INTEGRATED VISUAL ARTS AND LANGUAGE ARTS: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM

A Dissertation

by

ANGELA MERCED CORNELIUS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

Integrated Visual Arts and Language Arts: Perceptions of Students and Teachers in a

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee	B. Stephen Carpenter II
	Patrick Slattery
Committee Members	Patricia Larke
	Chance Lewis
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ABSTRACT

Integrated Visual Arts and Language Arts: Perceptions of Students and Teachers in a

Middle School Classroom. (August 2011)

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The overarching problems to which this study responds are the inadequacies of a traditional language arts curriculum for underserved middle school students and the ways such curricula fall short in providing these students viable means to succeed both academically and socially. The purpose of this study is to learn what happens when underserved middle school students are simultaneously engaged in literacy studies and visual arts learning based on the perceptions of four students, their teacher and the researcher.

The questions that guide this study of an integrated literacy curriculum in a visual arts classroom are: 1) What are the perceptions of four underserved middle school students regarding their participation in an arts and literacy integrated curriculum? 2) What are the perceptions of a middle school teacher about student participation in an arts and literacy integrated curriculum? and, 3) What are the perceptions of the researcher who participated in the arts and literacy integrated curriculum?

By using a case study methodology along with elements of autoethnography, the study primarily explores the perceptions of four underserved students in an art class as they engage in literacy activities. This study incorporates ethnographic techniques of observation, interviews, artifact collection, and analysis as a basis for assessing and interpreting evaluations of real world experiences of students and a teacher.

Results illustrate the students did not find the writing assignment relevant to the associated art activity. The veteran teacher expressed interest in incorporating language arts into the art class but only did so on a limited basis. It appeared to the researcher that the potential for increasing verbal literacy was likely hampered by inadequate preparation for the lesson. The teacher may not have had a deep belief or motivation to fully utilize this technique. The potential for students to be exposed to deeper literacy integration in the art class may not have been fully realized.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and extended family. A special feeling of gratitude goes to my loving parents, Bill and Rose Cornelius, who have always stressed the importance of education. They not only gave me moral and emotional support, but instilled in me a tireless work ethic and persistent determination to be whatever I wanted to be in life without limitations. And my brother, William, who is a pillar of strength in my life.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my aunts and uncles who have supported me throughout this process. I will always appreciate all they have done for me, especially the phone calls, text messages, flowers, cards, and occasional pampering at the "Red Door" beauty salon. These family members never allowed me to give up on the pursuit of my dream.

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my grandmothers, Esdela Soto and the late Vivian Cornelius, for being there for me throughout the entire doctoral process. Both have been my best cheerleaders through their presence and spirit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would never have been able to finish my dissertation without the guidance of my committee members. The printed pages of this dissertation hold far more than the conclusion of my years of study. These pages reflect the relationships with the many inspiring and generous people I have met along this journey. I cherish each contribution to my development as a scholar and teacher.

I would especially like to express my gratitude to Dr. Stephen Carpenter, my committee chairman, and Dr. Patrick Slattery, co-chair, who have demonstrated that rigorous scholarship can be accessible to everyone. They also have stressed that social change is essential to scholarly work and that scholars have a duty to use the privileges of academia to envision and create a better world for everyone.

I would also like to thank Dr. Patricia Larke and Dr. Chance Lewis for agreeing to serve on my committee. Thank you to all my professors who have demonstrated, by example and through challenging coursework, how to think, teach, and teach others to think. I am grateful for your patience through the entire dissertation process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Locating Myself

It is 1986, my hair is in pigtails and I was wearing a denim jumper with a flowered t-shirt underneath. I threw down my backpack and kicked off my shoes. I just got home from another horrible day at elementary school. Once again I received another "graded" writing assignment that did not meet my reading teacher's standards or expectations. Earlier that day I stared at the big red face on a paper I had just received, feeling embarrassed and ashamed; I had tried to hide it before another classmate saw my "grade." Instead of a "smiley" face representing a job well done I received a sad face which displayed to the world that I was a failure. Such a face was common on my reading and writing assignments. At other times I would receive blank faces or faces with only eyes.

I ran to my room and pulled out my sketch book, pencils, and markers. I sat at my desk and furiously began drawing. My arm and hand flew across the page in rage and humiliation digging the lead of my pencil into the paper. I remember thinking that if I could draw what I was feeling at that moment my embarrassment might disappear; my feelings of humiliation, frustration, and perceived failure would vanish. It was my hope that whoever looked at my drawing would understand my feelings.

Once the drawing was complete I put my pencil down and stared at the drawing.

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This dissertation follows the style of *Studies in Art Education*.

A little girl with pigtails in a denim jumper and a flowered t-shirt was crying as she held a book. Books, scattered and torn, surrounded the little girl in the middle of the paper.

Tears rolled down my face as I tore the drawing out of my sketchbook and added it to the collection of other drawings of little girls crying and holding their school books. This was no isolated incident.

As I reflect on some of the school related experiences from my childhood, I remember having to overcome hardships in education. Reading and writing were particular challenges. I did not pass the state assessments in the third grade. I received special tutoring in and outside of school for years. Throughout my elementary educational career, few teachers seemed supportive of anyone who did not meet their expectations. I often felt ashamed, humiliated, and judged. In the years since there had been a struggle with self-esteem ever since. When young, I tried to cope with these problems through illustrating my frustrations. Drawing pictures of little girls crying and holding their schoolbooks was extremely common for me (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 1. Sad Girl with School Books

Figure 2. Crying Girl with School Books

From an early age, drawing gave me a focus. I did not fully realize it at the time, but it helped identify my feelings and gave me the opportunity to explore my imagination. I can now appreciate how important drawing is as a part of literacy development.

According to Richardson (1982) art is a special type of language. Art can take the form a formal critique or it can form visual images. Regardless, the language of art is an effective way to communication. Art embraces the tangible and the imagined, thus, art balances realistic representation with abstraction. Children discover the world around them through intellectual, physical and emotional methods (Wilson & Wilson, 1982). All these factors play a part in their art. Art encourages children to interact with their environment. It is through this interaction that learning takes place. In my own early years I had notebooks filled with drawings and stories expressing my experiences, feelings, and imagination. Many of these early expressions were not sad if school was not the topic.

In the past I struggled to express myself through the written word. For me, writing required years of formal and informal teaching and learning. In adequate fluency in language was how I conceived my artlessness in the use of words. This, at times, prevented learning vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and correct usage and yet mental development, learning, emotional health, and social integration required it. In the early years when the foundations of intellectual and emotional development are at their most critical stage, words alone are not always up to the task. Later, I learned to combine

images and words to narrate stories and events of my day in spiral notebooks and sketch pads, much like the picture books in elementary school.

Awakening the Teacher Within

Throughout my life I have been on a path to becoming an educator an educational path. My awakening did not occur until I began a leadership program in high school. Prior to high school, my early years were filled with many bumps in the road because I found school to be dissatisfying and often brutal. Consequently, I developed a strong aversion toward education, especially teachers, simply because of my negative experiences.

At the time I did not realize the difference between schooling and education. To me they were the same, but now I can see that what I experienced was schooling in its negative form - regimented, demanding that I conform to the order of the classroom and curriculum. It was only much later that I began to appreciate education as a mind freeing process where one could grow and develop new knowledge and skill that were not bound to the closely controlled classroom.

I finally reached high school, depressed, but undeterred, and encouraged myself to enroll in as many AP/Honors classes as I could. It was through the recommendations of my high school teachers that I be allowed to join a leadership program called *Teen Involvement*. This program allowed student members to travel to different elementary schools and tutor children in various subjects.

As if through divine intervention, I was assigned to the elementary school where some of my negative learning experiences occurred. Teaching and tutoring those

children brought my experiences full circle. I helped elementary students struggling with literacy by patiently approaching them with understanding. I had an instant connection with those children because I could see the fear and uncertainty in their eyes and body language; those same emotions that once resided within me. At the end of the semester their teachers informed me that the children had substantially improved in their literacy skills. Knowing that I may have contributed to their improvement was extremely motivating and inspiring. I knew then, I wanted to become a teacher.

My Teaching Experiences

To interest students in learning can be an immense challenge. I knew the students who sat before me in the classroom were full of potential – potential – right brain powers for intuition, imagination, and resources of the senses, and left brain powers to organize, calculate, and compute. Because I had formally studied art and graphic design as an undergraduate student and later English education as a graduate student I knew I wanted to incorporate multimodal representation in my classroom; multiple ways of expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Because of my discovery of expression through art it made sense to incorporate this process into my own classroom.

Traditionally, literacy has been narrowly defined as an ability to read, write, and understand print-based texts (Finders, 1997, Messaris, 1997). By adopting visual arts texts alongside more traditional-language bound literary texts in my language arts classroom, I did not adhere to the more conventional understandings of literacy or teaching of "English." Kress (2002) explains how English was "founded on the eminence, the cultural and social dominance of the mode of writing…and of the medium

of the book" (p.18) and yet I had disrupted the dominance of writing and the book with frequent incursions into the arts.

Guided by the standard curriculum for teaching language arts I offered my students a wide array of trade books, magazines, and other "non-textbook" literature to read. Using a variety of art materials to record their studies, and working collaboratively with student partners, they followed up their readings with multimodal representations. I worked with students who doodled, day-dreamed, acted out, and had a predilection for telling tall tales; behaviors typically seen as disruptive, in order to channel productive ideas that could come from such activities. I knew that providing these alternate outlets encouraged students to assert themselves over assigned tasks. By providing various outlets, I could gain the attention of all my students without punishing or humiliating those whose minds drifted elsewhere. The most popular outlet was the individual Idea Logs, notebooks in which student's recorded visual ideas and descriptions of daydream inventions. Doodles were quick expressions of thoughts students had and were often used as a springboard to more fully developed expressions later. Students did not all use them the same way. Some did a series of doodles that told stories; others did caricatures, simple portraits of someone they were interested in illustrating, often for the purpose of venting a variety of feelings. Multimodal text, that is "text as that phenomenon which is the result of the articulation in one or more semiotic modes of a discourse," (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 40) has traditionally been given much greater weight in the early years of schooling than in the later years. Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) describe how children:

Actively experiment with the representational resources of word and image, and with ways in which they can be combined. Their drawings are not just illustrations of a verbal context, not just 'creative embellishments;' they are part of a 'multimodally' conceived text, a semiotic interplay in which each mode, the verbal and the visual, is given a defined and equal role to play (p.118).

In contrast, in the later years of schooling, the printed word begins to replace image. "Advanced textbooks address their readers as 'no longer needing pictures,' as having been weaned off everyday naturalism and having acquired their abstract and impersonal characteristic of higher learning…" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 91).

Simultaneously, many scholars (Albers, 2006; Berghoff, 1998; Dyson, 2003a; Eisner, 1991; Flood, Heath, & Lapp, 2005; Jewitt, 2008; Kellner, 1998, 2000; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; New London Group, 1996; Luke, 2003; O'Brien, 2001; Suhor, 1992) are beginning to challenge the view that "meaning resides in language alone – or…that language is the central means of representing and communicating, even though there are 'extra-linguistic', para-linguistic' things going on…" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 91). In an era in which communication has undergone a revolution of the profoundest kind (Kress, 2002), in which "most messages…now make use of more and other modes of representation and communication than those of speech or writing," educational researchers and teachers are finding the predisposition to privilege language in formal schooling and particularly in the language arts classroom, is "no longer tenable, that it never really was and certainly is not now" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p.111). Thus, for educational researchers and teachers (Albers, 1997; Albers & Murphy, 2000;

Berghoff, Egawa, Harste, & Hoonan, 2000), including other communication systems as part of students' complete literacy development is vital, especially if we want them to acquire new perspectives on the world (Greene, 1995; Harste, 2003).

Students need to articulate concepts that they might otherwise be unable to in written or oral communication. Visual art is a method of knowing, a way of creating responses to and looking at the world (Eisner, 2002; Greene, 1995). According to Flood, Heath, and Lapp (2005) the visual arts "encompass everything from dramatic performances to comic books, television, and video arcade games" (p. xvi). The communicative arts (i.e., language arts), "such as reading, writing, and speaking, exist as integrated elements in the visual arts" (p. Flood, et al., 2005, p. xvi). According to Wagner (1985), the language arts strive to give value and continuity to the various components that contribute to reading, writing, and oral expression. Each language element (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and seeing) is part of the whole, not a set of isolated components (Wagner, 1985).

The visual and language arts can be a means for students to learn to communicate ideas and learn new ways to think about problems and texts. Thus, the visual and language arts can provide unique ways for underserved students who may be at-risk of academic failure to become creative and critical learners who can symbolize their thinking in a variety of ways (James, 1999) while experiencing success in school and thereby raise their self-esteem (Cho, 1996). Hence, for this study, I argue that visual and language arts integration is a perfect means for giving underserved students to demonstrate their proficiency.

Due to ideological and philosophical divisions among educators, policy makers, and the general public, the meaning of the term/label/descriptor at-risk is highly contentious (O'Brien, Springs, & Stith; 2001; Slavin & Madden, 1989). In education, at-risk students fall into a larger unidentified group. At-risk students are typically those in danger of dropping out of or failing school or who have already dropped out or failed. Underserved students include at-risk, immigrant, low-socioeconomic, ethnic minority, and other marginalized groups (Camblin, 2003; Green, 2006). In relation to school, behavior of underserved youth typically include truancy, skipping classes, disengagement, refusal to work, unruliness, and focus on social and cultural pursuits at the expense of schoolwork (Field & Olafson, 1999). For this study, the use of the term underserved, with respect to my own research, is concerned primarily with students who are at-risk of school failure.

Problem Statement

The problems to which this study responds are the inadequacies of a traditional language arts curriculum for underserved middle school students (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009; O'Brien, 2003; Ryan, 2008) and the ways such curricula fall short in providing these students viable means to succeed both academically and socially (Alvermann, 2001; O'Brien, 2001; 2003; O'Brien, Springs, & Stith, 2001). The inadequacies of which I speak are of a poor curriculum, where students receive literacy instruction that is not suited to their needs due to rigidly imposed standards and controlled curricula and textbook and lecture-dominated teaching.

Public schools today are confronted with expanding numbers of students who are being identified as at-risk of school failure. Underserved students who struggle with literacy may include students who are non-native English language learners, who have learning disabilities and others with various literacy needs. Gunning (2006) stated, "the literacy gap is a persistent, pervasive and significant disparity in educational achievement and attainment among groups of students" (p. 1).

Many underserved children have significantly fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful literacy related experiences and are less likely to develop the skills and experiences they need to become successful learners (Leslie & Allen, 1999; McEwan, 2002). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, approximately two thirds of 8th- and 12th-grade students read at less than the "proficient" level (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009).

Many students arrive in middle school, typically grades 6, 7, and 8, underprepared or unable to meet the literacy demands expected of them. Furthermore, "by middle school, students who struggle in reading have already experienced years of failure, which has reinforced their low perceptions about ability and loss of agency and contributed to increased disengagement from reading" (O'Brien, Beach, & Scharber, 2007, p. 52). Once a student falls significantly behind his or her peers, neither special education nor remedial assistance is likely to bring the child up to age-appropriate achievement (Pikulski, 1997; Slavin, 1996). Adolescents struggling with literacy are less likely to be motivated when compared to their competent peers. Research claims these students are particularly likely to have low confidence in their reading abilities.

(Alvermann, 2001; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriquez, 1998).The fact that the number of underserved students is steadily growing, poses a challenging problem for schools (Ross, Smith, Casey & Slavin, 1995). At a time in a student's schooling when the demands to learn content literacy increases, the opportunity for students to express/demonstrate understanding in more than one sign system might be useful (Berghoff, 1998). For example, Berghoff (1998) and Short, Kauffman, and Kahn (2000) conducted studies in classrooms where sign systems such as art, music, drama, dance, and math were available to students to use as resources to understand and respond to literature. Teachers introduced these resources to enable students' exploration and learning, and students chose which system would help them make meaning of the text. Research in cognative development has shown that intelligence is multidimensional (Bruner, 1996; Gardner, 1993). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) institutions of learning typically center around language and logical analysis, however there are other important learning modalities that should be tapped such as lessons focusing feeling, creativity and, aesthetics. Research has shown that a standardized approaches to literacy development and instruction is in contrast to what is known about how students learn (Bruner, 1996; Gardner, 1993; Tomlinson, 1999) Over the years cognitive research has shown the uniqueness of student learning needs (Bruner, 1996; Gardner, 1993; Tomlinson, 1999). With the continuing emphasis on high stakes testing, schools ought to implement multiple routes to success by focusing on student's strengths and interests.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess/interpret what happens when underserved students are simultaneously engaged in literacy studies and visual arts learning. The motivation to do this study is based on my experience as a middle school teacher. In that role I saw many students having difficulty expressing their feelings, thoughts, and ideas adequately with written language. They seemed not to have the vocabulary and motivation to write effectively for their grade level. I witnessed students working on art assignments who preferred artistic expression over written/verbal expression. I also observed how 8th grade middle school students value other school subjects in relation to their art education, and the role art serves as an overall means of self-expression and its relationship to spoken/written language.

Insights about their perceptions were gained by observing and speaking with students as they engaged in their art projects and by examining their written statements after their assignments were completed. After the lesson, it was possible to gain insights about students' perceptions of the written component of their art assignment after speaking with them and examining their written statements. Recording teacher interviews permitted a thorough analysis of his perceptions of the literacy component of the art project. After analyzing the perceptions of students, teacher and researcher, the expectation was to create revised curriculum to better address the needs of students who have difficulty expressing themselves with written/verbal language by integrating literacy into the art classroom.

Research Questions

Based on my personal path to literacy learning and the contemporary contexts of literacy learning in media environments, I have integrated the visual arts and other modalities into the language arts classroom. As a middle school teacher who taught both art and language arts to students in monolingual and bilingual classrooms, I found many of the texts available did not connect to my students' lives. I took up the notion of a need for texts that allows for an "increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, and the behavioral" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 94).

Some researchers and educators agree that literacy is of the utmost importance for a successful educational preparation. Growing up, I was positioned as an underserved learner who was challenged with literacy tasks in school. Prejudiciously, I was viewed as inept, unresponsive, and lazy. If I had been given the opportunity to participate in a curriculum that supported alternate ways of representing knowledge and understanding I may have experienced greater academic achievement and self-confidence. This study originates from my desire to examine a modified visual arts curriculum where underserved middle school students experience learning through the language arts.

Incorporating ethnographic techniques of observation and interviews were the basis for collecting and analyzing the perceptions of students and a teacher. It was important to understand those experiences within the context of a middle school that has previously dictated learning experiences through standardized traditional lesson plans. Having no hypotheses to test the topic the following guided questions were offered:

1. What are the perceptions of 28 middle school students in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

2. What are the perceptions of four middle school students who struggle with literacy in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

3. What are the perceptions of a middle school teacher who teaches in an inclusive classroom about his participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

4. What are the perceptions of the researcher who participated in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

Significance of the Study

While some teachers continue to use traditional pedagogical approaches to teach their students, many have turned to integrated curriculum because of its many advantages. One primary reason teachers implement this approach is to help students make connections across subject areas (Papai, 2000). Researchers (Biondo, Raphael, & Gavelek, 1999; Wagner, 1985) describe language arts integration as the incorporation of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking to achieve a balanced approach to literacy education (Wagner, 1985). Taylor, Carpenter, Ballengee-Morris, and Sessions (2006) suggested "the arts do not have to be taught in isolation to be taught well" (p. 30). Art teachers and language arts teachers can collaborate in order to have shared, but not duplicated learning experiences that enhance student learning (Taylor et al., 2006). This

approach can afford teachers the opportunity to cultivate higher level thinking skills and imagination in their students. Students can be engaged in all forms of literacy, including multiliteracy and visual literacy. Further research can provide a greater understanding how language arts integration might provide an improved environment for the development of academic and social achievement. This study examines the outcomes of a language arts integrated curriculum by exploring the personal and academic performance of underserved students. This study provides an interdisciplinary approach which explains the incorporation of the language arts into an art class and identifies the value of multiple learning styles.

Further, more studies focusing on the literacy skills and strategies students use when reading and composing multimodal text are necessary to connect theory to practice (Flood, Heath, & Lapp, 2005; Kress, 2003). The aim of this study is to provide additional information describing underserved middle school students and a teacher's beliefs and understanding regarding the value of expression in two sign systems as multiple ways of knowing.

Limitations

As a participant observer, my presence in the classroom made me familiar to the participants. This in itself may not have overly interfered with the class, but since I was the primary instrument for data collection in this study, it was important for me to remain free from formal and informal expectations and to describe rather than judge what would be occurring in the study. To accomplish this I sat in a corner of the room

and was as unobtrusive as possible when not interacting directly with the students. In that position I could observe the conduct and interactions of both teacher and students.

Definition of Terms

The following terms relate to the present study.

Art Integration: Curricula that consciously create a connection between one or more art forms and one or more other subject areas (language arts) in order for students to master the learning objectives in both art forms and the other subject areas. Arts integration models employ diverse approaches, in all areas of the arts and educational settings (Deasy, 2002), as such, arts integration models cannot be standardized, but should be researched based and individualized to meet educational goals.

Integrated curriculum: Integrated curriculum occurs when one or more subjects are combined and this combination reveals a broader understanding than could be attained through either of the individual subject disciplines alone (Beane, 1991; Bresler & Gardner, 1995).

Language Arts Integration: The incorporation of reading, writing, word study, speaking, and listening into a cohesive setting (Wagner, 1985).

Multiliteracy: Making meaning through the interaction of different communication modes. (New London Group, 1996) For example, a contemporary lesson in multiliteracy might be one that has students deconstruct hidden meanings n magazine adds.

Multimodality: The use of multiple modes to represent knowledge and to communicate that knowledge or ideas. An example might be of a persuasive paper in the form of a brochure using text, image, and color.

Semiotics: The study of signs with which people express, represent, communicate and, understand meanings. Examples of such signs are still and video images, words, nonverbal sounds, body movements, and objects.

Underserved Students: Students who do not receive equivalent learning resources or who are identified as being from an underrepresented group. An example of such a student is one who is from a first-generation immigrant family who goes to a under-resourced, low performing school (Camblin, 2003; Green, 2006).

Researcher/Teacher: Positioning myself as a researcher with background knowledge, perspectives, and experiences as a teacher.

Visual Arts: The process that produces a range of products that is primarily visual in nature. Examples are such products such as drawings, paintings, sculptures, ceramic creations, printmaking, photography, video or filmmaking.

Visual Literacy: Understanding and using visual images to think, learn, and communicate (Wileman, 1993). Some examples of visual literacy would be having students relate to and find meaning in storyboards, graphs, charts, diagrams, photographs, and maps.

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter provided an introduction to the study topic. The research cited lays the foundation for integrating literacy instruction in the visual arts curriculum. Such an

approach can support the needs of students with varying learning styles. Chapter II

provides greater depth on current research related to language arts and art integration.

Chapter III describes the methodology used for this ethnographic case study to

investigate what happens when underserved students are simultaneously engaged in

literacy studies and visual arts learning at the school under study. Chapter IV reports the

results of data collected during the course of the study, and Chapter V reports

conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the existing literature on the key concepts discussed throughout this paper. First, the work, philosophies, and theories of John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Paulo Freire are briefly discussed as they pertain to literacy integrated curriculum in the arts classroom and its link to this study. The second part examines the expanding conceptions of literacy in education and a discussion of theories and research related to multimodality. Third, is a review of the importance and complexity of curriculum and arts integration. Fourth, is research on underserved students. Fifth, is an exploration of literacy and arts learning as supportive facilitators of learning for students at-risk of educational failure. Lastly, is a justification for the need for research on arts and literacy integration and underserved students.

Views of Learning: The Thoughts of Dewey, Eisner, Greene, and Freire

A critical view of the approach to instruction that views students as depositories of knowledge does not serve the needs of all students according to Freire (2009) and hooks (1994). Education is not instantaneous—learning occurs over time and through experiences. Traditionally, concepts about teaching indicated that there was a particular way to learn certain skills, but various learning modalities students employ are distinguished by numerous different types of learning styles and intelligences that need to be engaged in various ways (Gardner, 1993; Hoerr, 2004). Committed to providing an equitable education for all students, the philosophies and theories of John Dewey, Elliot

Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Paulo Freire reveal a need for active, creative, relevant and liberating learning.

John Dewey

John Dewey's (1916) philosophy of education states that traditional views concerning knowledge and learning are problematic. The mistake lies in comparing the learner to a spectator who passively recognized what is there and whose objective was to be certain about it. This makes objects independent of our knowing them and, thus, knowing them is just recognition. In contrast, rather than teaching lessons with large amounts of rote information, Dewey believed schools should teach students how to be problem-solvers by helping them to learn how to think. Dewey pointed out that knowledge was embedded in, and also derived from, experience. According to Dewey (1938) "all genuine education comes about through experience" but he quickly followed that with the idea that not all experiences are equal or genuine educational experiences (p. 25). One does not automatically equal the other. Further, Dewey felt that many traditional educational practices were "mis-educative" because they did not foster further growth.

In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey maintained that no other type of experience can replace the experience gained from artistic experience. For example, Dewey found the value of art to be its unique way of expressing the mind. Dewey said, "Because objects of art are expressive, they are a language. Rather, they are many languages … Language exists only when it is listened to as well as spoken" (p. 106). He then stated that all languages involve what is said (substance) and how it is said (form). Dewey is

correct in saying that artwork cannot be translated through words, because literacy is not the right medium for it. According to Dewey, every person is capable of being an artist. Individuals can live an artful life of social interaction that benefits everyone and thereby beautify the world. Art can change perceptions, increase interest, and display moral sensitivity through thought provoking actions in regard to societal roles and responsibilities. Art can be used as a tool to help erase biases and express global experiences; consequently, Dewey looks to art as a way to exemplifying democracy. It is through arts that imagination can be conceived in ways that can improve individual lives, as well as shape experiences that add value and dignity to how we lead our lives.

Elliot Eisner

Elliot Eisner (1998c), like Dewey, identified the relationship between arts and learning. He contended, "knowledge cannot be reduced to what can be said, that the process of working on a problem yields its own intrinsically valuable rewards, and that these rewards are as important as other outcomes" (p. 68). The arts taught him that "in education goals are not stable targets at which you aim, but directions toward which you travel; that as constructive activity, science as well as the fine arts are artistically created structures" (Eisner, 1998c, p.63). Thus, the arts make a prominent contribution to education and play a significant role in furthering education because they explore the possibilities that not all problems have single or correct answers, that the form of a thing is a part of its content, and that having fixed objectives and following specific clear-cut procedures for achieving them are not always the most reasonable way of dealing with the world.

As an educator and an artist for many years, Eisner (2002) learned ten important lessons about the role of the arts in education. First, the arts teach students to make good judgments about relationships. Second, the arts teach students that problems can have more than one solution Third, the arts celebrate numerous perspectives. Fourth, the arts teach students that various forms of problem solving are rarely fixed, but change with circumstances and opportunity. Fifth, the arts illuminate that neither words in their literal form nor numbers conclude what individuals can know. Sixth, the arts teach students that small differences can have large effects. Seventh, the arts teach students to think through a material. Eighth, the arts help students learn to say what cannot be said. Ninth, the arts allow students to have experiences they can have from no other source. Tenth, the arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to students what adults think is important. As a result of these lessons, Eisner (2002) proposed to view educational systems like a studio instead of a factory; and nurture "productive diversity" instead of uniformity.

Eisner (1991) stated that schools overemphasize the linguistic mode, thereby limiting the forms of expression available to students. Students need experience with multiple modes in a variety of formats to increase their ability to communicate. Art as a symbol system, Eisner argued, allows the learner to capture ideas, view their visible form, and reflect upon them. The arts promote creative thinking and allow for meaningful association of ideas. Students, who are weak in the language mode, but strong artistically, are held at a disadvantage in typical school curricula. Thus, Eisner

(2002) argued that serious attention to the cultivation of visual literacy would represent a fundamental expansion of the educational agenda. Eisner (1991) claimed,

> If education as a process is aimed at expanding and deepening the kinds of meaning that people can have in their lives, and if literacy is conceptualized as a process concerned with the construction and communication of meaning, then school programs must attempt to provide time for the development of multiple forms of literacy. Not to do so is to create an epistemological parochialism that limits what people can experience and, therefore, what they can come to know (p. 125).

Teaching and learning should be taught, not only through text, but through visual resources that students can explore and understand through hands-on experiences.

Eisner supports teaching the arts to students in order to strengthen decision making processes through a more complicated way of learning. According to Eisner (2002) there is a need to conduct research in arts education, and the role of arts in the learning process. Eisner posits that one focus for additional research in instruction and cognition should be the correlation between experience in the arts and achievement in academic subjects. It is this perspective that is central to the study being undertaken in this dissertation.

Maxine Greene

Greatly influenced by existentialism, Maxine Greene insists that every human spirit has the capacity to blossom, especially when the imagination is being utilized. Imagination "discloses possibilities, both personal and social as well as of aesthetic

imagining" (Greene, 2001, p. 65). It is through this process that "we are enabled to look at things, to think about things as if they were otherwise" (Greene, 2001, p. 65). Greene believes all learners must be able to think, question, and understand in ways different and new.

Institutions of learning, Greene (1995) believes, should be reorganized as places where students look for meanings and where the silenced and unheard may have a voice in the learning community. We may begin to understand the role imagination through "the recovery of literary experiences that have been significant at various times in our lives" (1995, p.76). This exercise allows educators to help students return to the imagined worlds that were once real to them as a way to understand the importance of imagination. It is within fiction that underserved groups can find the promise of voice and privilege which are not necessarily awarded to them. By releasing the imagination there is the possibility for opening new perspectives, understanding and compassion through dialogue. Thus, Greene encourages teachers to guide and support children in this joining of voice and art as they construct their narrative in the making. Greene requests for more collaborative classrooms, where students and teachers work collectively in thoughtful ways to raise critical consciousness.

Greene proposes various ways to re-envision the current educational system so that it includes and works for all children. Greene creates an argument for using the arts as a means to open minds and break down the barriers so that we can imagine worlds other than our own familiar cultures. Greene (1995) writes, "in many respects teaching and learning are matters of breaking through barriers – of expectation, of boredom, of

predefinition" (p.14). The barrier that compels her the most is that of a lack of imagination within education. Greene wants schools to develop a kind of imagination which is open to seeing and believing the alternative worlds that exist in works of art created by others. "The arts," Greene writes, "offer opportunities for perspective, for perceiving alternative ways of transcending and of being in the world, for refusing the automatism that overwhelms choice" (p.142). It is imaginative thinking inspired by literature and art which can make educational and social change possible. Through books, poems, dance, theater, music, and images teachers can teach their students to read, to see, to interpret, to place themselves in alternative worlds; not to resist them because they are new and different. Teachers and students do not necessarily have to become artists, but they can open themselves up to others' art. Providing this opportunity to educators is one which Greene feels is essential to nurturing creativity in both learning and teaching.

For Greene, literacy is an ongoing process involving change and growth rather than a closed set of skills which can be attained once and which then remained fixed. Greene's view that teaching literacy involves releasing students from their inarticulateness and powerlessness in the world by providing them with a place to speak, to write and read from their own experience, and encourage them to reflect on and imagine perspectives other than their own starting place (Greene, 1982).

Paulo Freire

According to Paulo Freire (2009), voice, social transformation, and agency should be major goals of education. Freire believed that the dominant culture uses

schools, as well as other social institutions that support its hegemony, to transmit messages of superiority and inferiority. Freire (2009) argued against the prescriptive traditional educational methods where the educator perpetuates the relations of power, domination represents the authority in the classroom, and the learners are passive "receptacles" waiting to be "filled" with knowledge by the teacher.

Freire's (2009) educational philosophy supports the teachers' position of meeting the needs of the child. He argued that the banking model of education equates to oppression: "Banking education anesthetizes and inhibits power…" (p. 81). The banking model of education is the enemy of liberatory pedagogy. Liberatory education first and foremost resolves "the teacher-student contradiction by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (p.72).

Instead of adopting the banking model of education, Freire proposed a problem-posing model that called for dialogical learning, where the educator and the student engage in collaborative conversation and action. These dialogic conversations involve teacher-to-student and student-to-student conversations that encourage equal contributions to learning and shared ownership of learning. Additionally, problem-posing education creates critically thinking individuals. It ". . . consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information" (Freire, 2009 p.79). In problem-posing education, students are "no longer docile listeners" but "are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (2009, p. 81). Freire sees dialogue as "an existential necessity" (p.88).

In relation to literacy, Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987) believed that, in its purest form, literacy is empowerment.

> ...literacy is fundamental to aggressively constructing one's voice as part of a wider project of possibility and empowerment. Moreover, the issue of literacy and power does not begin and end with the process of learning how to read and write critically; instead, it begins with the fact of one's existence as part of a historically constructed practice within specific relations of power (p. 7).

Literacy is the liberator from oppression enforced through social power structures and cultural biases (Freire & Macedo, 1987). As such, literacy takes on the form of being a vehicle for change within citizenship and with the structures of society.

> Literacy in this wider view not only empowers people through a combination of pedagogical skills and critical analysis, it also becomes a vehicle for examining how cultural definitions of gender, race, class, and subjectivity are constituted as both historical and social constructs. Moreover, literacy in this case becomes the central pedagogical and political mechanism through which to establish the ideological conditions and social practices necessary to develop social movements that recognize and fight for the imperatives of a radical democracy (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 6).

This new definition of literacy must be expanded to include conceptualizing new information in context to social implications and the transformational potential of an individual's perception of the world in which they live. Thus, his concept of literacy in which the learner "reads the word and the world" offers a practical and theoretical

framework for facilitating an empowering literacy instruction and curriculum for underserved students.

The perspectives of John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Paulo Freire and others attempting to provide meaningful dialogue about literacy and the conflicting definitions and agendas for literacy demonstrate the importance of multiliteracies. All four sought to illustrate the importance of multiple ways of learning and promoted the idea that art is central component to literacy learning. This study, sought to observe and interpret how and to what extent a curriculum that incorporated language elements in an arts class empowered and engaged underserved students. to possibilities of literacy education and arts integration, as articulated in the following sections.

Promises of a Broadening View of Literacy

Traditionally, literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write (Finders, 1997, Messaris, 1997). Gambrell and Mazzoni (1999) define literacy as: "Being able to independently use strategies to construct meaning from text, draw upon texts to build conceptual understanding, effectively communicate ideas, orally and in writing, as well as possess an intrinsic desire to read and write" (p. 11). According to Moje (2002), however, defining literacy is complicated because a definition relies on what constitutes a literate individual and discussions about what "counts as texts" (p. 107). A traditional focus on written and spoken language only has meant neglect for other representational and communicative modes (Kress, 2000). A reconstructed definition of literacy sees language as operating in a more "transformative way, as a means for seeing the world differently, so that we might begin to construct a more human and compassionate

society" (Powell, 1999, p.20). Powell calls for a less linear and technically oriented means of literacy instruction, allowing for more creativity and critical thinking. She relates traditional literacy instruction with controlled knowledge, minimal engagement for students, and dependent roles for learners. Aldridge (2003) explains that text book school districts and publishers are switching toward scripted lessons in order to atone for ineffective teaching practices. Scripting is being implemented as a means of meeting the demands of content standards, unfortunately, scripts present material in an auditory fashion which does not assist all student learning styles (Bruner, 1996; Gardner, 1993; Miller 2001).

Maxine Greene (1995) writes,

I am reminded of the differentiated meanings of literacy. As a set of techniques, literacy has often silenced persons and disempowered them. Our obligation today is to find ways of enabling the young to find their voices, to open their spaces, to reclaim their histories in all their variety and discontinuity (p. 120).

This resonates with the International Reading Association's (1999) call for curricula and instructional programs to take into consideration the academic and nonacademic literacies that function in the lives of adolescents.

Gee (1996) believes that situating literacy in socially interactive communities implies there are multiple forms of literacy, or literacies, that people engage in and out-of-school (Alvermann, 2002; Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000; New London Group, 1996). The non-school literacies that students engage in with peers and family

are characterized by specific, acquired ways that students use language to read, write, and communicate and are influenced by the media and popular culture (Finders, 2000).

Non-school literacies represent ways of negotiating meaning in socially situated contexts through interacting, dialoguing, thinking, and valuing outside the school culture (Luke, 2003). For example, in a study of 'gangsta literacy' among alienated youth, Moje (2000) showed how youth produced unsanctioned graffiti. These practices earned the students the admiration of their peers, but only criticism from others such as their teachers. Moje concluded that, for those students to avoid further marginalization, teachers should educate them on "how the language and literacy practices they value might be used productively in other contexts to challenge dominant assumptions about literacy and social practice" (Moje, 2000, p.684). In other words, students' nonmainstream forms of literacy must be brought into mainstream texts so that academic literacy is more meaningful and engaging.

Similarly, Rymes (2001) examined how schools position certain groups of adolescents as literacy failures rather than acknowledging literacy knowledge they bring into the classroom from outside the school. During an 18 month investigation in an alternative Los Angeles high school, Rymes discovered teachers were drawing on their students' graffiti literacy within the classroom and encouraged them to explain what various tags meant and allowed them to use their tags to identify their completed work. Literacy, in this case, graffiti literacy, played a major role in this group of students' construction of themselves as potentially successful students. Graffiti's permitted presence in the classroom offered the students a chance to draw on an important part of

their lives which had not been condoned by the school in order to improve their more traditional in school literacy. By accepting the graffiti, the teachers at this school sent the message that these students were important and valued for who they were and what they brought with them to school. Expanding literacy instruction to acknowledge multiple literacy contexts and activities can potentially invest students more in the literacy process.

Semiotic Theory

Semiotics is the study of the relationships among signs and meaning (Barthes, 1977; Eco, 1976; Kress, 2000, 2003). As a sign maker decides on the appropriate modes to convey his or her own interest, learning takes place as the sign maker connects prior learning with available resources to communicate meanings with particular contexts. Using cultural tools like language and art to mediate self-interests and social relations within the classroom, students generate and convey their meaning making through visual signs (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). For example, a teacher creates a lesson by having students listen to unfamiliar music and describe their interpretation of a scene that it inspires in them. In this way they are using multiple signs (music and text) to construct meaning. The concept of multimodality within the literacy classroom offers students multiple ways as well as alternate ways to engage, represent, and communicate their understandings and experiences (Eisner, 1998c; Gardner, 1993; Jewitt & Kress, 2003). According to Cowan and Albers (2006), "learning within a semiotic approach to literacy enables learners to develop richer and more complex literacy practices and allows them

to more thoughtfully and critically deal with the images and messages of popular culture" (p. 124).

Researchers and educators who hold a semiotic perspective propose that the human ability to create and interpret signs and symbol systems is what makes us humans (Eisner, 1991; Harste, 1994). A semiotic viewpoint suggests that signs, such as pictures, words, gestures, and objects are used to mediate (Suhor, 1992) an understanding of the world in which we live. From this vantage point, the purpose of literacy instruction in schools is to teach children to be proficient in learning various culturally situated symbols. An exercise that illustrates this concept is one that incorporates a 360° picture(s) of Times Square in New York City and downtown Tokyo. Students would identify and write down all the signs in the pictures that have social relevance they recognize. With guidance from the teacher, a class discussion could then ensue about the various signs.

Social Semiotic Theory

In contrast to traditional semiotic theory which focuses primarily on theorizing unchanging semiotic systems or structures, social semiotic theory tries to account for the variability of semiotic practices. Social semiotics stresses the social, not the systematic, basis for the production of signs (Halliday, 1978; Jewitt & Kress, 2003). According to Jewitt and Kress (2003),

> Social semiotics views the agency of socially-situated humans as central to sign-making. From a social semiotic perspective, people use the resources that are available to them in the specific sociocultural environments in which they act to

create signs, and in using them, they change the resources. In other words,

signs…are viewed as constantly newly made, in a process in which the signified

(what is to be meant) is realized through the most apt signifier (that which is

available to give realization to that which is to be meant) in a specific social

context (p. 10).

Social semiotics recognizes the array of "functions performed by the use of language and

other semiotic resources" (Morgan, 2006). Therefore, communication is created to

interpersonal meanings, attitudes, and beliefs (Morgan, 2006). This can address

extensive issues of interest to literacy education.

An example of social semiotic theory in the classroom that engages students in

learning is to have students look at slides of people living in U.S. with distinctive ethno-

cultural dress and allow them to articulate in words what each person is like. In this way,

discussions of cultural biases, preconceived notions of social status or stigmata could

broaden student knowledge of various groups.

A social semiotic theory allows new meanings and new ideas to replace pre-

established meanings and ideas. This theory allows for an analysis that goes beyond

'content' knowledge to examine the wider social and cultural implications of meaning

making in language arts classes. Furthermore, this theory allows underserved students to

express their ideas and experiences in the ways they deem appropriate. According to

Jewitt and Kress (2003),

What establishes the relation of analogy between signifier and signified (in other

words, 'what means' and 'what is meant') is the 'interest' of the maker of the

sign. This relationship is realized in three ways: first, her or his interest decides

what is to be signified; second, she or he decides what is the apt signifier; and

third, she or he decides how the sign is made most suitable for the occasion of its

communication. In all three cases metaphors provide insights into the meaning

principles of a culture as much as of an individual (p. 11).

An examination of how and what meanings are constructed allows for possibilities of

change by making visible that which is often invisible (Wright & Forrest, 2007).

Multimodality and Representation

Informed by social semiotics, the development of a multimodal theory (Jewitt &

Kress, 2003) describes the role of modes in meaning-making. *Multimodality* is the use of

multiple modes, organized sets of semiotic resources for meaning making to represent

knowledge and to communicate that knowledge or ideas (Figure 3). Within a multimodal

perspective, an implicit assumption is that modes of communication are partial and

communicate only a part of the overall message (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). All modes

contribute to the construction of meaning in different ways. Consequently, no one mode

stands alone in the process of making meaning; in other words, each plays a discrete role

in the whole. Thus, as a sign maker decides on the appropriate modes to convey their

own interest, learning takes place as the sign maker connects prior learning with

available resources to communicate meanings in particular contexts.

According to Jewitt (2003), "multimodality also challenges assumptions about

learning (as a linguistic process) and the traditions embedded in education" (p. 84).

Jewitt (2008) stresses the incorporation of nonlinguistic representation into

understandings of literacy in the contemporary classroom. Greene (1995) agrees and suggests that multimodal expressions (including film, plays, artworks, music, photography, and so on) encourage students to think alternatively about the fictional world of literature and the real world around them. For example, students would read individual parts in a Greek tragedy and create a thematic visual representation of the play in form of a poster. Therefore, students can use cultural tools like language and art to mediate self-interests and social relations within the classroom to generate and convey their meaning making through visual signs.

Semiotic theory provides a means of explaining how experiences, sign systems and media work together: transmediation. Siegel (1995) defined transmediation as:

> …the act of translating meanings from one sign system to another [that] increases students' opportunities to engage in generative and reflective thinking because learners must invent a connection between the two sign systems as the connection did not exist *a priori* (p. 455).

According to Suhor (1992), through transmediation students develop a deeper understanding by using cognitive, aesthetic and at times psychomotor skills to work within different design elements such as linguistic, visual, audio, and gestural. For example, if a student wanted to communicate or convey their understanding of a certain concept while reading a novel, the student might decide to represent that knowledge within the language arts classroom by metaphorically representing that concept. The student might choose to represent that metaphor through a drawing or any mode of their choosing. The student may decide that the most appropriate way to communicate their

knowledge about that concept might be through the use of multiple modes of

representation. Transmediation in a language arts classroom embraces the notion that

"meaning is not limited to what words can express" (Eisner, 2002, p. 230).
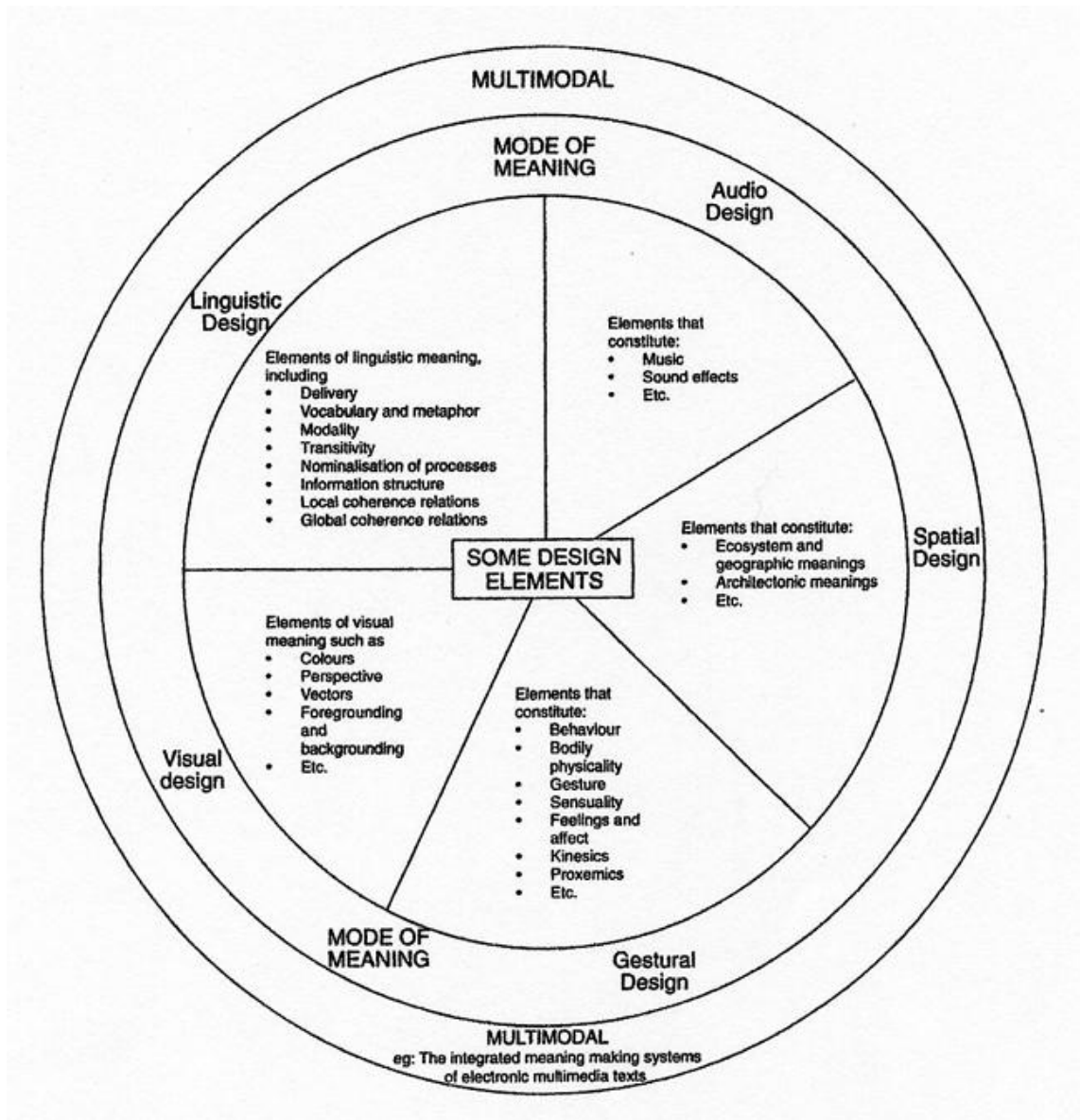

Figure 3. Multiliteracies: Metalanguages to Describe and Interpret the Design Elements of Different Modes of Meaning (The New London Group, 1996)

For this study, underserved students transmediated their cognition, experiences, and emotions through language and visual arts. Taking into account the social semiotic view of representation the student could make the choice as the sign maker based on their own interests. The use of multimodalities within the language arts classroom offered underserved students multiple ways to engage, represent, and communicate their understandings and experiences (Albers, 2006; Cowan & Albers, 2006, Eisner, 1998a, 2002; Greene, 1995; Jewitt, 2008; Jewitt & Kress, 2003).

Multiliteracy Theory

Language arts, as literacy pedagogy, is not only biased toward the monomodal, but is "a carefully restricted project – restricted to formalized, monolingual, monoculture, and rule-governed forms of language" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 61). In other words, a traditional literature-based model of language arts has emphasized the primacy of certain written texts over others (and over other semiotic modes as well) thus positioning itself as the lens through which all other educational practices are seen (Morgan, 1993). According to The New London Group (1996), multiliteracies "overcomes the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how negotiating multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of students" (p. 60). Multiliteracy theory points to "fundamental changes in the way we communicate and disseminate information, the way we approach the task of reading and writing and the way we think about helping people become literate in their communities" (Semali, 2002, p. 11). It is necessary to celebrate diversity and view the world as a variety of cultures, which have various ways of

thinking and to create meaning. According to Tyner (1998) "the goal of the teacher is to expand the number of choices available to students. An understanding of the many literacies and their uses offers opportunities for students to become as proficient in as many literacies and learning styles as possible – not only those with which the students finds an affinity" (p. 64). This suggests cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning which can benefit students as connections are made. For example, in a multiliteracies classroom, a teacher could design a unit in which students create their own public service announcement (PSA) videos dealing with social, economic, and/or political topics. Students would first watch examples of PSAs and analyze the multiple meanings of the video texts by asking open-ended questions. Second, they would use their responses as a basis for writing the scripts for their PSA. Then students would create a short video clip using video editing software such as Microsoft Movie Maker. In this unit, students would engage in technology, compose with a variety of semiotic modes, display their interest and knowledge of a range of subjects, and demonstrate levels of multimodal and technological expertise.

To achieve such a curriculum The New London Group (1996) explains that multiliteracy pedagogy is a complicated integration of four factors: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice.

Situated Practice utilizes students' knowledge and experiences as a foundation for specific skill development and the attainment of understanding and knowledge. Further, situated Practice acknowledges students' cultural attitudes and does not make the student the object of teacher directed approaches to learning. Thus, students are

involved in constructive experiences applying various discourses. In other words, this constructivist approach attaches learning to what people want to do so that it is comes from their personal perspective. This will allow students to use and extend their language and conceptual frameworks by means of experience and reflection.

Overt Instruction transpires when the teacher presents new concepts and activities which allow the student to obtain certain information. The amount of overt instruction involved depends on the backgrounds of the students and their previous experiences. Overt instruction is unlike direct approaches to teaching and learning because it emphasizes the students' interpretations of the task by utilizing 'metalanguage', "languages of reflective generalization that describe the form, content, and function of the discourses of practice" (The New London Group, 1996, p.86). It is this 'metalanguage' that becomes the tool for learning and expressing the 'what' and 'how' as the teacher connects learning assignments and extends the important experiences of the students' understandings. The language and vocabularies of both art and literacy are engaged as forms of discourse. Both student and teacher learn and teach as they interact in this process of meaning making, attempting to understand each other's interpretation and/or viewpoint of the topic.

Critical Framing permits the teacher to build on students' newly acquired "understanding in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice" (The New London Group, 1996, p.86). Students are provided an opportunity to review their learning, "constructively critique it, account for its cultural location, creatively extend

and apply it, and eventually innovate on their own" (p. 87). In other words, Critical Framing places students in their context with a cognizance of the new skills and knowledge they have acquired.

Transformed Practice assists students to merge their new understandings into practice in new situations or contexts. Students practice joining everything they absorbed in Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, and Critical Framings. Thus, students take a specific meaning out of one context and adjust it so that it can works well somewhere else.

Multiliteracy instruction can incorporate all four components of the proposed framework. For example, a teacher could develop a literacy lesson where the students create a narrative in the form of a slideshow. The aims of the lesson would be to develop student's knowledge of and skills with composing a narrative text and to enhance the meaning of the text with graphic images. Situated practice would encompass the process of writing which involves student prior knowledge of planning, composing and revising of the narratives. Students would consolidate their skills in inserting and editing text and images. Overt instruction involves class discussions on the steps for creating their narrative providing students with the necessary metalanguage to talk about their project. Once the students understand how to complete their narrative, students will critically "frame" what they have learned in order to establish the plot and setting before beginning of their slide presentation. Finally, transformed practice would involve students describing their intentions for the characters, images, and text in the final presentation.

By addressing these four components, the application of multiliteracies theory within the language classroom can possibly attend to Morgan's (1993) appeal to restructure language arts classes so teachers can assist students in contemplating why specific modes of meaning (written texts) have been privileged. According to Benson (2008) "multimodal assignments in language arts involve student learning through not only print and verbal language activities, but also visual, kinesthetic, aural, and spatial activities" (p. 635). Benson (2008) suggested that language arts teachers can use these various elements with their students as a way to develop stronger critical thinking skills. To meet the challenges of modern society, Kellner (1998) also proposed that multiple literacies are necessary; literacies that include visual literacy, print literacy, aural literacy, cultural literacy, critical literacy, social literacy, media literacy, computer literacy, and ecoliteracy (Table 1). The table does not represent a comprehensive list of scholars dedicated to the various literacies; only a certain represented few are listed. Most are important scholars in their areas. Also, because literacy is multimodal, many of the listed literacies must be combined to critically read, interpret and understand various "texts" or any organized pattern of meaning (Halliday, 1978).

Table 1. Kellner's (1998) Poposed Necessary Multiple Literacies

Literacies	Definition	Selected Scholars
Visual Literacy	The ability to analyze, create, and use, images and video using technology and media to enable critical thinking, communication, decision making and understanding.	Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, (2001); Duncum (2001, 2002); Eisner (1991); Freedman (2000); Freedman & Wood (1999); Mirzoeff (1999); Rose (2007)
Aural Literacy	Listening skills ability to interpret and to create messages using spoken words, natural and artificial sounds, music, and/or silence.	Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001); Selfe (2009)
Media Literacy	The ability to critically read, interpret and understand visual, aural and digital messages. This engages knowledge of how media works, how individuals construct meanings.	Alvermann & Hagood, (2000); Kellner (1998, 2000); Knobel & Lankshear, (2007); Leu & Kinzer (2000, 2003); Leu, & Leu (2000); Leu, Mallette, Karchmer, & Kara-Soteriou (2005)
Multimodal Literacy	The ability to understand and interpret the multiple formats in which information is communicated and presented.	Cope & Kalantzis, (2000); Eisner (1991); Jewitt & Kress (2003); Kress (2000, 2003); Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001); Siegel (2006)
Computer Literacy	The knowledge and ability to efficiently operate and perform a variety of tasks on computers and technology.	Bruce (1997); Chandler-Olcott & Mahar (2003); Compeau & Higgins (1995); Liao & Pope (2008); Selfe (2009)
Cultural Literacy	Comprehending and appreciating differences and similarities in cultural values, customs, and beliefs.	Alvermann (2006); Bourdieu (1991); Giroux & McLaren (1994); Hirsch (1987); Ladson-Billings (1991, 1992, 1994)
Critical Literacy	The ability to read and interrogate texts, in a reflective mode, to better understand inequality, power, and injustice in human relationships.	Alvermann & Hagood (2000); Foucault (1980); Freire (2009); Gee (1996, 2004); Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, & Vasquez (1999); Street (1995)
Social Literacy	The development of social skills that generates the desire and ability in individuals to act responsibly and positively in many complex social settings.	Barton (2000, 2001); Barton & Hamilton (2000); Dyson (2003a, 2003b); Gee (1996, 2000); Heath (1983); Street (1995)
Ecoliteracy	The ability to understand the natural systems that make life on earth possible.	Capra (1999, 2009); Fritjof, 1993; Pretty (2002, 2004a, 2004b); Pretty & Ward (2001)

Visual Literacy

In human development, visual recognition precedes verbal recognition; therefore, rather than the verbal thinking stressed in most institutions of learning, visual thinking might be a more basic way of thinking (Berger, 1972). Seeing and learning visual images help students to extract information stored through prior experiences. This information can be conveyed in any mode students deem necessary, including both visually and verbally (Heath, 2000).

The term *visual literacy* has been given many definitions (Mirzoeff, 1999; Rakes, 1999; Rose, 2007). A general definition for visual literacy is "the ability to 'read', interpret, and understand information presented in pictorial or graphic images" (Wileman, 1993, p. 114). Similarly, Heinich, Molenda, Russell, and Smaldino's (2002) definition is "the learned ability to interpret visual messages accurately and to create such messages" (p. 64). Based off of these definitions, visual literacy can be considered as being similar to verbal literacy, since both are based on alphabet and aural (Kiefer, 1994). As Raney (1999) observed, the concept of visual literacy highlights the status of the visual in a text-dominated world and suggests the expansive visual basis of contemporary culture.

Today, schools still exist in a highly text-rich environment; however, not all students have the experience or skills to represent their knowledge through the symbols of word or language. Students need skills that would allow them to use a multiplicity of symbols to represent what they know. Additionally, given our current modern climate, our experiences are now "more visual and visualized than ever before" (Mirzoeff, 1999,

p. 10). Even though this has been the case for generations, the pace of these increases

seems to be accelerating (e.g., the ubiquitous mobile phone with voice, text,

applications, and Internet capabilities). According to Mirzoeff (1999), the contemporary

visual culture in which we live confronts people with endless streams of divergent and

convergent images. Images all compete in order to gain the viewers' attention.

Therefore, different ideas of viewing and interpretation should be taken into account.

The images that inundate our environment ultimately influence our attitudes, beliefs, and

life-styles. In order to participate fully in this "visual culture," our students must be able

to think, create, critique, question, and communicate effectively using visual forms they

encounter daily. Students who are not strong with traditional literacies (reading and

writing) can atone for for deficits in those areas by amplifying their talents in other

stronger areas. In the United States, an estimated 65% of the adult population is visual

learners (Davis, Nur & Ruru, 1994) therefore; visual literacy instruction would focus on

the strengths of a large group of people.

　　　　Eisner (1998c) suggests that serious attention to the cultivation of visual literacy

would represent a fundamental expansion of the educational agenda. Teaching and

learning should be taught, not only through text, but through visual resources that

students can explore and understand through hands-on experiences. Eisner (1998c) states

"humans think not only in language, but also in visual images, in gestural ones, and in

patterned sound" (p.19). Consequently, if students are unable to think in one of those

forms then they are also unable to access meaning projected in that form. Eisner (1998c)

argues that teachers should promote diachronic language so that students can show

visually and textually what they are learning in different areas of their lives and can carry their learning with them over time.

It is important to understand the merging of visual language and textual language, rather than promoting only one. The goal of instruction in visual literacy is to convince traditionalists that visual and verbal literacy can contribute to modern society as way to develop and instruct comprehension. The use of multiple representations is a powerful way of facilitating understanding (Ainsworth, 1999; Chanlin, 1998; Kirsh, 2002; Stokes, 2002). According to Bodemer and Ploetzner (2002), "multiple representations can complement each other, resulting in a more complete representation of an application domain than a single source of information does" (p. 2). For example, when written and verbal messages fail to completely communicate an idea, visual elements may be relied upon. In support utilizing multiple representations, Ainsworth's (1999) research found, "where the learner employed more than one strategy, their performance was significantly more effective than that of problem solvers who used only a single strategy" (p. 137). This can promote metaphorical language, both visually and linguistically, which further develop students' creative and critical thinking skills.

Curriculum Integration

The verb integrate means to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole; to unite with something else; to incorporate into a larger unit ("Integrate," 2009). Integration is concerned with "ways to bring into a broad organization those subject matter elements which have certain relationships" (Oliver, 1977, p. 243). In education, teachers develop methods to help students create a unity of knowledge.

Student learning is integrated by stressing concepts which various subject areas commonly share and by assisting students to develop a constant framework for understanding these concepts.

The concept of integrating curriculum is not new. There are various definitions about integrated curriculum; therefore, it can be hard to know how to approach it, or even understand what it is. The term integrated curriculum has been under discussion with educators and has come to mean any arranged curriculum that is not strictly subject centered (Oliver, 1977). Broadly speaking, integration is the blending of disciplines. According to Oliver (1977), in integration "... the basic consideration is of ways to bring into a broad organization those subject-matter elements which have certain relationships" (p. 243). An integrated curriculum is one "where several related disciplines provide the basis for the topics those students are asked to study" (Sharan & Tan, 2008, p. 57). An integrated curriculum is a method of arranging learning, where a unit, lesson, or activity draws upon more than one subject or discipline, and thus promote cross-links between content areas on particular subject matter.

The implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) put great emphasis on standardized testing in English and math. The act forced educators to have subject centered curricula that meets the mandate pushed on teachers by state standards and testing. The well-meaning emphasis on improving elementary, middle school, and high school performance on standardized tests is problematic. The longer term goal of the program is to improve college graduation rates and create a more globally competitive workforce. In its present guise NCLB mandates student test scores improve. This often

leads to drilling students for tests and, in turn, often makes learning and school disagreeable and unpleasant. A mandated curriculum restricts what teachers can do with students. A typical, middle school curriculum, according to Beane (1991) is one that "presents an endless array of facts and skills that are unconnected, fragmented, and disjointed" (p.9). Beane (1991) equates this type of curriculum to working on a jigsaw puzzle without a picture. Beane (1991) explains that integrated curriculum offers students a more complete picture; skills and knowledge are taken from diverse areas so students can solve the problems before them.

There is still limited research on advancements of standardized tests by students using an integrated curriculum. Current research signifies that students engaged with integrated curricula do as well academically than those engaged in traditional isolated subject curricula (Hinde, 2005; Vars & Beane, 2000). This can be attributed to many educators who observed how an integrated curriculum can inspire students' focus and engagement (Hargreaves & Moore, 2000). Integrated curriculum has shown to produce higher order thinking, increase student motivation, and develop stronger interpersonal skills, especially underserved students who are in danger of falling behind in their learning (Chapman, 2002).

Integrated curriculum brings together different subject areas in significant ways and engages varied learning styles. Both language and visual arts claim to be forms of communication concerned with thinking (Flood, Heath, and Lapp; 2005). According to Olson (2005), "each discipline professes to be a primary means of knowing, experiencing, and understanding the world around them; and each discipline claims to

facilitate creativity and self-expression" (p.417). The intent of this research project is to utilize a modified language arts curriculum which integrates literacy studies and visual arts learning and also investigate alternate ways of representing knowledge and understanding.

Arts Integration

As with integrated curriculum, there are several definitions for arts integration. Russell and Zembylas (2007) define arts integration as "activities that strive to infuse the arts across school disciplines" (p. 289). An arts integrated curriculum "enable(s) students to be active, to experience things directly, and to express themselves in ways best suited to the students" (Corbett, Wilson & Morse, 2002, p.17). Taylor et al. (2006) explain that an arts integrated approach "is more holistic and involves students and teachers in combining discipline specific ways of knowing to understand topics" (p. 7). According to Corbett, et al. (2002) the following are some goals of arts integration: (1) To use the arts to enable students to have direct experiences; (2) Students are involved in making decisions about their learning; (3) Students are engaged in lessons that are motivating while mastering objectives in both the subject area and the art form. Arts integration recognizes the educational curriculum as a whole; it does not divide the curriculum into distinct parts but celebrates the overlapping qualities between subjects and content. As a process, it concentrates on the arts' ability to teach across/through the curriculum and transcend school subject boundaries.

Several arts integration programs have demonstrated student academic achievement through the arts (Ingram & Seashore, 2003; Luftig, 2000). In *Champions of*

Change (Fiske, 1999), reported on a set of seven studies, that describe the role of the arts in learning. These studies revealed that the arts: enable educators to reach students in effective ways, learning through the arts has significant effects on learning in other domains, and students with high levels of arts participation outperform arts-poor students on virtually every measure. The results of *Critical Links* (Deasy, 2002), a research compendium which focused on the academic and social effects of learning through and participating in the arts, reaffirmed the findings of *Champions of Change*. The research indicated that the arts develop skills and support desired outcomes in many areas such as mathematics, literacy, and science as well as increased student engagement and motivation.

Similarly, *The Third Space* (Deasy & Stevenson, 2005) provided evidence of the potential for programs focusing in the arts in underserved schools to generate new opportunities for teaching and learning. Deasy and Stevenson (2005) discovered that the arts can change the social atmosphere of a school. For example teachers' job satisfaction levels increased and all schools saw an improvement in attendance rates and a decline in discipline referrals as a result of the arts integration reform model. According to the authors, the arts go beyond simple presentation-absorption of information in the learning process; the arts create a completely different and unique understanding. The arts helped to make learning matter to students in active and meaningful ways. Students developed new understanding and appreciation of their teachers and peers and reported greater enjoyment of school. Teachers began to see students as individuals rather than

behavioral challenges or test scores. It was also noted that parents became more actively involved in their children's learning.

Meaningful integration of the arts with other subjects is a valuable element to student engagement and success. Students who show poor attention or performance in academic disciplines may be highly engaged in arts activities (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997). Teaching the arts in conjunction with other subjects helps create flexible thinkers, and encourages students to synthesize new relationships between ideas. Heath and Soep (1998) reported that students who participated in the arts for three hours a week for one year are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, three times more likely to be elected to class office, four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair, and three times more likely to win an award for school attendance. Teachers and district officials acknowledge their schools' arts programs (Deasy & Stevenson, 2005) for the improved scores of students on standardized test, including improvement in reading and mathematics (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Ingram & Reidel, 2003; Ruppert, 2006; Vaughn & Winner, 2000).

It is important to note, however, that while arts integration studies have produced positive results, over the years, art educators have both explored and challenged the art integrated curricula. The concern most often expressed by art teachers is whether art could maintain its integrity in an integrated classroom (Catterall, 1998; Eisner, 1998b; Hetland & Winner, 2000). Some have addressed concerns that the arts are shortchanged in integrated curricula or just viewed as a hand-maiden to core subjects (Bresler & Gardner, 1995). Some fear that the goals of art will not be met and the value of the arts

diminished. Additionally, Winner and Cooper (2000) argued, that "advocates should refrain from making utilitarian arguments in favor of the arts [because] as soon as we justify arts by their power to affect learning in an academic area, we make the arts vulnerable" (p. 66-67).

To address these concerns, Winner and Cooper (2000) recommend that researchers pursue studies that concentrate on how the arts can possibly improve student attitudes toward school. They also suggest that studies should focus on how the arts affect motivation and subsequently how that motivation affects academic improvement and/or persistence. Meaningful experiences in school are important to learning and arts integration, if done well; it is a possible method for students' personal success. Because of the diverse content in the arts and ways of teaching, there is no way to tell at this point what is enhancing learning (if it is) and what is not. What is needed is an examination of particular kinds of art activities and their impacts as well as explanations for their promotion of positive student gains in learning.

In order to carry out effective arts integration Catterall and Waldorf (1999) listed six contributors for success: (1) students should see connections and walk away with bigger ideas; (2) Students should take their work seriously; (3) the expressions and activities in the arts should genuinely speak to important areas of the academic curriculum; (4) the content lesson and the artistic lesson should be of equal importance; (5) the experience should have a planned assessment with rubrics and scoring guides; (6) the lesson plan should grow from state curriculum standards in both content areas and the arts.

Language Arts Integration

Educators across all disciplines are developing methods to develop and strengthen a cross-curricular foundation in literacy. Language arts integration has been defined as the incorporation of writing, reading, word study, speaking, and listening into one, cohesive setting (Biondo, Raphael & Gavelek, 1999; Wagner, 1985). Typically, teachers select a topic or theme to examine that provides significant opportunities for students to interact with language. Language arts integration is valuable because it supports students' internal motivation to learn and use language for real purposes. Gavelek, Raphael, Biondo, and Wang (1999) assert that integrated language arts address three needs in education: (a) authenticity; (b) meaningfulness; and, (c) efficiency.

Hladczuk and Eller (1992) define literacy as "the vehicle of education, the means through which ideas, information, knowledge, and wisdom are expressed and exchanged" (p. ix). According to Feret and Smith (2010), reading and writing represent the most familiar forms of literacy. They are processes in which letters or symbols gain meaning after being scanned and thoughts recorded in at least a semi-permanent form. They also propose a second set of skills that identify people as literate: listening and speaking. For most people speech is the dominate mode of oral communication. It expresses thought and/or feeling; where are listening involves thoughtful reflection on the sound, whether verbal or artistic. Listening is a key attribute of student conduct, and is at the core of classroom management efforts. Together, these four literacy processes help shape cognition (Feret & Smith, 2010).

According to Smith (1997), an integrated language arts curriculum creates an atmosphere with which "the world is presented and understood through various actions, such as speaking, writing, listening, reading, and drawing" (para. 4). The goal of a rich and integrated environment is for students to realize their potential. Wagner (1985) states "Learning information about some aspect of language is not the same as developing language abilities, nor are drills, exercises, or workbooks a substitute for the acts of listening, speaking, reading, or writing in real communication settings" (para. 10). It is important to remember that language arts integration does not use one of the language arts to assist another, such as advocating reading by teaching text through writing; however, instruction is organized to use a mixture of the language processes as a tool to accomplish a learning goal (Gavelek, Raphael, Biondo, 2000). For instance, if the objective is for students to understand a literature study, then the teacher should create multiple ways of experiencing that work through reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Lapp and Flood (1994) articulated ten reasons for developing integrated language arts, including that it: (1) builds connections among ideas and concepts and between in- and out-of-school topics; (2) provides authentic communication processes; (3) enables sociocultural classroom practices, such as the exchange of ideas, collaborative learning, and flexible grouping patterns; (4) develops student autonomy and responsibility; (5) it puts the teacher in the role of facilitator rather than information dispenser; (6) develops a sense of community; and, (7) encourages ongoing and multiple assessment measures. Lapp and Flood state that integrating the curriculum motivates students and allows them

"to participate in authentic learning experiences that [have] meaning for them both inside and outside the classroom" (p. 417).

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) reinforces writing skills outside of English composition into other courses, by engaging students completely in the subject matter of the discipline through various of activities that focus on writing as a way of learning (Kautzer, 2004). Both teaching and learning are focused toward projects, which are created and monitored by the teacher, so students can obtain the knowledge and skills of the discipline's content. Jager's (2000) research on units of study which integrates WAC in her art class found students were able to understand how learning in all areas are related, how it strengthens concepts that have been learned in the lesson, and how it builds on their prior knowledge. Jager (2000) claimed integrating the arts and writing across the curriculum allowed all students to experience success.

Hurwitz & Day (2007) explain that exposure to visual images provides topics and issues that motivate students to think and learn within the framework of art. Utilizing visual concepts and vocabulary in conversing about art, art criticism moves students beyond the descriptive use of language to formal interpretation and analysis of meaning in art. According to Vacca & Vacca (2002) students in one high school art class, kept sketchbooks which guided their thoughts and emotional responses to what they were seeing and studying. The constant recording of responses to art was not only a multipurpose writing-to-learn strategy, but a key in building the reflective behaviors.

Ballinger and Deeney (2006) suggested teachers should "capitalize on literacy teaching and learning in every environment possible" so they do not "leave many

children ill-prepared for later life" (p. 19). Feret and Smith (2010) state that, "art educators have a unique opportunity to develop and strengthen cross-curricular foundations in literacy through art education" (p. 37). In their research of pre-service art teachers enrolled in a content reading course, Feret and Smith (2010) found that their students' literacy lessons improved their observations of student performance in art classes at both the elementary and high school levels. According to the researchers, the pre-service teachers realized that incorporating literacy instruction in art class enhanced creativity and the quality of art projects. Similarly, Barnes (2009), discovered that by using art prints for pre-writing activities (which is a variation of a process that takes place in many K-12 art rooms on a regular basis), her pre-service art teachers experienced literacy which led to complex discussion, deeper insights and a much richer art experience. With professional encouragement and development, pre-service teachers can blend literacy skills with art and acquire instructional and professional strength (Feret & Smith, 2010).

Factors Affecting Underserved Middle School Students

Underserved students are students who are in danger of academic and/or educational failure due to a wide variety of factors (Camblin, 2003). Underserved students typically do not respond well to the rule-bound norms traditional classrooms deliver (Bertrand & Stice 1995). According to O'Thearling and Bickley-Green (1996), underserved students "have not found a way to integrate into the general educational system" (p.20).

Social and environmental factors of underserved students include drug abuse, low self-esteem, problems with the family unit, immigration status, low socio-economic background (Camblin, 2003; Reglin, 1998, Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2002). Risk factors found among underserved students vary, but include: behavioral problems, low self-esteem, low standardized test scores, personally irrelevant or weak curricula, poor teaching conditions, high student-to-teacher ratio, inferior teacher quality, school violence, high level of suspensions and expulsions, low teacher expectations, making fun of teachers, focusing on peer social and cultural pursuits at the expense of schoolwork, and low parental involvement (Bertrand & Stice 1995; Field & Olafson, 1999; Jagers & Carroll, 2002; Land & Legters, 2002; O'Brien, 1998, 2001; Rush &Vitale, 1994; Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2002). Historically, researchers saw at-risk status as a minority and low socioeconomic problem; however, researchers are now noticing that any student can become at-risk of educational failure at any time due to economic and social issues/changes (Barr & Parrett, 2001). The term at-risk is ambiguous because of the evolution of its meaning and the different *loci* of blame for how people are placed or become at risk.

One source of students becoming at-risk for school failure is poor literacy skills (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Coats & Taylor-Clark, 2001; Land & Legters, 2002; O'Brien, 1998, 2001; Taylor, 2002). Franzak (2006) noted that students who are labeled "at-risk" are identified by their degree of success using literacy in traditional school settings. Findings from numerous studies show compelling evidence that many adolescences are unable to read beyond the third-grade level (Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent

Literacy, 2010; Lee & Spratley, 2010; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2006).

O'Brien, Springs, and Stith (2001), King and O'Brien (2002), and Emery and Rother (1999) pointed to how traditional school programs have diminished the self-worth of underserved students because they face what they perceive as unattainable tasks. According to Emery and Rother (1999),

> One of the characteristics of at-risk students is that they possess low levels of literacy. This characterization results from assessment practices based on the ability to interpret and generate certain forms of print texts. Because at-risk students are not particularly successful in these contexts, assumptions are made about their intellectual abilities (p. 103).

Barr and Parrett (2001) explain that schools fail these students in various ways. The use of intervention practices such as special education, tracking, pull-out programs, expulsion, and retention have not been proven to work consistently. As previously highlighted in this chapter with 'gangsta literacy', Moje (2000) advised that underserved students need to be challenged to bring their non-school forms of literacy into traditional language arts classrooms. Like Moje (2000), I too believe the importance of teachers understanding how unsanctioned literacy practices may offer adolescents ways of "constructing and maintaining thought, identity, and social position" (p. 652).

Arts and Literacy Learning as a Component of Liberation for Underserved

Students

An approach to arts education through a literacy integrated curriculum could

provide liberation that benefit underserved students' personal and educational growth.

According to Paulo Freire (2009), "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition,

not transferrals of information…The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches,

but who is him or herself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being

taught also teach" (p. 79-80). Institutions of learning, Greene (1995) believes, should be

reorganized as places where students reach out for meanings and where the silenced and

unheard may have a voice in the learning community. We may begin to understand the

role of imagination through "the recovery of literary experiences that have been

significant at various times in our lives" (p.76). This exercise allows educators to help

students return to the imagined worlds that were once real to them as a way to

understand the importance of imagination. It is within fiction that underrepresented

groups find the possibility of voice and privilege which are not ordinarily given to them.

By releasing the imagination there is the possibility for opening new perspectives,

understanding and compassion through dialogue. Greene encourages teachers to guide

and support children in this joining of voice and art as they construct their narrative in

the making. She calls for collaborative classrooms, where teachers and students work

collectively to raise critical consciousness.

Advocacy for arts learning is not new. The arts have always been vital to a broad

based education and well-rounded student development. A refocused interest on literacy

caused the arts, along with other subject matter areas, to consider reconfiguring curricula to better promote literacy learning Writing across the curriculum (WAC) is now a part of k-12 and higher education programs on many campuses (Bazerman, Little, Bethel, Chavkin, Fouquette, & Garufis, 2005). Eisner (1998c) urged schools to develop multiple forms of literacy so children can, "read the language of art, or music, or mathematics, or written prose," (p.34). The arts are a way to open up curriculum from conventional approaches to teaching so students can use their imagination, solve problems in many different ways, and increase their learning (Eisner, 1998c).

Similarly, Messaris (2005) explained that nonverbal modes of communication, which are inherent in the arts, are not used at the expense of verbal language learning, but are a necessary complement. Literacy involves processes used to produce and receive meaning in symbolic form, so visual art forms are natural extensions of literacy (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999).

Visual art is a methodology for making meaning, for knowing, and a way of perceiving which provides a language that enables both artists and audiences an opportunity to imagine, question, and reflect. The integration of visual art has shown to help with overall achievement due to the implementation of a curriculum that encompasses all the intelligences that a student can use (Gardner, 1993; Richards, 2003). The arts have value in educating all children, especially in motivating students who may not be reachable, such as underserved students (Paley, 1988). Further, it can address their personal, social, and emotional growth.

Paley (1988) described the multidisciplinary methodology of Tim Rollins and Kids of Survival (K. O. S.), a group of inner city minority teen-age students in New York City, who create art in response to their study of literature. Guided by Rollins, a junior high teacher, the group collaborated on creating and designing large-scale paintings inspired by themes drawn from world literature. The group tackled vocabulary, themes, and, ethos from works such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Moby Dick*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and Franz Kafka's *Amerika,* investigating the language, issues, history, and contexts of these books for clues that would allow them to create a visual correspondence in paint that links aspects of the narrative to the social, political, and ideological factors that affect the students' daily lives. Supporters of Rollins's work commended him for challenging traditional notions regarding knowledge as well as his ability to empower youth who have been marginalized by society.

Paley's (1988) description of Tim Rollins and the K. O. S. is a perfect example of the broad benefits of student exposure to an arts and literacy integrated curriculum. The K. O. S. provided a unique model of reading and responding to literature at the middle school level because they identified, defined, and interpreted the various codes, themes, and meanings of a culture. This transformative power of arts learning created an opportunity for students to build positive self-concepts and engage in creative thinking. Although these two positive results cannot be reflected in a standardized test score *per se*, the implications for learning are meaningful. By bringing to the classroom a more positive image of oneself, students stand a greater chance of viewing themselves as contributing, successfully as participants in the learning environment.

Similarly, Wilhelm (1995) wanted to know if the visual arts could serve as a motivational tool for learning-disabled reluctant readers. The researcher conducted a nine-week visualization training period as he taught students to use creative strategies like creating cutouts or finding appropriate objects to represent key elements in stories, drawing pictures to convey impressions, and illustrating books to fully engage in the reading process. By the end of the nine-week period, students were more actively engaged in the reading process and had become more sophisticated readers, evidenced by their more active reading and interpretive responses to texts. An arts and literacy integrated classroom can enable students, especially those learning a second language, to have greater confidence as a result of participating in such a curriculum. In her work with sixth-grade students, DeJarnette (2002) found that for her students with limited English skills, drawing, along with writing offered an effective means to represent their understandings and created an environment for success. Similar outcomes were reported by Carger (2004), who investigated ways in which visual arts could support and enhance language and literacy learning with bilingual/bicultural children. Students talked about picture books that were read aloud, and recorded their responses in journals. They also illustrated, and created art using clay. Carger found that students developed as art critics and their command of English flourished. Carger writes, "The students engaged in divergent thinking . . . . [A]rt provoked them to reflect and to engage in authentic inquiry . . ." (p. 280). Carger explained when students were given the opportunity to use art, she consistently found them to be focused and on task, often chatting about the book or technique they were using.

Heath (1998) conducted an 11-year longitudinal, ethnographic study of 120 non-school organizations in arts, athletics, and community service. Specifically, 48 organizations were arts-based programs. Low-socio economic status (SES), at-risk students volunteered nine hours a week for a one-year period to work in a self-selected art form that involved indirect learning (i.e. reading, math). Heath (1998) found that students experienced enhanced academic performances in academic classes and contests, increased school attendance and community service involvement, and developed positive self-concepts. Heath (1998) also reported that arts involvement positively impacted students' development of language skills, thinking skills, and life skills.

Heath (1998) also showed how arts involvement contributed to thinking skills, participatory skills, and language usage, not only within the extracurricular activities but also within the normal school context. The results of this study are helpful because they showed how underserved students make important performance gains.

These studies inform my own research because they specifically deal with underserved students involved in integrated arts and literacy learning. Researchers (Deasy & Stevenson, 2005; Sidelnick & Svoboda, 2000) have stated the arts can provide creative, emotional, and educational outlets for students; however, it is important to emphasize that no intervention method or one program that could completely meet all the needs of students at risk of school failure (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Land & Legters, 2002).

Curriculum Implications

Today schools are concerned with teaching literacy; especially with those

students who are struggling. Given the increasing challenges within classrooms today,

the implications of integrating arts and literacy within classrooms are important when

considering how to transform traditional classrooms studios of learning; that is, learning

spaces that are flexible and can be modified per the needs of instructors and students. It

is necessary for teachers to develop a critical consciousness in regard to the content and

pedagogy within the classroom. Without this awareness in teachers it is more difficult

for students to become active participants within the learning community. Teachers need

to recognize the diversity within the classroom and create opportunities for all students

to gain greater social position within the classroom (Freire, 2009; Greene, 1995).

Underserved students need and deserve an education that will assist in guiding

them toward future possibilities by developing the essential knowledge and skills to

increase academic and personal success (Sanders, 2000). Literacy should not be limited

to the written word. Literacy should also include the arts. If the concept of literacy is

defined to refer only to just traditional symbol systems of language, students will not be

prepared with various symbolic tools they need to fully represent, express, and

communicate the full spectrum of society and culture (Fowler, 1991).

While there is no one school or intervention program in place that fully address

the needs of underserved students (Bogan & Bilken, 2003), however, small changes,

such as utilizing an integrated curriculum that combines art and literacy, can be

beneficial to any student whose artistic and expressive needs are not met (Gilliam &

Franklin, 2004). It is important for educators to be creative and to create ways in which students can understand and process different types of information. As Dewey (1934) pointed out, the use of art for literacy education allows   learners to have a holistic learning experience. Providing numerous divergent forms of reading, writing, thinking, speaking, and problem solving creates what Eisner (1998c) considers "multiple forms of literacy" or multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996). He argues that "each form of literacy has the capacity to provide unique forms of meaning and it is in the pursuit of meaning that much of the good life is lived" (p. 52).

A social semiotic theory allows new meanings and new ideas to replace pre-established meanings and ideas. This theory allows socially situated students to express their ideas and experiences in the ways they deem appropriate. Appropriate knowledge and skills apply to discovering knowledge that is personally and socially relevant (Sanders, 2000). Greene (1985) noted "it is impossible to think of literacy, after all, without thinking of living human beings come to know, how they acquire dependable knowledge, how aspects of what is represented 'outside' the mind are represented 'within'" (p. 518). Greene insisted that teachers need to include the particulars of each person's knowing – there cannot be one way, the "right" way, of knowing. Because of this, there are no deeply meaningful labels. Her work is permeated with the understanding that there is not an "objective" to knowable reality – that there are in fact many convergences of multiple perspectives, agendas and insights into the realities that can appear very different dependent upon our situatedness, our context, in the experience.

This chapter reviews research related to literacy and art education. The work, philosophies, and theories of John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Paulo Freire were discussed they pertain to literacy integrated curriculum in the arts classroom and its link to this study. The expanding conceptions of literacy in education and a discussion of theories and research related to multimodality were also included. Third, was a review of the importance and complexity of curriculum and arts integration. Fourth, was a review of research on underserved students. Fifth, was an exploration of literacy and arts learning as supportive facilitators of learning for students at-risk of educational failure. Lastly, was a justification for the need for research on arts and literacy integration and at-risk students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methodology used in this study. Ethnographic techniques of observation and interviews were employed as a basis for collecting and analyzing the real world experiences of the students and a teacher. A case study methodology documented the activities and perceptions of the teacher, researcher, and underserved students as they simultaneously engaged in literacy studies and visual arts learning. The focus was on the perceptions of students covering a particular curriculum that integrated literacy into the arts class. This was an attempt to understand how arts and literacy-based integrated curriculum might impact students who are struggling with literacy. Furthermore, as the researcher, I was interested in examining my own subjectivity as well as reflexivity – questioning past activities and the circumstances of those activities. Having no hypotheses to test the following guided questions were offered:

1. What are the perceptions of 28 middle school students in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

2. What are the perceptions of four middle school students who struggle with literacy in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

3. What are the perceptions of a middle school teacher who teaches in an inclusive classroom about his participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

4. What are the perceptions of the researcher who participated in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

Qualitative Research Design

Research is a process of investigation; an examination of a subject from different points of view. I define research as an evolutionary process that uses various methodologies in an attempt to understand a phenomenon being studied. Different educational ideas require different representational forms to be effectively communicated (Jewitt, 2008). According to Greene (1995), "we have to understand this world and provoke others to understand it if we are in some fashion to transform it" (p.44). The methodology utilized for this study was qualitative, naturalistic, and participatory in design.

General Perspective

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to a "quiet revolution" that "is taking over the social sciences and related professional fields" (p. ix). This is the "methodological revolution" of qualitative research that they identify not as a new trend, but one that has profound implications as an interpretive approach to research and theory (p. ix). Qualitative research emphasizes investigation of the way individuals interact with others and their environment across time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Merriam, 2002, 2009) and is purposed for exploring issues of culture, social interaction, language, and everyday

experience. Qualitative designs are used predominantly in social science fields such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and education, where research tends to focus on social interactions of individuals in relation, to environment, whereas quantitative methodologies derive relational data from numerical comparisons (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Merriam, 2002, 2009).

Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2006) describe qualitative research as being more inductive in its approach. By collecting data through observations, interviews, and document analysis, findings are presented in summary fashion through a narrative or even verbally. This inductive approach leads the researcher to: (1) systematically observe phenomena; (2) search for patterns, concepts or themes; (3) develop a generalization from the analysis of the concepts and themes. Similarly, Eisner (1998b) defines six characteristics of qualitative research that contribute to the design of qualitative study. According to Eisner(1998b), qualitative studies: 1) tend to be field-focused and naturalistic, 2) utilize the self as the primary instrument, 3) are interpretive in character, 4) use expressive language, 5) pay attention to particular detail, and 6) employ multiple forms of evidence to build reasonable persuasion. In this manner, the research gives an accurate picture of what the phenomenon was like, in its totality, in the eye and mind of the researcher.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), the benefit of the qualitative model is that a researcher can approach the study of a problem in its natural setting, explore related and contradictory themes and concepts, then identify the missing, and the subtle, along with the explicit and obvious. Eisner (2002) stated, "It seems likely that qualitative

studies of practice are an appropriate methodological orientation to the study of teaching" (p. 217). If there is a need to know how people think about an issue or reconstruct events then one of the many qualitative methodological variants might be suitable.

As Merriam (1998) states, ". . . qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of the world" (p. 6). My own perceptions and experiences have, and continue, to shape my role as a teacher and researcher. In addition to understanding the meaning I constructed a personal narrative which acknowledged that my experiences have meaning (Chang, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Jones, 2005). I used a qualitative style which allowed for the inclusion of the researcher's own perspective in the process of understanding and evaluating ideologies that emerged from the fieldwork experiences (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). To add greater depth, I chose a narrative design for my descriptive case study.

Case Study

According to Dyson and Genishi (2005), cases are not found, but instead are constructed by the decisions researchers make about how to tell a particular story of a human experience. When researchers are interested in exploring, explaining, and describing a phenomenon within a real-life context, a case study method is desirable since it focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon, expresses rich details, and illuminates the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998, 2009, Stake, 1995). According

to Stake (1995) a case study is appropriate when the researcher is studying change and process and when "how" and "why" questions are being asked.

The overarching question for this study centers on finding out the perceptions of underserved middle school students who are simultaneously engaged in literacy studies and visual arts learning. The case study methodology is a suitable means of achieving the present research goals because it focuses on developing greater understanding of the impact that this type of art and literacy learning might have on underserved middle school students. Another factor was the diligence required by the teacher who attempted to implement an integrated curriculum within a mandated curriculum.

Case study research "is a form of framing for qualitative research that, in turn, endeavors to discover meaning, to investigate processes, and to gain insight into an in-depth understanding of an individual, group, or situation" (Lodico, & Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006, p. 269). A case study is, "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (Merriam, 2002, p.8). A case study is useful when developing a profile of pedagogy incorporating the arts because it offers understanding into the certain activities used in the classroom as well as why and how they are used.

Another characteristic of the case study, (Merriam, 1998), is that case studies can be differentiated from other forms of qualitative research because these studies focus on a single unit or a bounded system. In order to determine whether the case studied is a bounded system, the researcher might ask whether there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed. For the present research, a single class was

observed and interviewed over a six-week period, thus qualifying as a case. (Merriam, 1998, 2002; Stake 1995, 2000).

A case study might also be selected because it is intrinsically interesting in and of itself, and one would study it to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible (Merriam, 1998). Stake (1995) defined three kinds of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. *Intrinsic case studies* do not intend to build theory, but are completed to satisfy the interests of a particular group. *Collective case studies* investigate a number of cases to determine knowledge about larder phenomena, populations, or general conditions. An *instrumental case study* is undertaken to provide insight into an issue and create some generalizations. This study was designed as an intrinsic case study because I have an intrinsic interest in the case, in terms of a particular issue: literacy and arts integrated curriculum.

In further differentiating types of case studies, Merriam (1998) described studies as *descriptive, interpretive,* or *evaluative. Descriptive* case studies present information about the phenomenon being studied without hypothesizing. *Interpretive* case studies also contain description, but research is gathered "with the intent of analyzing, interpreting, or theorizing about the phenomenon" (p. 28). *Evaluative* case studies have the further dimension of judging and evaluating data. As the intent of this study was to present the perceptions of the students, teacher and researcher an interpret the data collected.

According to Merriam (1998) a fundamental necessity within a case study approach is description. The researcher must provide a thick descriptive account so that

the reader can learn vicariously from an encounter with the case (Stake, 2000). Stake (1995) suggests, "The more a case study is an intrinsic case study, the more attention needs to be paid to the context" (p. 64). Case studies use prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyze situations (Merriam, 1998). For example, description often takes the form of narratives or vignettes, allowing the reader to visualize and experience the setting and actions of the participants (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Done effectively, a rich contextual description will allow the reader to experience empathy for the participants because they will be able to sense the experiential nature of the study. To more effectively portray the perceptions and experiences of the participants engaged in an integrated, curriculum, narrative inquiry was chosen to achieve the purposes of this study.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the process of gathering information for the purpose of research through storytelling. Narration brings researchers and educators together collaboratively to construct school experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). According to Bell (2002), narrative assumes that human beings make sense of experience by the imposition of individual story structures. That is, humans identify moments of experience to which we care for, and pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect the stories we are observing. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain:

> Narrative inquiry was the study of experience, and experience, as John Dewey
>
> taught, is a matter of people in relation contextually and temporally. Participants
>
> are in relation, and we as researchers are in relation to participants. Narrative

inquiry is an experience of the experience. (p. 189).

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) the researcher can come to understand the holistic nature of human experience through narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry acknowledges the centrality of the researcher's experiences. When a researcher utilizes narrative inquiry, the researcher becomes part of the process. The researcher's narratives are fixed within the research experience and are lived, told, and retold throughout process. Being engaged in narrative inquiry is a continuous reflective process.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) frame narrative study within a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space which will allow their inquiries to move simultaneously in four directions: inward (inside self), outward (toward community), backward (in time), and forward (also in time). This inquiry space was derived from Dewey's (1938) "interaction" and "continuity" principles for an educative experience. Dewey states, "The principle for continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). This would be the first part of the three-dimensional inquiry space: past, present, and future. The second part is personal and social which relates to Dewey's principal of "interaction." Interaction is the interplay between "objective and internal conditions" (p, 42). The third aspect of the three dimensional space is place, or what Dewey called "situation." In summary, the three-dimensional inquiry space includes:

1.   Personal and social (interaction)

2. Past, present, and future (continuity)

3. Place (situation)

Greene (1995) asserts that writing narratives creates space(s) for us to "become freed to glimpse what might be" (p. 19). Additionally, Conle (1999) stated, "Narrative work seems to invite us to consider new conceptions of self and others, new ways of thinking about schools and about settings for research" (p. 27). In this study, the intent was to work within this three-dimensional space and record and interpret the perceptions and experiences of all the participants, the use of the three dimensional space helped direct the effort to better understand the experience. Concurrently moving between past, present, and future, while accounting for situations, I, as the researcher, interacted with the teacher and student participants, inquired as to their interactions with the researcher, with others, and with the integrated, multimodal curriculum. In his notion of *currere,* Pinar suggests (2004) educators analyze their "experience of the past and fantasies of the future in order to understand more fully" their submergence of the present (p. 4). Rather than keep academic distance, it is a goal of this study to invite educators to call attention to the details of everyday practice and allow for an examination of that practice.

Unquestionably, the close examination of my journey from student to educator has served a self-gratifying purpose. It casts a light on the deep seated reasons for the visceral reaction to scripted, mandated commercial literacy instruction. It was also the intention of this study to serve a greater good by making visible tangible strategies as well as roadblocks to successful integrated.

Autoethnography

To answer the research question, "What are the perceptions of the researcher who participates in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?" This process required a method of narrative inquiry in which the life/world and internal decision making of the researcher are considered valid and significant; a method that encourages constant reflection and analysis of evidence in order to enable discovery. The researcher chose an autoethnographic method of inquiry for this question.

Denzin, Lincoln, and Rolling (2006), describe autoethnography in the following way. "Autoethnography: (auto) individual reflexivity (-ethno-) the transcription of collective human experience and (-graphy) the writing as a form of inquiry" (p. 427). Additionally, many researchers (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Jones, 2005; Spry, 2001) all defined autoethnography in different ways however each conveys the idea that autoethnography attempts to explain and understand the self and others in common social contexts. In the words of Jones (2005), autoethnography is

> . . . a balancing act. Autoethnography works to hold self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis. Autoethnography writes a world in a state of flux and movement—between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement. It creates charged moments of clarity, connection and change (p. 764).

Autoethnography is a branch of ethnography, a methodology that tries to provide "interpretive descriptions or reconstructions of participants' symbolic meanings and patterns of social interaction" (Merriam, 1998, p. 14). The main difference between

autoethnography and ethnography is that in an autoethnography, the researcher is not attempting to become an insider in the research setting. The researcher is the insider. Autoethnography provides a means for the researcher to use their own experiences to look deeply at the relations in their study and acknowledges that the researcher's role is integral to the interpretation of meaning. Being a primary data source, the researcher's perspective has privilege over other researchers in data collection and analysis (Chang 2008).

Autoethnography has also been referred to as personal narratives, narratives of the self, first person accounts, and personal essays (Ellis & Bochner 2000). Autoethnography is written in first person voice, thus it is different from other forms of qualitative research where the researcher is expected to limit personal bias. The first person explanations provide prolific descriptions of specific events, people and cultural norms. Using oneself as an ethnographic model, the researcher is no longer restricted to traditional conventions of writing. Therefore, one's unique voice is honored. The writer invites the reader to hear their story through their eyes and the implied message is that "these are *my* experiences that I chose to share with you" (Ellis & Bochner, 2002, p. 15).

According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) autoethnographic studies "should ring true and enable connection. Part of what makes education-related biography writing attractive to readers is the promise of recognition and connection. A space is formed for readers' experiences that throw light on one's self and one's connections to others" (p.16). Jones (2005) concurs by stating,

autoethnography involves setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate

connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation

…and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful

attention to our words in the context of their own lives (p.765).

Thus, autoethnography was the vehicle which allowed me to take a close look at my own

historical perspective of literacy and art education and examine in depth the root causes

of my reactions to teaching and curriculum development.

There are challenges and supporting claims for autoethnography. Holt (2003)

explained that there are "reviewers who clearly do not think that autoethnography

constitutes scientific research and who have concerns over its lack of rigor" (p.8). On the

other hand, some scholars suggest that the criteria used to evaluate autoethnography

should not be the same as traditional criteria used to examine other qualitative research

investigations (Ellis & Bochner, 2002, Sparkes, 2000). Tierney (1998) argued that

autoethnography and life stories are powerful research tools (p. 51). The relationship

between the researcher and the audience is important because "the way we represent the

world to our colleagues and related audiences contributes to our ongoing relationships

within these life worlds" (Ellis & Bochner, 2002, p 15). The use of self as the only data

source in autoethnography has been questioned (Coffey, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994;

Shields, 2000; Sparkes, 2000). Shields (2000) suggested that using such data may be a

"myopic view of scholarship" (p. 395); and, Coffey (1999) advised that those who

preach autoethnography are narcissistic and "in danger of -gross self-indulgence" (p.

132). Arguing against this line of thinking, Ragan (2000) agreed that while

autoethnographic research is perhaps self-indulgent and self-absorbed, it is also "a provocative self-statement that makes us think . . . in new ways" (p. 231). As Sparkes (2002) stated:

> This kind of writing can inform, awaken, and disturb readers by illustrating their involvement in social processes about which they might not have been consciously aware. Once aware, individuals may find the consequences of their involvement (or lack of it) unacceptable and seek to change the situation. In such circumstances, the potential for individual and collective re-storying is enhanced (p. 221).

According to Reed-Danahay (1997) "the voice of the insider is assumed to be truer than that of the outsider in much debate" (p. 3). If the researcher's voice is taken out of a text, then the writing is reduced to simple summaries and interpretations of the works of others, and nothing new was added (Clandinin & Connolly, 1994). Furthering the argument, Banks and Banks (2000) acknowledge, "We had no grounds for invalidating an author's own experience if it is rendered as believable . . . (that is) has verisimilitude -this conveys the appearance or feeling of reality in a text" (p.233).

The Setting

This study took place at a suburban middle school in north-central New Jersey which has affiliations with Montclair State University, in Montclair, New Jersey. The township population is approximately 50,500 according to the U.S. census of 2000 (2010 data are not yet available). The middle school in this study was classified as a Title I school based on its percentage ($\geq$40%) of educationally underserved students who live at

or near the poverty level with a demographic breakdown similar to the city: the majority of the students in the school are Caucasian (57% vs. 62.5% city), Asian-Pacific Islander (31% vs. 28.2% city) mostly from the middle east and India, , and Hispanic 8% vs. 10.6%.

Participants

Participants in this study were all assigned or gave themselves pseudonyms except for the researcher, she retained her actual name. Data were collected in the form of interviews, observations notes, instructional documents, writing samples, and other student work from the teacher, and four students who were identified as underserved.

Role of the Researcher

Functioning within the classroom as a researcher/teacher I merged the two identities in order to actively interplay with the data. As a *researcher* I communicated the intention of the study to parents, student participants and the teacher participant; documented observations and interviews; took photographs and photocopies of student work. I became a participant observer in order to record the activities, people, and physical aspects of the study (Spradley, 1980). To uncover the potential impact this curriculum might on students, I participated enough in the culture to develop the rapport and empathy necessary for students to share their personal experiences. Establishing rapport and empathy (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was a critical component in gathering the type of data needed to answer the research questions.

As a *teacher*, my role was limited. Since I did not actively engage in teaching, but instead walked around the room much as a teacher would at times, there might have

been some student perceptions of me as a teacher. And, as teachers often do, I did observe students as they engaged in their assigned work with a critical eye on what and how they were doing it. I also observed the implementation of literacy integration activities as developed by Mr. G in the art class. As a result of this observation, another aspect of being a teacher arose, based on these classroom observations I wanted to modify certain teaching strategies and elements of the curriculum to be more effective. It is through the teacher's lens that I felt like I was simultaneously a colleague of Mr. G's and his critic. As his critic I wanted him to better prepare students for the literacy activities.

I do have a background in public school teaching including a Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree in Communication Design and with a certification by the State of Texas in both Art (K-12) and Language Arts (6-12). I taught Language Arts and Art in grades six through eight for three years. I also taught arts to middle school students in a Twenty First Century Grant program: Leap Camp, which helped crystallize the vision of how powerful the visual arts can be in student learning across content areas. For two years, the researcher also took part in the highly integrated Texas Governor's School in Arts and Humanities for Urban Leadership. This annual, three week, summer program is for diverse groups of high-achieving urban youth who participate in an arts centered curriculum where the emphasis is on developing leaders who are equipped with addressing unique challenges in urban culture.

Selection of Teacher

The teacher participant for this study was an eighth grade visual arts teacher. Mr. G (a pseudonym) as he became known, has over 42 years of experience teaching art in public schools. He is a conservative, middle class, Caucasian, Catholic man, and as he stated . . . "getting close to retirement."

He appeared enthusiastic as he held class and the students appeared to enjoy attending his art class. Mr. G was also a mentor to student art teachers. He helped identify those students who were underserved and at-risk of academic failure. He expressed interest in participating in the study and was available during planning and non-planning periods for consultation with me. The teacher was also selected based on the availability of planning and non-planning periods as well as willingness to participate in the study.

Selection of Students

In this part of New Jersey many of the urban and suburban school have large groups of minority and underserved students. Mr. G.'s class was made up of 19 females and 9 males. They were asked to identify their ethnicities for the study. They indicated they were 9 Caucasian, 15 Asian (8 East Indian, 4 Chinese and 3 Middle Eastern), one boy who identified himself as Puerto Rican and another who said he was African American. The teacher identified the several possible candidates for the study with the stipulation that they be underserved, at risk for academic failure and be representative of the overall student population. His selections included four Asian students (two boys and two girls) and six Caucasian (four boys and two girls). The final four selections were

identified as underserved by interviews and observations. The main focus of the study was on determining what happened when underserved students were simultaneously engaged in literacy and arts learning. I wished to select students struggling in traditional Language Arts classrooms. This was verified by the selected students who claimed to dislike both reading and writing because of their struggle. The focus was on the students as they experienced a literacy lesson in an arts classroom and their responses. One of the research questions focused on the opportunities to represent learning in different ways, so it was of interest to see how the arts might open multimodal avenues for underserved students.

Data Collection

The collection of multimodal discourse data (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) were in the forms of audio-taped student interviews, teacher interviews, and field notes from classroom observations. In addition, the researcher collected both teacher and student artifacts (i.e. lesson plans, handouts), and student work samples. I also maintained a personal reflection journal as the study progressed.

Observations

Observations permit researchers to document conversations participants have with others, participants' engagement in activities, participants' behavior, and the setting. Through observations researchers can draw interpretations about meanings and perspectives about others (Maxwell, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) noted that "all observation involves the observer's participation in the world being studied" (p. 49). Merriam (2002) stated that observation was the best method of surveying a phenomenon

first hand "when a fresh perspective is desired" (p. 13). This gives the researcher an

opportunity "to see things firsthand and to use his or her own knowledge and expertise in

interpreting what is observed, rather than relying on once-removed accounts from

interviews" (Merriam, 1998, p. 96). Through a researcher's journal, and observation

comments and memos, information can be obtained to produce valuable field notes.

According to Bogdan & Biklen (2003), field notes should be descriptive, while

containing a reflective account of the researcher's journey in which she/he is free to

record future plans, clarify ideas, problems, impressions, and feelings.

Eisner (1998b) identifies four areas of focus for qualitative observation in

educational settings: 1) quality of the content taught, 2) variety of forms of

representation, 3) incentives employed in the classroom, and 4) student engagement. He

notes that quality of content is "frequently neglected in classroom observation," (p. 178)

which he attributes to lack of content knowledge on the part of the researcher. Quality of

content is particularly important to this case study, not only because it is central to

learning, but also because much of the debate about integrated curriculum and arts

integration specifically, centers on maintaining content integrity.

During the study, the researcher assumed the role of a participant observer.

Merriam (2009) defines this role as one in which "the researcher's observer activities are

known to the group; participation in the group is definitely secondary to the role of

information gatherer" (p. 124). Being a participant observer can provide great inside

information, however Merriam (1998) warned of the difficulties that may occur from

trying to stay detached enough to observe, but connected enough to understand the

educational program and describe it to others. Keeping field notes during observations that described the methodology, group interactions, and students' responses aided in managing connection-detachment balance issues.

Interviews

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that "the interview has become a taken for-granted feature of our mediated, mass media culture. It is a mediated text, a site where power, gender, race and class intersect" (pp. 47- 48). Interviewing in this study included formal open-ended and informal unstructured, semi-structured interviews. According to Merriam (2002), through a list of guided questions, open-ended semi-structured interviews provide the researcher the flexibility to determine which direction to take during the interview process.

I used face-to-face interviews with the teacher and students in the form of informal conversation and formal interviews throughout the study. During the six week observation cycle I utilized two open-ended interviews with the teachers and students (student and parental consent was obtained at the outset): at the beginning of the study and at the end. The open-ended interviews were used at the beginning of the research period to provide a foundation for observations and to establish rapport with the students. I captured all formal semi-structured interviews and observations in my field notes and on audiotapes. Creswell (1998) suggested that the researcher create an interview protocol form to record the information (Appendix D). I designed and used a form to help govern the flow of the interview and aid in keeping the focus on information needed for the study. Each formal interview lasted about 30 minutes.

Informal conversations were quick exchanges at the end of the day or during other free moments throughout the day. Informal conversations were not be audiotaped; however, if any relevant information was revealed during the informal conversations, they were added to the daily field notes.

As students are in the process of creating and designing their multimodal art-literacy products I recorded "think-alouds." The think-aloud strategy asked students to say out loud what they were thinking about during an activity. These think-alouds provided an opportunity to hear the students' metacognitive practices and draw connections between their intentions in thought and their actual products.

After the first week of student and teacher interviews, I began transcribing the audiotapes at night while I continued to work at the school on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the day. This process helped with the accuracy of the information recorded because it was possible to make extra notes/comments about a particular student/teacher response since it occurred that day. Reviewing the transcriptions as the project proceeded helped determine if adjustments to technique were need to be implemented to better clarify information from the interviews or delve deeper into any area.

Documents and Artifacts

My intention was to triangulate the data in this study by using a variety of artifacts and documents. Artifacts are "objects used in the process of teaching and learning or products that result from the process of teaching and learning" (Lodico, et al., p. 133). Artifacts can provide additional information regarding outcome based products. Documents include "anything in existence prior to and during the investigation" such as

memos, transcriptions, and field notes (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p.99). In affiliation with interviews and observations, artifacts and document analysis can assist the researcher to understand the context in which the documents and artifacts were produced. Student artifacts such as in-class writing assignments, and other multimodal representations were collected, and upon completion, photographed, photocopied and later returned to the students. These artifacts were assessed based upon the goals of the study. The documents, such as writing responses, will help determine the level of students' growth and understanding throughout the study.

Data Analysis

According to Patton (2002), qualitative data describes and explains by allowing readers to "capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his or her own words" (p. 47). By spending time in the classroom with the teacher and students the researcher gained perspective about their experiences in the literacy integrated arts classroom. From the perspectives of the students, teacher and researcher an analysis and interpretation of these experiences were carried out. Merriam (1998) noted that when conducting qualitative research both data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. Throughout this study, data analysis occurred in a recursive manner as data was collected, analyzed, and reanalyzed. This type of interactive analysis helped direct the study.

For this naturalistic case study I used an inductive comparative strategy to analyze students and the teacher collectively in order to answer the initial and emergent research questions (Merriam, 1998, Patton, 2002). Merriam (1998) explained that the

comparative analysis process begins with "a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or another set" (p. 159). From the identified patterns, among the cases, I classified the patterns as categories that served as units of inquiry. Determining the common links woven through the categorical data is what Patton (2002) refers to as "convergence."

Once the patterns were categorized, I examined the data for "internal homogeneity" and "external heterogeneity." Patton (2002) defines internal homogeneity as "the extent to which the data belong in a certain category hold together in a meaningful way" (p. 465). Analyzing data for the internal homogeneity allowed for greater accuracy in specific categories. "External heterogeneity," is defined as "the extent to which differences in a category are bold and clear" (p. 465). Again, this analysis checked for both the accuracy and the correct placement of the categorical data. This approach also allowed me to analyze discrepancies in notable outcomes and their contributing factors.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, "Experience happens narratively" (p.50). Through the narrative structure of case study, I report the individual experiences of students as well as the experiences of the teacher and me. These individual and collective stories represented one large narrative about the experiences in an arts and literacy integrated classroom.

In order to analyze the field notes, interviews, documents, artifacts, and observations I conducted a content analysis which involves "identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 2002, p.

463). Based on emergent patterns captured in field notes and on audiotape, I categorized the patterns and organized them into units of inquiry. Lastly, it was necessary to analyze the categories to determine overarching themes based on the arts and literacy integrated instruction that took place in the classroom.

Validity

Qualitative researchers have historically been concerned more with the "art" of qualitative research rather than "science" (Grumet, 1990) and thus the concept of validity has been up for debate. Wolcott (1990) stated "There is no exact set of circumstances here [in qualitative research], no single and correct interpretation, nothing scientific to measure that tells us anything important" (p. 144) and thus he argued for the multiple meanings that exist in social settings, rather than any perceived scientific validity. Furthermore, Wolcott (1990) proposed that a better question might be "what is the nature of the contribution we can make" (p. 144), rather than is the contribution we make "valid." However, qualitative research does need to be held to standards and validity does play an important role in research design in particular . In Ellis and Bochner (2000), a student went to Ellis' office to gain Ellis' consent to serve on the student's doctoral committee. In an attempt to relieve concerns the student was certain Ellis would have consented, the student said, "'I've had breast cancer…But I won't let that bias my research. You can count on that.'" Ellis responded, "'Of course you will…as you should'" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 736). Ellis acknowledged the potential for bias and embraces bias as a component of autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It is not the goal of qualitative research to eliminate "the subjectivity of the researcher"

(Maxwell, 2005 p. 108) but to integrate it with integrity and full disclosure. Bias not only reflects the intimate exchange between the researcher and his or her study but also enriches the study through a more intensive focus of the researcher as the main subject thereby enhancing the reliability of the study (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Further, Ellis (1999) stated that validity can be evaluated by "whether it [the work] helps readers communicate with others different from themselves or offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers or even your own" (p. 674).

Because of my previous experiences with literacy and the arts in shaping beliefs as an educator, and implicit beliefs in the benefits of arts education, researcher bias and interpretative validity became an integral part of this study. In the theoretical framework section, the researcher explained her beliefs and assumptions and how they shape the present research. My beliefs and experiences are based on those of a student and classroom teacher, not as a classroom curriculum collaborator. The participant teacher developed and aligned his curriculum to meet the goals and objects of the school district and the state of New Jersey. The research began with few pre-conceived notions, save for the notion that the arts and literacy enhance learning.

In order to establish greater credibility, the researcher employed the following strategies to defend the study's integrity:

- Triangulation: Triangulation is fundamental in qualitative research and improves the quality of the collected data as well as the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods (Patton, 2002). My methods of data collection were

triangulated through the use of a variety of data collection methods, including

field notes, observations, interviews, documents, and artifacts.

- Respondent Validation or "Member checks": Analysis and interpretation of

  findings were taken to the participants in this study so that they were able to

  support or refute my conclusions. This allowed participants to ensure that their

  thoughts were accurately represented and disclosed within the context of the

  study. (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998)

- Thick, detailed description: qualitative research includes sufficient thick

  descriptions to help the reader experience the setting and gain a deeper

  understanding of context.

- Discrepant data: Evidence that is inconsistent with developed themes in order to

  increase the credibility of qualitative research studies (Maxwell, 2005). Any

  discrepant data found during analysis was coded and included in the final report.

Summary and Implications

In this chapter, I framed my research as a naturalistic case study and explained

the different methodologies of narrative inquiry and autoethnographic and techniques

that were used in collecting and analyzing data. From this study I hoped to gain a

meaningful understanding of the how an arts and literacy integrated curriculum enabled

students to represent their knowledge and experiences. It was my expectation that the

findings could offer educators a more enlightened understanding of the role of arts and

literacy integration can play. The results of the study may have broader implications for

formal K-12 education.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Chapter IV presents the findings that emerged in response to the research questions in this naturalistic case study. This chapter describes in narrative detail the findings of the study as they relate to participants and their perceptions. The actions of the researcher are also reported and analyzed in this section. The results of this study are based upon data gathered in investigation of the following research questions that guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of 28 middle school students in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

2. What are the perceptions of four middle school students who struggle with literacy in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

3. What are the perceptions of a middle school teacher who teaches in an inclusive classroom about his participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

4. What are the perceptions of the researcher who participated in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

The Classroom

The room was a large square shape, roughly 40'x 40' with three side-by-side rectangular windows on two of the walls. It was a standard style school classroom. The

windows spanned most of the space on those walls; about three fourths of the upper

wall. Bookshelves organized with supplies and books were located beneath the windows.

The other two walls contained a huge chalkboard and a bulletin board. Traditional white

painted cinderblock walls and blue-green speckled tile floors with random cream-

colored tiles comprised the remaining space. Student art from the current and previous

years was displayed around the room as well. Six wooden tables, pushed together to

form three work areas, spanned the center of the room. Metal and fiberglass stools with

curved chrome legs were placed at each table. The tables were placed in a roughly

horseshoe shaped configuration.

The art teacher, Mr. G, had a designated room equipped with specialized

equipment, such as a sink, large shelves and drawers, airbrush machine, and a kiln for

firing pottery. Materials for pottery, painting, drawing, weaving, and a variety of crafts

were available. Paper of various colors was stored on shelves, and many more shelves

held student work. The hallways and display cases throughout the school were lined with

student artwork.

My first encounter with the third period class was on a Monday when I stood in

the front of the classroom staring at twenty-eight pairs of eyes that were staring right

back at me. I had to remind myself that I was a guest and not the teacher. Mr. G wanted

to introduce me to the whole class so everyone would understand why I was there. I was

nervous explaining about my research. I knew that when Mr. G introduced me to the

class I wanted to be ready and say everything I needed to say. I am usually comfortable

with speaking to adolescents; however, I did not want to forget anything, so I needed a prepared script. I took a deep breath and began my introduction:

> *Hello, my name is Ms. Cornelius, and I will be here visiting this class for the next six weeks. I am originally from Texas, born and raised, and I have recently moved to New Jersey. I have been a middle school art and language arts teacher, so I am used to being around young people.*
>
> *Right now I am working on finishing my dissertation for my doctorate. This means that I have finished all of my college classes (I have been in school for 11 years) and I am almost ready to become a full-time college professor. In order for me to finish, and get my Ph.D., I need to do a research study. This is where I need your help. I want to look at your experiences with art and literacy. In other words, I want to look your experiences with art and writing, speaking, listening, and reading.*
>
> *I hope you are all willing to participate in my research project. If you decide to participate, this means that you agree to let me watch you work during your art class, take notes about what I see, and interview you about your art making and writing. I will tape record interviews, and I will also collect some art and language (writing) samples – you will get them back though.*
>
> *No one, except me, will be looking at your work or listening to your interviews. You will be able to make up a fake name. I will use that fake name and no one will know your identity. It will be our secret.*

It is completely your choice whether or not you decide to participate in this

project, and there will not be any consequences if you choose not to volunteer.

This project will not affect your grade in your class in any way.

If you do decide to participate, you have the right to stop participating at any

time.

Please take the Information sheet, which explains the study, to your parents.

Discuss your participation with your parents. Please sign the Assent form and

have your parents sign the Consent form and bring it back to class on Friday.

Does anyone have any questions?

Thank you, Mr. G, for welcoming me into your class. I look forward to working

with everyone.

I am happy I wrote down what I would say ahead of time. Everyone seemed receptive to

my presence in the class. Several students wanted to ask me questions, not about my

study, but being from Texas. Most of the students were quite taken with my southern

accent and claimed that I sounded like Paula Dean.

I felt good when I overheard one student tell another, "This could be cool." That

was what I was hoping for. I knew then that I would have at least a few willing

participants.

At the end of the week, all twenty-eight students turned in their consent forms. I

was so excited to have such willing individuals. I guess it had something to do with total

anonymity. When the researcher explained students could come up with a pseudonym

further explanation became necessary since several did not understand the word so the

word fake was used in its stead. Most appeared relieved by not having to use their

legitimate names. Relief that they could be honest and no one would know. Many

students came up with interesting and humorous pseudonyms: Nicki Minaj (the

singer/rapper), Hello Kitty, Jane Doe, Que-Que, and Neo. Others decided on more

traditional names such as: Trevor, Kennedy, and Julia.

Working with adolescents is never boring. I was going to have to be on my toes

with the class. I could already tell there are many strong personalities.

Description of the Curriculum

The art curriculum correlated its goals and content objectives to both district and

New Jersey state standards, known as the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content

Standards (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). The New Jersey Core

Curriculum Content Standards present content standards for learning, teaching, and

assessment in content disciplines for New Jersey's public schools. The curriculum was

driven by district and state standards. Mr. G authored *Illuminated Letter* lesson and

aligned it with the district/state standards by creating the lesson himself. He was also

responsible for the other classroom assignments and activities.

While I was present during the six weeks the study, students engaged in three

different assignments. The first was a construction of a three dimensional ceramic

medieval castle. Students were given extensive working drawings to use as a template.

Each student was expected to build their own castle (Figure 4). Once the castles were

built they were fired in the kiln. After firing, students painted and decorated their own

castle with trees and shrubs. The literacy activity for this project was limited to the teaching of vocabulary associated with medieval castles and their construction.

Figure 4. Medieval Castle

A second assignment, inspired by the work of artist Piet Mondrian, had students design a three dimensional abstract bas relief out of foam core and paint. The purpose of the project was to learn about dominate and sub-dominate shapes within a particular composition. Since this project was an introduction to asymmetrical design, the literacy

activities related to this project were limited to basic terms associated with abstract

shapes and color schemes (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Bas Relief Project

The *Illuminated Letters* lesson (Appendix A) infused specific New Jersey art education standards with the goals and objectives of the study. Integrated learning, which includes the arts, can possibly create a learning environment that is favorable to students' needs. According to Sidelnick and Svoboda (2000), the "use of the arts creates an environment that can expand awareness and reach beyond traditional classroom approaches that usually address only linguistic and logical mathematical abilities (p. 3).

The lesson used in this study, the Illuminated Letters lesson, can be described as a lesson for both the study of written communication and art. On the first day, students were informed of the scheduled activities that they would engage in during the project. The lesson was designed to accustom students to visual symbols and the elements and principles of design, in order to assist them in creating their illuminated letter. There were four New Jersey State Standards (2009) listed for this lesson:

- **Visual Arts**—(1.1.8. D.1) Describe the intellectual and emotional significance conveyed by the application of the elements of art and principles of design in different historical eras and cultures.

- (1.1.8. D.2) Compare and contrast various masterworks of art from diverse cultures, and identify elements of the works that relate to specific cultural heritages.

- (1.2.8.A.1) Map historical innovations in visual art that were caused by the creation of new technologies.

- (1.2.8.A.2) Differentiate past and contemporary works of visual art that represent important ideas, issues, and events that are chronicled in the histories of diverse cultures.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Mr. G created six goals and objectives for this lesson: As written, the students were expected to:

- Create a composition on colored paper using pencil only.

- Use line to create pattern and form.

- Alternate color for pattern contrast.

- Apply small areas of color for three colors blending using proper tools.

- Use light colors for highlights after background color is complete.

- Add gold or silver to enhance letter.

Assessment

For this lesson the assessment questions used by Mr. G, as he wrote them were the following:

a. Is the composition balanced?

b. Are the colors added correctly?

c. Is blending smooth and gradual?

d. Does the composition fit the format?

e. Are highlights place in the proper areas?

Teacher Assessment

To evaluate his own performance Mr. G offered this assessment of his teaching. As written by Mr. G asked the following three questions:

a. Is student focused on task?

b. Are students application of technique are correct?

c. Teacher observation and participation.

The Lesson

For the first 20 minutes of class Mr. G assessed students' prior knowledge by asking the class if they have ever seen a storybook in which the first letter of the first word was a large, ornate letter. Several mumbled "Yeses" could be heard. Mr. G then pulled out examples of children's fairy tales and nursery rhyme books as well as greeting cards that he had collected over the years which displayed large ornate letters at the beginning of the page or paragraph. Displaying the books caused the students to reminisce about elementary school story time and how "I remember that rhyme! My mom used to read me that book!" Once Mr. G regained their attention he asked the students to think of letters that are currently symbols of popular culture. Being in such close proximity to New York City it was no surprise when there were several shouts of "NY."

Mr. G continued to give a brief explanation of what illuminated letters are and explain that *artists often use what came before them to create new ideas. In other words, artists are always reinventing art.* At this point he passed out an 11 page gray scaled photocopy of a PowerPoint presentation on illuminated letters. He also gave them a

history of illuminated letters on a single 8.5 x 11 inch paper that was approximately 714 words with about an eight point font. After reading about illuminated letters on their own from both of these sources the assignment was for students to create their own updated version of an illuminated letter using any letter of their choice on a 6 X 6 inch piece of black construction paper. Instructions were for the design to reflect a theme, preferably something about themselves. In order to help students understand what he was looking for Mr. G showed examples of previous student work. Many of the students became excited and were ready to get started. They moved into clusters and began talking, chatting excitedly about their ideas.

Students made sketches of their letter on a practice sheet (Figure 6). Later, once they decided on a design, they then drew their letter on tracing paper and transferred the image on to black paper. The use of metallic pencils was only for dramatic effect and every student had to incorporate a color theme. Mr. G reminded students that all coloring must be dark for contrast on the black paper. Of course, there were some students who did not listen and fell behind in the composition process. The sparing use of gold and silver metallic paint markers enhanced the illumination effect. When completed students matted their work on white or gray paper and put their compositions into their portfolios.

Once Mr. G allowed the students to start their sketches, I got up from my corner of the room and began to circulate. I watched the students share ideas as they developed their Illuminated letter. One boy had a tendency to work intensely, lips pursed, brow furrowed, head and shoulders hunched over his sketches until he reached a point where

he was satisfied with his efforts. Later, he strolled over to friends' work areas, showed them his ideas he had sketched, and offered compliments on theirs. Another student leaned back in his chair and simply lifted his work in the air for all to see, with a confident, relaxed expression on his face. He received the obligatory response he sought such as "That's cool."

The Written Assessment

Mr. G asked the students two open-ended questions: (both related to State Standard — (1.1.8. D.1) Describe the intellectual and emotional significance conveyed by the application of the elements of art and principles of design in different historical eras and cultures: (1) Explain the elements and principles of design used in your composition; (2) Using the attached sheet as an information guide, explain the components you used that make your work an authentic Illuminated Letter. Historic elements may be included in your writing (Appendix B). According to Mr. G the written assessments were mandated by the district in which this study took place. The school district promotes Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) in all content areas or courses, rather than isolating writing in the Language Arts class.

WAC encourages students to learn the content for other disciplines as they write for each class or content area. Teachers can utilize the writings to help assess student knowledge and understanding of the discipline's content. This strategy is used to help students become more proficient in their writing when they take the *New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK)*.

Figure 6. Practice Sketch
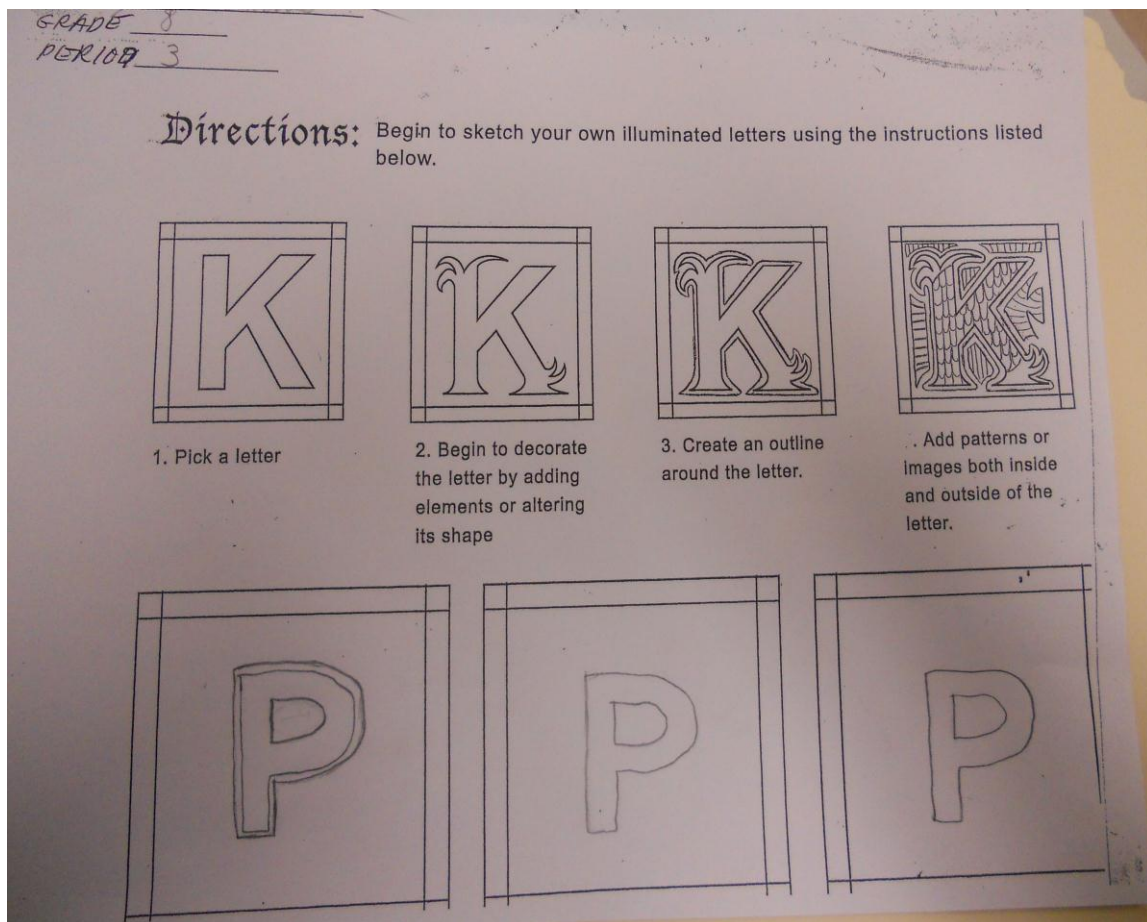
Teacher Perspective

Teacher Profile

Mr. G is an experienced, caring, energetic, and opinionated teacher of 42 years.

To Mr. G, teaching seemed like a logical career choice with an art related major. By the

time he had graduated from college, however, he had not been convinced that he wanted

to enter the teaching profession. Mr. G explained, "I had a lot going on in my life other

than thinking of teaching while I was going to school." However, he always wanted to major in art, and acquired a bachelor's degree in advertising and design. While contracting through his father's company he began to see education as a means of having his summers free to have extra time to do extra work. That was the first positive draw for him. Providing the time span in education during a regular teaching job was great for everything else he wanted to do in his life and it did not interfere with that.

According to Mr. G being in art in general was second nature to him because he had been painting since he was eight years old; "… it had always been in my life." It was natural for him to go from one thing to another and art education led him into wanting to share what he knew because, he explained, "I'm really good at what I do. I want to share with everyone else; to show them how to do the same things I did." Becoming a teacher has been a very rewarding experience for Mr. G. He believes that teaching comes naturally… "You're really good at something and you want to show people how you do it they ask questions how you do it and it naturally leads to a teaching mode."

Mr. G attempted to make real connections with his students, to genuinely communicate concern, support, and empathize with them. According to Noddings (2005), "Caring teachers listen and respond differently to their students" (p. 19) and assist students to be "recipients of care" (p. 108). According to Groves (1998), the teacher's mission is to create a culture of caring and facilitate a sense of openness between himself and his students that promotes teaching and learning Communication between the students and Mr. G is open. He is available to his students for technical as well as emotional support. He serves as a sounding board and/or confidant Mr. G talked

one on one with his students about problems and listens as students discuss critical social/cultural concerns in the class context. Mr. G explained that he listens to his students' in class conversations and statements to understand where they are coming from – their perspective. He tries to understand their perspectives.

Mr. G's experiences span a professional lifetime. In that time he dealt with policymakers and naysayers who questioned the legitimacy of art as a core academic subject. Even though the No Child Left Behind Act acknowledged art as a core subject, local policymakers within the climate of high-stakes testing and other academics still consider art teachers as second-class teachers and do not recognize the value of art within standardized curriculum and testing. Mr. G finds the situation comical when considering "The academics have their place but, creative people are much more advanced." These experiences contributed to his self-proclaimed mission of reaching more students through art.

When considering a favorite part of his entire teaching journey, Mr. G told me one of his most special experiences was winning the Dodge Grant for artist educator. The design of the grant program allows artists time to pursue their own art as well as receive professional development as art teachers. According to Mr. G winning the grant was "a highlight of 1994." This is important because it is reflective of his philosophy of teaching and his reputation as a teacher-learner within the school. Specifically, Mr. G is the type of teacher who believes one must "be dynamic in the classroom… [teachers must] show your students you are in command of your subject area."

Further, Mr. G said he found the experience of being a cooperating teacher rewarding because he felt he was helping the next generation of art educators, as well as contributing to the future of art education. As Mr. G simply stated, "I feel like I'm helping art education." He had a sense of gratification about his accomplishments as a cooperating teacher, knowing that he influenced someone just starting his or her career. "I take a great sense of pride when I talk with a student teacher and I'm seeing that they're doing really well, that student is trying to make an impact on [a local school]…And you know, I like to think that's little part of what I helped them achieve."

Teacher Perspective of the New Jersey Middle School

Knowing the demographics of the school site is important in contextualizing the school within this large school district, but demographics alone are devoid of teacher voices that can provide insights to the forces at work within the school. I used the language of the teacher to reflect his own perceptions of the culture at the school because Bakhtin (1981) argued that language is the way we "make sense of our worlds" and Mr. G tried to make sense of this school and his classroom by examining the structures he was enacting.

Mr. G spent the majority of his career in both low and high-needs schools. He described his present school as having order and professionalism. He stated that communication is open between administration and staff regarding important issues affecting the education programs; however, sometimes the administrators do not understand the goals of art education. According to Freedman (2007) "Art teachers have commonly felt isolated in regular schools and have had difficulty finding supportive

groups of colleagues…this is the case because art teachers…are literally isolated, often being the only members of the profession in a school and geographically located far from the center of leadership" (p. 212). Mr. G, the six grade visual art teacher and all the other arts-related subjects (band and choir; theater is not taught) are isolated in one wing away from other classrooms and subjects in the school. However, the isolation did not hinder the arts teachers from creating camaraderie among themselves. Mr. G explained that there has never been a disconnect from the other arts teachers. This was evident many times throughout the study when other teachers came by Mr. G's classroom for a chat or for advice or perspective.

The school culture is predominantly Caucasian with a growing east Indian population. The school was ethnically and culturally diverse and exposed students to many different races, ethnicities, beliefs, customs, and language, and focused on increasing acceptance of all students based on this diversity. Mr. G explained, "Diversity is not a question in our school. If you want diversity without assimilation into the culture you are causing division. This is the downfall of multiculturalism. Students are here for one purpose only and that is education. Everyone at this school is here for an education. This school allows students to grow in many directions. Acceptance is never a question." My interpretation of Mr. G's statements regarding diversity center on the actual ethnic diversity of the student population, as listed previously, and how this mixed group, with varying backgrounds, come together in school with a singular focus on learning. The reality might not be quite so clear cut; however, since underserved groups may not get the extra attention they need to succeed, at least in his class.

Teacher Perspectives on the Role of the Arts and Literacy in Education

As an advocate of culturally relevant curriculum at the Middle School, Mr. G believes that the arts can illuminate possibilities for students by fostering a safe environment, generating a sense of community within the classroom, and create more confident, self-efficacious students. Mr. G stated, "When students see the arts as part of their education, they begin to have a better understanding of the world in which we live."

Mr. G was supportive saying, "I support arts and literacy-based integrated curriculum because it provides a deeper, richer, more authentic means to the learning experience."

Mr. G. thinks that an arts and literacy integrated curriculum offers students the space and experience to explore beyond what they know, and increases their performance. He believes the writing assessments that he incorporates helps students develop skills on writing essays and while he is not necessarily looking for perfect grammar, he wants students to get the essential elements of what they are doing and know what they are and how to speak about them. Speaking about art, he said that it is a skill that they are lacking because "they really don't know what the vocabulary is for art and how well to use it… it's difficult for them to look at something and pick out things that are going on in a piece of art without you prompting them." He adds, "Most students have a little difficulty with art writing; especially in middle school. To apply what they have learned takes time and practice. I am sure our students will become more proficient as they continue writing."

Continuing along this line of thinking Mr. G said he feels that it is too difficult to integrate literacy with every project that the students do. He explains, "It is just too time consuming on my part. If I had a semester to work on it then I could do it. If we had a year class then we could do it, but with eight weeks there's not a lot of time." He claims he integrates literacy as much as he can; however, he does not want to integrate literacy so much as to transform his art class into a language arts class. To be fully literate, Mr. G feels that students must develop "the ability to function in society properly" and that is what he is trying to promote in his classroom. Mr. G stated that he emphasizes purposes for literacy and art skills with his students by constantly practicing the components of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and seeing in every lesson. According to my observations, this last statement did not seem to be fully realized during the six weeks period the study took place. While students did read something related to each art lesson, to say it had a truly integrated literacy component is to exaggerate the claim.

When I asked Mr. G if he supported arts integration instruction when implemented with other academic subjects, the question elicited a strong response. He stated, "More art educators need to vocalize, document, all the integration that we do on a daily basis and expect the same from core teachers to integrate art connections in their educational practices." It is Mr. G's belief, as is my own, that teachers can not merely "follow a curriculum." A teacher's own inquiry must drive what they do so they can create an environment for nurturing knowledge, student inquiry, and skill development.

Student Perspectives

The participants were eighth grade students. For much of the description that follows, I combined supporting data such as observations with artifacts to create a more complete picture of student experiences. Even in places where the student's voice is not present through the use of direct quotes, the summaries and interpretations of the artistic process were derived directly from the student's interviews, artifacts and my observations.

Several students were identified as underserved based on Mr. G's input. Mr. G indicated that certain students struggled in various aspects of school life. A few were from immigrant families, and others acknowledged they had difficulties with literacy studies in school.

As reflected in my second research question, I was interested in better understanding how four students perceived their integrated class. Because this study was limited to six weeks I interacted and informally interviewed all 28 students in the class for the first three days. From the gathered data I identified four themes: (1) Students who disliked reading, but liked writing; (2) Students who liked reading, but disliked writing; (3) Students who liked both reading and writing; and (4) Students who disliked both reading and writing. Four students, Joey, Seema, Megan, and Kish had struggled with both reading and writing. Like them, I too struggled with literacy and I found myself in familiar territory. As a researcher and teacher I followed the four students for six seeks in an attempt to further understand their experiences with literacy in the art class.

The four students gave me a glimpse into their lives when they began talking about their reading experiences, classroom events, and the writing task. It is important to hear their voices in this analysis. To protect the identity of the teacher and students, other than the researcher, their names have been replaced with pseudonyms chosen by the students.

Profiles of Four Students

Joey

Joey, who always seemed to have a smile spreading between his dimpled cheeks, is a 14 year old Caucasian boy from a secure home situation with divorced parents. I am certain that his friends would think of him as a "bundle of energy" with an inquiring mind in search of answers. After hearing my introduction to the research project, Joey promptly said, "of course I will participate; I would hate to be in school as long as you have so I'll help you out." Outgoing and athletic, Joey answered each question with great detail. Math was his area of strength, while science and language arts were more difficult. He explained:

> I started to really struggle in science and language arts in first grade and the
>
> problem just kept getting bigger and bigger. My mom got me enrolled with a
>
> learning center but I hate it. I feel that it just more work to do on top of
>
> everything else. I just want to escape the pressure and I can do that in
>
> extracurricular activities, like in athletics and art class. In art I feel like I can do
>
> and create anything I want to and I won't be judged. I don't have to be perfect.

In our interview, Joey expressed his anxiety about himself as a reader. He stated he "Don't read, besides stuff on the Internet because it's boring. If I have homework or I find a cool sports magazine, then I'll read. Otherwise I probably wouldn't pick up a book." In school, Joey would "rather read silently than out loud because I'm slow." He revealed his embarrassment and was "afraid they'll [other students] laugh at me."

Joey felt that he would rather participate in other activities than read. Joey enjoyed being involved with school activities, such as wrestling and baseball, and spoke proudly of the physical education programs. Socially, he felt pretty comfortable, and described himself as being "awesome!"

Seema

Seema seemed shy and reserved. She is a 13 year old Middle Eastern girl from an exceptionally close family. Seema began by saying, "I'm not a very socializing person, I don't really care for people," she then recounted and went on to indicate that she does have friends but most of them are older, already in high school. Music and art are her outlets for the emotions that trouble her. She loved relaxing in her art class, where, because it came easily to her, and she could "be herself." Seema found that math best matches her academically, while language arts are the most difficult. "For as long as I can remember reading and writing has always been difficult for me. I get so down on myself when I see how easy it is for someone else. I wish I could breeze by in school without any problems…I always wonder why I can't just do things the best way I know how and let that be enough."

For Seema reading had always been difficult. She explained that "sometimes I have to read things over and over to finally understand it." Seema admitted that she is easily distracted and "it's hard to stay focused, especially if the reading passage is long and boring." Seema went on to explain that, unless it was an art book or a "how to draw book", she seldom reads recreationally.

While Seema readily admitted that she disliked reading, she understood its importance for her future. She said, "I know it's [reading] and important skill that will make me successful later in life, especially since I want to go to college, but I just don't like to do it." For her future, Seema confided that she wants to become an interior decorator.

Megan

As with most adolescent girls, for Megan, loyalty to her friends and interest in connecting with them seem to be to her main priority. A bright fourteen year old Caucasian girl from a single-parent home Megan described herself as being "fabulous, silly, fun loving and ready to have a good time whether it was in class or at the mall." Although she indicated that she pays attention in her classes and, enjoys math class (she wanted to be an accountant), the majority of her concerns focused on her social life. She enjoyed being involved in school activities, such as volunteering to help younger students, band, and cheerleading. Her self-confidence was evident in her verbal responses and her interaction with me; however, like Joey and Seema, Megan declared that she had never liked to read.

In an interview with Megan I asked her to explain her reasons for dislike for reading. Megan explained,

> In elementary school I had this one teacher who seemed to always single me out in class for reading aloud. I'm pretty slow when I read out loud and the teacher knew that, but she would still call on me. Sometimes, if I went to too slow she would get frustrated and take over. It made me feel bad, like even though I was trying it wasn't good enough. That feeling of embarrassment and has always kept up with me.

Megan spoke fondly of her mother and older sister, who provide academic support. She said her mom "used to help me read every night when I was little." Megan indicated that her sister was her role model because she makes very good grades. Megan explained that both her "mom and sister wants me to practice my reading and writing so I can go to college, get a good job, and understand what I'm doing." Megan hopes to go to college one day and become a certified public accountant so that she can buy herself three cars and a fountain.

Kish

Kish was a thirteen year old East Indian male who had transferred to the middle school at the beginning of the year. He lived in a suburban neighborhood in town with his mother, father, and two siblings. Kish was quite proud that his father was a mechanic who worked on "heavy duty trucks." Kish was best described as a "man of few words." When asked to describe himself, Kish's response was "okay grades, I guess, friendly…I guess that's it." He explained that he worked hard to do what he thought was expected

and strived to please his teachers. His favorite subject, math, came pretty easy to him but subjects that required much reading and writing, such as language arts or social studies, were just too much work. "I'm not a big book person," he confessed. Often his choice of words showed strength of emotion, such as "I hate to read and write... I hate it! I just don't do good."

Kish described his aversion to school reading. He recognized that he had problems when texts were long, boring, and/or difficult to understand. Kish explained,

When I'm reading in class and it's boring or long, it makes me sleepy. Like when I have to read a whole chapter silently to myself. I look at the same words, and I read them over and over again. It makes me so sleepy. The words seem to blur together. Then, if I read something, and I don't understand it I get frustrated. Sometimes I'll re-read the page and sometimes that'll help. But usually, when I don't understand what I just read, I get frustrated and I'm done with it.

Kish went on to point out that he preferred when other read to him. He stated that he would "rather have the teacher read aloud in class." Kish explained that he understood texts better when the teacher went over what he just read.

Despite his aversion to reading, Kish did read on the Internet. He admitted, "I don't enjoy reading. Except sometimes on the computer." Kish made a point of saying that when he went online, he read about topics he was interested in, such as sports. Kish explained "When you're online, you can read about whatever you want. I go online, I go to messages that my friends wrote me on Facebook. I look up facts on baseball players and other stuff."

While he was not looking up "stuff" on the internet, Kish loved Yankee baseball and chess. Academic support at home and school were successful in facilitating his honor roll achievements. Kish expressed the support from his parents by stating, "They'll never let me give up. They keep pushing me to succeed in everything I do."

Researcher's Insights

When I observed these students in class and talked with them about their literacy experiences I could see through multiple frames of vision. I self-negotiated the relationship between positions. I was always cognizant that, as a researcher, I moved in and out of spaces marked by self, subject, text, and context (Ellis, 2004; Eisner, 1998b; Reed-Danahay, 1997). My understandings of the four student participants stories of struggle and dislike of literacy was tinted by my own experiences as a struggling student of literacy. Reading did not come naturally to me and I remember a time when I did know what it meant to struggle. Thus, when I saw Joey, Seema, Megan, and Kish I saw them through the eyes of someone who not only knew of their struggle, but someone who, at one time, did not believe in the power and joy of literacy.

Student Perceptions of Art Class

Educators meet the daily demands of schooling, constantly negotiating the multiplicity of roles required to face great diversity. At the heart of the classroom are students who face many unknown challenges when they enter a culture different from past academic, familial, and social experiences. For some educators, as in the case of Mr. G, creating a student-centered learning environment, relatively free from mandated curriculum and high-stakes testing was necessary. As I listened to the student

participants' stories, I was reminded of the school experiences offered to students. I wanted to hear student perspectives about the role they saw the arts playing in their education.

In every interview, art education was perceived unanimously by the students as something very positive in terms of how having art class in school and how making art impacts their lives. Megan explained that in art class,

We learn how to, like, express our minds, like, use our imaginations more. It helps you to, like, express yourself in a better way. When you draw you can express yourself and your feelings in a different way. Some people don't like to draw because they think they're not good enough. But if you think about it, no one can draw things you can. That makes you special. During my observations of Megan, she appeared confident as she shared recurrent thoughts with nearby classmates about her emerging illuminated letter (Figure 7).

Seema also included freedom of self-expression as the underlying reason that art was valuable in her life. She commented, "In other classes you just have to sit down and do it, but in art you can express yourself." She added that art "makes me feel like I can do anything on paper, like I don't even…um, well…it can be doodling or whatever, like it makes me feel good." Drawing, even doodling, helps to calm her down because she "can forget everything and just concentrate on my drawing only." Later, Seema shared some of her drawings (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Megan's Illuminated Letter

Figure 8. Seema's Drawings

Similarly, Joey expressed his thoughts about art class,

I think getting an art education helps me to express myself. If you get in to art

class in school it can help you to express your creativity more effectively in your

school work. I use my creative skills when it comes to mapping problems and

also problem-solving in language arts and math. When it comes to social studies,

I can think about the art history that I have learned and that helps to understand

the content in my history class.

Kish shared Joey's sentiments by professing that art class has helped his

creativity by enabling him to develop alternate ways of re-representing curricular

knowledge. In discussing his meaning Kish explained,

Sometimes when I go home I just draw what happened in school…I just draw my

favorite things from a story in Language Arts or from a battle we covered in

history class…I draw with my friends all the time too. We make up our own,

like, superheroes who save characters in stories. For example, we just finished

reading *Animal Farm* in Language Arts class. I hated it when Boxer died; I

thought it was unfair and sad because he worked so hard, so I wanted to save

him. I created a comic where Benjamin [the donkey] didn't fail in trying to

rescue Boxer from the glue factory. Boxer's rescue had to remain a

secret…Benjamin had to hide him. The pigs didn't get their whiskey but they

would have found another way…they were dishonest.

The development of an artwork originating from a human need to visually

capture experiences, thoughts and feelings requires reflection and takes time. This

determination finds many overlaps with the conclusions reached by Dewey (1958) in this regard. He summed it up thusly: "The final comment is that when excitement about subject matter goes deep, it stirs up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience. As they are aroused into activity they become conscious thoughts and emotions, emotionalized images" (p. 65). I found that the participants' enjoyment in expressing the diverse subjects of interest that represented their lives and experience supported Dewey's view. In their own ways, all participants perceived art as a distinctly valuable opportunity to reveal their personalities, interests, experiences and life stories.

Researcher Profile

I am a twenty-nine year old graduate student and adjunct professor of Caucasian and Latino descent. I come from a two parent household of educators with one male sibling, also a graduate student. Family is a major part of my life. We are a close knit group and are all supportive of one another. It is a central part of who I am as a person. I have a strong sense of hard work and a dedication to the task at hand.

From an early age, the only area that I was really interested in was art. I was able to draw before I could read. My family supported my efforts at drawing by supplying me with materials, equipment, and education.

Art was and still is a large part of my life. In middle school, a Language Arts teacher nurtured and patiently supported my drawing and helped with my reading handicap. With support at home and later in high school I enrolled in as many honors classes as possible. I participated in a Leadership class that tutored children in elementary schools. I worked with slow readers for a year and approached the children

with unconditional love and understanding. I understood their world. The children improved through reading and drawing out their frustrations.

I graduated high school with honors. I attended Texas State University to receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design and a Master's in Education with a Specialization in Reading. While going to school I was a substitute teacher at one middle school and later became a long-term substitute in a reading recovery class. I did student teaching and was later hired at Hopewell Middle School in Round Rock, Texas. I taught Language arts there for eighteen months and greatly enjoyed my time at both middle schools.

My motivations for becoming a teacher included a deep desire to help others who struggle with education. As a middle teacher, what I did I believe right was that I cared, listened, and encouraged. I was not the best disciplinarian, but students did not get away with much because they did not have that much time since they were so busy.

Researcher Perceptions of the Art Class

I had first met Mr. G in late fall of 2010. I was working as an adjunct professor at a local university in New Jersey. Once a week, my class met off site at a middle school. Two of my students had attended this middle school when they were younger and, because they knew I was seeking a teacher in which to conduct my dissertation research, recommended that I meet Mr. G. Taking their advice I went and introduced myself to Mr. G. He was very cordial and receptive when I told him about my research interests in arts and literacy integrated curriculum.

He told me that in the coming spring semester he had an integrated literacy lesson, involving writing and vocabulary that he was going to focus on. He claimed that he integrated elements of literacy in every lesson, such as reading, listening, and speaking; writing was going to be the main focus in the spring. I asked if he would be willing to allow me to conduct my dissertation research in his class and he was. I was elated!

Once permission was obtained from the principal, Mr. G asked me about the days that I would be coming. I asked for Tuesdays and Thursdays and he agreed. He went on to surprise me by stating that I could come whenever I wanted to; his class was open to me. When I told Mr. G I would like to work with eighth graders he suggested his third period.

Mr. G's art class was a very open and friendly. At the beginning of each class there is a flurry of activity, many students would come in to the classroom full of exuberance, often laughing and chatting excitedly with other classmates while throwing their backpacks on the floor. Typical in most classrooms, there was at least one student who would ask, "What are we doing today?" Most of the class, however, understood the expectations. Once students began their projects they knew to come to class and continue working on what they worked on the day before. With considerable amount of commotion, they would go straight to the shelves that contained their portfolios and retrieve their notes or sketches. Screeching metal stools would echo around the room as students would take their seats and begin to work.

Writing in the Art Classroom

Student Perceptions of Writing in Art Class

As the word "write" came out of Mr. G's mouth, I immediately heard the groans of students around me. They no longer looked at Mr. G with excitement. It seemed he had mixed feelings about this writing as well. Before incorporating writing, art teachers must convince themselves that, as writing is a valuable resource when instructing any curriculum (Barnes, 2009). By realizing writing's validity, teachers have a duty to make every effort to make writing advantageous to students and their daily lives.

"I'm not that great at writing, so I don't like to write very much. If I was given a choice I wouldn't want to write more than I have to in school," Megan explained during her interview. "I hate writing long papers. It's so boring and I just don't like to do it."

When probed further on her negative responses, Megan admitted she was often frustrated with formal writing and the need to "sound good." Megan would much rather "write notes to her friends because they don't care about grammar and all of that." Her negative responses suggested that school-based writing, particularly reports and essays that she perceived as "long papers," were hard for her and she was not successful.

Kish, red faced with embarrassment and eyes trained on the floor, explained that he had very little confidence in his writing abilities and often felt anxiety when he was asked to write in school. He felt pressured to succeed with his writing skills and at times he felt like "he just can't." He was afraid that he would not "use the right words", or have his "words flow," in a paper. Further, Kish also acknowledged that he struggled

with spelling. He was afraid of the possible censure that would follow from teachers and peers if they read his writing.

Seema confessed writing was difficult for her because she did not enjoy it. Drawing, on the other hand, was much more enjoyable to her because she liked "thinking up new ideas that would be creative in my drawings. I enjoy drawing, and it is fun for me." Seema explained that her Language Arts teachers saw her as a struggling writer because she typically rushes through a writing assignment just to get it done. Seema saw school writing as something "to get it out of the way, and not have to worry about it," so she could focus on other things, such as her drawings and other school assignments that she found to be interesting and more enjoyable .

Joey voiced handwriting as being a factor toward his negative feelings of writing. "I hate doing handwriting…people criticize, especially teachers. I usually have to write things over…it's so boring." Joey admitted that while he hated writing in school he would try if it "was something that I was in to, something I can relate to." Joey felt that most of his writing assignments in his other classes did not stimulate him, thus his attempts were minimal. Joey's desire for interest echoes with the findings of researchers who suggest the expression of choice is a central element of adolescent literacy learning (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). I asked if given a choice to express his knowledge and understanding in other classes what he would prefer. Joey stated he preferred, "Verbally telling the teacher or drawing a picture with very little words."

It was obvious that most of the class shared the four selected participant's sentiments. Nineteen out of the 28 students in class firmly denied that they enjoyed writing leaving nine who did enjoy writing. Joey was creative in his avoidance tactics. Obviously he was not "into" the assignment. During the writing assessment, Joey stalled for most of the entire class period, with tactics including repeatedly trying to leave class to visit the bathroom, rocking in his chair back and forth, getting up to wander around the room to sharpen his pencil. He finally wrote a few sentences for each open-ended question before the end of the period, but only when Mr. G walked by to monitor student progress. Similarly, Kish, who stated his reasons for hating to write was because he "don't do good" would look around the room to see who else was not writing so he could hold a whispered conversation with that person. Further, Kish nervously jiggled his feet and shifted in his chair exhaling loudly. Seema and Megan would also procrastinate in their writing assignment. Megan put her head down on her arm as she wrote and later looked around the room. Seema shifted in her chair, played with her pencil, and doodled on her assessment answer sheet.

The following are the exact written responses as they appeared on paper (Appendix B) to the open-ended questions in the writing assessment: (1) Explain the elements and principles of design used in your composition; (2) Using the attached sheet as an information guide, explain the components you have used that make your work an authentic Illuminated Letter. Historic elements may be included in your writing.

Question 1.

Joey: When created my illuminated letters, I used many things. I used pencil, paper, colored pencils and things to get ideas from. I used the

letter "D" because it is the first letter of my name. Overall, I used many things when creating my letter.

Megan: When creating our Illuminated letters we were told to add color, design, and anything their represents us. In my Illuminateds are different colors to create Emphasis. I wanted my viewer to notice the curve in my letter so I emphasized with the said color of pink. Also I used variety, In the types of designs I used all of them were different.

Seema: You use emphasis, movement, balance, and harmony.

Kish: When I was creating my illuminated letter I used many elements and principals of design to create it. I used a pencil, colored markers, and paper. I used the letter "T" because it is the first letter in my name. I used many things when creating my illuminated letter.

Question 2.

Joey: There are many ways my writing is authentic. One reason is because I did the illuminated letter by myself. As far as I know this is the only illuminated letter this. Another reason is by using my font and metallic colors, it is authentic. In conclusion my letter is authentic.

Megan: To make my illuminated letter authentic I included several principals of art. For instance, I used emphasis, variety, and proportion.

Seema: I used a different variety of shapes. I used different patterns inside and outside the letter. Also, I used different colors to show variety. I used the colors to shade in different parts of my letter.

Kish: When I was making my illuminated letter one way it was authentic because I did it myself. I used mattalic colors to make it look more better an unique. I put different designs like a background with army camoflauge. In conclusion I used many unique characteristics that made my letter authentic.

The student work was not revised or edited and contains several grammatical, spelling, and syntactical errors such as those in the textual response above for Question 1. The responses showed a lack of complete understanding of the questions. For example, Kish could not enumerate actual principles of design; although he said he used

many principles and instead listed pencils and colored markers, and that he selected the letter T because it was the first letter of his last name. This evidenced that he had not internalized the actual principles of design as delineated on the instruction sheet. The elements and principles of design are used to create a work of art. The elements of design (line, shape, direction, size, texture, color, and value) can be thought of as the things that make up a design, drawing, painting, etc. The principles of design (balance, gradation, repetition, contrast, harmony, dominance and unity) can be thought of as what artists do to the elements of design. How artists apply the principles of design is decided upon how successful artists are in creating a work of art.

For question one Joey and Kish both noted the materials used for their composition but did not explain the elements or principles of design that were utilized. In contrast, Megan understood that color helped to emphasize the line of her letter. She goes on to state that she used variety but does not explain what was various; color, value, line? For question one, Seema obviously knew the principles of design but she did not elaborate as to what principles she used in her illuminated letter until question two when she explains that she used patterns of shapes.

For question two students needed to understand that an authentic Illuminated letter is always enlarged and in color with gold applied in areas, while the rest of the text remained black. Images such as plants, animals, and mythological creature, are used to enhance the letters. Those images can be modified to fit into or around the letter. Once the illustrator makes a rough sketch they outline the drawing with pen. The gold leaf (metallic colors) would then be applied, followed by all the other colors. All four

students did not fully explain how their illuminated letter was authentic other than saying they produced it. Little was said about the elements and principles of design. Only Joey and Kish referenced the metallic color pens that were used to create the illumination and Seema and Kish mentioned using shapes and color inside and outside their letter.

Purpose for Writing in the Arts Class

Two of the four participants viewed the purpose of writing in their art class similarly; it was impractical in nature. Joey stated, "Writing is not my favorite, so I wouldn't want to write more in art class." Kish felt that writing in art was "a waste of time." To continue his line of thinking, Kish explained "art is a time to draw and paint…to be creative…not a time for writing. You read and write in English class, not art." It was his hypothesis that the only reason to include writing in art class was to prove that it was actually a class; however, he confessed that most students did not take the writing assessments seriously because it was seen as "busy work."

Likewise, Seema admitted that in art she does not think writing is important because "it takes time away from class, but I do think we should have a chance to explain a piece that we did…I just don't want to write about it." Therefore, when it comes to the writing assessment, Seema just writes enough to answer the question. As she explained earlier about school-based writing Seema hurries through her writing "to get it out of the way, and not have to worry about it." She adds, "I just read the question and answer it. I don't really think about it because it's never really occurred to me to write like I would in language arts." She would prefer to have a verbal discussion with the teacher. Seema said,

> When you talk out a question with the teacher it helps you to not only have their
> input but it also helps you to think through the question. Of course, you have to
> have the knowledge to have any hope of remembering the information.

Similarly Megan stated, "I don't like to write all the time because I'm very verbal…
[laughing]…I like to talk."

Megan and Joey believed that, while disliking the activity, the purpose of writing
in their art class was to communicate an understanding of the artistic concepts under
review. According to Megan:

> Mostly, we write to explain what we just did in our composition and I consider
> that expository. I don't really like to do it, but the writing assessments help me to
> understand the background information of what we are doing in class. I believe
> that information is important because that way you know what you're dealing
> with.

Whereas Megan felt art writing was explanatory, Joey viewed it as a "question/answer"
task:

> The purpose is to make sure we understand the concepts…it's just to make sure
> we understand the historical reading [the information guide in the
> assessment]…when we're given the reading I can write better because I use it as
> a guideline…I also really didn't know about these things before.

The message from these students was clear: the purpose for writing in art was
replication.

Researcher's Insights for Lesson and Written Assessment

Initial student participation and motivation seemed to be high for this lesson. Although disruptions and behavioral problems interfered with instruction from time to time, all students seemed excited to be participating in creating art. Students were actively involved in class discussions and drawing activities which centered on their illuminated letter. It was during this activity that there appeared to be one hundred percent participation from the class.

I was truly excited to view this lesson. Having a degree in graphic design, I have come to appreciate typography. When I studied abroad in Italy I took a graduate class entitled "Children's Literature." In that class we did a project on illuminated lettering and the Italian fairy tale Rapunzel.

My observations and interpretation at the beginning of the lesson indicated that art was important to the all the students, including my study participants. Students were focused, for the most part, during researcher observations. It is likely that my presence impacted the students' behavior, causing them to display their best performance, so to speak, because a visitor was watching their activities. The participants were particularly aware of my presence, more so at the beginning of the study. Occasionally they would look over their shoulders to see if was looking at them, or smiling shyly across the room where I sat in a corner of the classroom. This location seemed the most inconspicuous area and the cause the least amount of disruption, but naturally the presence of an outsider was noticeable to the students. As the weeks progressed, I became more of a fixture in the setting, and the students returned to what Mr. G

mentioned was more usual middle school behavior. I "usual" behavior deviated somewhat from the focused behavior observed initially.

When it came to the writing assessments the students seemed to balk. Most viewed writing in art as an oxymoron. For their age it would not be unusual for a class to display this behavior. I viewed art as a visual literacy, more basic than writing and speaking, because it was not hampered by the barrier of language. I found art to be For the educational, and fun. Most students in Mr. G's classroom seemed to use art as a way to escape from the worries of academic and social stresses. As described earlier, I did the same thing when young and did not recognize the importance of literacy skills in art until college. At that time, as a graphic design major, students were required to read, write, research, and speak in order to create compositions.

In order for the writing assessment to be successful, students need to fully comprehend that both visual and written literacy could not only strengthen their writing abilities, but also reinforce the basic art curriculum. Many times students, including the participants in this study, stated that writing in art was a waste of time. Therefore, to make the writing assessments relevant students must see the purpose of writing in art. It is important for students to experience interdisciplinary connections so they can bring multiple perspectives to problem solving and improve their critical thinking skills. This can be done by initiating limited written activities at the beginning of a student term and make it a consistent part of weekly if not daily work and once a foundation is laid, more extensive writing could be assigned. Here it is important to ensure students see the value and receive instruction in writing in order to facilitate their full cooperation.

While Mr. G believed it was important to integrate literacy into the arts curriculum it was clear that he did not fully recognize the value of the writing assessments in the arts classroom. Even though his words were to the contrary I had the impression that he looked at the written assessments as more of a chore. , It seemed he was fearful of turning his class into a language arts class. This is understandable. Most teachers are very protective of their teaching environment and subject area. However, Mr. G claimed he would inform a student's language arts teacher if he noticed severe writing errors.

Thoughts on the Study

One of the concerns going into the study was that there might be problems finding enough participants interested in being part of the study. Quite the opposite occurred Mr. G e-mailed me shortly after the school principal gave permission to conduct research in the district. He reassured the researcher that a fear of a lack of interested participants was completely unfounded: most of the students in his third period were interested. The researcher soon found some students seeking her out and wanting to describe their art interests and even non-arts areas of their lives. When first arriving to the classroom, I was impressed with the physical setting. The new room was captivating because it seemed an ideal place to teach. As a former art teacher, I was drawn to the art work that students were creating, and the art work which was displayed around the room. The faces of the students were all new and initially there were no names to put with them. It was noteworthy that most students were actively engaged in the art making process.

Prior to this study, I was naïve about what would be involved in doing this type of research. Conducting research in this type of setting was difficult and complex. My background in art and language arts made it more difficult to remain an impartial and a relatively unattached observer. It was difficult to restrain my classroom teacher personality who wanted to help and be a facilitator.

Because of these difficulties it caused a great deal of internal stress and tension because so much was depending on this research (a dissertation, and thus a degree). I was afraid of alienating Mr. G or his students and subsequently not being allowed to finish the study. At the same time I did not want compromise the study. Having some expertise in an area can make more difficult the task of maintaining the established role of researcher. However, having knowledge in an area also afforded insights into the art classroom. The difficulty arises from trying to be detached just enough to pay attention to the classroom and its members and yet still be part of the process. My role was that of a guest. As a guest in the classroom it was not possible to hold class discussions myself, or determine the order of teaching events, or assess and give feedback to students on their written assessments. Because of this role, it did not seem appropriate to request changes in the amount of time students were given for tasks such as composition production or writing.

Conclusion

This chapter described the curriculum, the student, teacher, and researcher participants. Their art products perceptions were listed as they engaged in the literacy and arts study as well as significant participants' reflection on the meaning of the

integration. Immersion, description, and analysis provided the tools necessary to access the primary data for the study.

The purpose of this study was to assess and interpret what happens when underserved students were simultaneously engaged in literacy studies and visual arts learning. A teacher was recruited and four students in the art class were identified as being underserved. All four agreed to participate in the study and chose pseudonyms to protect their identities. A literacy lesson was integrated into an illuminated letter lesson and students were asked about and reported their perceptions of the lesson. The four students all thought that writing was important, but did not like having to write in art class and found little value in the exercise. These responses indicate the lesson was not successful compared to the standard established by the researcher for this class which was to: (1) Explain the elements and principles of design used in your composition; (2) Using the attached sheet as an information guide, explain the components you used that make your work an authentic Illuminated Letter. None of the four underserved students were able to complete the objective questions satisfactorily. Included in Chapter V is a discussion of the lesson and its associated processes and its implications.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn what happens when underserved students are simultaneously engaged in literacy studies and visual arts learning. The motivation to do this study is based on my experience as a middle school art and language arts teacher. The three questions asked were to provide focus for how the research questions would be approached and dealt with within the study. These questions are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of 28 middle school students in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

2. What are the perceptions of four middle school students who struggle with literacy in an inclusive classroom about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

3. What are the perceptions of a middle school teacher who teaches in an inclusive classroom about his participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

4. What are the perceptions of the researcher who participated in an integrated literacy curriculum in a traditional visual arts classroom?

Based on analysis and evaluation of the research experience and collected data, information collected from the study was further interpreted in relationship to the

research questions in order to categorize emergent themes and conclusions. The interpretations are presented in this chapter along with implications for future research.

Analysis and Interpretation Supporting Question 1

What are the perceptions of four underserved middle school students, in an inclusive classroom, about their participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a visual arts classroom?

Analysis and Interpretation

In every interview, art education was perceived unanimously by the students as something very positive in terms of how having art class in school and how making art impacts their lives. There comments showed a great appreciation for art. Most students enjoyed art and felt that is was personally beneficial to them in some way. Megan said that, "you can express how you feel in your art." Similarly, Seema felt that art made her "feel good." She expressed in dealing with stress and emotion, she used art to help take her stress away. By creating art, including doodles, Seema is able to relax and express her emotions. She said, "it [art] calms me down when I draw. I can forget everything and just concentrate on my drawing only." The interactive process allows her to forget her worries and focus her energy on something she sees as positive.

Joey felt that "art is educational, and it's also a lot of fun. Art is like being able to tell your own way of thinking." Knowing that art is beneficial is important in creating relevance; students will not be willing to learn if they do not see the connections to real life and see the work as something fun that they can accomplish. Students tend to stay engaged if they perceive an activity as relevant to their lives.

Both Joey and Kish explained that art had helped them express their creativity more effectively in their school work. While this is consistent with Efland (2002) who stated that representations are created to further personal understanding these students did not offer any actual evidence that substantiated their claim. Elfland goes on to say that, "the symbolic character of most works of art is not limited to representation; they are also expressive; they transcend representation (p. 5)." Yet, the artistic expressions of the illuminated letter and the subsequent written assignment were actually based on low teacher expectations.

There were some revelations about student thoughts, perceptions, and feelings concerning the integrated curriculum. Many of the students seemed to enjoy the artistic elements of the study, as indicated through compliance and personal motivation in completing the Illuminated letter assignment. However, nearly all of the students, including the four student participants showed resistance to the writing assessment, which was evident through their groans, complaints, and noncompliance Avoidance tactics and procrastination were obvious signs of their dislike of the assignment. Writing was probably a difficult task for some of the students. The underserved students' writing attempts were plagued with grammatical, punctuation errors, and misspelled words. As several students mentioned previously, they disliked writing even if they knew its value. For underserved students the reason for poor performance on such an assignment could be tied to such things as English as a Second Language, learning disabilities, poor elementary school preparation, or consistent lack of study time and effort at home.

In reviewing the collected responses, student documents and artifacts as well as other forms of information, it seems realistic to say most of the students felt a greater sense of accomplishment with art and not their writing. Adolescent students can be vocal and emotional when asked about their writing tasks. It was quite clear from the negative reactions from the students that they did not like to write; especially in art class. For most of the students, including my participants, school writing assignments seem to engender varying degrees of uncertainty and idleness, creating attitudes and actions that affect and are affected by their self-beliefs. Generally speaking, the four students had high self-efficacy for the art assignment, but low interest and confidence in themselves as writers. In art, there are often no "right" answers, but in the illuminated letter assignment there were evaluation standards set by Mr. G that students were encouraged to meet. Writing can be an arduous and dialogic process. Seema confessed writing had always been difficult for her and she would get depressed and down on herself when she interpreted that it was easy for other people.

Both Kish and Seema found writing in their art class to be impractical. Kish felt that writing in art was "a waste of time," because "art is a time to draw and paint…to be creative…not a time for writing. You read and write in English class, not art." Seema felt that writing in art took away from class time. In contrast, Joey and Megan viewed writing in art differently. Although they both disliked the activity, writing was viewed as necessary to communicate understanding of the artistic concepts.

According to Hladczuk and Eller (1992), literacy is, "the vehicle of education, the means through which ideas, information, knowledge and wisdom are expressed an

exchanged" (p. ix). Literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and seeing) involves personal views of knowledge, values and understanding of fundamental group discourse and the discourse of language-patterns, which are either learned or acquired (Gee, 1992). The cultural and social context defines how literacy is understood and interpreted by individuals in specific settings and, according to Rueda and McIntyre (2002),"as we become literate, we learn the discourses underlying the literacy we are engaged in learning (or acquiring)….these discourses have to do with language patterns and internally accepted meanings and ways of behaving" (p. 192). To make the writing assessments relevant students must see the purpose of writing in art. It is important for students to experience interdisciplinary connections so they can bring multiple perspectives to problem solving and improve their critical thinking skills. If Mr. G used a written component in all his art assignments and gotten the students used to this type of exercise it would be expected. With this expectation, students might not think about art as a "relaxation" period. Some students would not think of art as being so frivolous if the instruction were more, focused on both the quality of writing and quality of the art. Further relevance for the assignments could be based on contemporary local, national, or international issues. Perhaps a better developed history component to the art assignments could motivate some students. Emphasizing technical skill by a greater degree by requiring students to complete their own work without undue instructor assistance.

Analysis and Interpretation Supporting Question 2

What are the perceptions of a middle school art teacher, who teaches in an inclusive classroom, about participation in an integrated literacy curriculum in a visual arts classroom?

Analysis and Interpretation

Mr. G was the art teacher and a 42 year veteran of teaching at the time of the study. Interview questions for the Mr. G interview can be found in Appendix D.

During the interview, Mr. G stated that he had 19 years teaching experience at the school while the other 23 were at an elementary and high school in the same district. Mr. G. exhibited and self-reported a remarkably high level of professional dedication to his students. It was obvious that he gained his students' trust over time by devoting large amounts of time and attention to them. As a result, a highly developed level of teacher-student trust and mutual respect emerged in the classroom environment.

Teachers are powerful classroom agents who, once curricula are decided upon at a higher level, create learning activities that engage students. Traditionally, because of limited availability in many schools, art has been a fragment of what art making and viewing is. However, the art making and viewing students experience in school influences their perceptions of what art is and how they can connect to it. The choices teachers make are important because how they represent art in their curriculum will shape how students conceptualize and value art and its relationship to literacy and learning.

Mr. G said he recognized the importance of incorporating literacy skills into his art teaching. He claimed to emphasize all the components of literacy (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) into every lesson in order for students to become comfortable in assessing their work. He explained that he tries, "to get kids to be completely involved in what they're doing." However, it was clear, after interviews and analyzing the written assessments that several students, including the four participants, they did not completely grasp the elements and principles of design and thus their understanding of the assessment questions. There was a conflict in Mr. G's voiced beliefs regarding the need for literacy and art.. He did not successfully integrate literacy into the art classroom. Mr. G likely thought virtually any element of the lesson that involved reading and the written word might be classified as integrated literacy instruction. When there is a stated difference between teacher's beliefs and practices, a stronger unexpressed belief overrides and influences practices (Nespor, 1987). From my perspective, integrating literacy into the art classroom seemed like a chore to Mr. G. For example, giving a dense, one page handout, for students to silently read on their own, without any analysis or comment from the teacher, is a minimalist approach to literacy instruction. Further, he stated that he did not want to integrate literacy so much as to transform his art class into a language arts class. The literacy component of the assignment was brief and not well understood by the students. There was very little preparation for writing and only minimal effort toward helping the students understand the importance of writing related to the illuminated letter. The brief background PowerPoint presentation on the history

and development of the illuminated letter was insufficient to adequately prepare students for the assignment.

In spite of Mr. G's protestations, incorporating literacy instruction into the art class was not as he initially represented to me. Mr. G appeared to have good rapport with his students, but it was if he was no longer motivated to innovate his teaching. In his interviews he indicated, by examples of instructional lessons he tried in the past that were not successful. Computer use is an example. There were no student computers in the classroom. Mr. G's was the only one.

Analysis and Interpretation Supporting Question 3

Question 3 asked: What are the perceptions of the researcher who participates in an integrated literacy curriculum in a visual arts classroom?

Analysis and Interpretation

As a former middle school art and language arts teacher, I was drawn to the art work that the students created as well as their in their perceptions of literacy in the art classroom. While several students claimed to enjoy literacy, for example reading and writing out of school, there were others, such as the four study participants who did not. My own reflections about past school experiences were thought of as frustrating, directionless, and standardized. That environment was where feelings of being lost, craving options and opportunities, and searching for self dominated. There were many times when boredom overtook, and the mind actively sought opportunities other than the class activity, and misbehavior resulted. Punished by having my name written on the board for missed work or unacceptable behavior often resulted in detention or missing

out of the joys of pizza and popsicle parties that only the "good" students received. Even when I tried to work hard and push myself it never seemed good enough. These experiences fostered passivity. A motivation to do this study arose out of a wish for the participant students to not feel such passivity in their learning opportunities. I felt like I understood these children, having experienced similar educational frustrations . This past personal experience gave me greater empathy for the students' resistance to literacy that may not have otherwise existed.

The impetus to initially design and carry out this study was linked to my past personal experiences. When confronted with the students in the classroom it gave rise to those old feelings of not being good enough. However, at the same time it prompted the "teacher feelings", those that wanted to help these students. It was obvious that some of them, especially the four chosen as the focus of the study, were in need of help. The circumstances did not allow for the kind of instructional assistance I thought they could benefit from; i.e., after-school tutoring, better integration of literacy in the art class, and interdisciplinary teaming focused on need identified students.

Although Mr. G had times when he used literacy components in his classroom, these moments were infrequent and not well developed which proved frustrating for me. Biases crept into the class times because having a background in art and language arts made it difficult to not want to intervene at times and insert inclusive techniques to motivate students, especially the four being closely observed. These biases did help in recognizing shortfalls in Mr. G's teaching technique. I was restrained from wanting to help, and be a facilitator. Beane (1991) stated, " real curriculum integration occurs when

young people confront personally meaningful questions and engage in experiences related to those questions – experiences they can integrate into their own systems of meanings" (p.9).True literacy integration provides students the internal motivation to learn and use language for real outcomes. Gavelek, et al. (1999), define language arts integrated curriculum, which they term interdisciplinary curriculum, as "the connection between language arts and content area learning, or problem-centered thematic pursuits" (p. 5). In this kind of integration, the language arts serve as functional tools. It was disappointing to observe that those tools were not fully utilized in the six weeks the researcher observed in this class.

Reflection: Coming Full Circle

Out there things can happen
and frequently do
to people as brainy
and footsy as you.

And when things start to happen,
don't worry. Don't stew.
Just go right along.
You'll start happening too.

OH!
THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

As a child my mother would read to me Dr. Suess's *Oh, the Places You'll Go* trying to instill a degree of determination and fortitude as I endured the educational hardships and challenges that plagued my early years in school. Now I can deny many of my former teachers who predicted I would never make it through college. I broke free from the constraining box which held my confidence in check and my ability to succeed in education (Figure 9).

Writing the conclusion to this dissertation, I reflect on my journey as a student, a teacher, and a researcher, and realize that I have come full circle. Being a dreamer, I always had ephemeral plans on becoming a lot of things. When I was little, I wanted to be a cartoon animator, comic book cartoonist, children's book illustrator, dancer, singer, and an actress. Becoming a teacher never entered my mind. I come from a nuclear family of educators and other family and friends always said that I would eventually become a teacher. I vehemently denied their predictions. My negative experiences with teachers and literacy in those early years made teaching a distant career choice. As previously stated, all that changed when I was assigned to help Kindergartners in my old primary school. The light went on and I knew I wanted to help children who face educational challenges.

Today, I stand on the edge of my own future. I look back at the circuitous route my journey has taken, and the unfolding of important ideas and self-discoveries and find myself grateful to those who believed in and encouraged me. I am finishing my dissertation in the field of education; something I never imagined as a public school student.

Figure 9. Breaking Free

As John Dewey, (1938) asserted, we are attracted to learn what is important to us and that attraction directed me to art and later to literacy. Who I have become as a researcher and teacher is now ingrained in who I am as a person; each role cannot be separated from the other. It has become my mission to help develop curricula which will provide multiple tools for students to reach their goals and allow them to discover paths to learning.

Throughout the rest of my life I will continue to question and create my path to understanding. The thoughts and ideas of people like John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Paulo Freire, and Maxine Greene continue to inspire me and my hope is that some of what I might accomplish might inspire others who struggle with less innovative methods of education.

Conclusion

Research in art education supports the assertion that the quality of art teaching and learning in all forms is essential. The National Association for Education in the Arts (2009) identified and defined research needed "for professional growth that will support and enrich teaching and learning in art education, establish new communities of research, and inform advocacy and policy development" (para. 6).

According to Feret and Smith (2010), "art educators have a unique opportunity to develop and strengthen a cross-curricular foundation in literacy through art education" (p. 37). Student writing is a form of assessment and in the context of the art classroom is a context to develop literacy skills. It informs the teacher about students' intentions, frustrations, successes and experiments. The written response, as well as the visual

response, stresses students examine what is before them so that they may interpret it to word, image, or symbol. Some may contemplate written responses to be a concession of the artistic experience and that having art students write will take time from creating art. However, there is support for integrating writing experiences in visual arts education. The visual arts and language arts both share a focus on communication: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and seeing. Simanski (2008) noted that "in the art room any child can succeed as images and examples can take the place of words" (p. 12), however she promptly acknowledged verbal discourse as an important link in art education. Learning takes place when students look at, discuss and make art (Housen, 2001).

I recognize that my transformation from student to teacher was greatly influenced by my own personal experiences with art and literacy. I came to the realization that this work could influence how language arts could be viewed in the art classroom. In Haust (1998), his colleague Cynthia Vascak stated, "The interactions between visual and written language facilitate understanding, provide meaning, nurture personal involvement in the learning process, generate ideas, and heighten perceptual awareness" (p.30). It means designing curriculum and instruction that offers an expanded view of literacy and learning. It means acknowledging and supporting the foundational knowledge of multiliteracies. Literacy and learning become a design process, pulling from available designs, designing, and redesigning to arrive at meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Vasack (Haust, 1998) continued by stating, "The more languages we have access to, the greater our capacity to intensely experience, translate experience, to know and to communicate" (p. 30).

Student success in art may occur because the variety of symbol-making methods supports the expression and communication of their experiences. Haust (1998) states "as each form of expression complements and enriches the other, students develop a richer and more extensive vocabulary to learn, know, and express themselves as artists" (p. 35). The ability to read, write, listen, and speak proficiently determines students' overall success in school. Ballinger and Deeney (2006) suggest teachers "capitalize on literacy teaching and learning in every environment possible, and use a variety of texts" (p. 19) so student can be prepared later in life. Ballinger and Deeney (2006) go on to explain that "teachers must think creatively about ways in which literacy teaching and learning can span subject areas" (p. 19). Research in literacy acknowledges the all teachers play a role in empowering students to become independent learners (Carger, 2004; Freire, 2009; Flood, Heath & Lapp, 2005; Greene, 1995; O'Brien, 2003; Vacca & Vacca, 2002).

Art, or what I refer to as *authentic* art, is about the self. It is about exploration, personal inquiries, problem solving, and self-expression (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002). Or at least it should be. Learning about art involves more than just drawing, painting, and sculpting. Art encompasses observing, reacting, reading, writing, critiquing. Art allows students to interpret their experiences into a visual form using various languages. Literacy subtly permeates all content area curricula; including art. Based on Eisner's (1998c) extensive research, he notes "Perhaps, the largest lesson that the arts in education can teach [is] the lesson that life itself can be led as a work of art. In doing so, the maker himself or herself is remade" (p. 56).

Implications for Educators

Today, a problem exists between literacy and learning. Teachers, researchers, and all sponsors of education must view literacy and learning in expanded ways (Albers, 2006; Dyson, 2003b; Eisner, 1991, Kress & Jewitt, 2003). As stated in the review of literature, there are many visions for the aims of integrated curriculum. This type of study is a useful tool for educators because it uncovers information on beliefs and practices that could be used to design a comprehensive arts and literacy integrated curriculum.

I believe educators are missing opportunities to engage more students in integrated art and literacy instruction. Supporters of integrated curriculum agree that "integration for integration's sake is ill advised" (Hinde, 2005). Activities within a lesson or unit should not be "pointless busy work", or distorted content. This was one problem that existed with observed curriculum in this study. Dewey (1929) states, "each day of teaching ought to enable a teacher to revise and better in some respect the objectives aimed at previous work" (p.75). Teachers are influential agents who determine what activities students will engage in and why they are important. The art and literacy integration students experience affects their perceptions of art and literacy. Thus, the decisions teachers make are important because the ways they decide to represent art and literacy in their curriculum will influence how students value and conceptualize art and literacy and its relationship to learning.

Teachers who implement integration in their classrooms need to be secure in their planning so that the quality of their subject area content is maintained. To

implement an art and literacy integrated curriculum well, art teachers may need some background knowledge about language arts. This does not mean, however, that art teachers need to be language experts, but perhaps professional development or a refresher language education course would be helpful in teaching language skills for students, as well as to improve student's verbal and written conversations about designing and composition processes.

Eisner (2002) stated that it is important for teachers to make "connections between earlier and current work and between current work and the world outside the classroom" (p.55). The classroom teacher needs to have the opportunity to reflect on their instruction and consider ways to improve. Teachers may need professional development that emphasizes how to document student progress and individual instruction as well as reflect upon how well the students' needs are being met.

Implications for Future Research

Current literature concludes that integrated curricula promote critical thinking in students (Beane, 1991; Lapp & Flood, 1994; Taylor, et al. 2006). Given the current increasing challenges and diversity within classrooms, the implications for an art and literacy integrated curriculum are important when considering how to transform classrooms into studios of learning. The premise that the integration of literacy strategies into the arts might lead to better art and better writing, and ultimately a better life, was central to this study. Studies focusing on writing in the visual arts class were generally difficult to find. This is an area of research that needs more attention. Improvement in

student work could be examined both in the context of their artwork and their overall written work.

This study took place over a six week period. Students may not have been indoctrinated sufficiently for the integrated approach to be well understood and ingrained in them. It may be beneficial to engage in a more prolonged approach, extending over a semester or academic year. A longer research time period would also be able to ascertain whether students were consistent in their perceptions of arts and literacy integrated activities throughout the school year. The longer study period could allow for a deeper and more meaningful experience for students. To be beneficial, a well thought out curriculum that integrates literacy studies into art is necessary. Further, a longer period might allow a well-motivated teacher to more fully integrate writing and arts with greater benefits to students. From that point it is possible that language arts teachers could incorporate the arts into their own instruction.

A more substantial and fully integrated curriculum in language arts and visual arts needed to be developed and implemented for this study. From such a curriculum further research could better validate the value of the integrated arts classroom at the middle school level by providing more well delineated objectives and learning strategies that include more directed practice for students in how they critique an art piece. What descriptive words apply to this process? In what order might a criticism take? If students can learn to think critically and then transfer that process into their own art making it could aid them in creating better art and their approach to art becomes more holistic. This kind of instruction should take months not weeks to carry out and hence the

research should be designed much the same as the present study, but over a semester or year-long period.

Another emphasis for further study in this area involves the student population. While all 28 students in the art class were given the same assignments only four were singled out for participation in this study because of their struggle and dislike for both reading and writing. In this case the class was diverse as stated previously, but two different approaches might be investigated in similar circumstances. First, studying more students in an art classroom might generate a greater understanding of the broader student population. The study could be extended to include those students who enjoy both reading and writing within the art class. Students who do not struggle with literacy may experience an art and literacy integrated curriculum differently.

Second, a study could be conducted across grade levels or particular underserved groups such as English as a second language or students of immigrant families. Perhaps placing emphasis on grade levels, a "critical" grade level for underserved students might be identified. Another avenue could be an attempt to identify particular groups of underserved students that might need a greater focus on language learning.

Based on this type of study another avenue of research could investigate how a well-developed and integrated literacy curriculum in the art classroom would compare with an underserved campus and one not identified as underserved. Further, a study could be conducted to show if arts and writing across the curriculum allow students to experience success in other subject areas.

The topic of curriculum integration is an important one in educational research. Eisner (2002) advocates for more research in curriculum, arts education, and the quality of teacher practice, specifically, the content educators teach, methods they employ, and the specific outcomes generated in the classroom. It is my hope that this research will serve as a motivational tool for future researcher in integrated curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

LESSON PLANS

Art Project   ILLUMINATED LETTERS

Grade 8

▬▬▬▬

All students will create an Illuminated Letter and learn the history of its use.

Goal: The student will create an Illuminated Letter with correct embellishments.

Proficiencies: The student will
1. use the elements of art and the principles of design.
3. use line to create form.
6. demonstrate that line can create value and depth.
13. integrate the study of Art History as it applies.

Objectives:
1. create a composition on colored paper using pencil only.
2. Use line to create pattern and form.
3. Alternate color for pattern contrast.
4. apply small areas of color for three color blending using proper tools.
5. Use light colors for highlights after background color is complete.
6. Add gold or silver to enhance letter.

Assessment:
1. is the composition balanced.
2. Are the colors added correctly.
3. Is blending smooth and gradual.
4. Does the composition fit the format.
5. Are highlights placed in the proper areas.

Teacher assessment:
1. is student focused on task.
2. Students application of techniques are correct.
3. Teacher observation and class participation.

C.C.C.S.
1.1.8.D.1 1.2.8.A2 1.3.8.A1 1.3.8.D.2

APPENDIX B

WRITTEN ASSESSMENTS

APPENDIX B: WRITTEN ASSESSMENTS

CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

ART " Open-Ended " Questions

Name ████████████   ████████████

Grade 6ᵗʰ   Date 3/16/11   Period 3

After reading the attached sheet on Illuminated Letters and producing your own Illuminated letter project, please answer the following questions.

1. Explain the elements and Principles of design used in your composition.

2. Using the attached sheet as an information guide explain the components you have used that make your work an authentic Illuminated Letter. Historic elements may be included in your writing.

① When created my illuminated letter, I used many things. I used pencil, paper, colored pencils and ~~~~ thing to get ideas from. I used the letter "D" because it is the first letter in my name. Overall, I used many things when creating my illuminated letter.

② There are many ways my writing is authentic. One reason is the ... only letter is this. Another reason is by using my Font and metalic colors, it is authentic.

In conclusion my letter is authentic.

CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

ART " Open-Ended " Questions

Name ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Grade ___8th___ Date ___3/16/11___ Period __3__

After reading the attached sheet on Illuminated Letters and producing your
own Illuminated letter project,please answer the following questions.

1.Explain the elements and Principles of design used in your composition.

2.Using the attached sheet as an information guide explain the components
you have used that make your work an authentic Illuminated Letter.Historic
elements may be included in your writing.

① When I was creating my illuminated letter I used many elements and principles to create it. I used a pencil, colored markers, and paper. I used the letter "T" because it is the first letter of my name. I used many things when creating my illuminated letter.

② When I was making my illuminated letter one way it was authentic because I did it myself. I used mettalic colors to make it look more better an uniquac. I put different designs like a backround with army camoflauge. In conclusion I used many unique characteristics that made my letter authu.

CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

ART " Open-Ended " Questions

Name ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
Grade 8   Date 3-16-11   Period 3

After reading the attached sheet on Illuminated Letters and producing your own Illuminated letter project, please answer the following questions.

1. Explain the elements and Principles of design used in your composition.

2. Using the attached sheet as an information guide explain the components you have used that make your work an authentic Illuminated Letter. Historic elements may be included in your writing.

1. You use emphasis, movement, balance, + harmony.

2. I used a different variety of shapes. I used different patterns inside + outside the letter Also, I used different colors to show variety. I used the colors to shade in different parts of my letter.

CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

ART " Open-Ended " Questions

Name _____

Grade _____ 8 _____ Date _3/16/11_ _____ Period ___3_____

After reading the attached sheet on Illuminated Letters and producing your own Illuminated letter project, please answer the following questions.

1. Explain the elements and Principles of design used in your composition.

2. Using the attached sheet as an information guide explain the components you have used that make your work an authentic Illuminated Letter. Historic elements may be included in your writing.

When creating our Illuminated letters, we were told to add color, design, and anything that represents us. In my Illuminated's are different colors to create Emphasis. I wanted my viewer to notice the curve im my letter so I emphasized with the solid color pink. Also I used variety, In the types of design I used, all of them were different.

To make my Illuminated letter authentic, I included several principals of art. For instance, I used Emphasis, variety, and proportion.

APPENDIX C

TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER INTERVIEW #1
1. Tell me about yourself and how you first came to teach?
2. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
3. How do you define literacy?
4. Tell me what you've noticed about the students' experiences with art and writing.
5. Describe the integrated literacy program that you use in your classroom.
6. What literacy and art skills do you emphasize with your students?
7. How do you view the role of the arts in education?
8. How have you integrated language arts into the curriculum?
   a. What helped you to integrate language arts?
   b. What hindered you from integrating language arts?
9. What you would like to add?

PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER INTERVIEW # 3

1. How would you assess the study?
2. What was your greatest struggle with the curriculum?
3. What new insights did you gain about language arts integration?
4. How might you apply language arts to your arts instruction in the future? Would you like to redesign your practice? Why? Why not?
5. What changes if any have you noticed in student behavior or attitude for during the course of the past six weeks?
6. What impact do you think this curriculum has had on the students? Who all do you think it affected and in what way?
7. Overall, please explain how would you evaluate the students' experience with language arts in the art class?
8. What you would like to add?

APPENDIX D

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT INTERVIEW #1

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your interests? Do you have any hobbies, or special talents?
3. What is your favorite subject(s)?
4. Do you participate in any extracurricular activities?
5. Who encourages you to do well in school?
6. Who has influenced you the most?
7. Have you had any favorite teachers? Why were they your favorite?
8. Has there ever been a time when you were frustrated or upset with your performance or grades in a class? What did you do to express yourself?
9. Describe yourself as a reader and a writer.
10. Why do you read and write?
11. Tell me about your experiences so far in Language Arts class this year.
12. What do you like best about Language Arts class? What do you find the most challenging about Language Arts?
13. Tell me about your experiences so far in Art class this year.
14. What do you like best about Art class? What do you find the most challenging about Art?
15. Discuss/share your perception of yourself as an artist. Why do you use art/visuals?
16. Other than in art class, have you ever used art/visual representations to express yourself?
17. What is the easiest way to show the teacher what you know? Which way would you prefer to show your teacher that you are learning something in class? Why?
18. Do you think it's important to include writing in art class?
19. Is there anything you would like to add about yourself?
20. Do you think writing about your artwork has helped you to understand artistic concepts?
21. Does art help you express your feelings than writing or do you like to write better.
22. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT SPONTANEOUS INTERVIEW

These questions will serve as a guide, but not a rigid plan, for the spontaneous interview. I will follow the student's lead during the questioning and let the conversation take its own course.

1. What are you doing?
2. Can you tell me about this drawing (or painting, etc.)?
   a. What does this drawing mean to you?
   b. Why did you choose to draw this?
   c. Did you do anything that helped you create the picture?
   d. How do you feel about this artwork?
3. Walk me through the steps of your drawing/creative process?
4. What do you think about when you are making a picture (or a piece of writing)?
5. What did you think about when making this picture/ piece?
6. What does your mind do?
   a. What do you focus on?
   b. What was the easiest part of the process for you?
   c. What was the most difficult process for you?
   d. How did you go about deciding the form that you would use for this particular project?
   e. Why do you think this was a good choice?

VITA

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