

The Arts in Teaching:

*Using the arts to stimulate student interest and foster
concept development in a first grade classroom.*

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ABSTRACT

This inquiry investigates the effects of incorporating the arts in a diverse first grade classroom. Using student concept interviews, student work samples and discussions, participation checklists, photographs, and observations, I explored the question, "What are the implications of using the arts to enhance an inquiry-based American Album unit?" More specifically, this inquiry focuses on the correlation between art mediums and the following: participation, concept development and retention, and student choice.

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BACKGROUND

Teaching Context

As one of three first grade classrooms in Radio Park Elementary, our self-contained class is comprised of twenty-three students, ranging in abilities, instructional support services, and family backgrounds. Our students have been divided into five reading groups, with the highest group working on level I books and the lowest group reading on level D. In terms of instructional support services, two of the twelve girls in our classroom currently receive special education services and leave our classroom for individualized instruction in the morning, returning in the afternoon with an adult assistant. Four of the students receive math enrichment and another four students receive writing enrichment. One of our eleven male students entered the school year speaking only Korean. His family moved from his native country in August. In the beginning of the year, his mother was the only member of his family who spoke English. Now, he is able to respond to both teachers and classmates in two or three word phrases. He spends part of every day with the school's E.S.L. teacher receiving English language support and instruction. Another male student, originally from the Ivory Coast in Africa, also receives language support once a week. The Occupational Therapist assists one student with his fine and small motor skills in handwriting. This student is also on two behavior plans developed by the Instructional Support Team (IST). In total, nine of our students are currently working on goals outlined by the IST in our building. In addition to diversity

within academic abilities and instructional support services, we also have a wide range of family backgrounds. Four students live with a single parent, one of which spends half of the week with one parent and switches households in the middle of every week. Two students attend after-school day care, while another student leaves school with his grandparents for after-school care.

Rationale

With a classroom full of varying abilities in reading, writing, and speaking, I began to consider the use of art as a bridge to academic content, specifically the implications it might have for our students in developing concepts and expressing their knowledge or understanding effectively. Before developing my inquiry project, I noted that all of the children at the writing center would begin their journal work with a picture first and then the words, unless otherwise prompted. Even those students who were capable of writing many complete sentences would spend their time drawing instead of writing. This observation led me to wonder whether students presented with art in academic areas other than writing would engage with content as fully as they had at the writing center. In addition to their interest in drawing at the writing center, many students chose to draw during inside recess rather than play with blocks, toys, games, or puzzles. In addition to noting their engagement level during these specific segments of the day, I also observed students excited about going to the art special. Based on these informal observations, I am confident that art is one area of interest for many of the students in our classroom.

Aside from the students' interest in art, I too have had a love for art throughout my academic experiences. In my undergraduate studies, I chose art as my academic concentration not only because it was an area of interest for me, but also because I thought that its visual basis could benefit visual learners in a classroom. Consequently, I wanted to include art in my teaching methods. For this inquiry project, I designed lessons centered on art for a classroom of diverse first grade learners as one way to test three years of educational theory, putting teacher research into action.

I sought the real-life implications of using art in the classroom as a means of enhancing curriculum. In other words, I wanted to see if the arts could be more than simply fun, but also educationally beneficial for our students. In this inquiry, my goal was to begin the journey of taking my undergraduate theories and applying them in my teaching, with the hopes of using my findings as a foundation for developing new insights into teaching pedagogy. Using the State College curriculum as my starting point, I implemented teacher action research. I explored ways to enhance curriculum in our classroom with the hope of investigating whether the use of art in my teaching could expand beyond art's fun factor. Does the inclusion of art lend itself to supporting students' meaningful learning?

Wonderings

As I began to think more deeply about the impact of art in education, I searched for areas in the curriculum where I could implement change and observe student response. At the same time, my mentor teacher offered the American Album unit as the next phase

of my teaching responsibility in the yearlong PDS internship. With this new responsibility, the door opened for my art hypothesis to be implemented in my teaching. My wonderings developed and became more defined. At first, I thought about an inquiry project focusing on the implications of using the arts in my teaching. However, the arts were too broad and my teaching happened throughout the day. With deadlines and data in mind, I narrowed my inquiry to visual arts and limited the teaching aspect to the American Album unit. Specifically, I wondered, what are the implications of using the visual arts to enhance the inquiry-based American Album unit? Furthermore, will the implications found through this inquiry resemble those outcomes I hope to see in my future classrooms?

Main question:

What are the implications of using the visual arts to enhance the inquiry-based American Album unit?

Sub questions:

- What are the effects of art on students' concept development and retention?
- How would our students' conceptual understanding of the curriculum compare to students' understanding in our partner classroom?
- What are the effects of specific art mediums on student choice and interest?
- Will students respond in ways I believe to be beneficial? If not, what might I change about the implementation?
- How might I use this knowledge in other curriculum areas?

TEACHER ACTION-RESEARCH

As I began to outline my wonderings and the process of including art into my teaching to support students' concept development, I was conscious of the line between conducting an inquiry and introducing a project. Because art can easily be implemented as a project in a classroom, I sought assistance from other professionals. With help from my PDA and my mentor teacher, we discussed ways in which I could make this a true inquiry. The first step we took in conducting an inquiry was developing a question that opened itself to an unknown number of possible outcomes. If an outcome was already set, I would not have been able to say that the inclusion of art was an inquiry. I needed a question whose results were undefined. The main wondering became "What are the implications of using the visual arts to enhance the inquiry-based American Album unit?" By broadening the question to include the many implications, I enabled the inquiry to provide data and observation beyond the pinpointed area of concept development, but also include evidence to support additional claims about the effects of art within a classroom.

Research

As I began to think about this art inquiry, I remembered reading about ways to introduce the arts in a book entitled *Beyond Reading and Writing: Inquiry, Curriculum, and Multiple Ways of Knowing*. Specifically, I recalled a strategy they labeled "Sketch to Stretch". This strategy "asks readers to draw a sketch symbolizing what this story means to you" (Berghoff et. al, 1). The authors suggest, "recognizing the subtle difference between sketching a favorite part of the story and sketching what the story means" (2).

One of my sub-questions emphasized students' conceptual development and understanding. This "sketch to stretch" strategy emphasized the importance of using art as a tool for meaningful learning in the classroom. The authors indicate a difference between using art by sketching for the act of sketching or sketching for the act of expressing learning. After investigating this strategy, I continued my research on using art in the classroom. I then read the book, *Lively Learning: Using the Arts to Teach the K-8 Curriculum*. I was initially interested in this book because the multiple types of art illustrated in the lessons. However, I narrowed my inquiry to include only the visual arts. As I continued to read through the text, I found that the visual arts were emphasized in teaching many areas of curriculum. In fact the author, Linda Crawford, suggests, "visual arts can be a highly effective way for students to sharpen their observations and improve accuracy in showing what they've learned in a social studies lesson or unit" (Crawford, 124). After reading these books, I decided to incorporate the visual arts into our social studies curriculum in similar manners, hoping to support students' conceptual development.

Plan

In the beginning stages of planning for the inquiry, I concentrated on the unit itself. Unlike the other teachers in the primary team, our classroom and one other first grade classroom decided to adopt the inquiry-based unit designed by an intern and mentor from the previous year's inquiry conference. This inquiry-based approach to the unit was different in not only the lessons included, but also the concepts taught. In the original

unit, the students traveled to four national locations (New York, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and Mount Rushmore) to learn about famous American places, monuments, and people. The unit our classes adopted focused on learning about our country's naming, the Declaration of Independence, the American Flag, the Constitution, the Pledge of Allegiance, National mascots, and the Statue of Liberty.

The curriculum designers who developed this inquiry-based unit included a pretend pen-pal scenario to help students think about these national concepts through the eyes of a new school. Our team's planning for this American Album unit started as an outline. Initially, I collaborated with one other first grade classroom to create the list of concepts to be covered and finalized their order. At this point, I made the decision to include the element of art in specific concepts' lessons, and to exclude it from others, in order to better collect data on the implications of using art. As the unit started, I was careful to keep track of the mediums used, trying to vary the mediums to again broaden the possible outcomes and findings for this inquiry. The following chart outlines the sequence of topics and the mediums used within the lessons.

Topic	New Mexico School	Concept	Art Medium
Declaration of Independence	School Announcement	Documents as Announcements	Watercolor paints
American Flag	School Pennant	Flag Symbolism	Construction Paper and Fabric Crayons
State Flags	Table Flags	Flag Symbolism	Markers and Fabric
Constitution	School Rules	Hopes and Dreams	- none -
Pledge of Allegiance	Class Pledge	Promises	Markers and Water
Uncle Sam	School Mascot	Mascots as Representatives	Construction Paper
Statue of Liberty	Welcoming New Students	Statues Symbolism	Modeling Clay and Tempera Paints

Collection

During the month of February, I began to plan and teach the inquiry-based American Album unit. In my initial outline for data collection, I planned to document outcomes and patterns through photographs, concept interviews, student work samples, and conversations. Through these modes of collection, I hoped to analyze students' choice, participation, and concept development as related to my sub-questions.

Photographs aside, I collected the majority of data at the beginning and conclusion of the American unit. Photographs were taken throughout the inquiry to document student artwork produced in response to the concepts of the unit.

Using Photographs for Data Collection

I found collecting photographs to be dual-purposed. First, I used photographs as a means to document student work through picture. I found photographs to be more time efficient than scanning student writing samples. Photography was particularly helpful when collecting records of students' 3-Dimensional artwork. Secondly, using photographs afforded me the opportunity to collect data throughout the length of the inquiry and later analyze it for patterns that I may have been otherwise neglected or overlooked. For example, students were directed to create part of a class flag as a follow-up activity to a lesson on flag symbolism. Towards the end of the lesson, I realized that I had forgotten to take photographs as a means of documentation. In hopes to recover data, I gave students the option of working on their flag or listening to the substitute teacher read a story about America. Students made their choice and I began to take photographs of students working on art. As I looked through the camera lens, I noticed something

quite interesting. Nine students chose to continue their art and all of them were girls. All of the boys in our classroom had decided to listen to the read aloud (pictured below). I found this unexpected and decided to continue to document and collect data on the gender implications of this art inquiry. I would not have gathered information on this implication without using photographs as a means of data collection.



Using Concept Interviews for Data Collection

I utilized student interviews to collect data towards the following sub-question on concept development and understanding, “How would our students’ conceptual understanding of the curriculum compare to students’ understanding in our partner classroom?” Because the interview questions were the same for all students, this method of data collection allowed me to compare concept understanding and knowledge between

students in two first grade classrooms. I also chose students based on their previously demonstrated abilities in the classroom. I chose a higher-level thinker as one interviewee, an average level thinker as a second interviewee, and a lower level thinker as a third interviewee. The partner classroom selected three students based on the same cognitive grouping. This breadth of learners evaluated would provide more information about how the art may have impacted specific learners [Appendix A: 1-6].

Analysis

Developing an organizational strategy was crucial in analyzing data. To assure my analysis was broad and comprehensive, I made copies of our class list so that all student work would be evaluated in a standardized manner. Each class list became a checklist for one of the following areas of observation: student art medium choice, demonstrations of concept understanding in student work, and students' retention. I focused on these three areas based on their connection to my initial wondering and sub-wonderings. Specifically, these areas addressed the following three sub-questions:

1. What are the effects of specific art mediums on student choice and interest?
2. What are the effects of art on students' concept development and retention?
3. How would our students' conceptual understanding of the curriculum compare to students' understanding in our partner classroom?

Analyzing student choice information

On February 16th, I took photographs as documentation of the first time students were given a choice to continue art or participate in a different activity. The first column

of my class checklist coded students choices based from their location in the photographs. As mentioned earlier in the paper, nine students decided to continue work on art while the remaining twelve students chose to listen to a read aloud. As I coded their choices, I used “R” to represent a decision to listen to the read aloud and a checkmark to indicate a choice to do artwork. I also labeled fabric crayon as the art medium used during this choice time. In the following column, I recorded the second time students were given a choice to continue art. In this case, students were using water and marker to create a watercolor painting. I used a checkmark to indicate the students who chose to continue painting additional pieces of work. Again, I recorded the medium used. In the last column, I recorded student art choice when they were presented with the five art mediums used throughout the inquiry: modeling clay, play dough, watercolor paints, markers, and Cray paws. This last choice time also incorporated the choice of reading, as occurred in the first choice time presented to students [Appendix A: 7].

In addition to organizing student choice during different times through the inquiry, as well as the art medium for the choice time, I also used blue and pink highlighter to indicate the gender of each student across the checklist. Afterwards I totaled the number of boys who chose the art activity compared to the number of girls who made that decision. Then, I took this information to the students in a class meeting to hear their view on the gender differences noted in the analysis.

Analyzing student work for concept development and retention

To organize student work for concept development and understanding, I used a class list for noting students’ expression of their understanding through their work. The

first checklist created centered on a lesson about the American Flag and the symbolism behind its design [Appendix A: 8]. The first column in this checklist identifies the number of red and white stripes students used on their flag. The second column identifies the type of flag the student made, whether the colonial flag or the modern flag, as well as their accuracy in pasting the accurate number of stars in the chosen design. The first two columns, accuracy of stripes and stars, were important for comparing their knowledge of the facts of the state and the symbolism behind those facts. The second two columns analyze students' use of symbolism in their writing about the flag. Specifically, this column identified whether or not students wrote about the symbolism in the flag's colors; whereas, the last column noted those students' written work that added more than the flag's color symbolism to the symbolism in the flag.

Their retention of this knowledge was observed and recorded during parent teacher conferences. For each of the three art pieces shared with parents (water color school announcement, construction paper American flag, and modeling clay welcome statue) I used a checkmark in the appropriate column to indicate whether or not the student was able to link the art to the concept taught [Appendix A: 9]. For example, students who were able to articulate that the Declaration of Independence was the announcement for our country and tie that into the creation of the announcement we made for our New Mexico friends received a checkmark next to their name for retention of this particular concept. Those who were unable to make the connection between their art to the American concept did not receive a checkmark. The checkmark indicates retention because

students need to not only remember what they created months previously, but also why they made the art in relationship to the American Album unit concepts.

Analyzing concept interviews for two classrooms: our's and our partner's

In addition to using student work samples to analyze their concept understanding, I conducted concept interviews with three students from our class and three students from our partner classroom. I took these interviews and categorized their response to a question as an “F” for factual knowledge or a “C” for concept knowledge. In this analysis, my aim was to explore the sub-question, “How would our students’ conceptual understanding of the curriculum compare to students’ understanding in our partner classroom?” After questioning students from the two classrooms, I went through the interviews and used the coding as a means of finding a theme within the data [Appendix A: 1-6].

The collection and analysis of data led me to the following claims related to my main wondering: “What are the implications of using the visual arts to enhance the inquiry-based American Album unit?” My claims are also connected to my sub-wonderings, which include: What are the effects of art on students’ concept development and retention? How would our students’ conceptual understanding of the curriculum compare to students’ understanding in our partner classroom? What are the effects of specific art mediums on student choice and interest? Will students respond in ways I believe to be beneficial? If not, what might I change about the implementation? How might I use this knowledge in other curriculum areas?

Claims and Evidence

Claim 1: Students in this classroom claimed to have specific, individual art medium preferences, although this was not consistently verified.

This claim is in response to the sub-question, “What are the effects of specific art mediums on student choice and interest?” When analyzing the data collected during the last student choice activity, I noticed that slightly more than half of the students in our class selected to work with some form of clay. In fact, 11 out of 21 students made the choice to work with either play dough or modeling clay. Still, seven other students worked with markers, while three students used watercolor paints. Another student colored by herself at the Cray Paw (oil crayon) station. Although this data expresses the medium students used during this choice time, it does not fully indicate a student’s medium preference. Based on the fact that tables, with seating limitations, were used to facilitate specific art mediums, I cannot verify that their destination was isolated to their preferred medium. Students may have desired to work with one medium, but instead, made a choice to sit at a different table based on space limitations. However, I did note that two students moved chairs to the modeling clay table, perhaps an indication of their medium preference. Social dynamics may have been another factor in students’ choice of medium. Students may have chosen to go to a table with a specific art medium to be near a friend or to avoid a classmate. However, this data in conjunction with student responses during a class meeting may indicate that students in our classroom have individual preferences towards art mediums. Our data supports that students in our class preferred clay.

In addition to the data that suggests clay to be a preferred medium in our class, I also observed that modeling clay seemed to be most popular among students. Of the 13 students who chose clay,

In order to collect more data on this matter, I held a class meeting to share my findings with the students. During this discussion, students claimed to have preferences in mediums. As expected, 13 out of 19 students claimed to prefer working with clay to other art mediums. Although I was not surprised by the students' overall preference towards clay, I was surprised by one student's expression of preference for this medium because of the account relayed to me by the Art teacher. During one of the art specials, students made clay busts of what they might look like if they were president. Andrew*, however, did not want to work with clay; instead, he drew a picture of himself. Knowing this, I was curious to see how he reacted as I presented the modeling clay for students to make a statue. Interestingly, he went right to work on his statue of a Roadrunner, the New Mexico state bird. More surprising, Andrew told me during our meeting that his favorite medium was clay. For this reason, I believe that he has an individual, specific art medium preference. However, his previous reaction towards that medium in an art special and his choice to work with marker during the student choice time does not consistently verify this statement.

Not only did a majority of students express an interest in clay at the meeting and during the student choice time, but they also indicated this medium preference in writing. Students described an excitement to work with clay in their writing at our writing center. Students were asked to describe the statue they constructed for the New Mexico school using modeling clay. One student wrote, "I liked how the clay felt because it felt like

foam and I like how foam feels.” The statements made by the children and the fact that 7 of the students who worked with clay or play dough chose to use the modeling clay, suggests that the type of clay also has an effect on student preference, yet I have not found additional evidence to support this thought. Samples of student writing on this topic can be found in Appendix B.

Beyond the findings in our classroom, research supports that students at this age are continuing development of fine motor skills. Fine motor skills can be defined as “small muscle movement: those that occur with the finger, in coordination with the eyes” (Developing). Five and six year olds are still developing the muscle strength necessary for writing and other school related fine motor tasks. Manipulating pencils, markers, or paint brushes for children helps students strengthen the muscles involved in grasping and controlling direction of strokes. “As children gain greater control of crayons and brushes, and as their eye-hand coordination improves, their drawings and paintings will become more detailed and colorful” (Perrone). Knowing that our students are currently developing these skills, clay and other tactile modeling mediums can be helpful in strengthening muscles in the hand. Experts on child development suggest that children at this age “draw, paint, and engage in making crafts” to develop “fine motor skills, which are smaller actions, such as grasping an object between the thumb and a finger or using the lips and tongue to taste objects” (Wells).

Claim 2: Within these first grade partner classrooms, art appeared to impact the type of knowledge students retained and used in follow-up conversations.

As part of the research collected during this inquiry, I conducted concept interviews with

three students from our classroom and three students from a first grade partner classroom. The interviews focused on the American Flag and other familiar flags [Appendix A: 1-6]. Within both rooms, students investigated the American Flag and its symbolic meaning. Students then created their own American flags using construction paper. Although the two classrooms were similar in content covered, the lessons were taught by two different groups of children and by two different teachers. Through the concept interviews, I noticed that students in our partner classroom were better able to articulate factual information about the flag. For example, Student D from the partner classroom could express who made the flag and when it was made. This student was also able to list eleven different flags, some from states and others from countries. He could describe their design, but did not articulate the meaning behind the design of those flags. According to Bloom's Taxonomy his ability to express factual information falls under the category of knowledge. Knowledge here is defined as "specific facts" or "as the remembering (recalling) of appropriate, previously learned information" (Washington University). Student D was able to express knowledge of Betsy Ross as the maker of the flag. He was also able to narrow down the year the flag was made to be 1764, 1762, or 1769. He was also able to recall the meaning of the American flag's colors. However, this information was not synthesized into his words; he was recalling factual knowledge.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Competence	Skills Demonstrated
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observation and recall of information • knowledge of dates, events, places • knowledge of major ideas • mastery of subject matter • Question Cues: list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.
Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding information • grasp meaning • translate knowledge into new context • interpret facts, compare, contrast • order, group, infer causes • predict consequences • Question Cues: summarize, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use information • use methods, concepts, theories in new situations • solve problems using required skills or knowledge • Questions Cues: apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeing patterns • organization of parts • recognition of hidden meanings • identification of components • Question Cues: analyze, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer
Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use old ideas to create new ones • generalize from given facts • relate knowledge from several areas • predict, draw conclusions • Question Cues: combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare and discriminate between ideas • assess value of theories, presentations • make choices based on reasoned argument • verify value of evidence • recognize subjectivity • Question Cues assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarize

Adapted from Benjamin S. Bloom Taxonomy of educational objectives. Published by Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. Copyright (c)1984 by Pearson Education.

According to Bloom's Taxonomy factual knowledge is considered qualitatively different than comprehension, and even application of knowledge (Washington). The students in our class demonstrated factual knowledge of the American flag's colors as well. However, these students were able to use their knowledge of a flag's symbolic design to apply it to other flag symbolic meanings. For example, Student B from our class described the colors of the American flag accurately. Similar to Student D, Student

B was able to recall the information. Both students have factual knowledge about the American flag and were able to recall the symbolic meaning behind the colors. Both students were able to describe the designs of other flags. The difference in can be seen in their ability to apply their knowledge to a new situation. Student B applies her factual knowledge to a new flag's symbolism. She describes Florida's flag and is then asked why the flag might look this way. She responds "because Florida is a hot place like Hawaii. They do hula dancing. In Florida they might do hula dancing too." Student B knows that there must be a reason for the flag to look a specific way and she uses her knowledge of its design, her knowledge of symbolism, and her prior knowledge of climates to help her construct meaning for Florida's design. Student D did not articulate an application of his knowledge of the American flag's symbolism to other flags.

With that mentioned, I return to the claim that art used in our classroom may have an impact on the type of knowledge retained. The examples provided in the concept interviews provide one piece into the type of knowledge our students possess. However, their knowledge level according to Bloom's Taxonomy may be due to other contributing factors. The two classrooms represented by the interviews are comprised of different children, with different backgrounds, strengths, and needs. To claim that the art used in our classroom is a contributing factor for a difference in student knowledge is valid. However, many other factors may have influenced student responses. Within these two groups of students, two different teachers had two different ways of teaching. They may have also had two different questioning strategies and two different objectives in mind when conducting classroom discussions. These factors also play a part in the development of knowledge.

TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

New Wonderings

While exploring this inquiry, I developed new wonderings about art integration that I had not considered previously. One wondering developed through the first experience with data collection. I noticed gender differences as I took pictures of students who chose art while others chose to listen to the read aloud. The only students working on art were girls. All of the boys in my class were sitting and listening to the read aloud. That day our substitute was a male teacher. I wonder if the separation between genders was apparent due to gender preferences towards art or towards the teacher. From this one observation, I have developed the following new wonderings about art integration.

- What are the gender implications when utilizing art in the classroom?
- What are the effects of specific mediums on gender preferences?

I also began to wonder how the visual arts effect students' emotions about school. For instance, one of the students in our classroom would leave early from school on a regular basis. During lunch one afternoon, his mother came to school hoping to encourage him to stay for the rest of the day. Staying a whole day is a challenge for this student. She asked me about the lesson for the afternoon and I described the art inclusion. On that particular afternoon, I planned to illustrate the Pledge of Allegiance. The student heard the description of the lesson and decided he wanted to go home. On a different afternoon, I used postings of photographs around the room for a lesson. His mother had come to school to take him home, but this time he wanted to stay for the lesson. The

school counselor approached me to let me know that he told his mother that he wanted to go back to class for the lesson. From this scenario, I have developed a new wonderings.

- Aside from the effects specific art mediums have on student choice and interest, what are the effects of viewing art compared to creating art in terms of student choice and interest?

In addition to continuing to collect data on the implications art has on students' concept development, I also would like to think about the way art affects emotions and students' abilities to learn.

- What are the effects of art on the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning domains?

Conclusions

As I began to write claims for this inquiry, I found myself imbedded in data and analyzing it for any implication art could have in a first grade classroom. The amount of data, 23 pieces of artwork for every art inclusion, was overwhelming and endlessly broad. Consequently, I have many pieces of information to direct me to my next inquiries. In the beginning of this inquiry, I wanted to see if the implications of art were beneficial beyond art's fun factor. I believe that I have found that art can be educationally meaningful for students. I wanted to know if medium affected students' interest. I have found that for this class, there is a preference towards clay. Having this information at the beginning of a school year may provide me with a teaching tool to incorporate through difficult material. Because of this finding, I will conduct surveys at the beginning of the school year, so that the preferred medium becomes a tool in my teaching for those students.

Even though I have come to two claims supported with evidence, I do not feel as though I can point to one factor and conclude that it was the sole contributor to any outcome. However, I do know that art is a piece of who I am as a teacher. I have seen that it can be beneficial for students' conceptual development and it is an area that sparks my interest and passion. Because of this, I will continue to develop meaningful uses of art in my teaching. My paper is finished; but, my inquiry is on going. I plan to continue to observe students and develop methods of implementation and research in my future classrooms.

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