pester students who aren't behaving and annoy them enough in a motherly way that they want to get back on task. There were only a couple of incidences during the whole of my student teaching experience where Joan had to discipline a student more severely and even that was done in a civil and kind manner. Because Joan aims to make all students feel welcome and as though they can achieve in her classroom and teaches with what appears to be a loving yet firm sense of control, she says really doesn't see many discipline problems in her classroom.

*Journal Entry 8/19/05*

Today the first period class of Art 3-4 students gets started about five minutes late. The class comes in, sits down, and starts talking. Joan is getting the final touches organized for the lesson. When she is ready to begin, she asks them to quiet down and they quickly do. It is the second day the class has been working on line drawing and Joan decides to initiate a discussion of some of the elements and principles of design (line, shape, value, texture, emphasis, contrast, and unity) by drawing the students' attention to the posters hanging on one of the side walls of the classroom. During this segment of the lesson she asks the students a lot of questions regarding how to use these elements in their drawings. Joan also gives very distinct examples of what the students should draw: for example *hair* or *tribal designs*, and also shows the students examples of exceptional work done in prior classes. Approximately half of the class period is discussion-based and students are given the remaining class time to continue working on their line drawings.

While the students are working, Joan sometimes walks around the classroom or even sits down with a group of students and starts talking about their families, asking them about their parents, their siblings, their jobs, etc. She believes it is important to know her students as people, and as she has had many of the students and their relatives in class before she feels a strong connection to some of them and is genuinely concerned for their well being.

From observing Joan in these early weeks of school I have learned the importance of establishing a good rapport with the students. This can most easily be done by using some of the time when students are working individually on projects to sit with a table and begin to get to know them. As several students will take repeated art classes it would be beneficial to learn more about them as people with particular interests in order to better cater to their needs and learning styles in future projects.

*Journal Entry 10/19/05*

The Art 3-4 students are continuing to work on their new project, Monochromatic Paintings. They have been working on this project for a couple of weeks, first doing a rough draft of a still-life of flowers in pencil; and now some of the students are beginning to do their final drafts using only black and white paint. Joan worked very closely with the students at the beginning of the project when getting them started, and now only walks around the room occasionally to monitor students' progress.

I have noticed that when she isn't walking around to check on them, several students are sitting and talking all period and not doing any work on their art projects. Other times, as a participant observer, I have approached students who are sitting and not working to try to understand why they aren't doing anything only to find out that they didn't know what to do. I feel that part of this problem is the fact that students sit at round tables and thus a few students naturally have their backs to the front of the room. Some of these students choose

not to turn around when instruction is being given, even when they are asked. Because of this I think several students miss initial and detailed instruction regarding assignments. I also have noticed that the students themselves tend to be less than proactive in asking for help. Some appear to almost prefer not doing an assignment to having to request further clarification or help with understanding a technique.

In acting as a participant observer I have several times been frustrated by what appears to be a lack of motivation on the part of the students. The question that begs to be asked is, “why don’t students appear to be motivated?” From my experiences working with these students I have concluded that it usually isn’t what the *students* aren’t doing but rather what the *teacher* isn’t doing that leads to this lack of motivation. What is missing from instruction that could help students better participate in assignments?

My experiences of observing Joan during the early weeks of the school year helped establish ideals of desired teacher-student interactions, introduced some of the challenges of teaching classes that are large where not every student appears invested in learning, and raised questions about how to help students become more motivated to learn. This time spent being a participant observer also allowed me to begin to interact with students and start to develop my own rapport with them. It also helped me realize how difficult and involved the act of teaching can be and all of the considerations that need to be taken into account to teach lessons that provide students with important art knowledge and that will get their attention and engage them.

*Part Two: Interactions with Students and My Role in the Classroom*

After a few weeks of observing Joan, it became my turn to begin teaching. During these initial lessons I often would make notes, either while in the process of teaching or immediately after class, regarding the day-to-day activities that were successful or problems I encountered either with student understanding of a specific aspect of the project or student behavior. I would also write more reflective entries at the end of a lesson that would evaluate the successful areas of the entire project and also try to establish areas that needed more clarification. These entries were useful when examined with students' visual output regarding a specific assignment to gauge the success of a lesson.

The first project I taught was with a Ceramics class. The project was based on ancient pottery and archeology and required that students recreate a form based on ancient pottery from examples shown during a powerpoint lecture. Students were then asked to imagine a contemporary use for the pot where the students' choice of surface decoration and texture would clue a viewer into this revised purpose or function. Choice of glaze and color scheme were also important to the outcome of the project. In teaching this project I hoped to introduce students to ancient and historical forms of pottery from a variety of cultures and to encourage them to imagine how things we use today might be based on forms and functions from the past (see Appendix D). The following three selections from my journal describe my reflections during the teaching of this project.

*Journal Entry 9/7/05*

Today was my second day of teaching my first lesson to a class of second period Ceramics students. I had planned a lesson on Ancient Pottery and Archeology where the students were introduced to ancient pots from cultures around the world. They were asked to take part in an archeological “dig” and then come up with a design for a pot that would incorporate the shape of the shard they dug up. The students were also asked to come up with a contemporary use for their pot and use texture, design, and shape to help convey this purpose.

It was the beginning of the class period and already the class was not going well. Some students were working on their drawings, others, however, were reading the paper, talking, or fighting with one another. When I asked students about the progress of their design, some were responding with heavy sarcasm, mocking, and/or disinterest. Even the students who normally were very well behaved and engaged in the class were doing homework for other classes. Other students who had only just started building their pots out of clay claimed they were almost done with the assignment. Another boy, who is repeatedly off task, was complaining that his clay was too dry and had crumpled it into a giant ball in front of him on the table. It seemed like every student was talking, not working, or would be rude when I approached to ask them questions.

I felt trapped in my ability to confront the students by the constraints set forth in what I perceived as the relaxed approach to discipline they had become accustomed to. Part of me felt that if Joan didn't have a problem with the

students being off task, then what right did I have to change their structure of how classroom time can be used. I was only halfway through the class period when I was already doubting my abilities as a teacher and making plans for my escape after class.

After class, Joan could tell that I was upset and managed to grab me before I fled to the teachers' bathroom for sanctuary. She said that it wasn't me, and that she noticed that the kids were being "rude" and "squirrely." She offered that sometimes they maybe don't like the project, don't understand it, or are simply *trying* to be difficult. She also advised that when she has a student who is really testing her patience or is refusing to work; she will take them aside and ask them what is going on: do they really not like the class or the project? She also reminds the students that they elected to be in art class and thus should do the work; they could have taken a theatre or music class. She suggested I try to see what can be done one-on-one and then offered encouragement by saying that for all of the students in a class who make it known that they don't want to be there, there will be a handful of students who want to learn absolutely everything you have to share. That is the reward of being a teacher.

Although the talk with Joan did help me feel better about the previous class period, I couldn't help but feel I could have done something to better prevent the circumstances from escalating as much as they did. I wondered how the structure of my lesson and my responses to students' behavior might have contributed to students' lack of

interest in and motivation to be on task. What kind of relationship with students was I establishing as a teacher and how might that affect the act of collaboration that was to take place later in the semester?

*Journal Entry 9/8/05*

Second period Ceramics went much better today. I admit that I was apprehensive about facing this group of students again but I was also determined that it was not going to be a repeat of the day before. I began class by having *all* of the students get out of their chairs and *physically* come up and stand by me. Yesterday I had given them the option bringing their chairs up to the front of the room and closer to the television while watching the power point presentation and it is likely that in not doing so many of them missed important information from the slides. I then did a demonstration on how to create a pot: starting with a pinch pot and gradually building up the sides with coils to achieve the desired shape. The demonstration took about fifteen minutes during which the entire class was quiet and paid attention. After the demonstration they went back to their seats and got to work. I spent the remainder of the class time walking around to all of the tables and helping some students individually, and was pleasantly surprised to see *all* of the students working.

What I have learned most about teaching from my experiences with the ceramics class is the importance of being able to give students sufficient direction in teaching them

*all* of the steps in the process in order for them to be successful. From the perspective of one who already knows the material being taught and how to work with a specific media, it is easy to lose sight of the need to take the time to teach even the most basic of steps for student understanding. Being a new teacher, I don't think I initially understood the importance of this concept. I am learning that more often than not, it is what the teacher is leaving *out* of instruction that affects how well students can accomplish a given project. Although I feel this is a very important aspect of teaching, I think it is one that is sometimes hard to accomplish, especially when one is new to a teaching environment and isn't fully aware of the different abilities of the students.

*Journal Entry 9/16/05*

Reflecting on the effectiveness of the process and subsequent outcomes of the Ancient Pottery and Archeology lesson plan I would make the following changes for the future: I would more strictly enforce the goals of the project of having students closely replicate the forms of ancient pottery but still have them apply innovative contemporary functions. Throughout the course of the project and sensing some students' lack of enthusiasm, I relaxed this goal to match the students' productivity levels. Due to the amount of surface design (or lack thereof) that adorned the outside of students' final pots I would change the lesson to make surface texture a necessary component of the lesson with the *option* of adding pictorial imagery.

I would also begin the lesson with a demonstration on the first or second day. Students initially seemed very confused about how they should create an ancient looking pot and were not sure what to do until they were given more information during the demonstration. Lastly, I would require students to do thumbnails before settling on one idea for their pot and also ask them to write something relating to the process or function of their vessel to hold them more accountable for their finished product and their effort towards the project.

Along with the changes I would make, there are also certain things that went well during this project that made me realize that certain aspects of it were successful: Without as much direction as anticipated, some students really adhered to following the forms of the ancient pottery we studied while making their own pots with beautiful results. Secondly, after the demonstration, most students seemed more engaged with the project and were also attempting to create larger work than they might otherwise have been willing to try. In addition, the openness of this project allowed for students' freedom of expression in terms of the forms they desired to create and the intended functions they gave to their pots which was evidenced by the variety of their completed work.

This entry demonstrates how being a reflective practitioner could be used to improve one's practice and interactions with students. During this lesson I found it helpful to comment on the progress of the lesson and students' responses to it as it was occurring. I was able to later draw on these entries to understand at what point the lesson

may have been confusing or students seemed to “hit a wall” in terms of their motivation to complete the project and then consider changes to be made for future instruction. This process of journaling and reviewing comments made during the course of the lesson is one that would later help me better understand the process of collaboration as I began to work with Art 3-4 students on my research project.

### Section Two: Students’ Responses to Collaboration

This section is composed of the results gathered from the various methods of data collection utilized during my study. These methods are initial questionnaire, preliminary art project, art topics and tools, student journaling, and final questionnaire. Each of the five areas offers a brief summary of how they contributed to the study and gives examples of how students’ responded to that aspect of research. For example, if students were asked to fill out a questionnaire, samples of their answers are given. For the section where students were asked to participate in the bookbinding project, samples of student work are shown and described. This section also offers an initial analysis of the data gathered from each of the five areas of the project. In addition, this section includes one personal entry, taken from my journal during the course of the project. This entry has been included to illuminate my personal response to the nature and progression of the research project and also to readdress the importance of action research to my overall understanding of the project and the part I play within it.

### *Initial Questionnaire*

At the beginning of the semester I administered an initial questionnaire to students in three art classes: 1<sup>st</sup> period Art 3-4, 2<sup>nd</sup> period Ceramics, and 5<sup>th</sup> period Ceramics. Although there were 100 students enrolled in these three classes I was only able to use the data of the 35 who signed and returned the consent forms. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather general information about students' interests and concerns as well as learn more about their interactions with friends and family in terms of the types of activities they participated in and the relationships they had with those close to them. I was also interested in finding out more about students' perceptions of their role in the classroom as the nature of my study asked students to potentially redefine those roles. The questionnaire consisted of nine questions, some of which were divided into multiple parts. The students were given approximately twenty minutes to fill out the questionnaire knowing that their answers would be used to direct future lesson planning. The following is a list of the questions asked and a summary of the responses given.



<p>What is your favorite thing to do with them?</p>	<p>Some also listed the type of relationship they had with that person such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person to joke around with</li> <li>• Strong in trust</li> <li>• Loving</li> <li>• “Friendly”</li> <li>• A close friendship</li> </ul> <p>Students responded in a variety of ways. Some of the more popular answers listed follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooking</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Talking about life/getting out problems</li> </ul>
<p>Question four: What was the most interesting thing you did over summer vacation?</p>	<p>In response to this question many students stated that their favorite summer activity was going on vacation to another state or country. Other popular responses were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Went to a variety of camps</li> <li>• Worked</li> <li>• Spent time with family</li> <li>• Two people left this question blank</li> </ul>
<p>Question five: Do you volunteer? If yes, where?</p>	<p>While the majority of students left this question blank, others stated that they volunteered at places such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MADD</li> <li>• Food bank</li> <li>• Animal shelter</li> <li>• Fire department</li> <li>• Nursing home</li> <li>• Church</li> </ul>
<p>Question six: What local issue are you concerned with or would you like to know more about?</p>	<p>Students answered with a thoughtful range of responses, some of which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicide</li> <li>• Drug use</li> <li>• Growing population rate</li> <li>• War in Iraq</li> <li>• Immigration policies</li> <li>• Seven people left this question blank</li> </ul>



	<p>grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn as much a possible and try hardest to succeed</li> <li>• Three people left this question blank</li> </ul>
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TABLE 4.1- Initial Questionnaire regarding students' interests and concerns

Students' responses from the questionnaire began to allow me to see the varied personalities of my students in vivid detail. It also introduced me more thoroughly to issues that were of interest to them outside of what is normally studied in school. Some of the students took the questionnaire seriously and others seemed to not care about answering the questions thoughtfully and either left them blank or wrote in "silly" answers that didn't pertain to the questions which I have refrained from including. Students' responses from this initial questionnaire were used to direct the nature of future aspects of the collaborative project, the next of which was engaging students in a bookbinding art project.

#### *Preliminary Art Project*

Only one class was chosen to participate in this and the subsequent parts of the project. The Art 3-4 students were selected due to the frequency of my contact with them and upon the recommendation of my mentor teacher. Joan believed that most Art 3-4 students would be willing to take additional aspects of the project more seriously in that they were a little older (freshmen could not enroll in the class), and knew the school and many of the people in it. This class was also the only one that was a second year art class, thus demonstrating the students' willingness to be enrolled in art and participate.

Of the 34 students enrolled in this class, I was able to include the data gathered from the 17 students who signed and returned the consent forms.

This art project was constructed as a way to build upon the initial questionnaire in order to gather additional information relating to students' interests and concerns but allow them to express themselves in a visual rather than a written format. I chose to teach a lesson on the art of bookbinding and incorporated aspects of visual and popular culture through the study of zines and comic books in order to encourage students' interest in the project. I also chose to do a comic based project because I wanted the design of the lesson to be based on a format that some students might already be familiar with. Each student was asked to create an illustrated story with additional text that addressed *one* of the following areas:

1. If you were a superhero, decide what your powers would be and how you would use them to effect change in the world, your town, or your school.
2. Tell a visual story of an important life moment.
3. Create a visual journal to express "a day in the life of yourself."
4. Describe a social, political, or personal issue that you are concerned with (in story form) and suggest ways you would deal with the problem.

Students were asked to follow a particular format for laying out their stories using at least one image per page. Students' narratives needed to contain at least six images and relate to a personal area of interest or concern. Following are some images of books students created along with a statement of what their story was about.

For his narrative, "John" chose to describe a social problem that concerned him. He told the story of "a girl who died...taking drugs [while] trying to make herself

happy.” John created a poem for his book that related to the collaged images he found. John spent time scouring popular women’s magazines for letters and partial images to use for his book. He eventually turned to the internet to gather additional images for the inside pages. The people in the color images he selected differ from page to page and result in the representation of an ambiguous figure. In a way, his book is relaying that the woman he writes about could be anyone: any student, any child, or any friend. The interior images are hazy (partially because they are downloaded from the internet) and present a slightly skewed version of the reality that is depicted. This complements John’s theme of the ruin of a life using drugs. The layout and design of John’s book is simplified in order to draw the viewer’s attention to the interplay between the words of his poem and the images he has selected. These images, “some beautiful and some frightening,” illustrate the visual downfall of the story’s character:

Stacy starts her final day, with all precaution thrown away.

She takes the drug to make her free, but death is all she’ll truly see.

The “glamour” is invisible, to everyone but her.

And life is now a spinning dream, a dizzy, nauseous blur.

She doesn’t care what her mother thinks; she’s never met her dad.

This life was pretty hard on her, and this trip was just as bad.

She took the pill to make her free; she needed that pill to make her see:

That she herself, was worth so much more, than sleeping behind that  
coffin door.

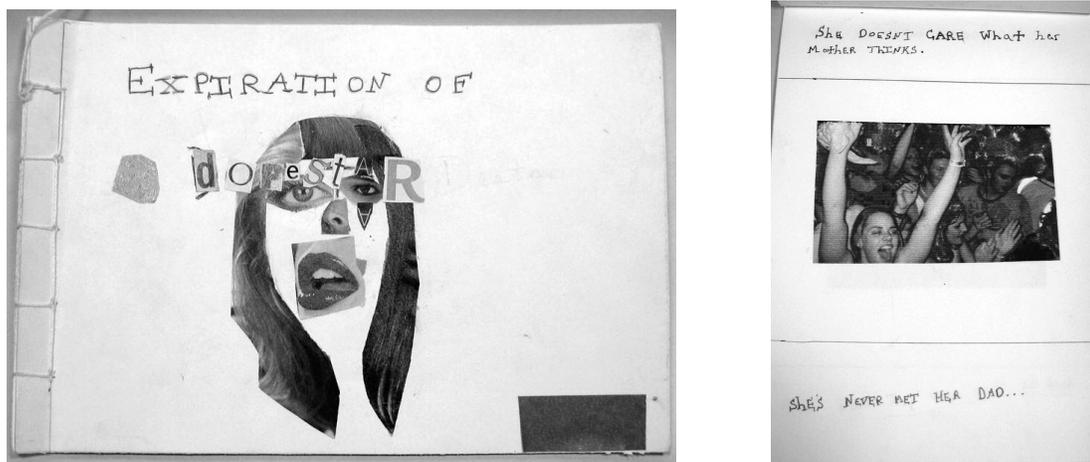


FIGURE 4.1- “John’s” bookmaking project

For her bookmaking project, “Sarah” chose to tell “the story of [her] weekday mornings.” Differing from John’s, the narrative she chose to tell is more comical. Sarah’s images are graphic and almost cartoon-like in design with each part of a scene outlined in bold, black lines. Compositionally, the viewer’s eyes are led around each image by following the areas of color which draw emphasis to the focal point on each page; in this case, the sleepy student and her reluctance to acknowledge the passage of time. While most of Sarah’s illustrations show representational depictions of the objects in them, the scene of her mother screaming, “Wake up!” uses an abstracted and simplified version of a person to show how much of an intrusion her presence is to Sarah’s preferred morning routine. Sarah created a decorative cover for her book that only hints at the story that will be told inside. Perhaps the flower, heart and sequins are symbols for the desired dream state Sarah wishes to remain in rather than waking for school each day.



FIGURE 4.2- “Sarah’s” bookmaking project

“Mike” decided to tell his narrative through a detailed account of a superhero that effects change on the world. Mike used as his protagonist, “D.J. the half-human, half-god.” In this story, D.J. betters the world by confronting those who commit crimes and uses non-fatal tactics to achieve justice. Mike’s illustrations are graphic and sequentially tell how D.J. catches a man who has stolen a purse from an unsuspecting woman and forces him to give it back. Unlike the other two stories, Mike used only line and value to capture details, omitting color completely. Shading is employed to add visual interest and sometimes depth to the background of his scenes. Compositionally, the action of the story takes place all over the visual plane, from a fight scene hugging the bottom edge of the paper to a final confrontation taking place on the left edge of the page. These placement choices allow the viewer to see a broader expanse of what is happening in the background of the scene. In addition, Mike keeps his viewer’s interest by shifting from

far away views to close-up views of the action and allows the viewer to witness up close, important aspects of the story (for example, when D.J. slices the antagonists gun in half with his knife).

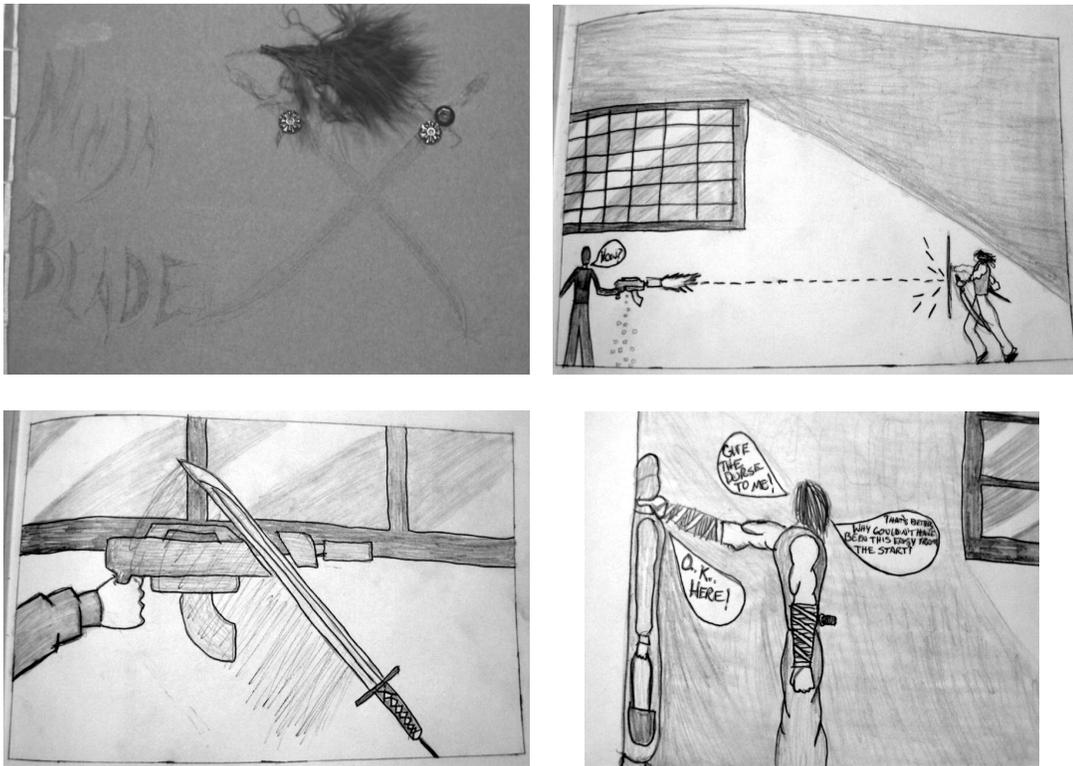


FIGURE 4.3- “Mike’s” bookmaking project

The students seemed to really enjoy this project and created a varied body of work as a class. The books I chose to include in this chapter represent the categories students could choose from when selecting a direction for their project. Several students opted to write about and illustrate “a day in the life” of themselves, although a few students like Mike chose to tell how they would alter their world, their town, or their school using

super human powers. John was the only student who chose to narrate a social problem that concerned him. Some of the students only partially completed the project or did not complete it at all.

### *Art Topics and Tools*

After the bookbinding project was complete, I gathered all of the information acquired from the students regarding topics of interest and concern to them and created a large chart that detailed their responses:

#### Areas of Interest:

- Hobbies: listening to music; playing sports; volunteering; making art; reading/writing; working on cars; dancing/singing; riding quads; jewelry making
- Global: natural disasters; war; AIDS/STDs; poverty; hunger; violence; pollution
- Local: cops; wanting more things to do; poverty/homelessness; politics; suicide; roads; gangs; violence; appearance of the town; pollution; population rate
- School: classes being boring; smaller learning communities; appearance; time between classes; people; discipline/rules; violence/hatred; cleanliness; food
- Role as a Student: be respectful; work; help others with their work; be a good listener; be quiet; pretend to pay attention; try to pass (worry about self only); don't see a role; student (someone who learns)

I had included students' responses about their perceived role in the classroom on the chart to remind them that the nature of this lesson was different from how they are normally asked to learn in the classroom. The next portion of my study involved asking students to reflect on their areas of interest and concern in order to engage them in collaborating to create a lesson plan. I decided that to more fully understand what they wanted to learn I would also try incorporating the materials and tools they might potentially like to use for

their project. Several days before the collaborative aspect of the project began, I asked students to write down suggestions for topics they were particularly interested in or subjects they might like to learn about in art class that hadn't been covered before as well as make a list of materials they would like to use. Following is a list of students' responses that was added to the list mentioned above and hung on the wall at the beginning of the collaborative project:

Art Related Areas of Interest: surrealism; impressionism; still life; learning to draw better; perfect shading; learning how to better express self in drawing; stippling; learning to draw people

Materials: Papier mache; clay; paint (oil, acrylic, watercolor); sculpture; pen and ink; fabric

On the day that collaborating to determine a lesson plan was to begin, all students brought their chairs to the side of the room where the chart was hung and one student, Mike, volunteered to record students' responses. Using this list to base the collaborative project on, students began suggesting the structure for the lesson plan.

The first decision to be made was the topic for the lesson plan. After several prompts were given asking for *all* students to participate, suggestions started to flow and Mike tried to keep up on the corresponding wall chart. After ten minutes of discussion and waiting for students to respond, reminding them that I was not going to *tell* them what to do, we had a list of topics to choose from. Some students seemed very excited to be able to give their opinion about what they would like to do while others sat quietly waiting for the next step of the process. In the following section the first number in parenthesis after a given topic relates to the initial number of students who voted on that

topic. These numbers were used to narrow down the initial list of eight topics. The second number in parenthesis after the initial number refers to the number of students who voted for that topic in the second round, narrowing the decision to two choices.

After much discussion and two rounds of voting, the class was split between creating a 2-D expressive mural using any combination of materials desired and creating an expressive tee-shirt design. After debating whether or not to choose one topic over another I decided I would allow both topics as options for the project and let students determine which one they would do. As a class we also determined a loose set of goals for the project, a list of potential materials the students could use, and a time frame that stated when the project needed to be complete. Students also suggested a list of responsibilities they would follow during the course of the project. The process of determining the topic and laying out the guidelines for the project took approximately two fifty minute class periods.

During this collaborative discussion phase, I attempted to guide students in their choices by asking them to refer back to their collective list of interests on the chart to help them find a focus for their decision-making. I also reminded students that they could and should use these areas of interest to guide their individual works especially if they were having trouble determining a place to start. In addition, I acted as a mediator and encouraged all students to participate in the discussion of potential topics and the voting process although there were still some students who opted not to participate. The following is the outline for the lesson plan that was decided upon through the

collaborative process by the students and myself and was left hanging on the wall for the duration of the project.

Topic: 2-D combination mural (6) (10); illustrate a quote; 3-D sculpture (6) (7); gingerbread mosaic; carving wood sculpture; 2-D things people are afraid of; expressive tee shirt design (8) (9); nature drawing (3).

Goals: expressing yourself; create original artwork based on personal experience; overall goal of class grouping on the wall  
*The goals were chosen after selecting the 2-D combination mural and expressive t-shirt design for the project.*

Materials: pencils; paint; charcoal; T-shirts (provided by students); India ink; spray paint; pastels; stencils; paper; collage  
*It was decided that those students making t-shirts would create rough drafts on 12" x 12" sheets of paper while those making murals would work on 12" x 18" sheets of paper.*

Time Frame: 2 weeks

Responsibilities: all students will make a rough draft in pencil on paper with the same dimensions they will use for the final draft, take care of and clean up materials, create a self-assessment rubric that the teacher also grades

At the beginning of this project I was excited by the broad goals and list of potential materials decided upon by the students. In my mind, it would allow for more personal freedom in decision making and would encourage students to come up with visual solutions to the assignment in whatever way they felt would best express their ideas. I was anticipating a great variety of thoughtful and creative solutions that would relate to expressive interpretations of students' interests and societal concerns. After students began work on the project and my rapid reality check set in, I began to

understand that this project might not be able to be successfully fulfilled in the utopian fashion in which it was originally conceived.

Almost every aspect of the process was followed through in detail at the beginning of the project, however, as the project progressed and I came to better understand the nature of collaboration, certain aspects of the project were changed. Because the project inherently required a need for self motivation and a level of decisiveness when selecting subject matter, not all students were prepared for the drastic change in instruction they were confronted with. Adding to the confusion were the looseness of the objectives and variation in student motivation, reducing the number of students working diligently to complete the project. Not all of the students completed the project. Therefore, the goal of having all students hang their expressive t-shirts and murals together on the wall in a collective grouping did not occur.

Another change that occurred in the lesson was that I gave the students more time to complete their projects, hoping that those who were frustrated or challenged by the perceived lack of time would be more motivated to participate and finish their projects. As a result of this decision, the conclusion of this project came very near to the end of my student teaching experience. At this point, I felt pressured by my own limited time as a teacher in the classroom to fully encourage students to complete their projects to their best ability. I thus determined that it wasn't necessary to have the students write a self-assessment rubric for the project and instead gave them participation points for their engagement with the lesson and attitude and participation in completing the assignment. Although I didn't want to alter the lesson from its original form, at the time I made these

decisions, I felt the changes were necessary. As an end result, however, they had an effect on how I perceived of the success of this experience.

### *Student Journaling*

The collaborative project spanned approximately 2 ½ weeks during which students were asked to keep personal journals. Three times during the course of the project, students were asked to respond to a series of two questions relating to their decision making process and levels of interest and engagement with the project. The purpose of these journals was to allow for the students to respond to what they were being asked to do in class during the actual course of the project. Following are typical examples of students' responses to the questions asked and the dates they were administered.

<p>Question one: Give your initial opinion on being presented with the option of designing your own project as a class. (11/2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I liked the idea of coming up with our project as a class.</li> <li>• My initial opinion about designing our own project was that it was a good opportunity but it really doesn't seem any different than a project assigned from the teacher.</li> <li>• I was confused. I think this is the first time a teacher has really asked one of the classes I'm in to actually come up with the whole lesson. I was pleasantly surprised though.</li> <li>• I think it is a great idea and can bring out a lot of creativity.</li> <li>• I don't like making up our own project because then we have to think of something to draw and I</li> </ul>
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	<p>am not used to that. It was hard for me.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I like the idea; it gave us a way to do something we wanted to do.</li> </ul>
<p>Question two: How do you think the collaboration part could have been more effective? (11/2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people are shy and don't want to speak up. Their ideas weren't really shared in front of the class. If we were to talk in groups and then tell the teacher it might have been more effective.</li> <li>• I think the collaborative part was successful enough and if I was to improve it I would try to make it more organized.</li> <li>• I think it would have been more effective if you had chosen the one [project idea] out of the group you [the teacher] liked. Then people wouldn't be doing different projects.</li> </ul>
<p>Question three: What are some of the benefits to deciding the direction of your own project? (11/7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can work at your own pace.</li> <li>• We can draw whatever is in our heads not just what people say to draw.</li> <li>• Being able to use what things you want to and having a say in what you're doing makes the project more interesting too.</li> <li>• We have more motivation because it is something we actually chose to do and can express ourselves through.</li> <li>• Benefits are simply the fact that there was total freedom and independent artistic action. You want to do it (the project) and you have more interest in the project.</li> </ul>
<p>Question four: What are some of the challenges? (11/7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only having 2 weeks to do this project and possibly a lack of materials.</li> <li>• Trying to get the rough draft done.</li> <li>• Sometimes it is hard to decide what to draw because we often have so</li> </ul>

	<p>many ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding a good idea.</li> <li>• Expressing my true feelings on paper.</li> </ul>
<p>Question five: How has free choice affected your motivation during this assignment? (11/10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a lot more motivation and new ideas for the free choice project.</li> <li>• My motivation hasn't really been affected by this project.</li> <li>• I think free choice made me want to work harder on this project because it's my creation.</li> <li>• I didn't have a lot of motivation because I got done really early.</li> </ul>
<p>Question six: Are you more, less, or equally interested in completing the project to your best ability compared to other projects? (11/10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am more interested in completing this project to the best of my abilities.</li> <li>• I was more interested.</li> <li>• About equal interest.</li> <li>• I am actually less interested. We planned a project with a very broad topic and there really isn't any definite challenge so it gets boring quite fast actually.</li> <li>• Equal because I try my hardest at everything we do.</li> </ul>

TABLE 4.2- Journal questions and sample students' responses

The students' responses to these questions, given during the process of working on the collaboratively determined project, offer an array of input relating to the process of collaboration and working within the boundaries of a fairly unrestricted assignment. Students ranged from being heavily invested in the project because they understood the power that was being afforded them in being able to make some of their own decisions to being bored by the lack of instruction that was taking place. Some students felt comfortable being asked to express themselves on the topic of their choosing, while

others would have preferred being given specific instructions on what to do. The varieties of opinions expressed convince me that more can be done to create a collaborative experience that results in more students being fulfilled by the process. The student responses given here would be useful in determining a potential approach to future attempts at collaboration.

*Reflection-on-Action: A Mid-Collaboration Journal Excerpt*

The following entry was taken from my journal during the course of collaborating with the Art 3-4 students. It describes my reflections on the lesson: specifically, the direction the project took as a result of choices I made. It details the aspects of collaboration that were frustrating to me and that I felt caused frustration in the students. This entry also mentions possible changes for undertaking a similar project in the future.

*Journal Entry 11/04/05*

Today I am watching students in the Art 3-4 class work and am looking at both how motivated they appear to be and their progress on the assignment. I think that the structure of the lesson established in the Art 3-4 class might be working but some of the students appear to be doing very random work. I think this collaborative project still might be too open in terms of what is expected from the students; however one week into a project lasting only two weeks seems too late to alter the guidelines.

I had a consolidated version of students' responses up on the side wall of the classroom while collaboratively planning the lesson that highlighted students' hobbies, interests, and issues of concern; however when we were in the process of planning the lesson, students didn't seem to pay much attention to it. Perhaps I should have encouraged them more strongly or even insisted, had I taken a more active role as participant, that their project be largely based on one of those themes. On the other hand, some students have been successful at basing their projects on personal interest, yet when asking them to further explain the ideas behind their creations I begin to wonder if their subject matter relating to things we had talked about in class was intentional or merely accidental.

I want the students to write something reflective at the end of the project in an attempt to get them to make sense of the direction their project took but I'm not even sure if they will know what their projects are based on. It seems like the process of coming up with a solid individual concept for their collaboratively determined lesson was difficult for them and I'm not sure that I modeled it very well in the early stages of our collective planning. When students confide that they don't know what to do, I have been trying to direct them back to taking their ideas from the list created from the questionnaires and bookbinding project but I'm not sure how much that is helping them.

I am finding that the openness of the objectives of this project is causing frustration in some of the students: they aren't sure of the direction to take their projects and because the lesson plan was collaborative, I didn't have anything pre-

formed that I could use to help give the lesson structure. Other students seem to be enjoying the freedom of ideas and materials and have no trouble with the openness of the assignment. I am beginning to think that the process of collaboration requires more structure to be successful and also perhaps needs to take place at the end of a semester or school year when a better rapport has been established between teacher and student.

This journal entry identifies the mixture of feelings I had towards the experience of collaborating with my students. I realized, in what felt like too late into the project, that students would most likely have benefited from more direction and interference on my part. Going into the process of collaboration with a more structured goal of the role I expected students to take and the role I should take also may have been helpful. However, as this was my first attempt at collaboration, I was more interested in learning how the process could work and how much students could be a part of the decision making. What outcomes might be presented if students were more involved in the process of designing their own lesson plan? How would students' prior experience with the process affect its outcome? Would the results have been different if students had conceived of more structured guidelines and designed a grading rubric?

### *Final Questionnaire*

At the end of the project students were asked to fill out a questionnaire consisting of eight questions and reflect on the nature of what they participated in, looking at both successes and failures regarding the process of collaboration as it was presented to them. The following is a list of the questions posed to the 34 students in the class and the responses of the 17 who participated in the study. This section concludes with examples of students' work and explanations of what they created.

<p>Question one: How successful was the collaborative process in creating a lesson plan that relates to issues or concerns that are important to you personally? <i>Rated on a scale from 1-10</i></p>	<p>The students' ratings and the number of students who selected each category are listed below:</p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Rating</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u># of Students</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>10</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>0</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Rating</u>	<u># of Students</u>	10	1	9	5	8	2	7	1	6	0	5	3	4	1	3	0	2	0	1	0
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<p>Question two: What would have made the resultant lesson plan more relevant to you?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A less broad subject would have made it easier to decide what to draw.</li> <li>• If we could have seen the mural as a whole when it was completed to see the similarities and differences regarding people's expression of emotions in drawing.</li> <li>• Planning the lesson ourselves was a bad idea. We could have learned something new instead of wasting time.</li> <li>• Although I didn't think so at first, I</li> </ul>																						

	<p>think a narrower topic/goal would have been better.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project was fine.</li> <li>• Two students left this question blank.</li> </ul>
<p>Question three: Was the lesson you collaborated to create more or less interesting than ones you are typically taught in art class, and why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less because when you are being taught you are trying something new rather than doing something you already know how to do.</li> <li>• More interesting because the students are expressing what they choose to express instead of having limits by being given an object we have to draw.</li> <li>• More interesting to me but maybe not to others.</li> <li>• I think my project was more interesting because it was directly related to my life.</li> <li>• It was surprisingly less interesting because I wasn't as determined and focused.</li> <li>• More interesting because the students chose the activity.</li> </ul>
<p>Question four: How did participating in this experience make you feel more or less engaged (interested) in what you are taught in art class?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It made me feel more interested because we got to do what we wanted.</li> <li>• Participating in this experience interested me more because we are able to experience the feeling of artistic freedom: drawing or painting what we choose.</li> <li>• I felt I learned nothing so in other words I did not feel engaged.</li> <li>• I felt more enthusiastic about doing the project because it was about me.</li> <li>• Participating in this project made me more interested in what we are [normally] taught in art 3-4 because [the students] planning it was a bad idea.</li> <li>• I wasn't that interested because I didn't know where to start.</li> </ul>

<p>Question five: Do you think the process of collaborating with classmates and the teacher to create information would help you be more interested in other classes? If yes, how?</p> <p>If no, please explain why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We the students would be more involved because we are making choices and will feel our own consequences.</li> <li>• It gives the teacher a chance to know what the students like instead of assigning a paper on a book or a paper about a war.</li> <li>• We wouldn't always be doing the same thing and we could have a different procedure.</li> <li>• The students would get a chance to not be bored.</li> <li>• The lessons may be more interesting although some students may take advantage of this.</li> <li>• It took too long.</li> <li>• If you have an idea that is not very popular with the class and the class has one that you don't like then it wouldn't be very entertaining or educational for you.</li> </ul>
<p>Question six: What do you feel was the most beneficial part of being a collaborator on this project?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My idea was used.</li> <li>• We got to express ourselves.</li> <li>• We had the choice of what materials we wanted to use.</li> <li>• We got to choose what to do but I don't think we knew what we wanted to do in the first place.</li> <li>• I got to vote on what I wanted to draw.</li> <li>• Everyone is somewhat satisfied because we all made the choice together.</li> <li>• Feeling creative and getting an idea to materialize</li> <li>• There was no benefit.</li> <li>• I don't think that it was beneficial at all because I didn't participate and I had no intentions to. I just want an assignment and not be asked what I feel.</li> </ul>

<p>Question seven: What would you change about the process of collaborating to create an art lesson plan for next time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing.</li> <li>• Make sure everyone votes.</li> <li>• I'd make the goal/topic narrower so that we actually learn things from it.</li> <li>• I would rather not collaborate and instead just be given an assignment.</li> </ul>
<p>Question eight: How did you personally benefit from this assignment, if at all?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I learned that sometimes doing our own thing isn't always the best.</li> <li>• I did not benefit.</li> <li>• I personally benefited from this assignment because the project gave me the opportunity to let out my feelings about some of the hardships in my life (divorce, death) and I also got to make more life goals for myself.</li> <li>• It was fun and let me get creative.</li> <li>• I believe that every drawing expresses something about you on a psychological level to tell you something you might not know about yourself or some one else-so looking at others [sic] drawings you can learn about someone's personality or if they're hurting inside.</li> <li>• I benefited from this assignment because I am working on a project I made up and chose to do therefore I am more involved and interested in it.</li> <li>• I slightly improved my drawing/painting skills.</li> </ul>

TABLE 4.3- Final questionnaire with student responses

Students' responses given in this final questionnaire, and when compared with their artwork which follows, are useful in evaluating the process of collaboration as it was undertaken in our classroom. This data provides an overview of areas that were successful as well as establishes areas that may need further improving. As the students' responses are somewhat varied, it becomes more difficult to determine how one might pinpoint areas in this process of collaboration that need altering. What led one student to achieve a feeling of personal freedom in their art making might have caused a feeling of frustration in another student. This data will be analyzed further in Chapter Five.

"Dave" decided to create a t-shirt design with the word "artist" on it in cursive letters. Behind the text he included a *Rampage* model because it is similar to what he thought of as his "favorite piece of art" that he had created in the past. The underlying message in Dave's work is that he's "an artist." This draft of the design is done in pencil

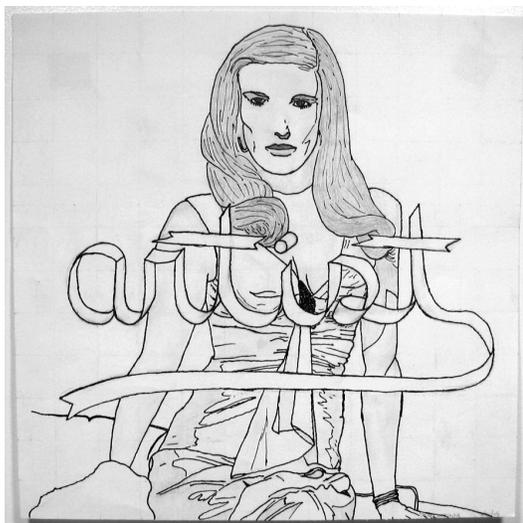
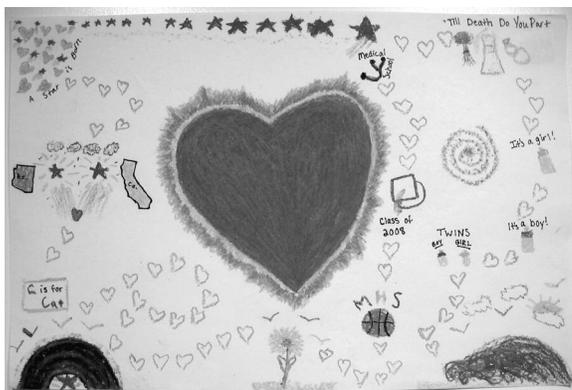


FIGURE 4.4- "Dave's" final project

first, then ink. The final design was copied to the t-shirt using a light table and was outlined in colored paint with the word artist in green. The central placement of the figure and text focuses the viewer's attention and without knowing Dave's intent would make one question the juxtaposition of the two.

For her expressive mural, “Jessica” created a timeline of momentous life events in oil pastel. She included important memories from her past and also illustrated future life goals, such as going to medical school, getting married and having children. The vivid



rainbow of colors leads the viewer’s eye through the work as they follow the path Jessica has set out for herself. Central to her theme are hearts which serve as both the central image and the “footprints” that lead from event to event.

FIGURE 4.5- “Jessica’s” final project

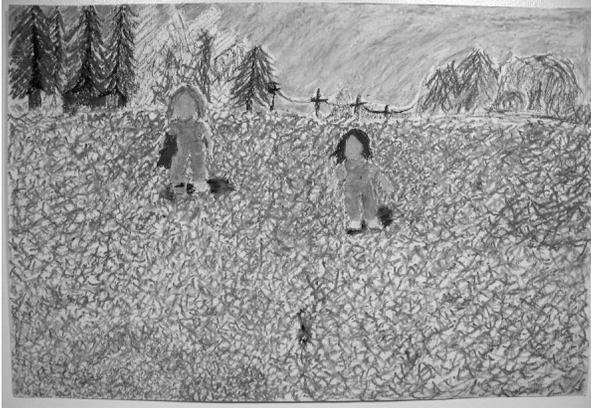
“Kate” chose to express a moment of personal triumph. She created a t-shirt design that told of how she “hit [her] first homerun” and the satisfaction of achieving that goal. The quote by Oprah Winfrey: “Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness,” detailed on the back of the shirt, is one that Kate’s coach used to say and relates to Kate’s philosophy of “never giving up on



your dreams because someday they will come true.” To mimic a dream not yet realized, Kate chose to create her goal in a thought bubble, showing the earth and her homerun ball soaring out to meet the stars. Kate used colors that were both representational and would compliment the color of the t-shirt she chose.

FIGURE 4.6- “Kate’s” final project

In this drawing, “Denise” recreated a memory of a happy time she experienced as a young girl. The image is of a “field of bluebonnets. When I was little my grandfather



owned it and it was one of my favorite places to go.” She decided to use a representational style and placed both herself and her sister centrally in the image to illustrate the vastness of a field from a child’s perspective.

FIGURE 4.7- “Denise’s” final project

For her project, “Naomi” chose to create an expressive mural. Her resultant painting is a minimal yet imaginative portrait of her interpretation of death. Death hovers on a blue orb (the earth?) that seems to have sprouted from a mound of dirt and appears



ready to pounce on something the viewer can’t see that is hiding just off of the picture plane. Death balances, almost weightlessly and his hunched position adds to the menacing prospects he is likely to bring.

FIGURE 4.8- “Naomi’s” final project

When “John” began this assignment, he initially wanted to make it a “display of who I am” by incorporating themes of religion, addiction, love and hate. In the end he



FIGURE 4.9- “John’s” final project

way to turn a smile, something that is typically perceived as inviting, into something more ominous that asks the viewer to question its intentions.

decided to create a colorful collage of *mechanical smiles* that expresses the “artificiality of society.” Scouring fashion magazines for days, he finally had enough smiles and supporting images and text to create this work. John found a

The work produced by students, resulting from the lesson planned through collaboration, was varied in content and level of completion in relation to students’ motivation. The examples of work depicted here are from those few students, of the 17 who signed consent forms, who completed the project to their fullest. Some of the students in the class became unmotivated after completing the rough draft of their design and didn’t finish the final artwork. Other students finished the work in class but took it home as soon as they were finished and “forgot” to bring it back. Of the students whose work is included above, some said that they were motivated by the collaborative process and getting to make decisions about the content of their work. Others stated they were

interested at the onset but lost motivation during the course of the project, however, still completed the project because they enjoy art class and are generally good students. This data demonstrates the complication in determining the part motivation played in students completing the project. It does however demonstrate the wide range of potential subject matter that students are interested in, that builds on previous data collected through questionnaires, which could be used to guide future instruction.

### Summary

This chapter has presented all of the data gathered during the course of my student teaching practicum that is relevant to my study. The data presented indicates the nature of collaboration I experienced with students and offers examples of both successful aspects of the study and potential areas of needed and necessary improvement. Chapter Five will offer an in-depth analysis of the data with regard to the research questions posed at the beginning of my study.

## CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

### Introduction

My initial interest in this study stemmed from my observations of students in the art classroom and their apparent disinterest in and disconnection with what is typically taught. Traditional curriculum that is chosen by the teacher and administered to the student, in what Goodson (1998) calls the “transmission” model of teaching, can result in students not being able to make personal connections to the topic or subject matter if it is outside the realm of their lived experience. Often students will be unable to relate to a project, such as asking them to create a paper mosaic in the style of cubist artists, if it isn’t put first into a context that relates to their lives.

One way I felt might enhance students’ feelings of empowerment and heighten their desire to participate in the classroom was to invite them to act as collaborators in determining the content they would be taught. What I learned throughout the process of collaborating with students is that the act of collaboration is a complicated undertaking and the level and method of teacher and student participation can affect both how collaboration occurs and the level of success of the resultant lesson that is planned.

### Discussion

Central to my findings is an acknowledgement of the teaching environment in which my study took place. The study was conducted by a researcher who was a newcomer to the classroom, who was a student teacher, and who implemented this study

with students at the beginning of a new school year. Additionally, the collaborative process was tested over just one project, and not over several. Of the 100 students enrolled in the classes who participated in my study, I was able to use the data of only 35 students for the initial questionnaire. Of those 35, only 17 students' data could be used for the bookbinding project, student journals, and final questionnaire. I believe that all of these factors had an affect on my findings.

Although I believe there are implications from the study that reach beyond the specific context in which I worked, I draw my findings relative only to the context in which I worked. In presenting the findings from my study, I will focus on the specific areas my research aimed to shed light on most notably, how collaboration can be used in the classroom and its affects on student engagement and participation.

### *Relating Art Content to Students' Lives*

My study began with a desire to better understand how the relevance of what is taught in the art classroom can affect student engagement. All of the prior research conducted leading up to my study supported the need for curriculum to be made relevant to students' lived experiences. Results from the student journals, questionnaires, and visual art projects uncover further evidence to support this claim and offer direction in how content taught can be related students' interests and concerns.

As stated by Milner (2004), high school students are complex individuals with clear ideas about what they hold important. Unfortunately, when asked, school and education are often not at the top of their lists. Similar to the research documented in the

review of literature, my study suggests that what is important to students are their friends, their hobbies, their families, and their desire to better understand the world and establish their place in it. Many of the students I interacted with were more concerned with text messaging their friends during class than learning the intricacies of a bookbinding stitch. For example, in a project that involved creating a monochromatic painting of a still life of flowers, a project that teaches the importance of using value and shading techniques to create volume and helps students' practice life drawing skills, students appeared engaged, but when asked how they liked the project, admitted that they found it uninteresting and unexciting. "Why do we have to paint flowers?" they asked. What was more important to most of the high school students I questioned was trying to find a place where they belonged and could be accepted among a group of their peers. As a result, the desire to socialize with peers preoccupied many of the students in my class. As a teacher, being aware that there are many students in the classroom who aren't necessarily readily engaged with standard curriculum can help propel an understanding for the need to make lessons more relevant to students' interests outside of school.

I also found during my student teaching that there was a less visible group of students to whom education was important. They wanted to be at school mainly for the purpose of learning. Socialization with friends appeared secondary to them and could be reserved for more appropriate times such as during passing time and lunch. Although this group of students was small, they affected the findings of my study initially by providing a wider range of student experiences to draw from on the preliminary questionnaire. Later, during the collaborative project, some of these students also

provided for those who responded in their journal entries that they were either engaged in the project because they enjoy school in general or were reluctant participants because they try hard at everything they are assigned, even if they aren't interested in it. The responses of these students to the act of collaboration, which some felt wasn't particularly challenging to them, reinforces the importance of finding a way to cater instruction to meet the educational needs of all students. Although some of these students participated in the study, they weren't necessarily engaged. In trying to collaborate with all students in the class it is important to find a balance where the teacher provides additional assistance and instruction for those students who need it and allows personal working space to those students who may have found a purpose of direction. The goal in collaboration is for all students to be engaged in the work they are making and feel it is relevant to them.

The introductory stage of my study was a search for methods that would allow me to combine the varied and complex interests of my students with art curriculum in a way that might have a positive affect on student learning. Students' openness in responding to the questions asked of them on both the initial and final questionnaires, through the narrative art project, and through the journaling process suggests that these methods effectively allowed the students to share perspectives about their interests that might not otherwise have been realized by the teacher. As a student teacher I was able to gain students' trust for their further participation in aspects of the collaboration project by integrating their input into the normal curriculum, thereby acknowledging that their interests were important. By encouraging students to discuss areas they are interested in

outside of school and topics that concern them that aren't normally discussed in school, a teacher can begin to initiate the introductory steps towards collaborating to make curriculum more relevant.

When I was planning the sequence for this research project, I anticipated that the only true collaborating that would occur would be when the students and I sat down as a class and decided the direction of the lesson plan. What I came to realize upon reflection at the end of the study was that the initial information gathering stage was also an act of collaboration, a sharing of ideas that was necessary to later stages of the project. As an initial step in the process of curriculum integration, I was opening students to the idea of what Fraser (1999) called "negotiated learning." I acknowledged to students before administering the questionnaire that I was interested in incorporating their perspectives into future planning rather than setting the content myself. The data gathered from the initial questionnaire and the bookbinding project were the students' way of adding to the input that would later help determine the nature of the lesson we would plan together.

### *Collaboration, Student Empowerment and Participation*

Collaboration with students was central to my project. Through this process I wanted to understand how students might be empowered in their learning by helping to plan curriculum and if their participation in class would be heightened because of it. My findings regarding this aspect of my study were complex and surprising.

I learned before I accepted my student teaching placement that my mentor teacher, Joan, was well respected by her peers at school and in the greater teaching

community as a good teacher and that she was generally acknowledged as using a student centered approach. From my initial observations of the class, I learned that instruction was typically given by the teacher to the student. Students were expected to use their creativity to interpret the goals of the lesson the teacher presented to them. Often, however, I observed students who seemed not to know what to do or who weren't confident in their abilities. Rather than develop their own skills, students would copy some aspect of an image from a magazine or book using the light table and/or ask a friend at their table to do a portion of the assignment for them. Students stated in the initial questionnaire I administered that they saw their role in the classroom as one who pretends to pay attention, someone who is respectful and does their work, and someone who does what they're told in order to get a good grade. Judging by the responses given and based on their previous behavior during observations, I didn't expect students to be accustomed to the role they would be asked and expected to take as collaborators. Even so, many students showed initial interest in collaborating to plan a lesson.

When the idea of collaborating to create a lesson plan as a class was presented to them, students responded in a variety of ways. Most were receptive to the idea, with few holding reservations. From their student journals, reviewed after the project was over, I gathered that the majority of the class was looking forward to the opportunity to determine the direction of their own learning. Students stated that they "like[d] the idea: it gave [them] a way to do something [they] wanted to do," and that "it [was] a great idea and can bring out a lot of creativity." Other students showed a little more reserve by stating that they were confused by the process because, "I think this is the first time a

teacher has really asked one of the classes I'm in to actually come up with the whole lesson. I was pleasantly surprised though."

During the planning stage of the project, students offered a variety of suggestions for topics for the proposed lesson plan and worked together to eventually eliminate all but two prospects, creating an expressive 2-D mural and an expressive t-shirt design. As a class, we decided that individual students could decide which of the two options they wanted to do. Students determined the time allowed for the project and created a loose set of objectives. After this point, I realized that what I had set up to be the collaborative portion of the project was essentially over. As the project continued, I discovered that while I had collaborated with students to decide the subject and materials, we had failed to negotiate the classroom working atmosphere, the interactions we would have during studio time and an assessment for the project.

My experiences in the classroom over the following two week period during which the students were working on the project were met with the realization that the collaborative process is a complex one that was potentially not as successful as it could have been under a variety of different circumstances. In the future, I would wait to do this project again until I was a full-time teacher and had an opportunity to build a positive working relationship with students. I also feel that with each repeated experience of working collaboratively, where both the students and the teacher have practice adjusting to their roles, there is more chance for a successful outcome. My review of literature had shown that a constructivist approach, grounded on the principles of building knowledge together, was a strong way to structure collaborative interaction. My experiences in the

classroom, however, indicated a disconnection between preparing for the process of collaboration and actually engaging in collaboration with students. I believed that I had followed a constructivist approach and planned for interactions with students that would allow for their opinions and ideas to be heard. Once I began working with the students on the lesson designed through collaboration which didn't have a pre-determined outcome, I realized that as a teacher I had to be more prepared to provide additional guidance in which ever direction the students decided to take the project. I also had to be willing to negotiate more areas of instruction, such as assessment, guidelines for studio time, and teacher-student interactions, in order to give students a clear idea of what would be expected of them and me during the process.

Students' journal entries offered insight into their perspectives on the collaborative process and some of the benefits and challenges they faced during the project. During the actual planning of the lesson, one student stated in response to question #2 (which asked students how they thought the collaborative part of the project could have been more effective), that they felt the process would have been more successful if more students' opinions could have been taken into account. They suggested that the students should, "talk in groups and then tell the teacher [our ideas because] some people are shy and don't want to speak up. Their ideas weren't really shared in front of the class." In response to question #3 (which asked students to state some of the benefits of deciding the direction of their own project), students stated that some of the benefits of the project were that they could "work at [their] own pace," and

that the “total freedom and independent artistic action” encouraged their motivation to do the project because they had more interest in it.

While several students offered opinions on the benefits of collaboration, other students acknowledged their frustrations in the challenges they faced. To question #4 (which asked students to describe some of the challenges of deciding the direction of their own project), students responded that they felt “only having two weeks to do this project” might not have been enough time to complete a rough draft and a final artwork. Another student stated that the broadness of the objectives and the topic made it “hard to decide what to draw.” “Finding a good idea” and a way of “expressing [their] true feelings on paper” also challenged some students. Students also gave their opinions on how interested they were in completing the project and there appeared to be a balance between those who were and weren’t interested. One student stated on question #6, (which asked whether students were more, less, or equally interested in completing the project to their best ability in comparison to other projects) that they were “actually less interested. We planned a project with a very broad topic and there really [aren’t] any definite challenge[s] so it gets boring quite fast actually.” In observing students during the process of making their artworks, I got the feeling that this idea was shared by many. My frustrations as a teacher and consultant, or guide, during this process stemmed from the challenges I realized the students were facing. The results from the students’ journal entries and the final questionnaire suggest that students are capable of collaboration, however, the success of that endeavor depends upon the structure put in place by the teacher or co-collaborator at the beginning of the process and the ability of the project to

provide challenges for all students. These feelings were mirrored in my personal journal entry taken during the act of collaboration. For the purposes of my project and from my perspective of what the role of the teacher should be in the process, I believe that students would have benefited from more guidance with regard to how to implement the topics they selected and how to better relate them to larger art and art historical issues. This relates to the model of collaboration that Olsen (2000) condones, based on constructivist principles where the teacher acts as a support for students while knowledge is being built. Using this model, the three agencies that Lusted (1986) believes collaborative pedagogy should have, would exist: that of the student (generating the topic and direction of the lesson), that of the teacher (drawing connections between that topic and the larger art world), and that of the knowledge they produce together (the negotiated aspects of the lesson and its outcome).

I also believe that students would have been more invested in the project had they created the assessment rubric that was suggested when laying out the guidelines for the project and had their final artworks displayed in the classroom. As suggested in the collaborative project explained in Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, and Abghari (2004), the lesson objectives determined by Richards' class were "used as criteria for evaluating their lessons" (p.22). The students then worked with the teacher to create an assessment rubric where students were responsible for determining the detailed descriptions of the areas they wanted to have assessed, such as good craftsmanship, originality in idea and materials, and effective composition. The involvement of students in this process would be beneficial for two reasons: students would know specifically the aspects on which

their projects were being assessed and would be held more accountable for their work by being involved in determining the guidelines for assessment. Displaying the final artworks of students might have encouraged those who were having trouble staying on task to complete their projects. On the other hand, I believe that those students who are shy might have been embarrassed by having their artwork displayed and would have preferred not to have it hung on the wall. In the future, I could invite all students to exhibit their work and allow any students who wanted to refrain from doing so to speak to me individually.

During this process, my role as a collaborator was very relaxed and not intrusive. I wanted students to experience the potential benefits of directing the majority of their learning or become what Szekely (1990) calls “generators of [their own] invention” (p. 225). What I didn’t realize until too late into the process was that students weren’t equipped with the experience or confidence to be able to act as independent learners as it most likely had rarely been expected of them before. One student responded to journal question #1, (asking them to describe their opinion of being given the option of collaborating to design a lesson), by stating that they didn’t like “making up (their) own project because then we have to think of something to draw and I am not used to that. It was hard for me.” The students were unable to handle the responsibility needed to be self-motivated learners and I did not have enough foresight necessary to be able to provide them with the guidance to do so. While this student’s response could indicate that choice and motivation aren’t as intertwined as I had earlier hypothesized, it could also suggest that in order for students to take advantage of choice in learning they need

first to be prepared with the tools that will give them the confidence to be self-motivated learners. Engaging students in a collaborative learning process once is not enough to allow them to gain experience and expertise with this approach, nor is it enough for a teacher to fully understand their role in the process and how they can best meet the needs of the students. For both the teacher and students to gain a sense of fulfillment from the process it would need to be repeated and practiced again and again.

At question was also whether or not students benefited from the collaborative process in terms of becoming more empowered in their learning and having a greater desire to participate in class. Results of students' responses from their journals and the final questionnaire show that most students had a strong reaction believing that the project caused them to be either more or less motivated to learn, while only a few students appeared apathetic to the question of empowerment and desire to participate. Some students stated their motivation was heightened during the collaborative project because they had a greater freedom in determining what type of artistic work they would make. Support for this is evidenced by examining the final artworks of students and noticing the diversity of themes and materials used. Others stated that being able to personalize their project and make it more relevant to their lives outside of school helped them be more engaged in the lesson that they created. On the opposite end of the spectrum, several students expressed that they were not engaged in the lesson they created because they felt they did not learn anything from it. This raises another question of why these students weren't engaged. Was it because they were accustomed to getting instruction from the teacher and didn't feel they were learning if not being instructed by

an authority figure? Or, were the students open to generating their own learning but didn't have the tools or experience to do so? Is it also possible that some of the students who participated in my research project simply weren't interested in learning? I feel that these are questions that could be better understood with further research.

My study also focused on student participation in class by looking at whether students were more willing to participate in the project by having the choice of making the lesson more relevant to their interests and concerns compared with more traditional instruction, such as being given an assignment by the teacher. Students' responses to question #3 (which asked students whether the lesson they collaborated to create was more or less interesting than ones they are typically taught in art class) and question #4 (which asked how participating in this experience made students' feel more or less engaged in what they are normally taught in art class), on the final questionnaire help clarify their varied opinions. The majority of students stated that they do benefit from being able to invest a project with their personal interests. Rather than being told what to make artwork about, many students enjoyed the freedom of being able to select a topic they were interested in: "The students are expressing what they choose to express instead of having limits by being given an object we have to draw." Another student stated that the lesson was more relevant "because it was directly related to my life." This aspect of the process was complex, however, and a number of students stated that the freedom given to them left them not knowing where to begin or what to do. Some students felt less inclined to participate in this project than in a traditional art project where the teacher determines the lesson because, "when you are being taught you are trying something new

rather than doing something you already know how to do.” Another student felt that having “a less broad subject would have made it easier to decide what to draw.” Perhaps because of some of the above reasons, a small number of students either did not finish or turned in an incomplete project for this assignment. Again, I believe this is an aspect of the collaborative process that could be strengthened with practice and by the teacher having a greater amount of structure in place at the beginning of the project, for example, by being more prepared to negotiate the classroom working atmosphere and by determining assessment guidelines. In addition, the teacher can encourage students to continue working on their project by acting as more of a guide throughout the duration of the project and assisting those students who need help by providing more direction. This study’s findings suggest that the collaborative process is affected by the type and duration of collaboration, the roles undertaken respectively by both teacher and students during the collaborative process, the experience of the teacher in guiding collaboration, and the ability of students to generate motivation towards their own learning.

### *Teaching as Process*

In search of a greater understanding of one’s teaching practice, nothing lends itself more immediately to self-discovery than reflection (May, 1997). While some reflection is beneficial during the actual course of instruction, most reflection occurs at the end of a class period, a work day, or upon the completion of a lesson or unit. From conducting this study, I have found that it is the element of reflecting that allows a

teacher to dissect the inner workings of their influence on the class, the impact of students' responses to instruction and the outcomes of the artistic lessons they teach.

During the act of collaborating with students, I reflected on the outcome of my instruction on numerous occasions. I began to analyze the nature of collaboration and the students' and my roles within it. From participating in this collaborative study with students, I was able to reflect on areas where I need to be more assertive as a teacher, such as better organizing the act of encouraging students to collaborate. As one student suggested, more students might have participated in sharing ideas had they had time to talk with their peers first and then present their ideas to the class. I feel that this would have encouraged some of the more shy students to voice their opinions to the class. I also feel that during the act of determining the lesson, I was unsure how to prompt students to create more in-depth objectives. As a result, the objectives for the project of "expressing yourself" and "creating an original artwork based on personal experiences" were very broad and provided a limited structure for the students to follow. Under the right guidance and circumstances, however, the broadness of the objectives presented here could be seen as beneficial to the collaborative process if students were taught to view them as a gateway to their own artistic freedom. In order for this to occur, however, students would need to develop a trust in themselves that I don't feel had yet been established with the group I was working with.

As the project progressed, I began to reflect on how the instruction I had withheld from students was impacting them. For example, how would the project have gone differently if I had been able to work with the students to make connections to larger art

historical issues related to the topics they chose, or to work with them to create an assessment rubric? From these reflections, I was not only able to realize areas of needed improvement in my study, I was able to see my teaching practice as a process.

As I found while student teaching, it is often easy for a beginning teacher to think of their practice in uncomplicated terms, such as, “that project went well, I am a good teacher,” or, “students really didn’t seem to enjoy that project, I must not be a good teacher.” While overly simplified, these statements point to fears inherent in many beginning teachers. Practice is analyzed but often in such a way that doesn’t allow one to engage with the nuances that influence their experiences in the classroom. In looking at one’s practice in this way, it is easy to become discouraged and begin to doubt the effectiveness of one’s role as a teacher. I felt unsure about my abilities as a teacher during the teaching of the archeological project to the ceramics class and again when observing the progress of the lesson from the collaborative project. I saw that students were confused and only some were motivated to work on the project and, for awhile, thought I had failed as a teacher. Several times I wondered if the project was a waste of time and questioned what had truly been achieved by the act of collaboration. What I found important to remember is that the act of teaching is itself a process that is continuously affected by outside influences and the choices a teacher makes. Rather than trying to understand only the end result of teaching, I have learned that it is just as important to value the process of teaching. It is in acknowledging teaching as a process that I have come to see my study as a stepping off point in a journey to find more

effective ways to collaborate with students and bring their interests and concerns into curriculum in a way that promotes their engagement and learning.

### Implications for the Field of Art Education

The topic of my study, while not new to the field of art education, offers procedures for gathering data from students to be used in understanding their interests as well as indicates that collaboration can be a beneficial addition to traditional methods of instruction. Collaboration can be conducted in multiple ways (Goodson, 1998; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998; Bolin, 1999; Check, 2000), however it is most often experienced when a teacher and student work together to generate ideas for lesson plans that both the students are interested in and the teacher feels are valuable (Olsen, 2000). My study documents effective ways of beginning to gather and utilize student opinions and interests in this process: administering an initial interest-related questionnaire, presenting a project based on narrative story-telling and illustration, and utilizing student journaling. All of these methods were effective in creating an avenue in which students could openly and without judgment express their opinions, concerns, and interests. These methods, used in conjunction with observations and teacher-student conversations, would provide a great amount of data from which to begin planning lessons that are relevant to students' interests and concerns.

This study also provided an in-depth look at one example of how collaboration can occur and the variety of student work and levels of engagement and participation that resulted from it. Art educators can use the methodologies presented in this study and the

specific outcomes resulting from the participation of this group of students to begin to plan collaborative efforts in their own classrooms. Collaboration is an effective way to acknowledge student input as an important factor in education (Wilson, 1971). What one needs to consider before beginning this process is how the preparedness of students as self-motivated learners will affect how the teacher designs and strategizes the collaborative process. What will students need to be responsible for during the process of collaboration? My study suggests that in order for collaboration to be successful, students will need to be prepared to be independent learners. This makes the argument that if students aren't already independent learners they will need to be taught how. As this requires a very different set of skills from the more traditional transmission model, students should be working on collaborative, student-centered learning throughout the school year in the art classroom or even across the school's curriculum. When students learn how to work more collaboratively with their teachers and with one another, and these skills are practiced, the act of collaboration can be more rewarding for everyone involved. Teachers can benefit by working with students as more of a guide rather than constantly feeding them information, such as through the transmission model. The act of collaboration can also help teachers get to know their students better and the ideas and concerns that inspire and motivate them. Richards (2004), a teacher who conducted a collaborative study with her high school art class, stated that some of the benefits she saw in students was that they took more ownership of their knowledge, had increased motivation due to open-ended production objectives and demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking in their remarks and interactions because they were more personally

invested in their work (in Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, and Abghari, 2004). It is students' expanded trust in their own creativity that will allow them to more readily bring their ideas to the act of collaboration and will allow for the teacher to more effectively take on a role of a supportive guide in the process.

Another aspect of collaboration for an art educator to consider before implementation is the level that is appropriate for their students. The collaborative process needs to be carefully structured and planned as it is easy for those students who lack self-motivation to fall behind and become discouraged. As was stated earlier, it is also necessary to ensure that collaboration be able to provide sufficient challenges to those art students who strive to achieve more. Perhaps initially, it would be more beneficial to start with a lesser amount of student involvement than I tried in terms of actually planning the lesson, and use instead student input to guide the nature of the lesson that will be taught. After successfully teaching lessons relevant to students' interests and concerns, and encouraging greater student engagement in the process of learning, the nature of collaboration can be made more complex as both the teacher and students are comfortable. However, it is important to always remember that teaching is a process that one is continually learning from and reflecting upon in order to improve, and that each class of students will present different dynamics, demanding an ever-shifting practice. As I have come to realize, the act of collaboration may not always prove a successful endeavor on the first attempt. It is important to not get discouraged and instead analyze the process and determine steps that could to be taken to attempt additional, more successful, collaborative efforts in the future.

### Conclusion

Collaboration is an instructional process that is complex and can be difficult to implement. My study has tried to provide evidence that even the most basic of steps can begin to open the door toward interacting with students in a more inclusive way that can result in the development of more relevant curriculum. Students can benefit from collaboration by having input on what is studied in the classroom, thus encouraging them to be more engaged in their learning. Teachers can also benefit from the collaborative process by getting to know their students on a more personal level and learning how to work with them to determine the direction of instruction.

In order for collaboration to become a more accepted method of instruction, attitudes regarding specific teacher and student roles in the classroom need to be addressed. Teachers need to become more receptive to student input and open to becoming less of an authoritative presence in the classroom. Students need to be encouraged through conditioning to take more responsibility for their own learning and thus be more active participants in their educational process.

New research might focus on different ways to structure collaboration and analyze how students respond to these structures in terms of their level of engagement and participation with lessons. This would require that multiple studies be conducted by reflective practitioners in order to determine their effectiveness. Findings would allow for educators to experiment with varied strategies for implementing the collaborative process more effectively in their classrooms.

## APPENDIX A- INITIAL AND FINAL QUESTIONNAIRES

## Initial Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your favorite hobby?
2. What is your favorite thing to do with your friends?  
What is your favorite thing to do with your family?
3. What kind of relationship do you have with the adult you are closest to?  
What is your favorite thing to do with them?
4. What was the most interesting thing you did over summer vacation?
5. Do you volunteer? If yes, where?
6. What local issue are you concerned with or would you like to know more about?
7. What global issue are you concerned with or would you like to know more about?
8. If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?  
What one thing would you change about your town?  
What one thing would you change about your school?
9. What do you see as your role in the classroom?

## Final (or Post) Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. How successful was the collaborative process in creating a lesson plan that relates to issues or concerns that are important to you personally?

Not at all				Somewhat					Very
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. What would have made the resultant lesson plan more relevant to you?
3. Was the lesson you collaborated to create more or less interesting than ones you are typically taught in art class, and why?
4. How did participating in this experience help you feel more or less engaged (interested) in what you are taught in art class?
5. Do you think the process of collaborating with classmates and the teacher to create information would help you be more interested in other classes?
- If yes, please give an example of how it would be helpful in another class.
- If no, please explain why.
6. What do you feel was the most beneficial part of being a collaborator on this project?
7. What would you change about the process of collaborating to create an art lesson plan for next time?
8. How did you personally benefit from this assignment, if at all?

APPENDIX B- LESSON PLAN AND WORKSHEETS FOR  
SEQUENTIAL ART AND BOOKBINDING PROJECT

Sequential Art and Bookbinding

Grades: 10-12

Subject: Art 3-4

Time Frame: approximately 2 ½ weeks

Standards:

- 1AV-P1 PO 2-Create artwork demonstrating skill and craftsmanship and a sensitivity to the media
- 1AV-P3 PO 1-State reasons for making artistic decisions
- 2AV-P1 PO 1-Determine the factors responsible for influencing works of art
- 3AV-P2 PO 3-Compare the power of the visual arts to communicate universal concepts

Objectives:

- Students will learn about zines and sequential art as a format for personal storytelling.
- Students will learn how to use a Japanese stab binding to make a book for their sequential art project.
- Students will be able to create an artwork that visually expresses a personal experience or opinion in a sequential (6 or more frames) and narrative format.
- Students will complete the project by using both visual imagery and text and either pencil and marker or collage.

Materials:

- For practice and artwork creation each student will need:
  - a sheet of 9 x 12” paper divided into 3 x 3” squares, a ruler, a pencil, a black sharpie, magazines (if doing collage)
- For bookbinding each student will need:
  - several sheets of white 8 ½ x 11” paper, a pushpin, thread, a needle, materials to decorate cover (buttons, colored paper, feathers, etc.), a ruler.

Instructor will need:

- Examples of zines and comics that are school appropriate

Instruction:

1. Begin by introducing students to sequential art and narrative journaling by giving them a brief history of comic books and zines.
2. Pass out comic books and zines so that each table has one of each and then ask students to begin to identify themes present in the work. Talk briefly about themes that are present and how they are expressed.
3. Explain basics of the project:
  - students will be coming up with an idea for their own sequential art comic/zine that allows them to visually and with text express one of the following scenarios:
    - a) if you were a superhero, what would your powers be and how would you use them to effect change in the world, your school, your town, etc.
    - b) tell a visual (with text) story of an important life moment
    - c) create a visual journal to express “a day in the life of yourself”
    - d) describe a social, political, or personal issue that you are concerned with in story form and suggest ways you would deal with the problem
    - e) students may come up with an idea of their own choosing
4. Students will have 3-4 days to work on their idea and storyboard. Students will need to divide a 9 x 12” sheet of paper into 3” squares (12 total). They will then need to design at least six of the pages (squares) with the option of doing more if they choose. Students will need to keep in mind the amount of time they have to transfer their images to their books.
5. After students have storyboarded their ideas they will learn a Japanese stab binding technique for bookbinding (see attached for instructions). They will select the appropriate number of pages for their narrative and will spend two days binding and decorating their books. At this step students will be given the option of tearing their pages to a desired size or keeping them a 9 x 12” page folded in half.
6. Once students have finished binding their books they will begin transferring their storyboarded images. At this point if students are working in collage they should begin using magazines to create their images. If using pencil students should continue to use pencil to transfer the images and then go over them with a black sharpie. This step of the process will take approximately 5 days.

Evaluation:

FORMATIVE- Students will be evaluated throughout the course of the assignment on participation, and creative thinking.

SUMMATIVE- At the end of the assignment students will be evaluated on creativity with regard to how they chose to solve the problem they chose. They will also be evaluated on craftsmanship, their use of the media, and their use of overall design

and composition. Students' responses on their reflective papers will also be considered for thoughtfulness.

### Individual Options for Zines Project

All stories need to be illustrated with text added. Please base your narrative on one of the following options:

1. If you were a superhero, decide what your powers would be and how you would use them to effect change in the world, your town, or your school.
2. Tell a visual story of an important life moment.
3. Create a visual journal to express “a day in the life of yourself.”
4. Describe a social, political, or personal issue that you are concerned with (in story form) and suggest ways you would deal with the problem.

### Group Questions for Zines Project

As a group look at the zines and/or comic books at your table and answer the following questions:

1. What stories are being told?
2. How are they being told? For example, are they in the first person, third person, etc.?
3. What issues or themes are being dealt with?
4. What are some of the strong features of the composition? For example, what elements and principles of design are present?
5. What medium was originally used to create the book?
6. What mood is expressed in the story and how was it achieved?

## APPENDIX C- QUESTIONS FROM STUDENTS' JOURNALS

## Students' Journal Questions

1. Give your initial opinion of being presented with the option of designing your own project as a class.
2. How do you think the collaboration part could have been more effective?
3. What are some of the benefits to deciding the direction of your own project?
4. What are some of the challenges?
5. How has free choice affected your motivation during this assignment?
6. Are you more, less, or equally interested in completing the project to your best ability compared to other projects?

APPENDIX D- LESSON PLAN AND POWERPOINT FOR  
ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANCIENT POTTERY PROJECT

Archaeology and Ancient Pottery  
(notes to accommodate the powerpoint)

Preface powerpoint with the following information:

We live in the desert, and because of the arid climate there are many preserved ruins from previous cultures that lived here. Archaeological digs at these sites can help us understand how other cultures lived by studying artifacts from those cultures that were left behind. Today we have the opportunity to do our own class dig that will help us recreate functional pottery vessels in the style of those cultures we will study.

1. Go through powerpoint:
  - Emphasize *function* (use for vessel including purpose of shape, size), *decoration* (texture, pattern, repetition, style and purpose of these), and *technique* used (coil, slab).
  
2. Talk about what project is:
  - making functional pottery in the style of ancient forms after participating in “archaeological dig.”
  
3. Do the dig! Have group members come up one table at a time to find a shard from a previously bisque fired, broken pot buried in a box of sand. Students should be encouraged to use the tools provided (brushes, pick, chisel) to *dig* their shards out of the sand.
  
4. Talk about objectives and list on the board:
  - SWBAT recognize ancient forms of pottery and their functions by replicating aspects of both style and usage
  
  - SWBAT create a detailed drawing of their pot and its design before beginning construction
  
  - SWBAT create a form using one or several methods given (coil, formed slab, pinch pot, paddling or a combination of these)
  
  - SWBAT create pattern and texture on the surface of their pot using repetition

SWBAT determine a purpose for their style of surface decoration (symbolic, naturalistic, linear, figurative) as it relates to the function of their pot/vessel

*Length of time for this project is approximately two weeks*

5. Standards:

1AV-P2 PO 2- Demonstrate proficiency of various techniques within the chosen visual art form

1AV-P3 PO 1- State reasons for making artistic decisions

2AV-P1 PO 2- Analyze ways a work of art expresses a point of view of the time and place in which it was created

6. Evaluation:

Students will be formatively assessed throughout the course of the project on the basis of their in class participation (time-on-task), persistence in finishing the project to completion, and attitude in class. Students will also be evaluated at the end of the project (through summative assessment) where their finished pot will be graded on how closely the student met the stated objectives.

## Ancient Pottery and Archaeology



### History of Pottery

- Found in all parts of the world.
- Dated by looking at form, color, and technique used.
  - Ancient Aegean and Minoan pottery dated to 2350 B.C.
- Seen as a symbol of developing technology
- Mainly functional uses
  - Storing and preserving food and liquids
  - Used for holding or decanting food and liquids and pouring from one vessel to another
  - Special uses (example: holding incense, oils or perfumes)

### Greek Pottery



Geometric Krater  
Covered wine bowl  
(also used as an urn)



Terra-cotta Lekythos  
Oil jar. 9.5" h.  
500-400 B.C.



Funeral Dancers Amphora  
Stores provisions. 12.5" h.  
750-725 B.C.

### Minoan Pottery



Octopus Stirrup Jar  
Stores provisions. 1500 B.C.  
7" h.



Ritual Rhyton  
Drinking Vessel  
Sea Life Motif  
1200 B.C. 9.5" h.



Lily Vase  
1650-1580 B.C. 8" h.

### Etruscan and Cypriot Pottery



Teano-Ware Cup  
Drinking cup.  
400-300 B.C. 4" h.



Household Shrine and Vases  
Bowls used to burn incense,  
rhyton used for drinking during  
ceremonies, vases held offerings.  
800 B.C.



Lekythos  
Oil jar. 700-600 B.C.  
4.5" h.

### Egyptian Pottery



Vessel made in Nubia  
Influenced by Egyptian  
culture. 1500 B.C.



Provision Storage Jar



Libation/Wine Jars

### African Pottery



Luba Figural Pot  
Used to pour libations on gravesites  
or as an oracle to detect illness by a  
diviner. d. 1800's. 10.5" h.



Contemp. Storage Jar,  
in process.



Contemporary Provision Storage Jars,  
post firing.

### Indian Pottery- Anasazi, Acoma and Tohono O'Odham



Anasazi Gray Pottery  
Jars, pitchers, cups and bowls.  
From 650-950 A.D.



Acoma Pottery (Lucy Lewis)  
Jars, wedding vases, bowls, and  
pitchers. From 1960-1993.



Tohono O'Odham Pottery  
Vases, jars, bowls, and pitchers.  
From 1920-1990.

### Asian Pottery



Yang Shao Pottery  
Neolithic Period 3500-1500 B.C.  
Cup/bowl.



Shang Dynasty Three-footed Vessel  
1700 B.C.



Contemp. Vase from  
Jiangxi Province, China

### Construction Technique



Pinch pot



Rolling coils



Coil pot



Smoothing coils on inside



Paddling

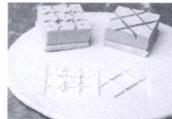


Formed slab

### Decoration

- Symbolic- related to special occasions, cultural beliefs, mythology and everyday life
- Naturalistic- observed shapes found in nature
- Linear- often geometric designs and patterns
- Figurative- human forms
- Could be painted, incised, or blackened
- Often no decoration on ware used everyday in peasant households or in shops (Greek)

### Decoration Technique



Stamping



Impressing



Incising/Carving

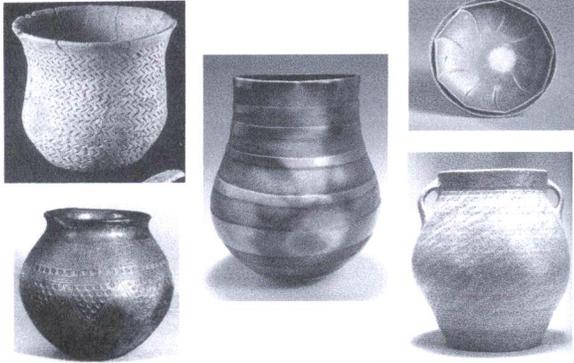


Paddling



Combing

### Pattern and Repetition



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